

The Second Vision: The Seven Seals 4:1-8:5

Remember, Revelation is divided into Seven Visions.

- The Seven Letters (ch.2 & 3) were the first vision.
- The Second vision begins with ch.4, although we don't actually get to the seven seals until ch.6.

CHAPTER 4 & 5 – setting the stage for the opening of the seven seals *These two chapters actually serve as an introduction or interlude to the opening of the seals*

vs.1 What does the word "this" refer to when it says "After this" at the beginning of vs.1?
after the appearance of Jesus to John and after the giving of the letters in Rev. ch.2-3

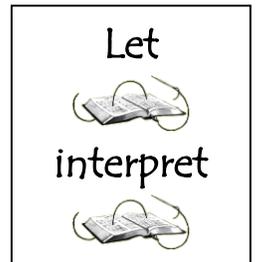
Whose voice was this that John had "first heard speaking to" him "like a trumpet"? 1:10

Jesus' voice

What sort of events was John about to see in this vision?

"what must happen after these things" = future events, namely from that time until the return of Jesus at the end of this world

NOTE: Look back at 1:19. Consider: ch.2&3 spoke a great deal about what was "now" happening for the believers at John's time and what would happen in the near future in some cases.



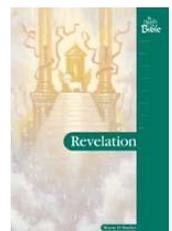
Vs.2 Recall from 1:10 what it means that John was in the Spirit (perhaps better: "in spirit").

This is a God-given vision / revelation.

The Throne

Who was sitting on the throne in heaven?

Vs.3 "We are kept from attaching symbolism to the individual stones when John writes 'appearance of' and 'resembling.' John didn't see actual stones, only what looked like them."



Instead of trying to attach individual symbolism, what overall impression do we get from the precious stones in this description of God, along with the rainbow?

Radiance and glory of the Lord, and our awe in response

- Vs.4 How many apostles were there? 12
How many OT patriarchs? 12
What do 24 elders on thrones around God's throne represent? All believers / the Church
What do the white garments and golden crowns add to the thought? Pure/forgiven. Made to be sons and daughters of the King of Heaven.

- Vs.5 What do the lighting and thunder convey?

God's presence and power

What are the seven blazing lamps before the throne? the 7-fold Spirit of God = the Holy Spirit's presence and work

- The "seven lamps" remind us of the seven-branched candlestick that burned in the Old Testament worship facility.
- There is a connection here between a lamp giving light and the work of the Holy Spirit. Recall what passages like Psalm 119:115 convey: that God's Word is a lamp for our feet and a light for our path. Who inspired God's Word? _____ Thus you see the meaning behind the symbolism of the Holy Spirit as a brightly burning lamp.
- Can you think of any other place where the Holy Spirit is symbolized by fire/light?

John is in God's throne room and before the throne there is what looks like a "sea of glass, clear as crystal." What is the impression you get from that?

Perfect peace

Illustration: Think of when an actual lake appears like glass. What feelings does such a scene stir in people?

Let  interpret 

Ezekiel 1:28 Like the appearance of a rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so was the radiance around him. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord.

Let  interpret 

Exodus 19:16-19 ...there was thunder and lightning, with a thick cloud over the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast... then Moses led the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. Mt. Sinai was covered with smoke, because the Lord descended on it in fire... the whole mountain trembled violently... Then Moses spoke and the voice of God answered him.

Let  interpret 

Acts 2:3 They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them.
Luke 24:32 They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he (Jesus) talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"

Let  interpret 

Compare this verse with Exodus 24:9-10 ⁹ Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and the seventy elders of Israel went up ¹⁰ and saw the God of Israel. Under his feet was something like a pavement made of sapphire, clear as the sky itself.

The Four Living Creatures

Vs.6b-8 What were these four living creatures?

Note: Let's be careful not to demand a certain significance to a detail of the vision that is not specifically revealed to us either in the immediate or wider context of the Bible. The four living creatures have been interpreted in various ways. Based on the context here in Revelation and other passages of the Bible, one interpretation seems best in my opinion.

The vision is similar to the vision in Ezekiel ch.1, though not exactly the same:

- “Living creatures” – in Ezekiel’s vision the living creatures are angels. It seems likely that is what they are here in Revelation too.
- “four” – the fact that there are four suggests that they are agents in accomplishing God’s providential rule over all the world (the four corners of the world; four being the symbolic number in Revelation for the world)
- the four different faces – likely represent the four great divisions of life on earth: the lion, representing wild animals; the ox, representing domestic animals; the eagle, representing birds; and man (human beings) as a class all by himself
- “six wings” – there were angels, seraphs, with six wings in Isaiah’s vision, ch.6. (The covering of their faces can be seen as representing awe in presence of God’s glory, the covering of feet as representing the covering of impurity, and two wings to fly with as representing the fact that angels carry out their assignments as messengers and agents of God.)
- What is the significance of so many eyes?
Psalm 91 – “He will send his angels to guard you in all your ways”

The explanation of the four living creatures as angels fits well. The message then? These angels are agents of God, used in governing the world and protecting his people.

See also Hebrews 1:14, 1:7 & Psalm 103:20-21 for other angel passages

Let  interpret 

Ezekiel ch.1 ...while I was among the exiles by the Kebar River, the heavens were opened and I saw visions of God. ...I saw a windstorm coming out of the north – an immense cloud with flashing lightning and surrounded by brilliant light. The center of the fire looked like glowing metal, and in the fire was what looked like four living creatures. In appearance their form was that of a man, but each of them had four faces and four wings... All four of them had faces and wings, and their wings touched one another... Their faces looked like this: Each of the four had the face of a man, and on the right side each had the face of a lion, and on the left the face of an ox; each also had the face of an eagle. Such were their faces. Their wings were spread out upward; each had two wings, one touching the wing of another creature on either side, and two wings covering its body. ... Spread out above the heads of the living creatures was what looked like an expanse, sparkling like ice, and awesome... Above the expanse over their heads was what looked like a throne of sapphire... Like the appearance of a rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so was the radiance around him. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord.
Ch.10 – I looked, and I saw the likeness of a throne of sapphire above the expanse that was over the heads of the cherubim... as for their appearance, the four of them looked alike... Their entire bodies, including their backs, their hands and their wings, were completely full of eyes, as were their four wheels. ... Each of the cherubim had four faces: one face was that of a cherub, the second the face of a man, the third the face of a lion, and the fourth the face of an eagle. ... These were the living creatures I had seen by the Kebar River. ... These were the living creatures I had seen beneath the God of Israel by the Kebar River and I realized they were cherubim.
Isaiah ch.6 In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.”

Do you see any significance in the fact there is a triple “Holy,” a three-fold name for God, and a three-fold description for God all within this three part saying of the four living creatures? Three is the number of our Triune God.

Holy	Holy	Holy
Lord	God	Almighty
Who was	and is	and is to come

The Response of the 24 Elders

Vs.9-11 It is said that Queen Victoria had hoped that Jesus would come before her death. Why? She explained, "I would so dearly love to lay my crown at his feet." What would such an act display on her part?

By laying their crowns before the throne, what are the elders showing about how they feel about their own authority to rule?

Compare this song with the first article of the Apostles’ Creed. For what is God praised here?

He is our Creator and Provider

Remember, the 24 elders represent the Church (all true believers). So, if you used these verses to establish a “purpose statement” for our congregation, how would it read?

We live to give glory to our God. Example of 1 Corinthians 10:31.

Our hymns often use imagery and symbolism echoed from the Bible.

Example: “Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty.”

Verse 2 begins: “Holy, Holy, Holy! All the saints adore thee, casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea.”



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