

The Revelation

Lesson 5

The Story of the Revelation

Thus Far

Once upon a time and long, long ago, Jesus decided it was time to give the Church the last book of the Bible. In that book, He wanted to tell the story about how He will return to earth one day to rule forever as the supreme King of the world. Only one of His twelve Apostles was still alive and he was living on a prison island called Patmos. His name was John and he was serving out his punishment for failing to worship the Roman Caesar as god. John was being punished because he had written four books of the Bible that were being used by the Churches to tell all the people the story of Jesus' first coming to earth as a baby, His ministry, death, resurrection and ascension into heaven. John was also being punished because he was telling every person he met how Jesus had changed his life.

One day, John heard the LORD speaking to him and the sound of His voice was as loud as a trumpet. When John turned to look at Jesus, the first things he saw were seven large candles and Jesus walking among those candles. He saw Jesus dressed in a long white robe, with a gold vest, and His hair was white as snow. Because His eyes were like burning flames, John dropped his eyes to the ground and he saw that Jesus' feet looked like polished bronze still glowing in the furnace. His voice was loud like the roar of a gigantic waterfall and in His hand He was holding seven stars. His tongue looked like a short two-edged sword and His face was shining as bright as the sun. John was scared to death and he fell to the ground as if he was dead.

Jesus touched John and told him not to be afraid. He wanted John to write a book about what He was about to show him concerning His Second Coming. To begin the book, John wrote down exactly what Jesus looked like. Then, Jesus told him that the candles were symbols for the seven special Churches in His story and the seven stars were the pastors of those seven Churches. He told John that He had a letter for each of the seven Churches and He wanted John to write what He was about to say to them. And so, John picked up his pen and began to write exactly what He told him to write.

Jesus was happy that the little Church in the town of Ephesus did not put up with the evil men in the congregation who called themselves apostles. But Jesus was unhappy with the Church because it was spending all its time fighting the beliefs of the evil men and had forgotten the most important job of the Church, sharing the story of Jesus with the people in the town. Jesus promised to allow everyone who believed Him to eat from the Tree of Life when they join Jesus in heaven. If the Church did not change its ways, Jesus would remove it from the earth.

Up the road a little bit was the Church of Smyrna. It was a poor Church that was having trouble with the Jews who attended the Synagogue in the town. Jesus warned the Church that

that those Jews would bully the Church because Jews did not believe that Jesus is the true Messiah. The LORD promised that one day every member of the Church in Smyrna would have a Crown of Life when they joined Him in heaven. If the Church did not change its ways, Jesus would remove it from the earth.

Just past Smyrna was the Church of Pergamum. It was an evil Church that had members who worshipped false gods and taught people that their nasty acts were perfectly all right. Jesus promised that every member in the Church who did not participate in the ungodly acts would be given the bread of heaven to eat and a new name written on a white stone when they joined Him in heaven. But, if the Church did not change its ways, Jesus would remove it from the earth.

On down the road was the Church of Thyatira. It was really in trouble. A nasty woman named Jezebel was running the Church. But that was not its only problem; some of the people were being taught how to worship Satan. The LORD gave them time to repent, but they did not. Jesus promised the members who were not involved with these two problems would one day rule with Him when He returned to earth to be the King. They would have all the authority they needed to help Him rule. He also promised that each one would receive the gift of the morning star – which meant they would be with Jesus. However, if the Church did not change its ways, Jesus would remove it from the earth.

The next letter was to the Church of Sardis. It was a congregation that was just pretending that it was an exciting Church, but really, it was dying. Jesus said to them, “Wake up and get back to work.” Jesus promised those who woke up white robes and promised that He would not erase their names from the Book of Life. He also promised them that when they joined Him in heaven, He would personally introduce them to God the Father. Yet, if the Church did not change its ways, Jesus would remove it from the earth.

In the letter to the Church of Philadelphia, Jesus had nothing bad to say. It was a wonderful Church. But the Jewish synagogue in the town hated Christians. They hated them so much that they made it their job to bully them every day. But Jesus promised to protect them. He also promised to give each member of the Church a place in the Temple of God and the name of God’s city– the New Jerusalem. But, if the Church changed its ways and stopped doing everything right, Jesus would remove it from the earth.

Finally, Jesus sent a letter to the terrible Church of Laodicea. It was filled with rich non-believers who were disguising themselves as Christians. Jesus told each make-believe member to accept salvation as quickly as possible. Jesus was so concerned about them that He was knocking at their doors, hoping that they would let Him come in to live with them. Jesus promised that each member who opened the door would sit with Him on His throne with God the Father. As with all the seven Churches, if the Church of Laodicea did not change its ways, He would remove it from the earth. *And there is more to come!*

Revelation - Chapters 1, 2 & 3

VIII. The Events of the Book

When the LORD approached John to have him record the words in this book, everything within its pages was still prophecy for the future. But with the passing of almost 2000 years, some of the prophecy has now become history. For instance, all seven of the Churches referenced in the first three chapters of REVELATION are gone – their lamps have been put out. The LORD called them the “the things which are,” and they are no more. Those Churches were important to the story of Jesus’ Second Coming because they were part of the time line leading to His arrival. With their candles extinguished, the prophecies of chapter 4 can begin to be fulfilled – even in our lifetimes.

A. The Invitation in Heaven (4:1)

Rev 4:1 **After these things I looked, and a door *standing* open in heaven, and the first voice which I had heard, like *the sound* of a trumpet speaking with me, said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after these things."**

John was on the island of Patmos when this message was given to him. He was just living his normal life in a normal way as an exile on that island surrounded by water. The LORD interrupted him and called him to the task of writing this book. From the first verse of chapter one to the last verse of chapter 3, John was aware of who he was, where he was and what he was doing. That is not to discount the supernatural! The LORD’s calling of John to this task as well as the LORD’s word-for-word dictation of chapters 1 – 3 was supernatural. The LORD was on the island of Patmos with John for those chapters. But then, it was time for John to see something that he had never seen before. It was time for John to see heaven.

The letters to the seven Churches were completed and John said, “**After these things I looked, and behold, a door *standing* open in heaven.**” Just imagine that! John looked up from his writing and cast his gaze toward the sky and saw an open door. Through that door he must have seen the landscape and realized that it did not look like the sky around that door. Then, all of a sudden, he heard “**the first voice which I had heard, like *the sound* of a trumpet speaking with me.**” In the first chapter, John spoke about this voice (1:12-20). It was the voice that startled him and when he turned to see Who it was, he saw Jesus walking among the seven large lampstands. The voice was the voice of Jesus.

As John looked at the door that would transport him to heaven, he heard the voice of Jesus saying to him, “**Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after these things.**” We must ask a very important question, “After what things?” We may say it another way, “Why is it that the new events given at this point ‘**must take place after these things?**’” The answer is simple, “**after these things**” refers to the lights of the seven Churches of Asia. The events John will soon see cannot take place until the lamps of the seven Churches of Asia are extinguished. In this story, those Churches acted as time markers to indicate when the events in chapter 4 can begin to be fulfilled. But, at this point, John had not seen those events. He had only seen the open door and heard the invitation from Jesus to join Him in heaven to see all its glory and the future of the LORD at His Second Coming.

B. The Throne Room in Heaven

1. The Throne in Heaven (4:2)

Rev 4:2 **Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne was standing in heaven, and One sitting on the throne.**

When John says, “**Immediately I was in the Spirit,**” it means that the Holy Spirit had taken total control of John’s mind. His body may have been on the island of Patmos, but his mind was in heaven – God’s eternal home. What a sight he was seeing at that moment. The only other living humans who had possibly seen the throne room in heaven in this way were Moses and Ezekiel. There on Mount Sinai, the LORD allowed Moses to see the Tabernacle in heaven with the original Ark of the Covenant, the seven-candle lampstand, the Veil, the Table of Incense, the Table of Show Bread, the Brazen Altar, the large Basin and all the utensils used in worship. Moses measured those items in heaven and then they were reproduced in the camp of the Nation of Israel at the foot of Mount Sinai for use on earth in worship of the LORD. We will discover Ezekiel’s vision of this throne room soon as we continue in the verses of this lesson.

John says, “**behold.**” That means *pay strict attention to this!* “... **behold, a throne was standing in heaven, and One sitting on the throne.**” Oh how quickly we often skip through the eternal importance of this sentence. Everything created in heaven and on earth is for the purpose of worship and adoration of the “**One sitting on the throne.**” Everything and everyone else in this world is insignificant to the “**One sitting on the throne.**” This “**One**” is no other than the first Person of the Trinity – God the Father. This throne room was part of the first thing Jesus created on the first day of creation before He created the earth. Fear not! Jesus, the second Person of the Trinity, also created His throne at the same time as well as a throne for the third Person of the Trinity – the Holy Spirit. We will cover this topic later in the story of this REVELATION.

2. The One in Heaven (4:3a)

Rev 4:3a **And He who was sitting was like a jasper stone and a sardius in appearance;**

The LORD is now allowing John to describe in his own words everything that he is seeing. It appeared to John that God the Father looked like “**a jasper stone and a sardius.**” Here we must rely on the expert for the best interpretation of John’s reasoning for describing the Father in terms of two specific stones. That expert is no other than John himself. First, in Revelation 21:11, John tells us the “**jasper stone**” was “**as clear as crystal.**” That is all the information we have from the expert about this “**jasper stone,**” - it was clear as crystal. Crystals are quartz and they come in almost every color in the spectrum. The word “**jasper**” means *a translucent stone*. Second, this same stone was used on the Urim and the Thummin and on the shoulders of the High Priest’s garment. John had not seen the High Priest’s garment in 25 years but before the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD, he had surely seen it many times. John was raised as a Jew and with his family he visited the Temple in Jerusalem at least once a year. We know also because of his association with John the Baptist and Jesus that visits to Jerusalem were extremely frequent and he had seen the stones on the priest’s garment many times. To John, simply saying it looked like a “**jasper stone**” was good

enough for a description for everyone in the Church who would be reading this book in Greek at that time. To further explain why it is all we have about this stone can be found in the fact that about 300 years before this writing, Antiochus the Great had transported 2000 Jewish families to western Asia Minor from Babylonia and thus many of the inhabitants of that area were Jews. They and their descendants would have probably understood what John meant when he simply said, a **“jasper stone.”** As to its color or tint, we know nothing more than it was translucent.

As for the **“sardius”** stone, that is a different story. It was a stone quarried in Sardis, one of the towns of the letters to the seven Churches. It was a reddish aluminum oxide mineral that could show a hint of brownish-yellow in its color at times. It is the same three colors that we see rotating with each other in a hot burning fire – a little red, a little brown, a little yellow.

John said, **“He who was sitting was like a jasper stone and a sardius.”** John was describing what he could see of God the Father, not the throne He was sitting on.

3. The Rainbow in Heaven (4:3b)

Rev 4:3b **and there was a rainbow around the throne, like an emerald in appearance.**

John says, **“there was a rainbow around the throne.”** The word for **“rainbow”** is *iris* and the best definition for the word is *a halo as in a full circle ring hovering in the air*. Ezekiel gives the following commentary on the rainbow.

As the appearance of the rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so was the appearance of the surrounding radiance. Such was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. And when I saw it, I fell on my face and heard a voice speaking, (Eze 1:28).

When we think of a **“rainbow,”** our minds take us to all the colors we are used to seeing of red, yellow, blue, orange, green, etc. But the **“rainbow”** around the throne was only **“emerald,”** or for us today, a beautiful *blue-green*.

The **“rainbow”** is a symbol of *judgment completed*. When the LORD rained judgment on the earth in the days of Noah, at its completion, He hung the rainbow in the sky as a symbol and sign that such a judgment as a worldwide flood was completed and would never occur again on earth. Although from earth we can see only part of a rainbow, it is always a full circle. A circle never ends, representing the continuous and flawless promise from the LORD. So, too, His judgment is always continuous and flawless at His throne.

4. The Elders in Heaven (4:4)

Rev 4:4 **Around the throne were twenty-four thrones; and upon the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white garments, and golden crowns on their heads.**

The judgment at the throne in heaven is formal, proper, and official. The jury was sitting around God's throne. When we draw a picture of this, we place this jury in a semi-circle but that is incorrect. These jury members are sitting in a full circle around God's throne. Here, John introduces us to the **“twenty-four thrones; and upon the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting.”** Most people in the Church place a special emphasis on the word **“elders,”** however, it is the Greek word *presbuteros* and it means *old men*. John saw these twenty-four *old men* sitting on *thranos*, the Greek word for *benches*, which were around God the Father. The function of these men, as we will see, is to give praise and honor to the righteous acts of God. Everything that occurs in this room, at this throne, is formal, proper, official but also eternal – never ending! These spiritual beings that looked to John like *old men* have been around the throne of God since the first day of creation. We will soon see them performing their duties in this court.

But John also described their dress. Each *old man* was dressed in a white robe and adorned with a golden crown on his head. The *white robe* represented the purity of these men – sinless. As for the **“golden crown,”** gold is the most referenced metal in the Bible. It is always a symbol of *salvation*, which is, by all standards in God's Word, the most important commodity that a person must obtain to enter into eternal life with Him. Of course, *salvation* means personally accepting the LORD as Savior. These *old men* did not need *salvation* because they were created to sit on the jury in God's judgment hall. But these *old men* are part of the process of *salvation*, not that they had authority to grant *salvation*, but that they had authority to give a hardy praise and word of glory to the One who offered *salvation* – God. **“Crowns”** are always a symbol of authority. Not to get too far along in the story, but, on earth in the REVELATION, **“crowns”** represent the authority of empires, *horns* represent the authority of countries and *heads* represent the leaders of those countries. However, in heaven, as in this case, the word **“Crowns”** is *stephanos* in Greek and it means *that which surrounds*. The gold that surrounds the heads of these *old men* represents the LORD's placement of these men at His throne to proclaim that His judgment and granting of *salvation* to those who belong to the Him is righteous. As we will see later in the story, they will also proclaim the righteousness of God when those who do not belong to the LORD are exiled permanently to the Lake of Fire and Brimstone.

5. The Environment in Heaven (4:5a)

Rev 4:5a **Out from the throne come flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder.**

But at God's throne, the environment in heaven is also fearful. John says, **“Out from the throne come flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder.”** The sounds and the sights were terrifying, they were greater than a full-scale booming and electrified tropical storm. At Mount Sinai, the whole camp of the Nation of Israel was terrified because of the presence of God on the mountain (Exodus 19:18). There, the whole mountain quaked with the flashes of lightning and the sounds and peals of thunder. The writer of Hebrews is correct in saying, “it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God,” (Hebrews 10:31).

6. The Seven Lamps in Heaven (4:5b)

Rev 4:5b **And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God;**

Looking around, John sees, “**seven lamps of fire burning before the throne.**” In our first two lessons, we presented an overview of people and places in the whole book of REVELATION. In both lessons we interpreted the “**seven Spirits of God**” who were before the throne as “**seven lamps of fire burning.**” Through chapter 3, these “**seven Spirits of God**” were the only things not defined by the LORD in the text. Even though we know who they are because we have studied the entire book of REVELATION, to this point in the story, the seven Churches would still have wondered who they were just as we did upon our first reading. If we were reading this book for the first time, here, we would have finally come to the first description of the “**seven Spirits**” with John saying they looked like “**seven lamps of fire burning before the throne.**” Some commentators immediately jump to the conclusion that these “**seven Spirits**” represent the Holy Spirit, but they do not. As we travel through the rest of this book, we will discover that John has more to say about these “**seven Spirits.**” We will soon see that John will tell us that they are actually seven angels, the same seven angels who will blow the seven trumpets and pour the seven bowls of wrath on the earth.

7. The Sea of Glass in Heaven (4:6a)

Rev 4:6a **and before the throne ~~there was something~~ like a sea of glass, like crystal;**

The floor in the throne room looked “**like a sea of glass.**” The oceans and seas on earth are never still; they are constantly moving, sometimes ever so subtly, at other times ever so raging, but, never fixed and never dead still. Glass on the other hand is always fixed, never moving to the naked eye. And so it was with this “**sea of glass**” before the throne of God – fixed or permanent. But this “**sea of glass**” was “**like crystal.**” The word is *krustallos* in Greek and it means *frost*. From this word we get our word *crust*. When we see *frost* on the ground, it is like a crust that has a twinkle about it that is hard to explain, a *sparkle*, a *gleam*, a *glimmer*, a *flicker*, a *shine!* That is exactly what John meant when he said this sea of glass looked “**like crystal.**”

8. The Four Living Creatures in Heaven (4:6b)

Rev 4:6b **and in the center and around the throne, four living creatures full of eyes in front and behind.**

Looking back at the throne of God, John saw “**four living creatures full of eyes in front and behind**” “**in the center and around the throne.**” We must conclude here that these creatures were at their posts on all sides of the throne – one each to the front, back, left and right because they were “**around the throne.**” But these creatures were also “**in the center.**” This statement must mean they were right next to the throne with the “**seven lamps of fire burning**” directly in front as God faces east. How do we know God is facing east on this throne? In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word for front actually means *facing the east*. The position of the tribe of Judah was facing the east as the sun rises in the camp of the Nation of Israel. Back means to the west, left means to the north and right means to the

south. Even though John is writing in Greek, he is still writing with a Hebrew mindset. God was on His throne, the four living creatures and the seven lamps were all sitting inside the circle of “**twenty four elders.**” These creatures were covered from head to toe with eyes all the way around them. Eyes in their wings and eyes on their flesh.

a) **Their Look (4:7)**

Rev 4:7 The first creature was like a lion, and the second creature like a calf, and the third creature had a face like that of a man, and the fourth creature was like a flying eagle. ^{8a} And the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings, are full of eyes around and within;

The four living creatures had four faces – a lion, a calf, a man, and an eagle. The prophet and priest Ezekiel was fortunate to see these same four living creatures twice and he wrote about both encounters. In the first chapter of his book he explained how God approached him for the first time. He recorded the following about that meeting.

Ezekiel 1:4 As I looked, behold, a storm wind was coming from the north, a great cloud with fire flashing forth continually and a bright light around it, and in its midst something like glowing metal in the midst of the fire. ⁵ Within it there were figures resembling four living beings. And this was their appearance: they had human form. ⁶ Each of them had four faces and four wings. ⁷ Their legs were straight and their feet were like a calf's hoof, and they gleamed like burnished bronze. ⁸ Under their wings on their four sides were human hands. As for the faces and wings of the four of them, ⁹ their wings touched one another; *their faces* did not turn when they moved, each went straight forward. ¹⁰ As for the form of their faces, *each* had the face of a man; all four had the face of a lion on the right and the face of a bull on the left, and all four had the face of an eagle. ¹¹ Such were their faces.

We are thankful that Ezekiel gives a fuller description of the four living creatures, but we also notice two discrepancies between his version of these cherubim and that of John's. Ezekiel states that each cherub has all four faces with the man's face facing out, the lion to his right, the bull to his left and the eagle to the rear. This statement seems to disagree with John who seems to give a single and different face to each creature. The second discrepancy is found in the number of wings on each cherub. Ezekiel states that there are four, John states that there are six. Before we delve into these discrepancies, let us take advantage of Ezekiel's second encounter with these creatures in the tenth chapter of his book.

Ezekiel 10:9 Then I looked, and behold, four wheels beside the cherubim, one wheel beside each cherub; and the appearance of the wheels was like the gleam of a Tarshish stone. ¹⁰ As for their appearance, all four of them had the same likeness, as if one wheel were within another wheel. ¹¹ When they moved, they went in any of their four directions without turning as they went; but they followed in the direction which they faced, without turning as they went. ¹² Their whole body, their backs, their hands, their wings and the wheels were full of eyes all around, the wheels belonging to all four of them. ¹³ The wheels were called in my hearing, the whirling wheels. ¹⁴ And

each one had four faces. The first face was the face of a cherub, the second face was the face of a man, the third the face of a lion, and the fourth the face of an eagle.

Ezekiel's second recollection seems to disagree with his first concerning one of the faces. In his first chapter one face is a bull; in his tenth chapter that same face is a cherub. Which is correct? The first is the Hebrew word *shor* meaning *the head of cattle*; That is a bull or ox. The second is the Hebrew word *kerub* meaning *the ox's face*. Therefore, even though Ezekiel used two different Hebrew words to describe the face in question, the definition of each word shows that there is absolutely no conflict. This discovery also justifies Ezekiel and John's account concerning that single face of the ox and cherub.

As for the number of faces, Ezekiel states that each creature had all four faces; John does not. But, that does not mean that they did not have all four faces. From John's view, as he saw these four creatures around the throne, each facing straight ahead, we must remember that John was looking at them from one point of view. If these creatures were around the throne of God with one facing east, one facing west, one facing left and one facing right, and the face of the man was always looking to each point on the compass, then John would have seen a different face looking at him from his perspective. For instance, if John was seeing the face of a man looking straight at him, he might not have noticed the other three faces. As for the creature looking to the right of God, John would have seen the face of the lion looking at him exactly as Ezekiel did. Looking at the creature to the left of the throne, John would have seen the face of the ox looking at him. Finally, for the creature looking toward the back, John would have seen the face of the eagle. All four eagles were looking at God on the throne. All four faces of man were looking away from the throne of God. The lions were always looking to the right and the bulls were always looking to the left. This explanation solves the discrepancy, but it is only a conjecture. John simply did not give enough information about these creatures to close the gap in the three accounts.

Now for the issue of John saying the creatures had six wings and Ezekiel saying they had four. For this discrepancy, God's Word remains silent.

And then we come to the eyes as John says, they **"are full of eyes around and within."** With eyes on every part of their bodies, these creatures could see everything around them all at one time. Some of their eyes were always looking at God the Father, others were looking at the Lamb of God, the Son. Still others were gazing at the seven Spirits, others at the twenty-four elders, and still others at all that we have not encountered yet in this story that reside around the throne of God and in His creation.

b) **Their Duty (4:8b)**
Rev 4:8b **and day and night they do not cease to say, "HOLY, HOLY, HOLY is THE LORD GOD, THE ALMIGHTY, WHO WAS AND WHO IS AND WHO IS TO COME."**

The four living creatures are not silent at any time as they render their service to the LORD. In glorious worship they constantly say, **"HOLY, HOLY, HOLY is THE LORD**

GOD, THE ALMIGHTY, WHO WAS AND WHO IS AND WHO IS TO COME." Three times they say **"Holy,"** - once for the Father, once for the Son and once for the Spirit. It was through Isaiah that these words were first spoken (Isaiah 6:3). **"THE LORD GOD, THE ALMIGHTY"** is found in Revelation 1:8 and **"WHO WAS AND WHO IS AND WHO IS TO COME"** in Revelation 1:4. The words of the song the four living creatures were saying were not their own words. Those words dictated by God refer to the LORD God! John was seeing the worship in progress in heaven. It just so happened that he had just described the four living creatures when he noticed their praise and worship of God begin. The creatures were saying their praises outward from the throne where God the Father is sitting. The praises are directed toward God the Son, the LORD God, Who existed from eternity past, Who came to earth and died for the sins of humanity, Who overcame earthly death and rose from the grave, Who lives forever more! He is worthy to receive that praise; He is Jesus. But John has not noticed Jesus yet.

9. The Worship in Heaven (4:9-11)

Rev 4:9 **And when the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, to Him who lives forever and ever, ¹⁰ the twenty-four elders will fall down before Him who sits on the throne, and will worship Him who lives forever and ever, and will cast their crowns before the throne, saying, ¹¹ "Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created."**

How amazed John must have been when the four living creatures were joined in their worship of God by the twenty-four elders. The act of worship was in full throttle as the elders left their seats to fall prostrate before the LORD God and toss their crowns of gold toward the throne. As the ensemble of four living creatures said, **"HOLY, HOLY, HOLY is THE LORD GOD, THE ALMIGHTY, WHO WAS AND WHO IS AND WHO IS TO COME,"** the two dozen men's chorus answered with **"Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created."** The elders had their duty, too, to worship the LORD, the Creator Who willed everything into being. Both the living creatures and the elders gave thanks to God the Father for God the Son!

10. The Scroll in Heaven (5:1)

Rev 5:1 **I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a book written inside and on the back, sealed up with seven seals.**

And then John noticed something extremely special, a book **"in the right had of Him who sat on the throne"** and it was covered with writing on every side of every page. He also noticed that the book was secured shut with seven seals. It was in the right hand of God. It must have been an important book. We should say it is an important book because it is the title deed to the glorious mansions in the presence of God for all who believe in the LORD as Savior. This book holds the future of all the lives of the faithful whose names are within its pages. This book holds the determination of eternal life or eternal death for every human who has lived on earth since the creation of Adam and Eve until the birth of the last baby

before the Great White Throne Judgment. This book with seven seals is none other than the Book of Life. But it was sealed up. Who could open it and reveal its contents?

11. The Strong Angel in Heaven (5:2)

Rev 5:2 And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the book and to break its seals?"

The strong angel wanted to know the answer to the same question we have presented in the previous verse, "**Who is worthy to open the book and to break its seals?**" Who has the heavenly right to open that Book of Life? Who is worthy to grant eternal life?

12. The Search in Heaven (5:3)

Rev 5:3 And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the book or to look into it.

The search took place in heaven and on earth. Just stop to think about all the tyrants of the world down through history who would have loved to have had the right to open the seals of this book and have had the power to control mankind. Just in recent history, Osama ben Laden, Saddam Hussein, Adolf Hitler and Kaiser Wilhelm would have given everything they had to take a whack at trying to open the seals on that book and garner the power associated with each. None of them were worthy because they were all evil. What about the hall of faith listed in the Bible in Hebrews chapter 11. There was Noah. Surely, he was worthy! No, no, he had a drinking problem. Oh, there was Abraham! No, he was not worthy; he had a lying problem. What about Lot? No, he was not worthy because he did not see anything wrong with homosexuality. How about Jacob? Surely Jacob was worthy! No, he was a thief. Perhaps Moses? No, he could not always follow directions. So, what about the more modern godly people? What about Mother Teresa, Billy Graham, George Whitfield, Charles Wesley, Jonathan Edwards, Luther Rice, General William Booth, or Pope Paul? No, no, they were godly, but not one of them as a sinner saved by grace would dare attempt such a foolish task for not one of them was worthy enough. The search was made in heaven and on earth, not one human or one angel or creature of any kind was worthy.

13. The Weeping in Heaven (5:4)

Rev 5:4 Then I began to weep greatly because no one was found worthy to open the book or to look into it;

How long did the search go on? It must have seemed like an eternity to John. From his perspective it was a hopeless task. He cried. He cried in heaven. Tears fell in heaven. Not tears of joy but tears of hopeless sorrow. They were not tears of the redeemed from earth who had made the transition to their heavenly home; no, they were tears of a man who was given the blessing to see heaven before he made that transition. Those who have gone on will not weep because they know the full story of all the rest of history and they understand. These tears were being shed by a man who was still looking at life with partial knowledge and bad worldly eyesight. Paul said it was like looking at life in a mirror that was hazy.

14. The Lion in Heaven (5:5)

Rev 5:5 **and one of the elders said to me, "Stop weeping; behold, the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome so as to open the book and its seven seals."**

Do you ever wish you knew the name of someone, but you really know you never will, at least while in this life? What was the name of the *old man*? We only know him as one of the elders created by Jesus to sit on one of the twenty-four thrones for all eternity. He knew Who was worthy! Yes, he did. He had been worshiping the Worthy One since he was created. **"Behold,"** the elder said. *Pay strict attention to this* is what **"Behold"** means. He then showed John **"the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David,"** the sinless One worthy to **"open the book and its seven seals."**

John was Jewish and when this *old man* pronounced the name of **"the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David,"** it must have brought great joy to his heart and mind. One of my mentors said the following about this.

What a chord the mention of the Lion must have struck in John's soul, for that was the kind of Messiah the Jews had always wanted and expected. They had crucified Jesus because He was too tame for them. They had wanted a king who would smash the power of Rome and make Jerusalem capital of a new world empire. The last thing they wanted was One meek and lowly, gentle and kind. At last that longed-for militant Messiah is to be unveiled, David's Son and David's Lord.¹

15. The Lamb in Heaven (5:6)

Rev 5:6 **And I saw between the throne (with the four living creatures) and the elders a Lamb standing, as if slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent out into all the earth.**

John looked again and there, between the throne of God and the thrones of the elders stood a Lamb, not a Lion as John might have expected. The interesting thing that we must ask is "How in the world did John miss this Lamb when he was describing the throne room?" The Lamb was there all the time. He had been there since He returned from doing His work on earth to provide salvation for every man, woman, boy and girl. He had been there since John last saw Him on the Mount of Olives, raising His hands and ascending into the Heavens, promising to return in the same way one day! John knew all about this Lamb; he had mentioned him twice in his Gospel that landed him in exile on the island of Patmos (John 1:29 & 36). From this point on in REVELATION John will mention Him 28 times. He is the Lamb because He came to earth to be sacrificed to save; the next time He comes it will be to rule as King of all. John may have been expecting the Lion, but he was satisfied with the Lamb. Then John realized it had **"seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent out into all the earth."** We should remember that the seven Spirits of God were symbolized as the **"seven lamps of fire burning before the throne."** We will soon be told that these seven are the seven angels that will blow the trumpets and pour the bowls of

¹ John Phillips Commentary Series, The - The John Phillips Commentary Series – Exploring Revelation: An Expository Commentary.

wrath on the earth. In other words, the “**seven horns and seven eyes**” on the Lamb of God represent the authority granted to the seven angels to do their assignments in the revelation of the Second Coming of Jesus and the duty to watch and report the results to the throne room for all the creatures, elders and angelic chorus to rejoice and give praise to God the Father and God the Son, the Lamb of God.

16. The Exchange in Heaven (5:7)

Rev 5:7 And He came and took the book out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne.

And so, we come to the glorious exchange in heaven – beyond all earthly imagination. John saw the rehearsal of the future story begin. Jesus, the Lamb of God, moved to the throne of God the Father and took out of His hand the Book of Life, sealed with seven seals.

17. The Adoration in Heaven (5:8)

Rev 5:8 When He had taken the book, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each one holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

All of heaven’s creatures knew the importance of the exchange between the Father and the Lamb. It must have been an eruption of joy joined with the grand worship in the throne room of God. Both the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell to their knees and prostrated themselves before Jesus when He took the Book of Life from the Father. The harps of the four living creatures and the harps of the twenty-four elders were placed on the crystal sea and so were their “**golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.**” It was their way of acknowledging that Jesus was the only One worthy of taking the book and opening the seals. The incense in the golden bowls will be myrrh and frankincense. In the Old Testament, these two incenses were considered the prayers of the Israelites (Psalm 141:2). The odor of the burning incense in these golden bowls represented the prayers of all the saints of all the ages. In all the ages, the saints have been looking forward to this day. What a halleluiah day it will be when Jesus begins to open the Book of Life one seal at a time which will inaugurate His soon coming return to earth to rid it of sin, sorrow and sadness by conquering as King of all the kings and lords of the world. And so, the prayers of all the saints of all the ages will be answered by Him.

18. The New Song in Heaven (5:9-10)

Rev 5:9 And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood *men* from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. ¹⁰ "You have made them *to be* a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth."

With the exchange of the Book of Life from the hand of the Father to the hand of the Son, a “**new song**” was introduced. In reality, it was not a “**new song**” at all because it had been written before the foundation of the earth and before the creation of all things. It was just the time for that ancient hymn to be sung for the first time in heaven. Even the words in the song

were not truly new because they tell the story of Jesus and His redemptive work. Verse 10 in this song was delivered first to John in Revelation 1:6.

Rev 1: 6 and He has made us *to be* a kingdom, priests to His God and Father—to Him *be* the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

John had already told the Churches that they had a special place in Jesus' plan. Together, they were part of His kingdom. It was not something still to take place in the future, it was already done. John's selected word was *basileia*. The word "kingdom" does fit as a meaning in this context, but we ought to think about it with a larger meaning such as a *royal power*. Why? Because we are the children of the King, living under His care, in His kingdom, whether in heaven or eventually back on earth. That sense of royalty becomes clearer when we see that the original Greek actually says we are a *basileia hierous* or translated *kingdom of priests*. By putting the kingdom and priest together, we see the royalty. As Christians we are a kingdom of priests, or, as Peter said, "a royal priesthood" (1 Peter 2:9). Every Christian has a place as a royal priest to God the Father which is the title of the first Person of the Trinity. When John says, "**to His God and Father,**" he means that Jesus recognizes God with the title of "Father." Jesus will hold the title of "God the Son" and the Holy Spirit will hold the title of "God the Spirit." All three make up the one essence of God in three persons. We as priests in Jesus' kingdom are in fact priests to Jesus' God Whom He recognized as the Father.

But the last part of that sentence says, "**and they will reign upon the earth.**" That phrase had already been spoken, too, to one of the churches (Revelation 3:21). It was in the letter to the pathetic Church of Laodicea where not one congregant was a true believer before the letter was delivered from John. Even at this point in the story, the Church at Laodicea is still in trouble because it has not received this letter yet. It will not be delivered to them for several days if not months at this point. And yet, the promise to Laodicea is brought forth to all believers in this chapter; each believer will rule and reign with Jesus when He returns at His Second Coming to become the King of all.

[19. The Choir in Heaven \(5:11-14\)](#)

Rev 5:11 Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands,¹² saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing."¹³ And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, "To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, *be* blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever."¹⁴ And the four living creatures kept saying, "Amen." And the elders fell down and worshiped.

After just one round of the "**new song**" all of heaven erupted in verse. "**Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing.**" And then John heard the rehearsal of what will take place in the future when the Lamb takes the Book of Life from the hand of the Father. He heard all creatures of

heaven and earth say, "**To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, *be* blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever.**" It is praise to God the Father and God the Son, the Worthy Lamb. "**Amen**" said the four living creatures. "**Amen**" means *true or truly*. And of course, we see the *old men*, "the elders," doing what they were created by the LORD to do. In the throne room they fell to their knees and gave worship for the righteous acts of God.