

Throne Room Vision: What About Creation?

Revelation 4-5

Turn to Revelation 4:11. Psalm 11 includes a question and then the answer: Q: *When the foundations are being destroyed, what can the righteous do?* A: *The Lord is in his holy temple, the Lord is on his heavenly throne, and he observes everything on earth.*

In a sense, the whole book of Revelation answers that question in that way, but Rev 4-5 in particular show us that the Lord is in his holy temple, the Lord is on his heavenly throne, and he is ruling earth.

Much of the Bible is written to encourage us. God knew we would get discouraged, and need words, messages, and pictures to give us hope and confidence. Let's give God a chance to do that. Let's open ourselves to him making our lives more hopeful than they sometimes feel.

The Core of this Vision: God and his Creation

Rev 4-5 are a single vision, divided roughly in half. The end of Rev 4 is the high point of ch. 4, and the end of Rev 5 is the focus and high point of that chapter. We will start with these.

4:10b-11 *They lay their crowns before the throne and say: "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being."*

The whole of Rev 4 gives us a picture of God's throne room, and 4:11 tells us what they do in God's throne room. They praise him for his creation. "You are worthy to receive glory and honour and ruling power, because you created all things."

*By your will they were created and have their being.* Why is God's will brought into this? Think of asking, "What is the will of God for my life." We are asking, "What does God want me to do? What's his plan for my life?" God's will for us means his plan for us, his purpose for us.

*They lay their crowns before the throne and say: "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will [that is, because of your plan and purpose] all things were created and have their being."*

In heaven they praise God for creating all things, and they also praise him because of his will for creation, his plan for it, what he wants it to do. That praise has been going on since God made the heavens and the earth, since Genesis 1:1, for a very long time.

Now to 5:13. 4:11 does not tell us God's will for creation. What is his actual plan? 4:11 does not say. But 5:13 gives the answer: *Then I heard every created thing in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, saying: "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!"*

God's plan for creation is: that every created thing in heaven and on earth would praise God and the Lamb. That's his will, his plan. At the end of Rev 4, the four living ones and the 24 elders are praising God, but only them. At the end of Rev 5, all creation, every created being, praises God. That's God's will for creation.

This still has not happened in our day. End of Rev 4 describes a scene that's been happening since Genesis 1:1, God praised for creation ever since God made the heavens and the earth. The end of Rev 5 takes us to the future, the end of time, to Rev 21-22, the new heaven and the earth.

The main question Rev 4-5 wants to answer: how will creation get from 4:11 to 5:13? How will creation get from being wonderful, but not doing what God's plans it do to, to actually doing what he planned, every created being joyfully praising God? How will it get from 4:11 to 5:13? And the answer is: the Lamb, the slaughtered Lamb that lives.

The First and Second Visions The first vision, Christ and the lampstands in Rev 1, answered the question: "what about the **churches**? Is God paying attention to the **churches**?" Yes he is. The mighty Jesus, walks among the churches, including our church, and holds them in his hand.

The second vision, this throne room vision, answers the question: "what about **Creation**? Is God paying attention to **creation**, to what he made?" And the answer will also be encouraging and positive. God still rules his Creation, and his plan is coming along nicely.

And it is important that we *feel* what's been covered in these visions. When the world *feels* out of control, and *feels* as if God has walked away, what's going on? Q: *When the foundations are being destroyed, what can the righteous do?* A: *The Lord is in his holy temple, the Lord is on his heavenly throne. He rules his creation, and he is bringing it to its happy fulfillment.* Psalm 11.

There Before me was a Throne in Heaven 4:1-6a

*After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven. And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this." <sup>2</sup> At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on the throne. <sup>3</sup> And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and ruby. A rainbow that shone like an emerald encircled the throne. <sup>4</sup> Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on the thrones were twenty-four elders. They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads. <sup>5</sup> From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder. In front of the throne, seven lamps were blazing. These are the seven spirits of God. <sup>6</sup> Also in front of the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal.*

There was a door standing open. John went through it. There was a room, a throne room. That's why it's called "the throne room vision." The first thing John sees in this heavenly room is a Throne. In vv1-6, Revelation uses the word "throne" or "thrones" 9x.

"Throne" is the central word here. The real throne is in heaven. Who is in charge of everything? Whoever is on that throne. Lightning and thunder and fire are coming out of this throne. No one is asleep in that Throne room. It is a lively place.

*When the foundations are being destroyed, what can the righteous do?* The righteous can calm down, because: *The Lord is in his holy temple, the Lord is on his heavenly throne.*

Revelation wants no alarmist preaching. We've already been told in Rev 1 that Jesus Christ rules the kings of the earth, and that he holds the keys of death and the place of the dead. This Throne and 24 thrones section says the same thing. The world feels crazy; take heart. God rules.

24 Thrones, with 24 Kingly Rulers on Them These 24 thrones and the rulers on them show that the One on the One Throne is so great that his council members, his deputies, are themselves impressive kings. That's the emphasis here, the 24 simply add to the glory of the One Throne.

But 24 is not that difficult. Can you think of a common "twelve" in the OT? The 12 tribes of Israel. Can you think of a common "twelve" in the NT? The twelve disciples of the Lord. In Revelation, "12" is the number of God's people. God's people come in 12s. In Rev 21, the New Jerusalem is built around the 12 Israelite tribes and the 12 apostles of the Lamb.

The 24 represent the people of God. That is probably secondary. The main emphasis is that the 24 thrones exalt the 1 Throne in the middle.

The Four Living Beings 4:6b-8 *In the center, around the throne, were four living creatures, and they were covered with eyes, in front and in back. <sup>7</sup> The first living creature was like a lion, the second was like an ox, the third had a face like a man, the fourth was like a flying eagle. <sup>8</sup> Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under its wings. Day and night they never stop saying: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come."*

God's throne always has angels with wings around it, heavenly beings with wings. On the atonement cover on the ark of the covenant in the holy of holies were two cherubim, two golden angels with wings, facing each other, and God was on that cover, between the cherubim. Exodus 25:17-22. Isaiah 6 and Ezekiel 1 also have heavenly beings with wings around God's throne.

Two more striking things on these four living ones. One, eyes all over the place, they were covered with eyes, which means they see everything, they don't miss anything. Two, they are bound up with life on earth: a lion is a wild animal, an ox is a domestic animal, a face like a human, and an eagle to represent birds. That is: Heaven sees everything that happens on earth!

Praise God for Creation 4:9-11 *Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives for ever and ever, <sup>10</sup> the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne and worship him who lives for ever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and say: <sup>11</sup> “You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and because of your plan and purpose they were created and have their being.”*

The four living ones praise God for what he made, and that he has a plan for his creation. There is much about creation on earth in Rev 4. A rainbow goes around the Throne. A rainbow was God’s sign to Noah, that as long as the earth existed, there would be summer and winter, seedtime and harvest.

The 24 royal elders represent God’s people on earth, the tribes of Israel and the followers of Christ. The four living ones have the faces of a lion, ox, human, and eagle, all earthly creatures.

*You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and because of your plan and purpose they were created, and have their being.*

The Scroll with Seven Seals 5:1 *Then I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals.*

What’s this book about? It’s in God’s hand, it is sealed up tight; what makes it so special? Let’s take away the chapter division, and the heading that your Bible probably has between Ch. 4 and Ch. 5, and read it that way.

*You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and because of your will and plan they were created, and have their being. Then I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals.*

If we read it that way, we’d assume the scroll had something to do with creation, and probably with God’s will, his plan for creation. So let’s say the scroll has to do with creation, and what God’s will is and plan is for creation.

The Search 5:2-7 *And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, “Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?” <sup>3</sup> But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it. <sup>4</sup> I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside. <sup>5</sup> Then one of the elders said to me, “Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals.” <sup>6</sup> Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slaughtered, standing at the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. The Lamb had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. <sup>7</sup> He went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne.*

Here we have unpleasant and surprising scene. There are many incredible beings in heaven, but none great enough to take this scroll, none great enough to put into motion God's plan for creation. It will take a very special being to bring creation to its proper destiny. The scene in heaven must be desperate, close to hopeless, because John does a lot of weeping there.

*V5 - Then one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals."*

There's great relief. They found someone to take the book. John sees history acted out before him. He weeps because Christ has not died yet. Then Christ died, and then as John watches, Jesus of Nazareth comes to God and is exalted to God's right hand. The lion of Judah triumphed.

What was happening on earth at the moment the lion of Judah triumphed? Jesus of Nazareth, nailed up high and dying, humiliated, disappointed, and in great pain, said, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Then he died.

That was the victory of Jesus, and that is why he can take the scroll and open the seals. In Revelation, conquering/overcoming (all same Greek word), means faithful to God until death.

What John Heard, What John Saw. What John heard from one of the elders: The lion of Judah that conquered. What John saw: The slaughtered lamb that lives. Think about these two: the lion of Judah that conquered. The slaughtered lamb that lives. Which one is our Jesus? He is most certainly both. The lion of Judah that conquered. The slaughtered lamb that lives.

The messages to the 7 churches in Rev 2-3 each ends with a blessing to "the one who conquers." And suppose you and I want to triumph, to conquer, to overcome, to be victorious? How will that look? You and I would like to be called "the ones that conquered." What will they see when they turn to look at us? At first it does not look much like triumph. Revelation hopes we grasp this.

Three Widening Circles of Praise, Three Songs: First, the 4 Living Ones and 24 Elders

Rev 5:8-10 - *And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of God's people. <sup>9</sup> And they sang a new song, saying:*

*What did the Lamb do to be worthy? "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slaughtered, and with your blood you purchased for God those from every tribe and language and people and nation. <sup>10</sup> You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth."*

Note the incense and the prayers, because it will become important later in Revelation. *They were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of God's people.* The prayers of God's people are heavenly incense. Our prayers create the worship atmosphere before the throne.

Second Circle of Praise, Second Song: Millions and Millions of Angels

5:11-12 *Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. <sup>12</sup> In a loud voice they were saying:*

The first song: what did the Lamb do to be worthy? Second song: seven honours that he deserves because he is worthy: *“Worthy is the Lamb, who was slaughtered, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!”*

Third Final Circle and Song: God’s Will for Creation – Praise to God and the Lamb

5:13-14 *Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, saying: “To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!” <sup>14</sup> The four living creatures said, “Amen,” and the elders fell down and worshiped.*

The circles of the Lamb’s victory spread out. The first two circles have already been taking place. The 4 and 24 are already singing, and the many angels are already singing. But the third circle, the widest one, not fulfilled yet. Every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea and all in them: not yet. But it will happen. Third circle = end of Revelation.

But the one thing that had to happen for creation to fulfill God’s will for it was that the lion had to conquer, which means the lamb had to be slaughtered and live. That has happened. It had already happened when John wrote to those seven churches.

The Psalms described this final praise long ago:

*Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad; let the sea resound, and all that is in it.  
Let the fields be jubilant, and everything in them; let all the trees of the forest sing for joy.  
Let all creation rejoice before the Lord, for he comes, he comes to rule the earth.  
He will rule the world in righteousness and the peoples in his faithfulness. Psalm 96.*

Rev 4-5, the Throne Room Vision, boils all of earth’s history into three main events.

One, God created the heavens and the earth, and heaven praises God for this. Two, Christ died and rose, that is, the lion of Judah conquered, that is, the Lamb was slaughtered but lives.

Three, Creation’s destiny: everything in heaven and on earth praises God and the Lamb.

Until Christ died and rose, Creation’s destiny seems uncertain. Once that happened, the rest is certain. Christ’s death and resurrection are already history, so the End is certain.

*When the foundations are being destroyed, what can the righteous do? The righteous can calm down, take hope, and praise, because: The Lord is in his holy temple, the Lord is on his heavenly throne. He rules the kings of the earth, and he is bringing Creation to its joyful destiny. Amen.*