

Revelation: Lesson 4 Part 1 Review

As we come to Revelation 4 we need to realize that we are coming to the third introduction of the book.

Introduction 1 = chapter 1. We learn just who this Jesus is exactly and there we saw the lines between Jesus and the Son being blurred. If a church is to endure a trial it must understand through **fear** who Jesus is, God.

Introduction 2 = Chapters 2-3. Here we learned what a church must do to be the Kingdom God meant for it to be. If the church is to endure a hard trial it must know itself. In chapters 2-3 we **hear** what the church must do to survive.

Introduction 3 = Chapters 4-5. In this last introduction we get to **see** where the church ought to put its focus if it will survive persecution, worship of God.

Chapters 4-5 bring with them a slew of symbols that are easy to get caught up in and lost in. Because we only made it through chapter 4 in this session, I will only cover those symbols.

First we talked about numbers:

Since the time of Moses, numbers have had more meaning than what they count. There is a weight to them. By this comment, I mean there is meaning beyond the mere number. And many of them have their roots in the first chapter of the Bible.

3 = Number of God

4 = Number of Creation/where man dwells

6 = Man's number/man was created on the sixth day

7 = number of completeness, sometimes we use the word perfection.

10 = the complete or perfect number for order instead of chaos.

12 = the number for God's people.

24 = the number of God's people worshiping God.

40 = Period of testing.

Now, these numbers may not always have this added weight to them. Sometimes we are meant to simply count and come up with the number. This is the conventional use of numbers in the Bible, like when the apostles counted the number of people that Jesus fed, 5000. However, sometimes these numbers are meant symbolically like I've laid out above. And yet occasionally they are used rhetorically. Meaning there is no number actually given but in a list of things the number of things listed may be a number with meaning or weight to it. A perfect example of this is Revelation 5:13 "And every created thing which is in (1) heaven and on the (2) earth and (3) under the earth and on the (4) sea . . ." Here John lists out four descriptions of created places. With four

being the number of creation, John is adding the rhetorical number four to what he is saying that all of creation praise the creator.

After we spoke on this, we broke into groups and had each group read a chapter and pull out the symbols they could identify. Here are the symbols I found that were worth investigating.

1. Door to heaven – an invitation like Jacob’s ladder to see beyond the created order into the heavenly realm.
2. Voice like a trumpet – a herald
3. In the Spirit (?)
4. Throne – this word is used 17 times in chapters 4-5. 38 times in chapters 4-22. All the impending judgments of Revelation 6-16 come from God’s throne. God is spirit and has not butt to place in a chair nor does he have any arms to place on arm rests. This is an anthropomorphism (which is much easier to spell than to say 😊).
5. Jasper, Sardius and Rainbow of Emerald. These are three stones that are precious. They all originate from Exodus 28 where they are used in the chest plate of the High Priest (which contained 12 stones). See Exodus 28:13-28. Together these stones intensify the light around God and represent a new creation of only the finest materials. Think streets of Gold.
6. 24 Elders. The predominate interpretation of this symbol are the 12 tribes of Israel and the 12 apostles. I’m a little uncomfortable locking into that perspective for two reasons. (1) it is stretching a symbol beyond what it might intend. That is very specific if it is true. But let’s not forget that John is not part of the 24 elders yet he is one of the 12. Again, this may be taking the symbol too literally. (2) The understanding of this interpretation of the symbol is that it is God’s former people, the Jews and God’s new people the Christians worshipping together. My problem with this is that there is not a rejection of Israel and an acceptance of Christians which are primarily Gentile. Rather what Paul tells us in Romans 11 is that the believers in Christ are Israel. There is no distinction between the two in God’s eyes because Israel is God’s people. There is no separation between Israel and Church. To God, it is his Kingdom and his people are those who live as if he is their King. I much rather would just take a step back and say that the 24 elders are simply the representatives of all of God’s people.
7. Flashes of Lightning and Rolls of Thunder. See Ex. 19:16 ff, Psa 18:12 ff, and Psa. 77:18. This language is used to express the presence of God.
8. The Seven lamps. We are told these are the seven spirits of God, which I’ve already explained means the Holy Spirit.
9. The sea of Glass in 4:6 is one of my favorite symbols. It probably is a reference to the physical Red Sea that God demonstrated control over when he parted it. This was then represented in Solomon’s Laver (1 Kings 7:23-26) placed on the Temple grounds for the priests to use. It was a large basin

of water. However, because symbols are powerful and can draw many meanings like that of peeling an onion, it can also represent God's control over chaos. Sea is often the representative of chaos and evil. Think back to Genesis 1:2 when the Spirit of God hovered above the chaotic waters. Jesus draws on this imagery when he walks on the water and then calms the storm. He has control over chaos.

10. 4 Living Creatures – these come straight out of Ezekiel 1:5-21 and Isaiah 6:1-7.
11. 4 creatures covered in eyes. This represents God's omniscience. God sees all therefore God knows all.
12. The lion = ruler of wild animals
13. The calf = ruler of domesticated animals
14. The human = ruler of people
15. The eagle = ruler of air.
 - a. Some have suggested that these four creatures represent the four gospels and their depiction of Christ.
 - i. The lion = Matthew depicts Jesus as the messianic lion of Judah.
 - ii. The calf = Mark depicts Jesus as the sacrifice
 - iii. The human = Luke depicts Jesus' humanity.
 - iv. The eagle = John's depiction of Jesus overcoming of Rome.
 - b. This is probably too specific of a symbol for these four creatures especially since they are straight out of Ezekiel 1:10 before the gospels were written but nonetheless an intriguing thought.
16. Six wings
17. The chant of the seraphim - see Isaiah 6:3
18. The chant of the 24 elders.