

**A Survey of Revelation**  
Week 4: The Throne Room Vision  
Revelation 4:1-5:14

**A Brief Overview of the Book of Revelation**

**A. Introduction to the Book (Revelation 1)**

**B. Letters to the Seven Churches (Revelation 2-3)**

**C. The End of the World As We Know It: God's Judgment Upon the World and Satan (Revelation 4-19:5)**

1. The Vision of Heaven and the "Beginning of the End" (4:1-5:14) }
  2. The "Seal" Judgments (6:1-8:1)
  3. The "Trumpet" Judgments (8:2-11:19)
  4. The Conflict with the False Trinity (12:1-14:20)
  5. The "Bowl" Judgments (15:1-16:21)
  6. The End of the World (17:1-19:5)
- This week, we are here!*

**D. A Whole New World: The Return of Christ and the New Heavens and the New Earth (Revelation 19:6-22:21)**

1. The Return of Christ and the Millennium Kingdom (19:6-20:15)
2. The New Heavens and the New Earth (21:1-22:11)
3. Epilogue to Revelation (22:12-21)

**Summary of Revelation 4:1-5:14**

After the letters to the seven churches, [1] John is given a vision of the throne room of heaven itself, where John sees God on His throne, surrounded by a worshipping heaven. [2] All of a sudden, a mysterious scroll with seven seals appears, and an anguished search begins for someone "worthy" to open it. [3] Eventually, someone worthy is found: Jesus, the lion of Judah, appearing as a slain lamb with conquering horns. [4] All of heaven then erupts in praise for God and for the Lamb.

[1] God and His "Entourage"

[2] The Mysterious 7-Sealed Scroll and the Search for Someone "Worthy"

[3] The Worthy One Is Found: Jesus!

[4] The Concluding Worship

## [1] God and His “Entourage”

*After the letters to the seven churches, [1] John is given a vision of the throne room of heaven itself, where John sees God on His throne, surrounded by a worshipping heaven.*

### God on His Throne

*<sup>1</sup>After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven. And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, “Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this.” <sup>2</sup>At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it. <sup>3</sup>And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and ruby. A rainbow that shone like an emerald encircled the throne. ...<sup>5</sup>From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder. In front of the throne, seven lamps were blazing. These are the seven spirits of God. <sup>6</sup>Also in front of the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal. (Rev. 4:1-3, 5-6)*

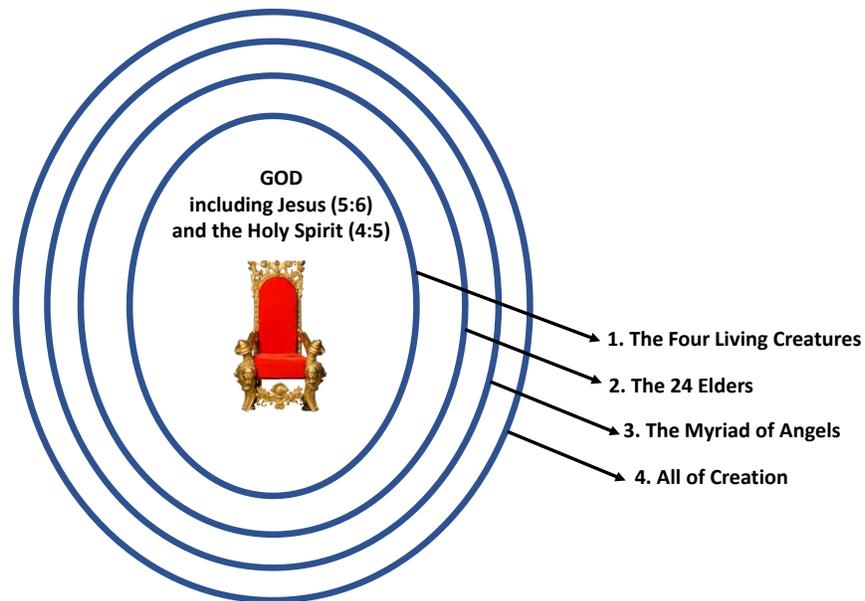
- Following the letters to the seven churches, John is transported “in the Spirit” to an open door through which he is given a glimpse of the throne room of God.
- Note that John never describes what God looks like. All John describes is the phenomena around God. This is in keeping with what we find in the rest of Scripture; apparently it is impossible to record in human words an accurate description of God. What John does say, however, is rich in imagery:

<b>“appearance of jasper and ruby” with a “rainbow that shone like an emerald” which “encircled” the throne (v. 3)</b>	All are precious stones: “God is portrayed as the brilliance of light reflected from precious stones” (Robert Mounce, <i>Revelation</i> ). These stones are also among those that were on the breastplate of the high priest (Exodus 28:17-20). The “rainbow” may also be intended to evoke the covenant with Noah (see Genesis 9:13).
<b>“From [Gk: <i>ek</i>, ‘out of’] the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings, and peals of thunder” (v. 5).</b>	This is meant to convey God’s awesomeness and power. It is also very similar to what the Israelites experienced when God appeared to them on Mt. Sinai (Exodus 20:18).
<b>“In front of the throne, seven lamps were blazing. These are the seven spirits of God” (v. 5).</b>	The “seven Spirits” of God are mentioned elsewhere in Revelation (1:4; 3:1; 5:6). This reference likely refers to the ONE Holy Spirit, and the number “seven” is either meant to convey His perfection/completeness or is a reference to Zechariah 4:2 and 10, which refers to the Spirit as the “seven eyes of the Lord.” Thus the ONE Holy Spirit is one of the ways that God perfectly sees all of humankind.
<b>“Also in front of the throne, there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal” (v. 6)</b>	God’s throne was said to rest on the waters (Psalm 104:2-3), and may be a reference to the separation God made between the “waters of earth” and the “waters of heaven” in Genesis 1:6-7. <sup>1</sup> It represents the transcendence and holiness of God; it’s meant to show God’s separateness from creation.

<sup>1</sup> Genesis 1:6-7, NLT: “Then God said, ‘Let there be a space between the waters, to separate the waters of the heavens from the waters of the earth.’” <sup>7</sup> And that is what happened. God made this space to separate the waters of the earth from the waters of the heavens.”

## God's "Entourage"

- Surrounding God on His throne are four other groups of people. Two of them are mentioned in Revelation 4 (the Four Living Creatures and the 24 Elders) and two of them are mentioned in Revelation 5 (the myriad of angels and the rest of creation).



### 1. The Four Living Creatures (4:6b-8)

- These four creatures seem to form the "inner circle" of the throne. They are the closest ring of beings to God, outside of the Lamb (see chapter 5) and the Holy Spirit (v. 5).
- Two other times in Scripture we are given a picture of these four creatures: Isaiah 6:2-3 and Ezekiel 1:4-13.
- Their odd physical description (lion, ox, man, eagle) is meant to represent "all of inanimate creation, centering on the noblest, wisest and swiftest creatures God has made. They sum up all of creation" (Grant Osborne, *Revelation*).
- Their eyes in front and behind and all around represent the fact that God sees everything; nothing can be hidden from him.
- Their six wings likely represent their speed; they respond to God's will and carry out his commands (see Psalm 18:10).
- Visually imagining these creatures is impossible; they are meant to "stir imagination, not yield to the drawing board" (Robert Mounce, *Revelation*).
- They seem to be the worship leaders of heaven, leading all of heaven in a praise of God!

2. The 24 Elders (4:4, 10; 5:14; 7:13-14; 8:3-4; 20:4)
  - The next “ring” of people surrounding the throne are the 24 Elders.
  - Considerable debate has surrounded these elders; some see them as human beings—perhaps the twelve apostles and the original twelve tribes of Israel.
  - It’s probably best, however, to see them as a special class of angelic beings who reign with God, perhaps provide God “counsel” (see Job 15:8), and are engaged in the worship of Him. The fact that there are 24 of them may be because of the 24 orders of priesthood in 1 Chronicles 24:4-5. They may also perform a sort of “priestly” function in heaven.
  - Their white clothes are a symbol of their purity and holiness; their crowns are a symbol of their ruling function.
  
3. The Myriad of Angels (5:11-12)
  - Surrounding the 24 Elders are “many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand.”
  - The number “ten thousand” was the largest known number at the time; this is like today saying there were “countless” or a “bazillion” angels in heaven.
  - These angels are involved in the worship of God.
  
4. “Every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea and all that is in them” (5:13)
  - Finally, surrounding the angels is all of creation worshipping God. Note that this even includes animals and even demons / fallen angels.
  - This is an acknowledgement that all of creation will one day recognize God and give Him praise (some, perhaps, reluctantly). (See Romans 14:11 and Philippians 2:10-11.)
  
- The cumulative effect of the “entourage” of heaven is that it is God, and God alone who is deserving of worship. **He, and He alone is in the center of all of creation.** God is King, not Caesar or any other human ruler. And one day, everyone will recognize that.

*“The incredible splendor of God is in total contrast to the earthly so-called glory of earthly rulers; the truth of the matter is that any glory any of us possess is that glory that we share by being a member of the family of the Godhead. Too often we find ourselves virtually worshipping sports stars, celebrities, or politicians. The queen of England or the president of the United States must bow before the throne of heaven just like the rest of us do.”*

- Grant Osborne, *Revelation Verse by Verse*

## [2] The Mysterious Scroll and the Search for Someone “Worthy”

*All of a sudden, a mysterious scroll with seven seals appears, and an anguished search begins for someone “worthy” to open it.*

*<sup>1</sup> Then I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals. <sup>2</sup> And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, “Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?” <sup>3</sup> But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it. <sup>4</sup> I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside. (Rev 5:1-4)*

- After John is given his vision of God on his throne, John sees in God’s right hand a “scroll with writing on both sides sealed with seven seals.”
- This scroll is **central** to the book of Revelation: **it is the opening of the scroll that ushers in the end of the world.**
- But what exactly is it? There are three things we know for certain:
  1. **It was a scroll with “seven seals.”** This is likely a reference to some sort of “official” document. In the Roman Empire in the first century, certain important documents required some documents be sealed by seven witness. The fact that “seven seals” are used here refer to the official nature of the scroll and how binding it is. As was the custom of the day, the scroll was likely made with strips of papyrus laid end-to-end and glued together, with the seals sealing the entire document (see picture).



2. **The opening of the scroll begins the judgment of God on the unbelieving world and Satan,** ushering in the end of the current age/world.
  3. **The only one who is considered “worthy” to open it is Jesus—**He is the Only one who has the “authority” to open it. Not even God the Father Himself seems free to open it!
- But beyond that, what is it? Although there have been numerous theories over the years, there are two that seem especially plausible to me.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Note that not listed here is the scroll of Daniel 12:4. I *do* believe that the scroll of Daniel 12 is mentioned in Revelation—for reasons I will make clear later on in this survey, I believe it is the “little scroll” of Revelation 10. In my opinion, the scroll of Revelation 5 seems to carry more importance than the scroll of Daniel 12/Revelation 10.

○ **Option 1: The “Title Deed of the World” Theory:**

**The Contents of the Scroll:** This theory sees the scroll as the “title deed of” / “mortgage deed of” or “the official rights to” this earth. The opening of the scroll means that Jesus now gets to officially inherit the earth (see Revelation 11:15 – “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign for ever and ever”).

**Why is Jesus the only One worthy to open?** Jesus is the only One worthy because as the only perfect human (Jesus is both fully human *and* fully divine) He is the only One who has the right to inherit and rule this earth. Jesus is also worthy because He has purchased for Himself people with whom to rule.

○ **Option 2: The “Certificate of Debt” Theory:**

**The Contents of the Scroll:** This theory sees the scroll as a record of all of the sins of mankind—the “debt” that mankind has incurred against God because of their sin. The opening of the scroll means that God has decided to no longer wait to bring His judgment against the sins of mankind.

**Why is Jesus Worthy?** Jesus is worthy for two reasons:

1. **He is a “jury of our peers”:** Since He was human and did not sin, He has the right to accuse us. He has the right to “throw the first stone.”
2. **He is the One who paid the debt:** Because of Jesus’ death on the cross, He was able to pay off the debt of those who believe in Him.

*“Christ, the Son of Man and the Redeeming Lamb, has the unique right to make public the truth about mankind which is contained in the scroll. For as the Son of Man, he is a firsthand witness of humanity’s debt of sin and as the sacrificial Lamb, he has paid that debt in full on the cross [for those who believe in Him] (cf. Rev. 5.9–10).”*

- J. Webb Mealy, *After the Thousand Years*

- Though I prefer Option 1 (“Title Deed of the Earth”) because it is a little bit more “positive,” I think the evidence of Revelation leans slightly more in favor of Option 2: it is the opening of the scroll that finally brings about God’s judgment and wrath upon the inhabitants of the earth.<sup>3</sup>
- **Thus the scroll in God’s hand that Jesus opens is the scroll that contains the record of the sins of humankind and brings about God’s judgment for those sins against those not saved by the blood of Jesus.**

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<sup>3</sup> Note also that the scroll is opened in direct response to the prayers of the martyred saints asking for God’s judgment upon those who killed them (Revelation 6:10).

### [3] The “Worthy” One is Found: Jesus

*Eventually, someone worthy is found: Jesus, the lion of Judah, appearing as a slain lamb with conquering horns.*

<sup>3</sup> But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it. <sup>4</sup> I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside. <sup>5</sup> Then one of the elders said to me, “Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals.”<sup>6</sup> Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing at the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. The Lamb had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. <sup>7</sup> He went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne. (Rev 5:3-7)

- At first, no one seems “worthy” to open the scroll, and John weeps (5:3-7). If the scroll is not opened, the events leading to the end of the world cannot occur, and the world is left in its current, sinful, broken state!
- But John is told not to weep, because someone appears: Jesus! He is the one who “has triumphed” (v. 5 – notice past tense) and thus is able to open the scroll.
- The description given of Him is full of rich, Old Testament imagery.
  - o First, Jesus is the “**lion of Judah**” (v.5).

This is a reference to Genesis 49:9-10: “You are a lion’s cub, Judah...The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet until he to whom it belongs shall come and the obedience of the nations shall be his.” This prophecy, written 1,400+ years before Jesus, predicts one from the tribe of Judah who will rule over all the nations.

- o But even though Jesus is described as a lion, when John sees Him, he sees a “**lamb, looking as if it had been slain**” (v. 6).

This is a clear reference to Jesus’ sacrificial death and to the Passover lamb, which saved the people of Israel from the judgment of God in the days of the Exodus (see also Isaiah 53:7). This shows that **the way that the “lion” has triumphed was through Jesus’ sacrifice**. The victory that Jesus achieved over Satan and sin was achieved was not through taking up a sword, but was through lying down and giving His life!

*“In one brilliant stroke John portrays the central theme of New Testament revelation: victory through sacrifice.”*

- Robert Mounce

Note: the victory of Jesus is clearly already achieved in Revelation 5. “V-Day” in Revelation is *not* Armageddon. “V-Day” in Revelation is the cross.

- But even though Jesus is described as a lamb, Jesus is no ordinary lamb, he is described as a lamb with **“seven horns”** (v. 6).

Lambs do not normally have horns; these are the features of rams. “Rams” in the Old Testament are often symbolic of might and victory; thus these horns indicate that Jesus though Jesus achieved victory through sacrifice, Jesus is not weak. He has immense power—and one day all will see that.

- Jesus is also described as the **“root of David”** (v. 5) and the one who has **“seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth”** (v. 6).

The “root of David” is a reference to Isaiah 11:10-11, and, like the “lion of Judah” refers to someone from the tribe of Judah who will bring together the people of God and rule over all the earth.

*<sup>10</sup> In that day the heir to David’s throne [lit: the root of Jesse] will be a banner of salvation to all the world. The nations will rally to him, and the land where he lives will be a glorious place. <sup>11</sup> In that day the Lord will reach out his hand a second time to bring back the remnant of his people—those who remain in Assyria and northern Egypt; in southern Egypt, Ethiopia, and Elam; in Babylonia, Hamath, and all the distant coastlands. (Isaiah 11:10-11, NLT)*

The “seven eyes” of Jesus are a reference the completeness of Jesus’ vision; He has perfect knowledge. The way that He sees, in part, is through the perfect Holy Spirit who fills the earth.

- Put together, the **image we are given of Jesus is one of sacrificial love (the lamb who was slain), power (the seven horns) and wisdom (the seven eyes).**
- After this description, Jesus takes the scroll from the Father (v. 7). As no human is able to approach God (1 Timothy 6:16), this identifies Jesus as One in authority with God.

## [4] The Concluding Worship

*All of heaven then erupts in praise for God and for the Lamb.*

- Following the transfer of the scroll from the Father to Jesus, all of heaven erupts in a praise of both Jesus and God.
- Most striking in this is the worship of Jesus: the same beings who worshipped God in Revelation 4 (the four living creatures, the elders, and the angels) are now joined in the worship of Jesus! This would have been unprecedented for a religion that came out of the Jewish faith with its strict monotheism; once again we see that Jesus has the same status as God Himself.
- Specifically, there are four things that hosts of heaven say about Jesus:
  - o They praise His worthiness (5:9).
  - o They praise His sacrificial death (5:9).
  - o They praise the effect of His death on His followers (5:10).<sup>4</sup>
  - o They say that He is worthy to receive “wisdom, strength, honor, glory and praise.”
- Following this unique praise of Jesus by the hosts of heaven, we are told that *all* of creation is involved in worshipping Jesus (5:13) (see discussion on “God and His Entourage” above).
- Whatever else this passage gives us, it gives us a picture of the worship that God and Jesus deserve—and should serve as a model for our own worship.

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<sup>4</sup> Note that Jesus is able to accomplish for His people what was never possible in the Old Testament: His people are able to be both **kings and priests**! This was impossible in the Old Testament for these were roles were spread among two separate tribes, and no one could be in two tribes at once.

## Application for Revelation 4-5

### *Who is Worthy? (Hint: It's Not Us)*

- We live in the age of self-promotion. But there is only One who deserves to be promoted: Jesus.

*For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. (2 Corinthians 4:5 NIV)*

*You see, we don't go around preaching about ourselves. We preach that Jesus Christ is Lord, and we ourselves are your servants for Jesus' sake. (2 Corinthians 4:5 NLT)*

- Ultimately we are the moon; Jesus is the Sun. Any "light" we have is only reflected light from Jesus.
- Therefore, a question we need to constantly ask ourselves:

***How are you reflecting Jesus? How are you showing the world this week that everything you are and everything you have comes from Jesus?***

**Don't forget to email questions!**

**[questions@friends.church](mailto:questions@friends.church)**

**Homework for next week: Read Matthew 24:1-44 at least twice this week. (Matthew 24? Yes!)**

## Questions for Group Discussion

1. Read the description of God in Revelation 4:1-3 and 5-6. Of all of the ways that God is described, what stands out to you the most and why? How does that effect how you might personally approach God in worship?
2. We talked this week about how no matter what is going on on this earth, God is still on His throne, being worshipped. How might that bring comfort to a specific situation that you are facing right now? How does that change your attitude as you face that situation?
3. Of the two options for the seven-sealed scroll (see page 6) which one are you the most drawn to and why? If option 1 is correct (title-deed of the earth) what does that teach us about Jesus? If option 2 is correct (the sins of mankind), what does that teach us about the seriousness of our sins?
4. Read Revelation 5:5-6, and the description we are given of Jesus. Then read what each likely means on pages 7-8. Which one of those descriptions speaks to you the most? Why? How do these descriptions add to our understanding of Jesus?
5. Read the worship that is given to God and to the Lamb in Revelation 5:8-14. What is said about Jesus in that worship? What is said about God? What might this passage teach us about how worship should be done in the church?
6. How, personally, are you reflecting Jesus throughout your week? How are you showing those around you (including yourself!) that you believe that everything you are and everything you have comes from Him?