

## Session 07

## The songs of Creation and Redemption Revelation 4-5

### 1) The Song of Creation Revelation 4

**“After these things”.** The context is the vision of the glorified Son of Man and His messages to the churches. John has seen Jesus from his position as a persecuted disciple on earth and is aware of the imperfections of the churches and their vulnerability to persecution, seduction, and the various temptations and trials energised by Satan.

Suddenly John sees another dimension of reality, hitherto unavailable to him – **“I looked ...”**

**“Voice ... like a trumpet ...”** c.f. 1:10 – the voice of Jesus Himself, **“Come up here ... and I will show you ...”**

Jesus invites John to see events on earth from the perspective of Heaven, where things look different. This pattern is repeated in Revelation.

**What is happening in Heaven explains what is happening on earth and makes sense of it. Note “Must take place ...”**

**The voice of Jesus results in an intensification of John’s vision – “... in the Spirit”.** He is now oblivious to other sensory input, unlike Stephen, Acts 7:55-60.

**“Behold, a throne set in Heaven, and One sat on the throne”**, c.f. Psalm 47.

**This is the central message of the vision, as it is the central message of the Gospel**, Mark 1:14-15, c.f.

Isaiah 40:9-11, 52:7-10. John is not seeing Heaven in a literal sense, but in symbolic fashion. It is not a “physical description” of Heaven but a revelation of spiritual reality as over against the apparent situation as seen from the world that John inhabits – where Caesar and Satan have their thrones, 2:13, 12:9. God’s throne is mentioned 17 times in chapters 4-5. News reports do not highlight this truth!

- **On the throne. The description of the One seated there is awesome – God the Father.** It is not a physical description – that is not possible, John 1:18, Ex. 33:18-23, 2Cor. 4:6, 1Tim. 6:13-16, Isaiah 6:1-3, c.f. John 12:39-41. The symbolic pictures communicate something of Who He is in His majesty and glory – not to promote curiosity but to inspire worship. Amazingly it is His purpose to share that glory with His redeemed people, 21:11, c.f. 2Cor. 3:18.

- **Holy purity.** Like a jasper (probably diamond, 21:11 – clear as crystal).
- **Holy judgement.** Like a sardius stone (red like a ruby).
- **Mercy. The appearance of an emerald rainbow encircling the throne**, Gen.9:12-17
- **Glory**, Rev. 10:1, c.f. Ezek. 1:26-28.

- **Around the throne. Twenty four thrones for twenty four elders.** Probably they symbolise the 12 patriarchs of Israel and the 12 apostles, representing the faithful people of God, 3:21, 5:10, Luke 22:28-30, 1Tim. 2:12.

**Clothed in white**, 3:5, 6:9-11, 7:9, 14, 19:7-8, 14 – imputed and also practical holiness.

**Golden crowns** – not the victor’s wreath of previous chapters, but kingly crowns signifying rank and position and glory.

- **From the throne. Lightings, thunders, and voices.** Like the Theophany on Mt. Sinai, Exodus 19:16, 19, 20:18-19, Heb. 13:18-2, 25-29.

- **Before the throne. A sea of glass, like crystal.** c.f. Ex. 24:9-11, Rev. 15:2.

- **Seven lamps of fire – the seven Spirits (seven fold Spirit) of God. The Holy Spirit.**

- **In the midst of the throne and around the throne – four living creatures.**  
The symbolism is from the visions of Ezekiel – 1:4-25, 10:1-22 (where they are also called cherubim). **The living creatures/cherubim are the close attendants of God’s throne and His glory,** guardians of His holiness, and swift to do His will, moving instantly in any direction that He chooses. They live in the midst of God’s holy fire, and are covered in eyes, all seeing and alert. **Probably they are best understood as a very high order of angels.**

**The cherubim guarded the way to the Tree of Life** following the great rebellion, Gen. 3:24. They were **symbolically represented on the Ark of the Covenant**, in the Holy of Holies, the immediate presence of God Exodus 25:17-22, and were **embroidered on the curtain guarding the way into that most Holy Place**, 26:31-34, and to be **carved on the doors in Ezekiel’s vision of a renewed Temple**, 41:17-26.

**Their four faces probably symbolise strength (Lion), service (Ox), swiftness (Eagle) and intelligence (Man).**

**One cherub was missing**, Ezekiel 28:1-16, and appears in Revelation as the arch enemy of God and His people. **He has been cast down from Heaven to earth with his army of fallen angels**, Rev. 12:9, c.f. Luke 10:17-18, John 12:27-33. Man had been placed in the Garden to tend and to guard it, Gen. 2:15. **Adam sided with the corrupt cherub, giving him access. God appointed another cherub, 3:24, to guard the way to the Tree of Life**, with all the attendant dangers the independent, rebellious man, would eat of it and fuel his independence with power.

### **The cherubim and the elders engage in constant worship of the One Who sits on the throne.**

This is not in response to a demand from the throne but a spontaneous outpouring from creatures who behold the majesty of the Creator God. It is their pleasure and joy to worship and adore Him. It happens again in response to fresh revelation of the wisdom and greatness of God, 5:8, 7:11, 11:16, 19:4.

- **The Living Creatures** – c.f. Isaiah 6:1-3. They are acutely aware of the holiness of God – **Holy, Holy, Holy. This, more than anything else, defines the uniqueness of God**, c.f. Deut. 6:4, Isaiah 40:24, Zech. 14:9. He is the LORD of Hosts/Almighty. He is self-existent and without rival. Satan is a mere creature.
- **The Elders respond with their worship of the Creator before whom their honour and station is as nothing**, c.f. 1Chron. 29:10-14. God is worthy of all praise and worship because He has made everything. He did not consult anyone. He did it through His own wisdom, Psalm 104:24. The root of so much of the chaos and disorder in our modern society is that we have lost the knowledge and awareness of the Creator God, Rom. 1:18-32.

## **2) The Song of Redemption**      Revelation 5

**Rev. 4 has revealed the throne of God, unchallenged and supreme. But how does that relate to the broken creation?**

**John is now a man of two worlds.** He knows the world of suffering, violence, persecution, the imperfection of the churches, and the malice and power of Satan. Now he has seen the throne of God where everything is secure and perfect. **How do these worlds connect?**

**John sees the Creator holding in His right hand a scroll written on both sides** – it is filled with the purposes of God for His creation.

**It contains seven parts or episodes in the yet unfulfilled purpose of God. But it is sealed with seven seals – unavailable.** This is no ordinary scroll – it is not mere information. **When it is opened the contents will happen in real time.**

**It requires someone to open it** – someone with the Key of David, 3:7, **someone Who can be trusted to carry out the purpose of the Creator** – someone Who is “The Amen, the Faithful and True Witness”, 3:14.

A strong angel calls out to all creation for such a person. **Angels do not qualify for they are not part of human history.**

**God restricted himself to act through human response** – He set man over the works of His hands, Gen. 1:26-28, Psalm 8.

The angel is strong, but **strength is not the issue. The quest for power is actually at the root of the problem.**

**“Who is worthy?” The issue is faithfulness to the Creator and His purposes. Who qualifies for this? – Apparently nobody!**

**John is beside himself with grief – loud wailing.** Must this situation persist with no resolution, bound up in a sealed book?

**God chose a fellow human to comfort John** – one now fully redeemed and enjoying the near presence of God.

**There is one human who has qualified, c.f. Phil. 2:5-11.**

- **The Lion of the tribe of Judah.** This connects with an ancient prophecy, Gen. 49:8-10.
- **The Root of David. This is an unusual description. In the prophetic Scriptures He is described as a shoot / branch, growing out of the root/stem of Jesse,** Isaiah 11:1, and c.f. 53:2, Zech. 3:8-9, 6:12-13.  
**Rev.22:16 describes Him as the root and offspring of David,** c.f. Psalm 110:1, Luke 20:41-44, and Micah 5:2. **He is both!**

**He has prevailed.**

**Of the entire human race He, and He only, has prevailed in doing the Creator’s will without deviation and at the cost of His own life.** He knew that the issue was not power but trust, faithfulness, and obedience. His life was a faithful witness to the character of God and His purpose for His creation. It was vividly revealed in the Garden of Gethsemane and in His trial before Pilate, representative of the power of Rome (the current monster), see Luke 22:41-44, Heb.5:7-9, John 18-19, Hebrews 2:5-11.

**John looked and behold - A Lamb! He is simultaneously in the midst of the throne and in the midst of creation.**

- **As though it had been slain,** Isaiah 53:7, John 1:29– **now obviously very much alive,** John 20:27.
- **Seven horns – symbolic of power.**
- **Seven eyes – the seven Spirits (seven fold Spirit) sent out into all the earth – omniscience/wisdom, - sent from the throne,** 1:4, 4:5. He has the Spirit in fullness, Rev. 3:1, John 3:34, Luke 4:14.

**With confidence and authority He took the scroll from the right hand of the Creator. The problem is solved!**

**There follows an outpouring of worship.**

- **Harps are instruments with which to express joy**
- **Bowls of incense represent the prayers of the saints – they are part of the process by which this has come about.**

## The new song – the song of redemption

- **The song of the Living Creatures and the Elders.**

**They understand the reason why Jesus qualifies for the task. The Lamb who was slain** carried through the purpose of God through self sacrifice. **They have been redeemed to God (the Creator).** The second part of the song could only apply to the human part of the choir, as they represent the whole of redeemed humanity. **Jesus is truly the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.** They have been constituted as a kingdom of priests, c.f. Exodus 19:4-6, 1Peter 2:9-10 – to draw near to God in prayer, John 16:23-28, Heb. 10:19-23, and to reign with Jesus, the glorified Man, on the earth.

**The Lamb is worthy to take the scroll and open the seals.**

- **They are joined by a multitude of angels.** They have seen, in the Gospel, a demonstration of the many sided wisdom of God, Eph. 3:8-11, 1Peter 1:12, Luke 2:8-14, Heb. 1:6, Luke 22:43, 24:4-7, Acts 1:9-11, 1Tim. 3:16.  
**Again the emphasis is on the Lamb who was slain.**

**The Lamb is worthy to receive – He did not grasp for any of these things. He can be entrusted with them.**

- **Now all creation sings the song – not just angels and humans.**  
**Creation, broken by sin, had no solution to the problem, v3. God, through His Son, has found a way.**  
So, all creation will find its redemption and renewal, Rom. 8:18-25, and raises a song of praise to the Creator (Father) and the Lamb (Son).
- **The Living Creatures say “Amen” - deep satisfaction with the response.**  
**The Elders fell down and worshipped, having witnessed the wonder of this scene, c.f. Gen. 24:12, 21, 26-27.**