



THE SCENE IN HEAVEN

Revelation 4-5

Intro: John was commissioned by the Lord to "write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after these things" (1.19). His first task was to write letters to the seven churches of Asia, letters that encouraged, rebuked and exhorted the saints to overcome so that they would receive the Lord's promised rewards. However, as we come to chapters 4-5 the scene changes. Our attention is no longer drawn to the Lord's people on the earth, rather we are given a glimpse of the Almighty on His throne in Heaven. John is beckoned to enter so that he can be shown "what must take place after these things" (4.1). As we pointed out in our first lesson, the events symbolically described in this book do not point to the distant future, but are "things which must soon take place" (1.1). John will be shown many things to come, but first he describes the glorious scene around the throne. We want to consider these chapters and focus on what they teach us about the Almighty and the Lamb.

What We Learn About The Almighty (chapter 4)

1. He is absolutely holy.
 - a. As seen in His appearance (vs. 3). We must remember that what John sees is a vision and not the exact image of the Almighty. Hence, John frequently uses the word "like" in describing what he sees. We need not press an exact interpretation onto what it means for the Almighty to look "like" a jasper stone and a sardius. It may be that those stones, the jasper being clear (see 21.11) and the sardius being red, may represent His dual nature of being both righteous and just (see Psalm 89.14-15). The presence of the rainbow probably refers to His covenant faithfulness (see Genesis 9.12-13).
 - b. The lightening and thunder that proceed from His throne (vs. 5). Reminiscent of the scene at Mt. Sinai (Exodus 19.16-19).
 - c. The sea of glass (vs. 6). No reason or purpose is given for the sea of glass, but it is interesting to note that it is gone in 21.1. It would seem that the presence of the sea emphasizes God's holiness, as this sea of glass forms a barrier between Him and anything profane. However, in the new heavens and earth there is no need for this barrier.
2. He knows what is happening and what will happen (vs. 5). Before God's throne

are the seven Spirits of God. As we noted in 1.4, this does not mean that there are 7 different spirits, rather the number indicates a completeness. (Note Isaiah 11.2). Not only does the Spirit reveal God's will to men, but also searches the hearts of men (Psalm 11.4-5; cf. Romans 8.27; 1Cor. 2.10). God's knowledge is complete.

3. He has the power to act (vss. 6-8)
 - a. The four living creatures bear resemblance to the Seraphim described in Isaiah 6.2-3 and to the Cherubim of Ezekiel 1, 10.
 - b. Again, we should not seek to give an exact definition of each feature, but taking the description as a whole it denotes beings of great power, insight and the speediness to go and do anything the Lord commands.
4. He helps His people to overcome (vs. 4).
 - a. Surrounding the throne are 24 thrones, with 24 elders sitting upon them. 12 is a common symbol for God's people. The number 24 seems to convey the idea that these are the redeemed of both covenants. 12 tribes + 12 apostles. These are now united in Christ and praise and worship God. "This view seems to be further confirmed by the victorious throng who sing the song of Moses and the Lamb (15:3), thereby combining both groups into one and acknowledging their redemption as being from God," (Hailey).
 - b. Recall that Jesus had promised that those who would "overcome" would sit with Him (3.21), be clothed in white (3.5) and reign with Him (2.26-27). Clearly, these 24 elders represent God's people who have overcome and received what was promised!
5. He is deserving of all honor and praise (vss. 8-11). Whether angelic being or redeemed man, both cannot help but give "glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne." This adoration is due to the nature of He who sits on the throne (vs. 8) and because of how He has acted on behalf of His people (vs. 11).

What We Learn About The Lamb (chapter 5)

1. He is absolutely necessary for God's will to be executed (vss. 1-5).
 - a. John's attention is brought to a book the Almighty holds in His right hand. It is "written inside and on the back", probably indicating a completed message. However, it is sealed so it awaits revealing.
 - b. This introduces a problem, since none are found worthy to open the book and reveal the will of God. The importance of Jesus is that only He can open the scroll; He is the crux of God's plan! The fact that He is described as "the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah" (see Genesis 49.9-10) and the Root of David (Isaiah 11.1,10; cf. 2Sam. 7.11-14) emphasize that Jesus fulfills God's eternal purpose which was revealed to the prophets.
2. He rules (vs. 5). The description of the Lion of Judah and the Root of David emphasize His rule.
3. He lives, even though He was slain (vs. 6). The regal description of vs. 5 causes us to anticipate the entrance of a majestic King on the scene, but what we are shown is a sacrificed lamb. However, this lamb now stands and His horn and eyes

indicate His power and insight.

4. He will execute the Father's will (vs. 7). What transpires in this verse didn't happen at the exact time that John was watching. Remember that this is being done in a vision, 4:2. What we see here transpired when Christ ascended into heaven after accomplishing His task here on earth. "Now He was in a position to take the purpose or plan of God out of His hand, send forth the Holy Spirit to reveal this truth, and Himself carry out the purpose to its ultimate consummation," (Hailey).
5. He is deserving of all honor and praise (vss. 8-14). Just as the angelic beings and redeemed man had praised the Almighty, now they praise the Lamb for who He is and what He has accomplished. They sing a "new song" because they have now witnessed the sacrifice the Lion of Judah freely made. This had never happened before, therefore their song of praise and worship was a "new song". But now the entire host of heaven and of creation join in praising both the Almighty and the Lamb!

All Hinges On This Scene

1. The previous two chapters contained the Lord's messages to His churches. The fact that we now see this picture of heaven is essential to understanding those letters.
 - a. Shows why His people are called to holiness. In almost every letter, the Lord sought to correct errors in His people. He did this because "those whom I love, I reprove and discipline" (3.19). He did this because as we've seen in these chapters, the Almighty and the Lamb are absolutely holy, and that is the calling of His people.
 - b. If He overcame, we can too! The Lord beckoned the saints in each church to "overcome". As we noted in chapter 5, the Lord has overcome even though it meant His sacrifice (vss. 5-6). Jesus did not tell His churches that overcoming would be easy, but He did say that it was possible. He overcame, and those in Him will as well!
2. As we proceed in the book, it will be revealed that even though victory is assured, difficult days await God's people. The picture of Heaven in chapters 5-6 was essential to establish before moving forward. Now, God's people can know that no matter what happens...
 - a. God knows what is transpiring.
 - b. God reigns, even though it may seem as if He doesn't.
 - c. His people can be assured that in Him, they will overcome.