

## Lesson 13: Revelation Chapter 4:5-11

### The Majesty and Splendor of the Heavenly Court

- a. **Revelation 4:5 (NKJV)** And from the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices. Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.
  - i. **(v5)** “lightning and thunder and The Seven lamps of fire”
    - a. Prof (Dr) WA Liebenberg presents the following:
      - I. This is the awesome and explosive power of Elohim that shoots out of the throne.
      - II. "Lightnings, thunderings, and voices" in Scripture are the signs of the awesome presence of YHWH. There were also lightnings, thunderings, and a sound of a trumpet so loud from Mount Sinai when the Torah Ketubah Wedding Contract was given, and Israel's 12 Tribes were established as YHWH's Bride. The millions of people in the camp at the base of the mountain trembled with fear (Exod. 19:16).
      - III. "Fire" is a sign throughout Scripture of the Spirit of YHWH active in the purification of His People and the destruction of His enemies. Recalling Mt. Sinai repeated at the end of judgments to come: 8:5, 11:19 and 16:18. (Liebenberg, 2017) (outline added)
    - b. “ The burning lamps before the throne are said to be the seven spirits, again the angelic representatives of the churches keeping the churches’ fires burning, in part by returning and being in the presence of God.” (Witherington, 2003)
    - c. “Flashes of lightning, and voices and peals of thunder... issue from the throne, witnessing to the awesome majesty of God. These same ominous portents, with an earthquake added, follow the breaking of

the seventh seal of the book of doom (8:5), the blowing of the seventh trumpet (11: 19), and the emptying of the seventh bowl of wrath upon the peoples of the earth (16: 18). They are a pledge to God's people that he soon will inflict dire punishments upon their persecutors." (Harmon, 1957)

- ii. **(v5) The Seven Spirits of God**
  - a. We covered this in lesson 2.
- b. **Revelation 4:6 (NKJV)** Before the throne there was a sea of glass, like crystal."
  - i. **(v6a) The vision from Ezekiel is paralleled here:**
    - a. **Ezekiel 1:22-25 (NKJV)** The likeness of the firmament above the heads of the living creatures was like the color of an awesome crystal, stretched out over their heads. <sup>23</sup> And under the firmament their wings spread out straight, one toward another. Each one had two which covered one side, and each one had two which covered the other side of the body. <sup>24</sup> When they went, I heard the noise of their wings, like the noise of many waters, like the voice of the Almighty, a tumult like the noise of an army; and when they stood still, they let down their wings. <sup>25</sup> A voice came from above the firmament that was over their heads; whenever they stood, they let down their wings. (Tyson, 2018)
    - b. This is the unapproachable floor of YHWH's throne, His absolute majesty. Before a worshipper can draw near to the throne, he must be cleansed and sanctified (Heb 12:14) through the "crystal sea" as the Priests in the TaNaCh had to wash themselves before entering YHWH's Presence (1 Kings 7:23); a huge wash basin for the cleansing of priests. This sea mingled with fire (Rev 15 :2) will possibly also be the place where your works will be tested with fire for your rewards (1 Cor 3:13). (Liebenberg, 2017)
    - c. According to Babylonian and Jewish cosmology, there was a sea above the vaulted firmament which separated heaven from earth.

John saw a sea before God's throne, but it was different from the one immediately above the firmament, for it looked like glass or crystal, and appeared to be the floor or base supporting the throne. Since John has borrowed freely from Ezekiel, conceivably he has borrowed and adapted a scene described by the prophet, who saw four living creatures bearing a platform glittering like ice or crystal, which served as the support for God's throne (Ezek. 1:22-26; cf. 10:1-22). It was relatively easy to enlarge the platform into a sea. (Harmon, 1957)

- c. **Revelation 4:6b-8 (NKJV)** ... in the midst of the throne, and around the throne, were four living creatures full of eyes in front and in back.<sup>7</sup> The first living creature was like a lion, the second living creature like a calf, the third living creature had a face like a man, and the fourth living creature was like a flying eagle.<sup>8</sup> The four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!"
- d. **(v6b)** four living creatures full of eyes in front and in back.
  - i. From the Fire Bible Commentary: FOUR LIVING CREATURES. These four creatures and their faces probably represent the entire living creation (v. 7). All of God's living creatures will bring glory and honor to him and eventually be liberated from the curse of sin (vv. 8-11). The description of these creatures somewhat resembles the cherubs of Eze 1:5-14, except in Ezekiel all the beings look the same. The creatures here have six wings like the seraphs described by the prophet Isaiah in 6:1-2, symbolizing both humility and swiftness. Note that these are presented as real, rational beings, not just symbols. The eyes reflect extreme intelligence, alertness and awareness of what is going on all around. (Fire Bible: A Study Bible for Spirit-led Living, 2001)
  - ii. They should never be called 'beasts' as some translations say, but rather, creatures. The term "beasts" is "Zoon" in Greek, which means "living creature" and is literally "created beings". These are called Cherubim and are the highest ranking angelic beings. They are assigned to guarding and

bearing Elohim's throne (Psalm 99:1). They are also associated with the worship of El Shaddai ( God Almighty). This is the reason why Elohim instructed Moshe to make two Cherubim to guard the mercy seat of the ark (Exod. 25: 18; 3 7:7-9 ), to enable us to understand how the throne of Elohim looks in Heaven. They also guarded the entrance to the Garden of Eden, where Elohim dwelt (Gen 3:24). You will also find them in Ezek 1:4-28 and 10:1-22 (They must not be mistaken for Seraphim, who are literally "burning ones" as in Isaiah 6:2). (Liebenberg, 2017)

- iii. "In the "midst of the throne" (also 5:6 and 7:17) is difficult to visualize. The Greek word (mesos) can also mean "amongst". It can also mean in the center of the throne room, in front of and around the throne. (Liebenberg, 2017)
- iv. The four living creatures delineated in these verses are a combination of that living creatures or cherubim seen by Ezekiel and the seraphim observed by Isaiah. The cherubim as described by Ezekiel were four in number. Although somewhat human in form, each was four-headed, having the face of a man, a lion, an ox, and an eagle. Further-more, they were winged, having four wings apiece. Their function was to carry the platform of God's throne, which was like a chariot. Beside each creature there was a double chariot wheel with its rim filled with eyes (Ezek. I :3-25). (Harmon, 1957)
- v. Dr. Jack Van Impe in his work "Revelation Revealed" tells us: "These are literal, created beings. At this point, the symbolic and figurative expressions depict their strength and knowledge. Thus, they have eyes before and behind to see all things clearly and accurately. By comparing the characteristics of these living creatures with Isaiah 6: 1-3, we see they are undoubtedly seraphim - angels of God -created to praise, exalt, and adulate the Lord. These beings are not monstrosities. Instead, they are a picture of beauty. Within each species there is always a leader-the lion among wild beasts, the calf among domestic animals, the eagle among birds, and man among all creatures. This is the portrait set before us - angels in all their

magnificence praising the Lord, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come. This threefold adulation of holiness is for the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit - the three in One (see 1 John 5.:7). The description - which was, and is, and is to come - is the title of the Father ( chapter 1, verse 4), the. Son ( verse 5), and also the Holy Spirit who always was, and is, and is to come, for the Trinity works unitedly. The praising of God by these living creatures is contagious and the entire group of God's people, pictured by the. twenty-four elders, joins them.” (Van Impe)

- e. **(v7)** The first living creature was like a lion, the second living creature like a calf, the third living creature had a face like a man, and the fourth living creature was like a flying eagle.
  - i. “The mightiest of birds is the eagle, the mightiest among the domestic animals the ox, the mightiest among wild animals is the lion, and the mightiest of all these is a human being. God has taken all these and secured them to His throne.”
    - a. (A Rabbinic saying, quoted by G. R. Beasley Murray, *The Book of Revelation*, 117)
  - ii. Prof (Dr) WA Liebenberg presents the following: There are various theories concerning the four creatures:
    - a. Theory 1: They refer to the four Gospels, and they stand between YHWH and the 24 elders. In Matthew, Y'shua is described as the lion -Y'shua as King in a Kingdom. In Mark, Y'shua is described as the calf -Y'shua seen as a servant. In Luke, Y'shua is described as the perfect man in normal life. In John, Y'shua is described as the eagle because He is the Son of YHWH coming from Heaven in all His glory.
    - b. Theory 2: It can also refer to the four divisions of the Israel camp around the Tabernacle (Num 2: 1-3 4; Gen 4 9 ). On the east was Judah with two tribes behind him -their emblem was a lion. On the west was Ephraim with two tribes behind him -their emblem was a calf. On the south was Reuben with two tribes behind him -their emblem was a man. On the north was Dan with two tribes behind

him -their emblem was an eagle. They had to camp around the Tabernacle to protect it and Yahweh's dwelling place is in the center (Num 2:3, 10, 18, 25).

- c. Theory 3: The Cherubim may also represent the aspects of creation. The lion represents the wild animals and / or nobility. The calf represents the tamed animals and/or strength. The man represents human beings and/ or wisdom. The eagle represents the birds and/or swiftness. Is it possible that Lucifer/ the snake represented the cold-blooded animals, but because he was thrown out of heaven they are not represented here at the throne?
  - d. Theory 4: From Biblical and extra-Biblical sources (the book of Enoch) that the four creatures are the four archangels: Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, and Uriel. (Liebenberg, 2017) (outline added)
- iii. Perry Stone gives us the following to consider concerning the four living creatures:
- a. These beasts match the four main tribes at the tabernacle.

Location	The Tribe	The Emblem	The Number of Men
East	Judah	Lion	74,600 (Num. 1:27)
West	Ephraim	Ox	40,500 (Num. 1 :33)
South	Reuben	Man	46,500 (Num. 1:21)
North	Dan	Eagle	62,700 (Num. 1:39)

- b. The four living creatures and Christ.

The Heavenly Emblem	The Imagery of Christ	The Gospel Reference
Head of a Lion	Jesus the Lion of Judah	Matthew's gospel
Head of an Ox	Jesus the Servant	Mark's gospel
Head of a Man	Jesus the Son of man	Luke's gospel

Head of an Eagle	Jesus the Eternal Word	John's Gospel
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(Stone, 2012) (changed to table format)

- f. **(v8)** The four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within.
- i. "Covered with eyes" indicates unceasing watchfulness, meaning they are alert and always ready to protect. (Liebenberg, 2017)
  - ii. The creatures in Ezek 1 and 10 only had four wings -these have six. (Liebenberg, 2017)
- g. **(v8)** And they do not rest day or night, saying: "Holy, holy, holy..."
- i. From the Fire Bible Commentary: HOLY, HOLY, HOLY. The Greek word *hagios* (separate, holy) means to be completely separate from and above all creation in character and purposes and completely separate from all evil. God is holy. He is absolutely pure, perfect and complete. The four living creatures, representing all facets of creation, unceasingly praise God for his holiness. The repetition of *hagios* is extremely significant as it emphasizes God's absolute and supreme holiness—from eternity past to eternity yet to come (cf. Isa 41:4). This character trait is God's primary quality and is repeated in relation to God throughout Revelation (3:7; 4:8; 6:10; 11:2; 14:10; 15:4; 16:5; 20:6; 21:2, 10; 22:11, 19). Holiness is the most clear and obvious aspect of God's nature and character, encountered immediately when in his awesome presence. Since holiness is an internal trait of God, his holiness will never change. His almighty power (2nd line) and eternal existence (3rd line) ensure that God's holiness (1st line) will triumph over all evil in human history and the universe... (Fire Bible: A Study Bible for Spirit-led Living, 2001)
- h. **(v8)** ... Lord God Almighty,...
- i. Comparison passages to consider:
    - a. **Ezekiel 1:4-14 (NKJV)** Then I looked, and behold, a whirlwind was coming out of the north, a great cloud with raging fire engulfing itself; and brightness was all around it and radiating out of its midst

like the color of amber, out of the midst of the fire.<sup>5</sup> Also from within it came the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance: they had the likeness of a man.<sup>6</sup> Each one had four faces, and each one had four wings.<sup>7</sup> Their legs were straight, and the soles of their feet were like the soles of calves' feet. They sparkled like the color of burnished bronze.<sup>8</sup> The hands of a man were under their wings on their four sides; and each of the four had faces and wings.<sup>9</sup> Their wings touched one another. The creatures did not turn when they went, but each one went straight forward.<sup>10</sup> As for the likeness of their faces, each had the face of a man; each of the four had the face of a lion on the right side, each of the four had the face of an ox on the left side, and each of the four had the face of an eagle.<sup>11</sup> Thus were their faces. Their wings stretched upward; two wings of each one touched one another, and two covered their bodies.<sup>12</sup> And each one went straight forward; they went wherever the spirit wanted to go, and they did not turn when they went.<sup>13</sup> As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance was like burning coals of fire, like the appearance of torches going back and forth among the living creatures. The fire was bright, and out of the fire went lightning.<sup>14</sup> And the living creatures ran back and forth, in appearance like a flash of lightning.

- b. **Isaiah 6:1-7 (NKJV)** In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple.<sup>2</sup> Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.<sup>3</sup> And one cried to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory!"<sup>4</sup> And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke.<sup>5</sup> So I said: "Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, The

Lord of hosts.”<sup>6</sup> Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a live coal which he had taken with the tongs from the altar. 7 And he touched my mouth with it, and said: “Behold, this has touched your lips; Your iniquity is taken away, And your sin purged.”

- i. **Revelation 4:9-11 (NKJV)** Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever,<sup>10</sup> the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying:<sup>11</sup> “You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created.”
  - i. **(v9)** Believers should get used to the ultimate praise and worship, as we are going to do that. Your primary purpose, why you were created, is to worship YHWH and study His Word. The reason you worship YHWH is to get "recharged" or to get "lifted up". If you do not know how to worship, you do not know how to live. (Liebenberg, 2017)
  - ii. **(v9)** The two roles of the four creatures are to worship YHWH 24/7 (4:8; 5:9, 10, 12, 14; 7:12; 19:4) and to direct John's attention to what happens on Earth when the first four seals are broken ( 6: 1; 3, 5, 7) and assist with the bowl judgments in chapters 15 and 16. (Liebenberg, 2017)
  - iii. **(v10)** All they do is to worship YHWH day and night. Nothing illuminates and enriches the soul more than worship. Do you realize what is happening here at the throne? They totally surrender. The scene is one of the most moving in the whole of Scripture. (Liebenberg, 2017)
  - iv. **(v10)** The crowns are the rewards that they received. The reason why they throw their crowns away is because they that they are not worthy to receive the crowns. (Liebenberg, 2017)
  - v. **(v10)** In Biblical times, a monarch reigned from his throne. It is a symbol of authority, meaning the final seat of authority is in heaven (Heb 1:8). (Liebenberg, 2017)
  - vi. **(v11)** The Worship in Heaven

- a. “The act of worship rehearses in the present the end that lies ahead.” (Peterson, 1988)
- vii. **(v11)** “You are worthy...”
  - a. For the Christian only the One upon the heavenly throne is worthy: the claims of all others are blasphemous.” (Mounce, 1997)
- viii. **(v11)** ... Glory, Honor, and power...
  - a. Both the angels and the elders praised YHWH for creating them. (This proves there will be no evolutionists in heaven. Instead, they will join up with Darwin in singing songs about their ancestors, the monkeys, in a place where air conditioning does not exist!) (Liebenberg, 2017)
- ix. **(v11)** “... For You created all things ...”
  - a. God is praised for his creative works, because in His creation, His sovereignty is established. Heaven and Earth were created by God and they belong to Him. The amazing thing is that He actually shares part of His ruling responsibility with those that He has created!!! (Tyson, 2018)
  - b. All things were created and are sustained by Him.
    - I. **John 1:1-3 (NKJV)** In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup> All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.
    - II. **Col 1:16-17 (NKJV)** For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. <sup>17</sup> And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.
- x. **(v11)** “... by Your will they exist and were created.”

- a. Dr. Jack Van Impe ends his commentary on chapter 4 with these words: “This is one of the most glorious moments in heaven! The crowned saints lay their rewards at the feet of Jesus. They lay aside their rewarded glory to add to His glory, thereby ascribing all glory to Him. They know that their victories came only because of His power working within them... The praise session is concluded with .the words, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created. Imagine, both the angels and the elders praise God for creating them! This proves there will be no evolutionists in heaven. Instead., they will join with Darwin in singing songs about their ancestors - the monkeys - in a place where air-conditioning does not exist. Jesus is coming! Prepare! Be with the blessed host when the greatest praise festival in the entire universe and heaven occurs. (Van Impe)

(note: The basic outline materials in this study was adapted from Truth Seekers Fellowship guide on “The Revelation of Jesus Christ”) (Tyson, 2018)

**Works Referenced:**

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