

The Enthronement of the
Lamb

“ ‘*To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne*’ ’ ” (Revelation 3:21, NKJV).



Christ's return to heaven was a joyful occasion. Just as these lambs are having fun, so Christ looks forward to having fun with us when we join Him in heaven.

Introduction

Take a Look Through the Open Door

Rev. 4:1

Why did some people in ancient times bow down to a wooden statue or an idol made of metal? I just don't get it. They thought that the object represented a spirit that could help them. "Oh Baal, hear us." They wanted to see something they could pray to. But they had no proof of a god, and it seems so futile.

We get to see the Godhead working on our behalf and why He deserves our worship.

Contrast that with the scenes of Revelation 4 and 5. The apostle John describes his visit to see the throne room of the God we worship. John's human limitations kept him from doing justice to the scene, but he gives it a valiant try.

In comparison to some other parts of Revelation, these chapters don't have much action. They seem not to be part of a narrative that's taking us somewhere. But they are a very important glimpse into the reality of what it is like to be physically in the presence of God. We need to look carefully at the picture God reveals of Himself and His Son Jesus in the sanctuary where the Godhead is working.

Visualize the moments described in Acts 1:9–11. Jesus lifted off the ground and left the earth, went up into the sky, and flew back to heaven. In Revelation 5:6 and onward, we see the place where Jesus went after He left us, even down to the details of where He is standing and who is with Him.

Among the things to look for in these chapters, you'll want to find out who are the "elders" seated on thrones around the throne of God. And who are the four living creatures? Why are they in God's presence all the time? They praise God constantly. Why would they do that? What do their praises signify? And what's the deal with the emerald rainbow? In chapter 5, we read about the scroll that nobody can open, and who gets to open it. What is the scroll? Find out why it has seven seals and what happens when the Son of God opens it.

As the opening verses of the book of Hebrews tell us, God spoke to us through the prophets long ago. But Revelation 4 and 5 show us more than a message. They are as close as we get to a video of what God and Jesus look like and what they are doing. We get to see the Godhead working on our behalf and why He deserves our worship.

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Rev. 4:4

Evidence *And the Glory Goes To . . .*

What has most fascinated me in this *weird* chapter is the 24 elders—strange in how normal they sound compared to the other more peculiar characters (Rev. 4:4). No semblance to precious jewels, no chimeric features, no 360-degree line of sight. Just white garments, golden crowns, and 24 thrones. Who are these elders? What is their purpose?

The 24 elders remind us of our ultimate purpose as humans: to bring glory to our Creator and Redeemer.

There is no indication in Scripture or Jewish tradition of angels taking the title of elder. But both sources reference humans as elders. The elders here also sit on thrones, suggestive of sharing God's throne, while angels are usually depicted as standing in God's presence. The elders' white robes and victory crowns are characteristic of the victorious saints (cf. Rev. 3:4, 5; James 1:12). All this evidence suggests that the 24 elders are not angels but humans. The elders, then, are symbolic of humanity itself; namely, those who have experienced salvation.

Twelve is often used to represent completeness. The 12 tribes of Israel symbolize God's people in the Old Testament, the 12 apostles symbolize God's people in the New. And in the New Jerusalem, there are 12 gates—one for each of the 12 tribes of Israel—and 12 foundations—one for each of the 12 apostles (Rev. 21:12–14).

With the four living creatures and the heavenly host, the 24 elders join in the worship of God. They cast their victory crowns at His feet, acknowledging that their spiritual victory was all due to God. They praise the Father as the only One worthy of worship as Creator and Sustainer of all things. And in chapter 5, their praise extends to Jesus as the only One worthy to open the scroll as Savior of humanity.

The 24 elders remind us of our ultimate purpose as humans: to bring glory to our Creator and Redeemer (Rev. 14:7). How much of what we do brings glory to the One who brought us into existence and who gave His life for us? Think of who God really is to you, and let Him bring you to your knees in worship, giving Him all the glory.

REACT

1. What areas in your life bring more glory to yourself than to God?
2. How can you give God glory as your Creator and Redeemer?

The magnificent splendor of heaven is on full display in Revelation 4 and 5. Beyond that, these chapters take us smack into the climactic heart of the heavenly plan of redemption. We're in God's throne room itself, where Jesus has returned from a human odyssey that found the weight of human destiny falling upon His weary shoulders. We stand in wonder as we witness the breathless citizens of heaven as they, too, observe the astonishing final events surrounding heaven's rescue plan. We see beasts, a glass-like sea, a heart-stopping rainbow, and many other head-spinning symbols of God's character, creation, and salvation activities.

Why only Jesus?

Where Have I Seen This Before? (Heb. 4:14–16)

Jesus was hardly a prodigal son, but His return to heaven following His (successful) earthly odyssey was marked with great ceremony. After all, this was the beginning of His heavenly ministry, in which He became our direct connection to all of heaven's bounties and redeeming grace (Heb. 4:14–16). No longer would a lamb be slain in humanity's behalf. The Lamb of God had been sacrificed once for all!

The setting for Revelation 4 and 5 is ground zero for our ultimate redemption—God's throne room itself. The featured scenes are replete with sanctuary imagery. Specifically, these chapters bear the marks of Solomon's temple inauguration (1 Kings 8:62–66). Another clear allusion to the earthly sanctuary system is found in Revelation 4:6–8. The four living creatures mentioned there find their counterpart in 1 Kings 6:23–28. As for the 24 elders? Some believe they represent those resurrected with Jesus (cf. Matt. 27:52, 53; Eph. 4:8). But there is another possibility. It turns out there were 24 courses of priests back in sanctuary times (1 Chron. 24:1–19). Those 24 heavenly elders take a definitive action in Revelation 4:9–11. Here we see them fall to their knees, cast their crowns at Jesus' feet, and sing a powerful praise song to the ultimate High Priest! We would do well to follow their lead as we have opportunity.

It's hard to escape beasts in Revelation 4:6–9, where we see four creatures that bring to mind the beasts found in Ezekiel 1:5–26. As for their six wings, check out Isaiah 6:2. In Bible symbolism, wings typically indicate "the speed with which God's heavenly creatures execute their errands."¹ By the way, some commentators view the "eyes" of these beasts as referring to a Hebrew idiom for brightness, which can also mean intelligence.

The preceding scenes are just a few of the striking similarities to the sanctuary services and Old Testament writings. The more you read, the more it becomes clear that this whole thing was by divine design.

What About That Scroll? (Rev. 5:1–8)

Have you ever had a jar of something that you could not open without a great deal of effort? The factory had sealed that thing up tight! Well, imagine trying to open something that had been sealed by divine hands! That’s what happened with the scroll mentioned in Revelation 5:1–8. Nobody could open its seven seals—until the victorious and worthy Lamb, Jesus, took His place in heaven’s throne room. Why only Jesus? Why? Because He was the only Person with the credentials needed to save humanity!

Back to our inauguration theme and sanctuary symbolism. “In ancient Israel, whenever a new king took the throne, he was given the scroll of the covenant.”² In other words, like so much else in these chapters of Revelation, the scroll scene is also sanctuary based. The scroll here to be opened represents the entirety of salvation history, as will be clearly seen in the next couple chapters of Revelation.³ It is as though the breaking of each seal on the scroll christens a new stage on which different breath-taking scenes are portrayed.

The drama associated with this section of Revelation is hard to overstate. John, the book’s author, is in tears (Revelation 4). So just why is he crying? Because his entire adult life has been spent serving His Savior and furthering His mission. Now, if there were ever any doubt about whether it was worth the cost, John knows it is all true. From the bloody cross to the crystal sea, he has seen it all, and it takes his breath away. Perhaps it will do the same for you.

REACT

1. Why are chapters 4 and 5 essential to understanding Revelation?
2. What would you say to someone who believes the Old Testament is largely irrelevant to “New Testament Christians”?
3. What do you think are a couple of highly effective ways to share the sometimes complex message of Revelation?

1. Francis D. Nichol, ed., *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, rev. ed. (Washington, DC: Review and Herald®, 1980), p. 768.

2. Seth J. Pierce, *What We Believe: Prophecies of Revelation for Teens* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press®, 2013), p. 92.

3. Additional resource used: Jon Paulien, *The Deep Things of God* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald®, 2004).

Testimony

“The Saviour of Dunkirk”

Rev. 5:6

“Oh, that all could behold our precious Saviour as He is, a Saviour. Let His hand draw aside the veil which conceals His glory from our eyes. It shows Him in His high and holy place. What do we see? Our Saviour, not in a position of silence and inactivity. He is surrounded with heavenly intelligences, cherubim, and seraphim, ten thousand times ten thousand of angels.

All the resources of Heaven are focused on one thing: God’s people.

“All these heavenly beings have one object above all others, in which they are intensely interested—His church in a world of corruption. All these armies are in the service of the Prince of heaven, exalting the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world. They are working for Christ under His commission, to save to the uttermost all who look to Him and believe in Him. These heavenly intelligences are speeding on their mission, doing for Christ that which Herod and Pilate did against Him. They confederate together to uphold the honor and glory of God. They are united in a holy alliance, in a grand and sublime unity of purpose, to show forth the power and compassion and love and glory of the crucified and risen Saviour.”¹

Time was running out. The Allied troops were stranded on the beaches of Dunkirk, France, and the German troops were closing in. From a vast network of top-secret tunnels underneath the medieval walls of Dover Castle, Vice Admiral Bertram Ramsay and his staff worked night and day in a desperate bid to rescue the troops before time ran out. In just 10 days, with only limited resources, Admiral Ramsay pulled off the impossible, organizing the evacuation of more than 338,000 Allied troops by a hastily assembled fleet of hundreds of fishing boats, yachts, lifeboats, and other small vessels.

It might sometimes feel as if God has left this world to its own devices. But behind the scenes, Jesus is working tirelessly on the greatest rescue mission in the history of the universe. All the resources of Heaven are focused on one thing: God’s people. No wonder the angels can only cry out, “Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!” (Rev. 5:12, NIV).

REACT

How does knowing what Jesus is doing in the heavenly sanctuary impact our daily lives?

1. Ellen G. White Comments, in Francis D. Nichol, ed., *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, rev. ed. (Washington, DC: Review and Herald®, 1980), pp. 967, 968.

Rev. 4:11; 5:13

How-to *Vindication by Proclamation*

We do not deserve to hear God's voice. To be His footstool in heaven for eternity is more than what we deserve; and yet, He has paradise and joys beyond our understanding in store for us, a treasure that is imperishable (1 Pet. 1:3–5).

The living creatures surrounding the Father's throne proclaim that He is holy and worthy to receive glory (Rev. 4:11). After the slain Lamb opens the scroll, all creatures proclaim that the Father and the Lamb receive honor and glory forever (Rev. 5:13). They are fit to be witnesses because they dwell with God and the Lamb.

He will never withhold anything good from you.

We, too, will proclaim God and our Savior are holy and worthy to receive glory and honor when we dwell with Him. This proclamation vindicates His character to the worlds because a lie has been spread by the enemy. This lie is whispered by the adversary, and though it manifests itself in many ways, it's merely only one lie: God cannot be trusted. When we proclaim that God is holy, good, and worthy of praise, we vindicate His character, shriveling the authenticity of the enemy's lie.

How can we more effectively vindicate His character and tell the world He can be trusted?

Spend time with God so that His character rubs off on you. Have you noticed that when you spend considerable time with a friend, you tend to adopt his or her mannerisms and phrases they tend to say frequently? The same will happen once you delight in God's presence.

Get into the habit of allowing God to be your first counsel in all things. From choosing your attire to choosing a spouse, asking God's advice and asking Him to have full control over your life will set you in motion to testify of His holiness. He will never withhold anything good from you (Ps. 84:11, 12), so you will witness for yourself how He picks only the best of the best for you.

Praise God even when your plans don't work out. When God shuts a door, we may question His intentions toward us. This is when the enemy tends to whisper that God is not who He says He is, that He cannot be trusted. Thank Him when plans come crashing down. He may have just saved you from unnecessary heartache.

REACT

What do you think are the benefits of gradually discovering God's character?

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Opinion | Rev. 4:1-11
The Wonder of It All

“Remember that life is not measured by the number of breaths we take, but by the moments that take our breath away!” This quote, which has been attributed to many authors, resonates with me in a powerful way. These moments—moments of awe, wonder, and exhilarating joy—are experiences that often catch us by surprise and make a permanent mark on our memories.

We will see nature as God truly intended it and explore the universe in ways we can't even imagine.

Travel is a great way to explore the world and people, and it has often left me in wonder. I have been to grand concert halls, cathedrals, museums, government buildings, and eclectic structures in several countries. In the natural world, mountains and waterfalls, in particular, grab my attention. People and cultures also fascinate me, and I am often eager to interact and learn about them.

There is so much beauty in this world. And yet, I have learned that it is only a sample of the true beauty of the universe.

When I think about the throne room of God as described in Revelation 4, I find myself truly without words. There is nothing on this earth, natural or man-made, that compares to the majesty, glory, and wonder of this grand space somewhere in the universe.

A throne of precious stones, an emerald rainbow, decadently dressed individuals, mind-bending creatures, heavenly music, and of course, the awesome presence of God the Father.

This Father, full of might and grace, has proven through His Word that He considers us, human beings, His greatest creation. God loves us and has done everything in His power to restore His precious creation back to Himself in giving humanity His Son, Jesus.

Because of Jesus, His sacrifice, and His victory, I and all who claim Him as Lord are assured that one day we will be able to join Him and the Father in heaven. We will see nature as God truly intended it and explore the universe in ways we can't even imagine.

Most important, we will be in an everlasting love relationship with our Creator, Redeemer, and Friend. When I sit and think about that and all that it means, it simply takes my breath away.

Rev. 5:8–14

Exploration

The Return of the King

CONCLUDE

The triumph of Jesus over sin deserves a celebration. Heaven resounds with the songs of victory after a long and punishing war. As Jesus takes His place in the heavenly throne room, it is the happy ending of every movie all rolled into one. Now the good guy has come out on top, love wins, and everyone will live happily ever after.

CONSIDER

- Finding the song in your music library that you think most closely approximates the kind of triumphant anthem that would accompany the scenes in Revelation 5.
- Planning a celebration for a friend or family member who has persevered to accomplish a goal. It could be a graduation, the finishing of a book, or the anniversary of establishing a business.
- Composing a poem or song of praise that follows the pattern of Revelation 5. Include praise for something specific God has done in your life.
- Studying to find the reason why the creatures in Revelation 5 have so many wings and so many eyes.
- Interviewing your older friends or family members about the most memorable celebrations in their lives.
- Creating a greeting card to thank and honor a person who has done something noble in your behalf and deserves your praise.
- Finding a video on the internet of a great ceremony—perhaps an inauguration, a coronation, or a royal wedding. What do you think the ceremony has in common with the celebration of the Lamb?

CONNECT

Exodus 15:1–21; Isaiah 6; Ezekiel 1.

Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, pp. 673–678; *Heaven*, chap. 19, “The Music of Heaven.”

Elizabeth Talbot, *Jesus 101: Revelation: The Fifth Gospel* (Pacific Press®, 2014).

Kay Rizzo, *On Wings of Praise: How I Found Real Joy in a Personal Friendship With God* (Review and Herald®, 1996).