

Living Word Fellowship Church
An Expository Explanation of Revelation Chapter 4

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Part III

A. General Description:

The churches enjoyed the church they created while ignoring Christ headship. Christ describes this when He told the story of the owner of a vineyard in. In that context the son of the vineyard was killed. In a similar manner the son in this case was not heard or respected when He came and talked to workers in the vineyard (Luke 20:8-23; the people in the church represented by the seven churches). No matter what chapter 4 portrays, Christ day in court will be when every knee bows.

This is a fulfillment to what was said in Philippians 2:8-11; “Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (NASU)

B. Worship in heaven (9-11):

1. **Background information:**

a) With the introduction of the four living creatures, we have the first of twenty hymns, as they might be called, sung by various heavenly groups throughout the book of Revelation. Five of them are in these two chapters prefacing the opening of the seals. The first two are hymns to God: one sung by the living creatures ascribing holiness to God (4:8) and the other by the twenty-four elders acknowledging God as Creator. The opening words of the first hymn remind us of Isa 6:3, technically known in ancient hymnology as the Trisagion. The third and fourth are hymns to the Lamb, sung by the two groups just mentioned, acknowledging that the Lamb is worthy to open the book (Rev 5:9, 10; 5:11, 12). The fifth hymn is sung to both God and the Lamb by “every created thing in heaven, on the earth, and under the earth” (v. 13), and ascribes to them blessing, honor, glory, and dominion.

b) These four living creatures are a combination of the seraphim of Isa. 6 and the creatures of Ezek. 1 and 10. These creatures are not named. In Rev. 4:7, each creature had four faces, corresponding to the four of Ezekiel's vision. These creatures before the throne praise God and give glory and honor to Him. Psalm 148 shows how all creation praises God; what a tragedy that a sinful world refuses to praise Him.

2. An Explanation of Apocalyptic Depictions (vs. 3):

a) The Creatures:

- The presence of the four creatures (symbolizing creation) before God's throne teaches us that He is in control of creation, and that He will keep His promise to one day deliver creation from the bondage of sin (Rom. 8:19–24).
- The creatures praise God for His holiness (4:8) and the elders praise God for His worthiness as Creator of all things (4:11). Seeing God in His holiness and Creator-sovereignty is indispensable for appreciating the upcoming judgment of the contrasting evil on the earth. The praise of a holy God results in seeing how bad it is on earth and how glorious it is in heaven.
- They cast their crowns before the throne, singing: this action acknowledges that God is the supreme King, who rules over them. Crowns represent their power, authority to rule as kings, and so here they surrender their power to God. The verb has the forceful meaning of "throw," and it seems better to represent this meaning than to say something like "lay" (REB) or "lay down" (TNT). The Greek verb translated *singing* by RSV is "saying" (TEV). In many languages this clause will be rendered as "they throw their chiefs' hats down in front of the high chief's chair."

3. Summary of 4:9-11:

a) So here "Holy," as He "who was"; "Holy," as He "who is": "Holy," as He "who is to come." He showed Himself an object of holy worship in the past creation of all things: more fully He shows Himself in governing all things: He will, in the highest degree, show Himself so in the consummation of all things. "Of (from) Him, through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory forever . Amen." In Isa. 6:3 there is added, "the whole EARTH is full of His glory." But in Revelation this is deferred until the glory of THE LORD fills the earth, His enemies having been destroyed [BENGEL].

b) Rest is a physical necessity of earthly life, but in heaven it is unnecessary. There is constant worship day and night. Holy, holy, holy recalls the similar heavenly scene in Isa. 6:1–10. Was and is and is to come speaks of the eternal nature of God, past, present, and future. The elders cast their crowns before the throne, symbolizing the willing surrender of their authority in light of the worthiness of God as Creator. Because

no one but God can create, He alone should be worshiped and recognized as sovereign.

c) Psalm 148 shows how all creation praises God; what a tragedy that a sinful world refuses to praise Him.

d) *“And whenever the living creatures”*: this is how the Greek text begins the sentence that runs through verse 11. The word whenever seems to contradict the preceding statement that they never stop their praise. Verses 9–10 show that their praise is done repeatedly, but not continuously. Each time the living creatures sing praise to God, the twenty-four elders prostrate themselves and worship Him.

e) To *“give glory”* to God means to proclaim that God is “glorious,” that is, majestic and wonderful. To *“give ... honor”* to God is to proclaim that God is great, famous, worthy of praise. To *“give ... thanks”* is to thank, to declare one’s gratitude for benefits received. For *“glory”* see 1:6; the word translated honor appears also in 4:11; 5:12, 13; 7:12; 21:26, always associated with *“glory”*. The noun translated thanks appears elsewhere in Revelation only at 7:12.

f) *“Who lives for ever and ever”*: this is an expression used by God (see Dan 4:34; 6:26; 12:7). It may be necessary to say, “who never dies” or “whose life will never end.” The word “immortality” is used in 1 Timothy 6:16.

g) Lay their crowns – Acknowledgment that God alone is worthy of ultimate praise and worship

h) The basis of the praise is twofold: (1) God’s creation is based solely on His will and proceeds from it, and (2) God’s “power” is revealed through creation, as demonstrated by the praising recognition of His created beings. V 11b has its closest parallel in Nebuchadnezzar’s concluding hymn of praise in Daniel 4 in the LXX and Theodotion (see below on the use of Daniel 4):

i) It is interesting to note that the name of God used here is “Lord God Almighty” (4:8). History tells us that this was the official title used by Emperor Domitian, who was responsible for the persecutions that sent John to Patmos. Men and women may honor themselves, but the day will come when everybody—great and small—will acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord of all.

4. The Meaning of the Text:

Even though five of the seven churches have drifted from God, the Lord is still in control, has all power and will be worshipped whether the churches praise Him or not. *“As soon as He was approaching, near the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the miracles which they had seen, shouting: “BLESSED IS THE KING WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD; Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!”* (Luke 19:37-40; NASU)