

## THE HEAVENLY VISION (part 1)

### Revelation 4, 5

Chapters 4, 5 provides us with a *glimpse* into glory, a picture postcard of a celestial paradise! In Philippians 3, Paul reminds us, this world is not our home. (Philippians 3:20-21) *For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.* Heaven is our home, not by our ability, but because He is able!

My prayer is that this glimpse of glory will *inspire* us to live for Christ, and *encourage* us, *regardless of what we are facing today*, that “with heaven before us the best is yet to come!” In fact, heaven is essential to possessing an *effective* witness, for Christ. C.S. Lewis: *“If you read history you will find that the Christians who did the most for the present world were just those who thought most of the next. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this.”* C.S. Lewis - *Mere Christianity*

(v.1) *“After these things”* (after Christ dictated the seven letters); (v.1b) “after this” – after what? The phrase denotes a time when certain things must take place – things ordained by God’s irrefutable will! Many believe Jesus is referring to after the “church age.” In fact, from chapter 4 to the end of the Book of Revelation, the word “church” does not appear again until the end of the book (Revelation 22:16). This is why some *conclude* the Church of Laodicea (lukewarm church) may well represent the final church age on earth. Further possible evidenced can be found is Paul’s words in **2 Thessalonians 2:1-3** whereby he states the rapture will not occur until after the *“great falling away,”* within the church, a testament to the “lukewarm” disposition of the church in the last days.

John sees a door – this door is representative of the Way of Salvation, which Christ has provided. (John 10:9) *I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.* Next, he hears – a voice sounding like a trumpet – not an actual trumpet, but a divine call, loud and clear! The same clarion call will be made at the rapture of the church: **1 Corinthians 15:51,52; 1 Thessalonians 4:16.** The rapture however, will be a call to

blessing; here the voice proceeds judgement, which is about to be poured out on the earth! In fact, there are seven more trumpets, which will sound after the rapture; all are trumpets of divine judgement – seven judgement trumpets: (Revelation 8:7, 8, 10, 12; 9:1, 13; 11:15).

In (v.2-11) John describes what he sees, in glory! (read: v.2, 3) The key word in chapter 4 is “throne” – which appears twelve times in this chapter. The Book of Revelation begins with a throne (1:4) and concludes with a throne (22:3). “Immediately” John’s “caught up” in the Spirit of God and finds himself in heaven – *illustrative* of the fact that only the Spirit can draw us there; (John 6:44) No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.

(v.3) John describes the “One” on the throne. In the Majority of Biblical texts, the phrase, *“He who sat there was...”* is omitted. Thus, a more accurate translation places John’s emphasis upon the *throne*, and not God! John is not attempting to describe God’s form, but the manifestation of God’s glory residing on the throne! Jesus said: (John 4:24) “God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”

The two colors *radiating* from the throne: Jasper (a diamond-like stone); Sardius (a reddish stone) – both stones are found in the breastplate of the Old Testament *high priest* (Exodus 28:17-20). Scholars believe these colors represent God’s glory and His righteous government. Around the throne John sees an emerald (blueish/greenish) rainbow. One commentator wrote, *“This rainbow represents God’s faithfulness, a sign of promise and hope.”* - Lehman Strauss Everlasting hope is with our God, through faith in Christ!

(v.4) Encircling the throne are twenty-four *other* thrones; occupied by twenty-four elders. These *elders* are not angels, but redeemed human beings – *evidenced by the song they sang in (Revelation 5:9)*. But why are there *twenty-four*? First - They are representative of the twenty-four Levitical priests – 1 Chronicles 24 appointed by King David in the service of the Lord; Secondly - they *also* represent all the redeemed of heaven, the Old Testament saints and the New Testament church; we have here the twelve patriarchs of Israel, and the twelve apostles of the New Testament. Their white garments (v.4b) speak of perfect righteousness. The “golden crowns” on their heads, represent their status as *priest and kings*

(1:5,6); and may also represent the *crown of life* Jesus spoke of in (Revelation 2:10). The attire of the redeemed!

**(v.5) From the throne** (throne of God) came lightning, thundering, and voices; these are all symbolic of *judgment*, and *revelation*; representative of the fact that a *dreadful storm* is about to *burst* upon the earth below. Lightning and thunder, also appeared at the giving of the *law* on Mt. Sinai (Exodus 19:16). Naturally, thunder and lightning has a sobering affect upon the human psyche, demanding our attention! **It's time to pay attention; judgement is coming! (v.5b) "Seven lamps"** - represent the full and complete work of the *Holy Spirit* (7 being the Hebrew number for completion); **"fire"** is representative of the *purifying nature* of the Spirit of God.

**(v.6-8a) "A sea of glass"** – The sea is not actual glass; John is *simply* conveying its transparency, a crystal-clear sea! Before the Old Testament Tabernacle there was a laver (large basin) containing water in the court of the tabernacle (Exodus 30:18-21); Solomon's temple also had a "sea" (a much larger basin) in the court of the temple (1 Kings 7:23-27); the laver or sea were for priestly purification; both served as a copy of the *actual sea* before God's throne in heaven. *However, in heaven there will be no need for purification; for the inhabitants have been washed through the blood of Christ!* (ttt) **1 Corinthians 6:9-11.**

**The four living creatures** – These are "created beings." They are thought to be **"Cherubim"** (winged angels): (Genesis 3:24, Ezekiel 1:10, 10:14). Their likeness represents: strength of a lion, service of a calf (ox), intelligence of a man, and swiftness of an eagle. *Many believe them to be administrators of divine government and authority (all seeing – full of eyes around and within).*

**(v.8b-11) Praise in the midst of the throne:** 24/7 by a quartet of four living creatures, singing, **"Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty (Jehovah Elohim Shaddai), Who was and is and is to come!"**

When they begin to sing the *twenty-four elders* arise and *fall down* before the triune (three in One) God, and *worship* Him! **(v.11)** This the holy anthem, the song our soul longs to sing! **He is worthy!** - and we were created for **His will!** (Philippians 2:13) **"...for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure."** In this anthem we find our ultimate purpose, *which is able to sustain us*, even in times of *great uncertainty!*

**APPLICATION:** Three points of application: (1) The trumpet call is also for today. (Hebrews 3:15) "Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion." (2) God is a rewarder. Jesus wondered out loud, (Luke 18:8b) "Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?" The "great falling away," in the "end times," will be the result of unbelief in God as a rewarder. (Hebrews 11:6) But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. (3) The door is still open. (2 Corinthians 6:2b) Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.

**CONCLUSION:** Heaven is going to blow our minds! The popular song "I Can Only Imagine," reminds us that one day soon our imaginations will give way to the full revelation of His glory! (1 Corinthians 13:12) For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.

**VIDEO** – (1 John 5:12-13) He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God. Someone once said: "Two things will surprise us when we arrive in heaven: who is there and who is not." (John Hannah – Dallas Theological Seminary) **Communion** - reminds us, *no matter who we are or what we've done*, Jesus has made the imaginable attainable, through faith in Him!