

Revelation Bible Study

Remember, Revelation is a book of comfort to the Christian!!

Chapters 4-5

These two chapters constitute an introduction to chapters 6-20. In the throne room of heaven, the Lamb assumes the responsibility of initiating the great final conflict with the forces of evil, the end of which will see the Lamb triumphant and the devil consigned to the lake of fire.

One sees the fullness of God's glory only when one sees also the enthroned Lamb who was slain. One praises God's glory rightly when one also acclaims the enthronement of the crucified and risen Son of God.

View the picture (chapters 4-5). See if you can find the items mentioned in the "notes" on these chapters.

Chapter 4:

(Notes to help understanding)

4:1 door standing open. In the case of the church at Philadelphia it meant opportunity for Christian service. Here it is used to envision a solid-like firmament separating the earth from the heavens. It represents the idea that John was given the special grace of looking into heaven, which is ordinarily closed and forbidden to the human eye, to view the heavenly glory of God. The opened door thus signifies a particular divine revelation. (CC pp. 110-111)

4:1 voice...trumpet. With a loud sound, like the blast of a trumpet, the Lord gives John a signal to look and listen. (Stoeckhardt p. 18)

4:1 Come up here.† Similarly, Moses was called up on Mount Sinai to receive divine direction (Ex 19:20, 24). Cf. also the heavenly ascent of the two witnesses (11:12). Some interpreters find the rapture of the church in this verse. John, however, is not describing an event in the distant future, but what happened on a particular Sunday in the first century on the island of Patmos. "After this" (v. 1) refers to the dictation of the seven letters. (CSB)

4:3 Jasper/Carnelian/Emerald. Since God dwells in "unapproachable light" and is one "whom no one has seen or can see" he is described in terms of the reflected brilliance of precious stones.

These three stones were also part of the breastplate of Israel's high priest (Ex. 28:15-21). There were twelve stones in all, representing the twelve sons of Israel.

Jasper is a dark-red transparent stone, carnelian is also of a dark-red brilliancy. The dark-red color should remind us of his wrath. The emerald, which is of a rich green color, is the symbol of hope. That brilliancy of green pictures God's loving kindness and gives hope to sinners.

4:3 rainbow. Literally the word means "a circle of light, a fiery-like ring." It was used to refer to a "halo," or for the "iris" of the human eye. The ancient Greeks called the rainbow an Iris because

they imagined that the rainbow encircled the entire earth. Though only half of the Iris could be seen, they still called the rainbow a “circle.” The visible part of the rainbow was called the bow.

4:4 twenty-four elders. Representatives of the 12 tribes of Israel plus the 12 apostles of Jesus. Together, they represent all God’s people from both OT and NT times. (TLSB)

4:4 white...crowns of gold. White = purity / Crowns = victory / Gold = royalty

4:5 lightning...thunder. Symbolic of the awesome majesty and power of God (cf. the manifestation of God at Sinai, Ex 19:16–19; cf. also the conventional OT depiction of God’s coming in mighty power to deliver his people. In Revelation, thunder and lightning always mark an important event connected with the heavenly temple (8:5; 11:19; 16:18). (CSB)

4:6 sea of glass. Normally, the sea is a symbol of chaos and evil (cf. 13:1). Here however, the sea is portrayed as tame and beautiful, thus nonthreatening. (TLSB)

4:6 clear as crystal.† Symbolic of the peace which exists in God’s presence and also of the absence of pollution or blemish in his presence. (CSB)

4:6 four living creatures. An exalted order of angelic beings whose task is to guard the heavenly throne and lead in worship and adoration of God, distinct from the numerous other angels in 5:11. (CSB)

4:6 covered with eyes.† (Also in v. 8) Nothing escapes their attention. In the OT God’s eyes suggested his knowledge or his concern for his people (see 1:14 and note). (CSB)

4:7 lion...ox...man...eagle. If we regard the four living ones as agencies of God’s universal providence, we may take the lion as representing the wild places of the earth, the ox as representing the cultivated parts, the human countenance as representing the cities and towns, and the eagle as representing the whole expanse of air and sky. (Poellot p. 78)

4:8 six wings. Two to cover the face in reverence, two to cover the feet in modesty, and two for flying.

4:8 Holy, holy, holy. This echoes the worship Isaiah beheld in the heavenly temple. This threefold acclamation points to the three persons in the Holy Trinity. This vision of heavenly worship is the basis for the Sanctus of the Communion liturgy. (TLSB)

4:11 You are worthy. Here, the One on the throne is praised for creating all things. Later, the triune God will be praised in similar terms for Christ’s redemptive work (5:9-13). Creation is one of “the chief articles of our Christian faith” (FC SD I 34). (TLSB)

(Meditation/Discussion)

1. What lessons did you learn from this section? How will they impact your life?

2. What comfort can you take from this section?

Chapter 5

(Notes to help understanding)

5:1 scroll. This was a roll or book of writing.

5:1 writing on both sides. Like the stone tablets of the OT covenant law. The fibers of a papyrus scroll run horizontally on the inside, which makes writing easier than on the reverse side (where the fibers are vertical). (CSB)

It implies that God's plan is comprehensive and complete. (TLSB)

5:1 sealed with seven seals.† Indicating absolute inviolability (cf. Isa 29:11; Da 12:4). Scrolls are sealed because they refer to the future, which is a closed book to men until revealed by God. (CSB)

5:3 heaven ... earth ... under the earth. A conventional phrase used to express the universality of the proclamation—no creature was worthy. It is not intended to teach a threefold division of the universe. (CSB)

5:5 Lion of the tribe of Judah. A Messianic title taken from Ge 49:8–10, where Judah is named a “lion’s cub” and promised the right to rule “until he comes to whom it belongs.” (CSB)

5:6 lamb. Recalls not only that Jesus is “the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29) but also His resurrection. (TLSB)

5:6 Seven horns...eyes. The horn is an ancient Jewish symbol for power or strength. Seven horns would symbolize full strength.

The exalted Lamb now knows and sees all things.

5:11 thousands upon thousands. A rhetorical phrase for an indefinitely large number. (CSB) The ESV has “myriads.” A myriad is ten thousand. Thus, the angels number in the millions. (TLSB)

(Meditation/Discussion)

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