

BOOK OF REVELATION, WEEK 3
CHAPTERS 4 AND 5

John is taken in the Spirit into Heaven, where he sees a vision of what is taking place in heaven. While this experience is similar to what some of the Prophets of old also experience, most poignantly the Prophets Daniel and Ezekiel, John's vision goes further and is seen to be a continuation and even the fulfillment of their visions when the lamb who was slain arrives and is worthy to bring to completion all that had been prophesied and written since the beginning.

A VISION OF HEAVEN

John is taken up in the spirit into heaven, where he sees a vision of Divine Worship.

This vision is very similar to visions shared by prophets of the Old Testament. In addition to the message that is intended to give, they also serve as a validation and proof of the prophets role as one who has been given insight and a Divine ability to see the reality behind the corporeal events that are taking place. In particular, John's vision shares many qualities with the visions of Daniel and Ezekiel. There are some differences in the details, but differences should be expected. Each of the prophets has been called to speak to a different community, meaning that their message would be different and a description of the same vision would vary by some degree. There is, however, a significant difference in John's vision, which is why it is described as both a continuation and fulfillment of Daniel and Ezekiel: the appearance of the Lamb who was Slain.

NOT THE RAPTURE

This vision is the basis for many who claim that there will be a rapture, taking of the righteous before the time of tribulation. There is nothing in the text, however, that indicates what is happening to John, is intended to represent something that happens to all of the faithful. Rather, what he describes goes hand-in-hand with visions experienced by some of the Old Testament prophets. This interpretation also contradicts, in many places, what is later described in the Book of Revelation in the presence of the Church and the faithful still present in the world.

A DESCRIPTION OF REALITY

What John sees in the Heavenly throne is reality. This does not mean that Heaven is physically a throne, encircled by a rainbow and surrounded by 24 smaller thrones on which elders sit with bowls of incense. God wants to reveal Himself to us. He does this through symbolic images that we can understand. In other words, God is revealing and explaining reality in a way that we can see and comprehend.

WHAT IS GOD REVEALING IN THE VISION?

- ⌘ Divine Worship
- ⌘ What happens in Heaven is a constant praise and worship of God by a chorus of Angelic and human beings.
- ⌘ Human destiny will be fulfilled in a return to the presence of God.
- ⌘ The destiny of salvation will not be fulfilled without the presence of the Lamb.
- ⌘ The worship of God on earth is intended to be not only a shadowy reflection of what occurs in Heaven, but by mirroring what takes place, we enter into the life and events of what is actually happening.

Recall that Solomon's Temple was constructed as a copy of the Temple in Heaven. The bronze laver that was placed before the Holy of Holies was intended to remind and reflect the Sea of Glass that was before the throne; the bowl of incense that was burned next to the bread of the presence, was reflective of the bowls of incense held by the elders; the veil in front of the holy of holies that was torn at the moment of Jesus' death, was a sign of the veil that had been in place between God and His people, that was removed by the sacrifice of His Son.

THE FOUR LIVING CREATURES

Resemble mostly the 4 creatures in Ezekiel (1:13-15, 19-22; 10:1-22)

The *Cherubim* are the second rank of angels. Also known as the sentries set to guard the gate to the Garden of Eden.

While the *Seraphim*, the highest rank of angels, never left the side of the throne, or God's presence, the *Cherubim* were sent to announce and be a sign of God's presence toward creation.

Symbolism of the 4 Creatures from Tradition:

Virtues; Identity of Christ; Evangelists; Task of the Church; Aspect of Creation

Lion: Bravery; King; Mark; Apostolic Authority; Noble

Calf: Righteousness; Priest; Luke; Sacrifice of Martyrs; Strong

Eagle: Prudence; Life-Giving Spirit; John; Call to Evangelize the Nations; Swift

Man: Intellect; For our Sake; Matthew; Object of the Church; Wise