

## Session Four: The Heavenly Council

Revelation 4-5



**Description** Manuscript in the Badische Landesbibliothek, Karlsruhe, Germany  
Codex Bruchsal  
Shows Christ in *vesica* shape surrounded by the "animal" symbols of the four evangelists.

**Date** ca. 1220

## The Throne in Heaven

Revelation 4: <sup>1</sup>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 it. <sup>3</sup>And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian. A rainbow, resembling an emerald, encircled the throne. <sup>4</sup>Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them 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. Before the throne, seven lamps were blazing. These are the seven spirits<sup>1</sup> of God. <sup>6</sup>Also before the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal.

### Big Picture: "God Judges the Great City" Revelation 4-18

- The Heavenly Council (4 & 5)
- Seven Seals & Seven Trumpets (6-11)
- The Great Ordeal (12-14)
- The Seven Bowls (15-16)
- Last Days of Babylon (17-18)
- "After this" 4:1
  - 1-3 "What is" (cf. 1:29)
  - 4-22 "What will be"
  - Past, Present, Future (4:8 cf. 1:4, 8; 21:6; 22:13)

### The Throne room of the Universe

- A. The Vision
  - a. Door to the Vault of Heaven (cf. Ezek. 1:1)
  - b. Prophetic Call Narrative (See 1 Kings 22:19; Amos 3:7; Isa. 6)
- B. The Throne (Ps. 47:8)
  - a. Used more than 40 times in Revelation

- b. God's Sovereignty
  - c. The Chariot Throne (Merkabah)
    - i. Sinai Ex. 19:16-20
    - ii. Ezek. 1:4, 13, 14, 24
    - iii. Psalm 18:7-14
  - d. Flashes of Lightning (Ex. 19:16, Job 36; 30-32; Ps. 18:13; Ps. 77:17-18;)
  - e. The Rainbow (Gen. 9:8-17; Ezek. 1:28)
- C. The Other Thrones
- a. Shared Rule
  - b. Polemic of the 24 Star gods of the Babylonian Pantheon or Dominician's royal court
  - c. 24 Heads of the Levite Priesthood and Ministry (1 Chron. 24, 25)
  - d. Twelve & Twelve (7:1-8; 12:1; 21:12-14)
  - e. Elders, White Robed (6:11; 7:9 and Crowns (2:10)
  - f. Heavenly Representatives of the People of God on Earth (see Eph. 2:6)
- D. The Seven Spirits of God
- E. The Sea
- a. (1 Kings 7:23-26; 2 Chron. 4:6)
  - b. Chaos (Gen 1:1-10; 7:11)
  - c. God rules the sea Job 38:8-11
  - d. No More Sea 21:1
  - e. Tiamot -- Dragon

*When on high the heaven had not been named,  
Firm ground below had not been called by name,  
When primordial Apsu, their begetter,  
And Mummu-Tiamat, she who bore them all,  
Their waters mingled as a single body,  
No reed hut had sprung forth, no marshland had  
appeared,  
None of the gods had been brought into being,  
And none bore a name, and no destinies  
determined--  
Then it was that the gods were formed in the midst  
of heaven.*

**--Enuma Elish: "When on High . . ." The  
Mesopotamian/Babylonian Creation Myth**

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<sup>1</sup> Or sevenfold Spirit

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 his wings. Day and night they never stop saying: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come."<sup>9</sup> 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 by your will they were created and have their being."



Martin Crampin, *The Vision of the Four Living Creatures*, 2008.

## God the Creator of All

- A. The Four Living Creatures
  - a. The Four Evangelists (Irenaeus AD 170)
  - b. Ezekiel's Cherubim (Ez. 1:6, 10; 10:16)
  - c. The Rulers of the Four Types of Creatures (Seraphim of Isa. 6:2)
- B. Sanctus Anthem
  - a. Holy
  - b. Eternal Nature of God
- C. Worship –
  - a. Worthy
  - b. God Created All things
  - c. Romans 1:18

## The Scroll and the Lamb

Revelation 5: <sup>1</sup>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. <sup>2</sup>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 triumphed. 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 slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. He had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits<sup>2</sup> of God sent out into all the earth.



## The Christological Redefinition of Winning

### A. The Sealed Scroll

- a. The Book Reveals the End of the Story
- b. Evokes:
  - i. Law and the Prophets;
  - ii. The Scroll of Ezekiel (2:10);
  - iii. The Book of Life<sup>3</sup> (Names of the Redeemed see Rev. 3:5, 13:8; 17:8; 20:15; 21:27);
  - iv. The Book of Judgment<sup>4</sup> (deeds are recorded for future

<sup>2</sup> Or sevenfold Spirit

<sup>3</sup> Ps. 69:28; 139:16; Dan. 12:1; Luke 10:20; Phil. 4:3; Heb. 12:23

<sup>4</sup> Dan. 7:10

judgment, see Rev. 20:12)

- c. God is a God of the Word
  - i. Gen. 1, John 1, Heb. 1
  - ii. He speaks and it comes to be.
  - iii. He reveals his will for us to follow (Deut 29:29)

### B. The Seals

- a. Conveys a guarantee
- b. Places one's reputation on the line.
- c. Conveys Inaccessibility
- d. A Mystery waiting to be Revealed

### C. The Great Lion of God

- a. Lion of Judah (Gen. 49:9-10)
- b. Root of David (Warrior-Messiah of Isa. 11:1)
- c. Weeping of God's People as they have been lambs

for the slaughter (Ps. 44:11, 22... but here comes the King! (cf. Rom. 8:36)

### D. *Agnus Dei*: The Lamb of God

- a. Not: First the Lamb, then the Lion
  - i. The Past-Perfect tense: Joy to the World the Lord *is* Come!
- b. Or, Lamb to some, Lion to others
- c. The lamb is really a lion!
  - i. Both/And
  - ii. A Powerful Lamb
- d. The Lion is really the Lamb
  - i. A Humble King
  - ii. Represents the ultimate power of God—Conqueror

**Revelation 5:** <sup>7</sup>He came and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne. <sup>8</sup>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 the saints.

<sup>9</sup>And they sang a new song:  
"You are worthy to take the scroll  
and to open its seals,  
because you were slain,  
and with your blood you purchased men for  
God  
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."

<sup>11</sup>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 sang:  
"Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain,  
to receive power and wealth and wisdom and  
strength  
and honor and glory and praise!"

<sup>13</sup>Then I heard every creature in heaven and on  
earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all  
that is in them, singing:  
"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.

## Universal Victory and Praise

### A. Elders Worship

- Spokesmen (5:5; 7:13)
- Representatives
  - i. Harp: Song of the Saints
  - ii. Incense: Prayers of the Saints
  - iii. Definition of Saint—Holy Ones

### B. The Elders' "New Song"

- God is Worthy of New Songs<sup>5</sup>
- Song of Redemption and Atonement
- Song of the Goal of the Redeemed
- Kingdom of Priests to Serve God Ex. 19:6 (Rev. 1:6, 5:10, 20:6)
- To Reign on Earth (Gen 1:28; See Rev. 2:26-27; 20:4; 22:5)

### C. The Chorus of Heaven

- Hosts of Heaven (cf. 1 Chron. 29:10-13)
- Praise: "The one gift that we who have nothing to give to Him who possesses all." –W. Barclay

### D. The Chorus of Every Creature

- Phil. 2:9-11
- To God and to the Lamb (See Rev. 6:16; 17:10)



<sup>5</sup> Isa. 42:10 Ps. 33:3; 40:3; 96:1 98:1 etc.