**Notes for verses to Revelation – 4-5**

Chapters 4 and 5 together present a vision of God’s heavenly glory. God on his throne is surrounded by his court, the heavenly host of saints and angels. While the focus of the heavenly majesty and glory is on God the Father, the purpose of the vision is to demonstrate the enthronement and exaltation of Jesus Christ, the Lamb who was slain.

It is also a picture of glorious worship in God’s heavenly court.

**4:1 What did John see?**

John not only saw through the door into heaven, he probably entered heaven through it.

John was given the special grace of looking into heaven, which is ordinarily closed and forbidden to the human eye, to view the heavenly glory of God. The opened door thus signifies a particular divine revelation.

**4:1** **What did John hear?**

With a loud sound, like the blast of a trumpet.

**What does the trumpet blast mean?**

Pay attention!!! The Lord gives John a signal to look and listen.

**4:1** **What does the invitation to “come up here” remind you of?**

Similarly, Moses was called up on Mount Sinai to receive divine direction.

Some interpreters find the rapture of the church in this verse. John, however, is not describing an event in the distant future, but what happened on a particular Sunday in the first century on the island of Patmos.

**4:1** **What will he see?**

The phrase “what must take place after this” is all that John will see about what will take place before Christ comes again. It also will give some glimpses of what heaven will be like.

**4:2** **What state was John in?**

In a state of heightened spiritual awareness. Possibly John experienced what Paul testifies to in 2 Cor 12:1–4. There the apostle declares that he was “snatched up” into paradise and heard things that were not proper for a human being to repeat. The prophet Ezekiel seems to have had a similar experience (Ezek 8:1–3; see also 11:1)

**4:2** **What is the first thing John sees?**

The depiction of God ruling from his throne in heaven is a regular feature of the OT (e.g., Ps 47:8).

The throne is not a physical piece of furniture, etc. Rather God here condescends to the forms and terms of this present world in order to convey to us, as far as possible, some idea of the realities of heaven, which, in their full glory and splendor, are inconceivable to us now.

**4:3 How does John describe the appearance of the One on the throne?**

John says that the majestic person on the throne was in appearance like the precious stones of jasper and sardius. The identification of these precious stones with modern equivalents is somewhat uncertain. However, the impression which they imply and reflect is unmistakable. The light flashes through and from them with beauty and brilliance is the same majesty and glory of God flash forth from the appearance of the One seated on the throne. John does not mean to say that God in his glory looked like the essence of these stones. Rather, the appearance of God’s glory reflects the brilliance of God’s presence and person in the same way that precious stones reflect the rays of the sun. One cannot look directly at the sun, but one can, by way of the reflection of its rays through precious stones, catch a glimpse of the beauty of the sun’s light.

The three precious stones—jasper, sardius, and emerald—were also part of the breastplate of Israel’s high priest (Ex 28:15–21). There were twelve stones in all, representing the twelve sons of Israel. Wearing these stones, the high priest represented Israel before God as he offered sacrifice for atonement (Ex 28:29; 1Chr 6:49). These stones suggest God’s mercy toward his people. In the ancient world, especially among the Greeks but among others also, jasper and sardius and the emerald were especially prized.

**4:3 What does this rainbow symbolize?**

Literally the word means “a circle of light, a fiery-like ring.” It was used to refer to a “halo,” and for the “iris” of the human eye. The ancient Greeks called the rainbow an “iris” because they imagined that the rainbow encircled the entire earth. Though only half of the iris could be seen, they still called the rainbow a “circle.

The rainbow is the symbol if peace. The surrounding radiance of the bow represents the grace of God.

**4:4 What is around the throne?**

Twenty-four (24) Thrones – As blessed conquerors they sit upon thrones.

Twenty-four (24) Elders – Representatives of the 12 tribes of Israel plus the 12 apostles of Jesus. Together, they represent all God’s people from both OT and NT times.

Dressed in white – The wearing of white garments by God’s people, both on earth and in glory, is a common theme throughout Revelation. These robes of Christ’s “blood and righteousness” are the Christians’ “glorious dress,” reminiscent of the wedding garment in the parable in Mt 22:11–12 (cf. 1 Jn 1:7).

Crowns of Gold – The crown that the Lord Christ wears signifies *victory,* and because of that victory the merited glory of godly *royalty.* Likewise God’s saints, when elevated, will wear crowns which signify the victory that the Lord Christ won for them and shares with them. Each Christian is promised the crown of life (2:10).

**4:5 What proceeds from the throne?**

“Lightning flashes and noises and thunders” (4:5a) come out of God’s throne. They are reminiscent of the thunder and lightning that accompanied God when he met Moses and the children of Israel at Mt. Sinai (Ex 19:16). These demonstrations of natural forces are symbolic of and a part of God’s majestic and creative power.

**4:5 What stands before the throne?**

The seven lamps are identified with “the seven Spirits” first mentioned in the trinitarian endorsement of 1:4–5.

**4:6 What lies before the throne?**

The glassy sea was like crystal, that is, transparent and quiet. This is quite the opposite from the usual raging sea of chaos and evil in the OT. The sea that is before God’s heavenly throne has been tamed, conquered, and stilled. Its crystal-like stillness reminded John that what had separated him from the glory of God’s presence, the turmoil of his sin and God’s judgment, is now stilled and quiet. Though the sea reminds John of his separation from God, he is no longer afraid, for the sea is quiet; he knows that Christ has conquered Satan and taken away the raging torment of his (John’s) guilt and the fearsome wrath of God’s judgment. Now all is peaceful between himself and God, despite the fact that the sea reminds him he is not yet in that glory while still on earth.

**4:6-8 What is seen in the midst and around the throne?**

4:6 – The four living creatures are an exalted order of angelic beings. They fulfill the godly role of attending God in his heavenly majesty. In particular they lead the heavenly host, angelic and saintly, in singing the praises of God.

4:6 – By being covered with eyes shows that nothing escapes their attention. In the OT God’s eyes suggested his knowledge or his concern for his people.

4:7 – The lion is an example of fortitude and power, the ox an example of strength, the man represents intelligence, and the eagle perfect marksmanship. These four living being excel in all these qualities. They are dauntless, mighty, and wise. Excelling in power and wisdom as they do, they are superior to man. They never fail in their

missions. As cherubims they occupy the superior rank among angels. These God uses to carry out his counsels on earth.

If we regard the four living ones as agencies of God’s universal providence, we may take the lion as representing the wild places of the earth, the ox as representing the cultivated parts, the human countenance as representing the cities and towns, and the eagle as representing the whole expanse of air and sky.

4:8 – The six wings were symbols of speed in the doing the providential will of God. Perhaps the number six finds its proper explanation in Is. 6:2, two to cover the face in reverence, two to cover the feet in modesty, and two for flying.

**4:8 What do they proclaim without rest, day and night?**

This echoes the worship Isaiah beheld in the heavenly temple. This threefold acclamation points to the three persons in the Holy Trinity. This vision of heavenly worship is the basis for the Sanctus of the Communion liturgy.

When Christians die they are in presence of Jesus.

The liturgy of the Lord’s Supper begins with the Preface, which acknowledges that heaven and earth are joined in Christ. What we must always remember when we go to the Lord’s Supper is that we commune with Christ and that wherever Christ is there in heaven. And this communion includes all the saints who died and risen in Christ. This includes the saints of old and our family members. After someone dies, it is good to think of them at the Lord’s Supper, knowing that as we commune here below at the table of the Lamb and sing His songs, we join them since they are simultaneously communing at the marriage feast of the Lamb in His kingdom that knows no end, and singing the songs of the Lamb with angels and archangels. In Christ, in that great mystery of our union with Him, we joined to all who are joined to Him. (Heaven on Earth – The gifts of Christ in the Divine Service – Arthur Just pp. 211-213)

**4:9-10 When the creatures offer glory, honor, and thanks to God, what happens?**

Lying prostate before someone was a common posture for worship in the ancient world.

As an act of worship the twenty-four elders cast before God’s throne their golden crowns, indicating that they share in Christ’s victory only because of God’s mercy and grace.

**4:11 Why do the twenty-four elders deem God worthy of glory, honor, and power?**

Here, the One on the throne is praised for creating all things. Later, the triune God will be praised in similar terms for Christ’s redemptive work (5:9-13). Creation is one of “the chief articles of our Christian faith.

View slides 1-8 of the power point presentation of lessons chapters 4-5 at this time as a review and visual sense learning.

**5:1 What did John see in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne?**

We have reason to say that the scroll contained a full statement of “things which must be hereafter,” for we see the unfolding of events with the opening of each of the seven seals. Such a scroll, then, in the hand of the Almighty, is a symbol of God’s omniscience.

Like the stone tablets of the OT covenant law (Ex 32:15; see Eze 2:9–10). The fibers of a papyrus scroll run horizontally on the inside, which makes writing easier than on the reverse side (where the fibers are vertical). It implies that God’s plan is comprehensive and complete.

The scroll in John’s vision is sealed with *seven seals.* Seals offer security and keep the contents safe from any unlawful usage. In Mt 27:66 the tomb of Jesus was sealed in order to secure it. One first century source says that the tomb of Jesus was sealed with *seven* seals. It was a practice in Roman civil law for a last will and testament to be sealed with seven seals.

**5:2 Who enters the picture?**

Though John does not explicitly say so, it is likely that this angel is of a different rank from the living creatures described in 4:6-7. Different angels fulfill a variety of functions in Revelation (cf. 1:20; 4:6-7; 7:1; 9:15; 20:1).

**5:3-4 How did John react when it seemed none was worthy to open the scroll?**

The word for “wept” means to sob, wail aloud. It is saying “I began to weep and continued to do so for some time.”

**5:5 What did one of the twenty-four elders then say to John?**

The elder introduces John to the victorious Lamb by the titles that describe Jesus by way of his human nature. “The Lion who is from the tribe of Judah” and “the Root of David” refer to Christ’s human origin and descent. From the tribe of Judah the Messiah would come and the lion was the symbol of his messianic royal reign and power He would be a direct descendant of David and as such would be the everlasting King upon whom all the nations would place their hope for salvation.

**5:6 What did John see?**

Jesus, the Lamb who was slain. The victory is won by Christ the Lamb, in his death on the cross and his resurrection. It is a victory that is shared with his faithful followers, the people of God.

By his wounds and scars he is forever known. Isaiah 53:5b, “…by His wounds we are healed.”

Jesus previously said that He shares a throne with His Father. Here, however, He is described as standing before God’s throne. Accordingly, many interpreters understand this scene as involving a coronation or investiture of authority. One may see here a glimpse of what occurred in heaven at Christ’s ascension.

The victorious Lamb lives and He exercises total power on earth (cf. Mt 28:19), as symbolized by the “seven horns,” and by means of the “seven Spirits” he is omniscient, all seeing and all knowing. In the OT the “horn” is a symbol or metaphor of power on earth in human affairs.

Closely connected with the horns are the “seven eyes” (Rev 5:6), by which the exalted Lamb now knows and sees all things.

View slides 9-10 of the power point presentation of lessons chapters 4-5 at this time as a review and visual sense learning. (The seals are from 5:2.)

**5:6-7 What did the Lamb do?**

Only the chosen one of God, the Lamb, could open the scroll. This means first of all that the entire destiny of the human race and its history is under the lordship and control of Jesus Christ. Humanity is *not* under the guidance of some mindless evolutionary force and is not subject to the ambitions and works of people, but rather it is under the will and power of God as now exercised by Jesus Christ.

**5:8-9a What happened when the Lamb had taken the scroll?**

When the Lamb had thus taken the scroll and had been enthroned at the right of God, the heavenly host (as represented by the four winged creatures and the twenty-four elders) fell before the Lamb. The elders made preparation to worship him with harps and golden censer-like bowls full of incense. The censers of incense symbolize the prayers of the saints as they rise to the throne of God. Psalm

141:2 states, “May my prayer be set before you like incense; may the lifting up of my hands be like the evening sacrifice.” Comment on Psalm 141:2 says, “Clouds of fragrant incense rise to the heavens, signifying prayers pleasing to God.”

What was most important was that the worshiper had a repentant heart. Psalm 51:17: “My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise.”

**5:9 What they proclaim in this new song?**

Christians throughout the ages have joined in the celestial singing described here. In our generation, numerous Lutheran hymnals have a musical setting that includes the very words of this canticle (e.g., “This is the Feast,” LSB 155).

With the singing of the hymn of praise to the Lamb “we enter into one of the greatest scenes of universal adoration anywhere recorded.” In fact, we can even say that this scene of adoration of the Lamb is the greatest such scene in all of the biblical writings, for it is through the worship of the Lord Christ that the heavenly Father receives his highest glory from his saints (cf. Jn 5:23; 8:54).

**5:9-10 Why did they deem the Lamb worthy?**

The Lamb is worthy to receive “[all] the power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing” (5:12): he ransomed for God with his blood a people from all quarters of the human race.

The people purchased by Christ are now the “kingdom” of God and serve as his “priests” on earth. The royal priesthood of all believers is a royal-priestly reign of God’s kingdom here on earth in which his people are involved.

Not a reference to any millennial reign, for the reign of God’s people on the new earth will last forever, not for only a thousand years. “His kingdom will never end” (Lk 1:33).

**5:11 What did John then see and hear?**

The whole heavenly host, saints in representative fashion and all the angels, worships and adores the Lamb now enthroned at the right of the Father. All the glory and honor and worship that was given to God the Creator (4:11) is now given in equal manner to the victorious and elevated Christ (5:12).

**5:12 What were they saying?**

Christ deserves the wealth of all honor, embodied here is seven aspects symbolizing fullness. Because John records the very words of the angelic worship, the earthly Church is able to join in “with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven” (LSB Altar Book, p. 161)

**5:13 What does John hear next?**

Depicts the fulfillment of the prophecy that “at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth” (Phil. 2:10).

**5:14 What happens then?**

Except for the One on the throne (the Father; v. 1) and the sevenfold Spirit (v. 6) everyone in heaven and earth is worshiping Jesus.