

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Look! A door opened in heaven! Look! A throne set in heaven! (4.1-11)



*The LORD reigns; let the peoples tremble!
He sits enthroned upon the cherubim; let the earth quake! (Psalm 99.1)*

Review From Last Week (Revelation 3.14-22)

1. “The Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God’s creation” (3.14)
2. neither hot, nor cold, but lukewarm: compromised and irrelevant (3.15-17)
3. Jesus exhorts the poor, naked, and blind church “buy from me gold, white garments, and salve” (3.18)
4. God’s love and God’s discipline (3.19)
5. “Behold, I stand at the door and knock!” (3.20)
6. My Father’s throne (3.21)

Revelation 4.1-11

After this I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven! And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this."² At once I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne.³ And he who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian, and around the throne was a rainbow that had the appearance of an emerald.⁴ Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones were twenty-four elders, clothed in white garments, with golden crowns on their heads.⁵ From the throne came flashes of lightning, and rumblings and peals of thunder, and before the throne were burning seven torches of fire, which are the seven spirits of God,⁶ and before the throne there was as it were a sea of glass, like crystal.

And around the throne, on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind:⁷ the first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with the face of a man, and the fourth living creature like an eagle in flight.⁸ And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say,

"Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty,
who was and is and is to come!"

⁹And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever,¹⁰ the twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever. They cast their crowns before the throne, saying,

¹¹"Worthy are you, our Lord and God,
to receive glory and honor and power,
for you created all things,
and by your will they existed and were created."

1. **Revelation 4 and 5:** The theological and liturgical introduction to the book
 - a. Behold! An open door to heaven! Behold! A throne set in heaven!
 - b. Sovereignty and Glory (orthodoxy – "right worship")
2. **Introduction to the vision:** After this I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven! And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this."² At once I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne. (4.1-2)
 - a. "After this I looked" (literary marker: a new vision is beginning)
 - b. "Behold, a door standing open in heaven!" (heavenly lenses for your glasses)

- c. “The first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, ‘Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this.’ At once I was in the Spirit.”
- i. Cf. **Revelation 1.10**: “I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet.”
 - ii. those who have ears to hear what the Spirit says, hear Jesus’ voice
- d. “I will show you what must take place after this”

Daniel 2.27-29 Daniel answered the king and said, “No wise men, enchanters, magicians, or astrologers can show to the king the mystery that the king has asked, ²⁸ but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and he has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days. Your dream and the visions of your head as you lay in bed are these: ²⁹ To you, O king, as you lay in bed came thoughts of what would be after this, and he who reveals mysteries made known to you what is to be. (“the latter days” is a reference to the church age [cf. 1 Cor 10.11; Heb 1.2; 9.26])

3. Old Testament Background (structure of Revelation 4-5 follows Daniel 7)

Daniel 7.9-10: As I looked, thrones were placed, and the Ancient of Days took his seat; his clothing was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames; its wheels were burning fire. ¹⁰ A stream of fire issued and came out from before him; a thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him; the court sat in judgment, and the books were opened.

Ezekiel 1: In the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, on the fifth day of the month, as I was among the exiles by the Chebar canal, the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God. ² On the fifth day of the month (it was the fifth year of the exile of King Jehoiachin), ³ the word of the LORD came to Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the Chebar canal, and the hand of the LORD was upon him there. ⁴ As I looked, behold, a stormy wind came out of the north, and a great cloud, with brightness around it, and fire flashing forth continually, and in the midst of the fire, as it were gleaming metal. ⁵ And from the midst of it came the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance: they had a human likeness, ⁶ but each had four faces, and each of them had four wings. ⁷ Their legs were straight, and the soles of their feet were like the sole of a calf’s foot. And they sparkled like burnished bronze. ⁸ Under their wings on their four sides they had human hands. And the four had their faces and their wings thus: ⁹ their wings touched one another. Each one of them went straight forward, without turning as they went. ¹⁰ As for the likeness of their faces, each had a human face. The four had the face of a lion on the right side, the four had the face of an ox on the left side, and the four had the face of an eagle. ¹¹ Such were their faces. And their wings were spread out above. Each creature had two wings, each of which touched the wing of another, while two covered their bodies. ¹² And each went straight forward. Wherever the spirit would go, they went, without turning as they went. ¹³ As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance was like burning coals of fire, like the appearance of torches moving to and fro among the living creatures. And the fire was bright, and out of the fire went forth lightning. ¹⁴ And the living creatures darted to and fro, like the appearance of a flash of lightning. ¹⁵ Now as I looked at the living creatures, I saw a wheel on the earth beside the living creatures, one for each of the four of them. ¹⁶ As for the appearance of the wheels and their construction: their appearance was like the gleaming of beryl. And the four had the same likeness, their appearance and construction being as it were a wheel within a wheel. ¹⁷ When they went, they went in any of their four directions without turning as they went. ¹⁸ And their rims were tall and awesome, and the rims of all four were full of eyes all around. ¹⁹ And when the living creatures went, the wheels went beside them; and when the living creatures rose from the earth, the wheels rose. ²⁰ Wherever the spirit wanted to go, they went, and the wheels rose along with them, for the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels. ²¹ When those went, these went; and when those stood, these stood; and when those rose from the earth, the wheels rose along with them, for the spirit of the living creatures was in the

wheels. ²² Over the heads of the living creatures there was the likeness of an expanse, shining like awe-inspiring crystal, spread out above their heads. ²³ And under the expanse their wings were stretched out straight, one toward another. And each creature had two wings covering its body. ²⁴ And when they went, I heard the sound of their wings like the sound of many waters, like the sound of the Almighty, a sound of tumult like the sound of an army. When they stood still, they let down their wings. ²⁵ And there came a voice from above the expanse over their heads. When they stood still, they let down their wings. ²⁶ And above the expanse over their heads there was the likeness of a throne, in appearance like sapphire; and seated above the likeness of a throne was a likeness with a human appearance. ²⁷ And upward from what had the appearance of his waist I saw as it were gleaming metal, like the appearance of fire enclosed all around. And downward from what had the appearance of his waist I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and there was brightness around him. ²⁸ Like the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud on the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness all around. Such was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. And when I saw it, I fell on my face, and I heard the voice of one speaking.

Ezekiel 10.12-15, 20-22: And their whole body, their rims, and their spokes, their wings, and the wheels were full of eyes all around – the wheels that the four of them had. ¹³ As for the wheels, they were called in my hearing “the whirling wheels.” ¹⁴ And every one had four faces: the first face was the face of the cherub, and the second face was a human face, and the third the face of a lion, and the fourth the face of an eagle. ¹⁵ And the cherubim mounted up. These were the living creatures that I saw by the Chebar canal ... ²⁰ These were the living creatures that I saw underneath the God of Israel by the Chebar canal; and I knew that they were cherubim. ²¹ Each had four faces, and each four wings, and underneath their wings the likeness of human hands. ²² And as for the likeness of their faces, they were the same faces whose appearance I had seen by the Chebar canal. Each one of them went straight forward.

Isaiah 6.1-4: In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. ² Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. ³ And one called to another and said: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!” ⁴ And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke.

4. **Behold! A Throne:** “At once I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne. ³ And he who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian, and around the throne was a rainbow that had the appearance of an emerald.”

- a. note the prepositions related to the throne (around, before, in the midst, upon, etc.)
- b. “jasper and carnelian” (Edenic, priestly, temple connotations)

Exodus 28.15-20: “You shall make a breastpiece of judgment, in skilled work. In the style of the ephod you shall make it – of gold, blue and purple and scarlet yarns, and fine twined linen shall you make it. ¹⁶ It shall be square and doubled, a span its length and a span its breadth. ¹⁷ You shall set in it four rows of stones. A row of sardius, topaz, and carbuncle shall be the first row; ¹⁸ and the second row an emerald, a sapphire, and a diamond; ¹⁹ and the third row a jacinth, an agate, and an amethyst; ²⁰ and the fourth row a beryl, an onyx, and a jasper. They shall be set in gold filigree.”

Ezekiel 28.13: “You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering, sardius, topaz, and diamond, beryl, onyx, and jasper, sapphire, emerald, and carbuncle; and crafted in gold were your settings and your engravings.”

- c. “a rainbow that had the appearance of an emerald”
 - i. God’s covenant with creation, a symbol of God’s mercy and the promise of life (provided by Christ’s atoning death)

Genesis 9.12-16 And God said, “This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: ¹³ I have set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. ¹⁴ When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, ¹⁵ I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh. And the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. ¹⁶ When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.”

- 5. **Twenty-Four Elders:** “Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones were twenty-four elders, clothed in white garments, with golden crowns on their heads.” (4.4)

- a. seated on thrones, white garments, golden crowns → God’s people (cf. Rev 2.10, 26-27; 3.4-5, 11, 18, 21)

Philippians 3.20-21: But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

- 6. **Theophany, Judgment, the Spirit, and Shalom:** “From the throne came flashes of lightning, and rumblings and peals of thunder, and before the throne were burning seven torches of fire, which are the seven spirits of God, ⁶ and before the throne there was as it were a sea of glass, like crystal.”

- a. God’s awesome presence, sitting in judgment: “flashes of lightning, and rumblings and peals of thunder” (cf. Rev 8.5 [seals]; 11.19 [trumpets]; 16.18 [bowls])

Exodus 19.4-6, 16-19: You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. ⁵ Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; ⁶ and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel.” ... ¹⁶ On the morning of the third day there were thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud on the mountain and a very loud trumpet blast, so that all the people in the camp trembled. ¹⁷ Then Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God, and they took their stand at the foot of the mountain. ¹⁸ Now Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke because the LORD had descended on it in fire. The smoke of it went up like the smoke of a kiln, and the whole mountain trembled greatly. ¹⁹ And as the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him in thunder.

- b. Spiritual worship: “before the throne were burning seven torches of fire, which are the seven spirits of God”

- c. “Sea of glass, like crystal” (conquest of evil = shalom)

Exodus 15.7-10: In the greatness of your majesty you overthrow your adversaries; you send out your fury; it consumes them like stubble. ⁸ At the blast of your nostrils the waters piled up; the floods stood up in a heap; the deeps congealed in the heart of the sea. ⁹ The enemy said, ‘I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil, my desire shall have its fill of them. I will draw my sword; my hand shall destroy them.’ ¹⁰ You blew with your wind; the sea covered them; they sank like lead in the mighty waters.

Psalms 77.13-20 Your way, O God, is holy. What god is great like our God? ¹⁴ You are the God who works wonders; you have made known your might among the peoples. ¹⁵ You with your arm redeemed your people, the children of Jacob and Joseph. Selah ¹⁶ When the waters saw you, O God, when the waters saw you, they were afraid; indeed, the deep trembled. ¹⁷ The clouds poured out water; the skies gave forth thunder; your arrows flashed on every side. ¹⁸ The crash of your thunder was in the whirlwind; your lightnings lighted up the world; the earth trembled and shook. ¹⁹ Your way was through the sea, your path through the great waters; yet your footprints were unseen. ²⁰ You led your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

7. **Four Living Creatures:** And around the throne, on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind: ⁷the first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with the face of a man, and the fourth living creature like an eagle in flight. (4.6-7)
- a. Representatives of animate creation (cf. Ezekiel 1.5-21, 10.12-22)
 - b. Ministers of God’s judgment (cf. Rev 6.1)
8. **Worship:** And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!” ⁹And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever, ¹⁰the twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever. They cast their crowns before the throne, saying, ¹¹“Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.” (4.8-11)
- a. “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!” ...
“Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.”
 - i. God’s Sovereignty, Providence, and Eternity
 - ii. Doxology at the centre of the Revelation
 - b. Emperor Domitian: *dominus et deus noster* (“Our Lord and God”)