

1

Revelation 4 – 5

HEAVEN AND THE THRONE



talkabout

1. What do you imagine when you think of heaven?



investigate

Revelation was originally written by the apostle John to seven churches (see Revelation 1 v 4), many of which were facing persecution. In chapters 4 and 5 John shares with them, and us, the first glimpse of heaven that God has given him in a vision. It's rather surprising and perhaps a little difficult to get our heads around. John is attempting to describe the indescribable! We should aim to enjoy the whole picture rather than pore over every detail.

Read Revelation 4

2. Who is the main focus of this chapter and how do we know?

3. How many times is God's throne mentioned?

DICTIONARY

Jasper (v 3): type of gemstone.

Twenty-four elders (v 4): powerful angelic beings representing all God's people. "Twenty-four" recalls the 12 tribes of Israel and the 12 apostles of the church.

Seven (spirits) (v 5): seven symbolises completeness. The spirits might be angelic beings or the Holy Spirit.

Sea (v 6): for the Jews this was a place associated with chaos and fear.

- Why is it mentioned repeatedly, do you think?

4. What things are we told about God by the four living creatures and by the elders (v 8, 11)?

5. How does the imagery in this chapter reinforce the message that God is:
- beyond physical description (v 3)?

- merciful (v 3; compare Genesis 9 v 15-17)?

- powerful (v 4; check out “twenty-four elders” in Dictionary on p7)?

- holy (v 5; compare Exodus 19 v 16-23)?



- sovereign (v 6; check out “sea” in Dictionary)?



explore more

optional

▶ Read Isaiah 6 v 1-5

What similarities are there between Isaiah’s vision and that of John?

How does Isaiah react, and why?

How does Isaiah’s reaction challenge our attitude to God?



apply

6. How is this description of heaven and of God different from the typical images we come across? Complete the table.

Common views of heaven	What Revelation 4 teaches us
Heaven is a fairy tale	
Heaven is about the future	
Heaven is filled with white fluffy clouds	
Heaven is about me and my desires	
If we live a “good life”, we will go to heaven	



- How do people live in light of these typical views? How might they live differently when they understand the truth of Revelation 4?



getting personal

God the Creator is on the throne of heaven. What areas of your life don't reflect this fact?



investigate

The scene is set. We have a glimpse into the throne room of God, who is seen in all his glory. But there is a problem...

► Read Revelation 5

No one is worthy to open the scroll, which is in the right hand of God (so not very accessible given the description in the previous chapter!). The scroll represents God's purposes in judgment and rescue. The fact that it contains writing on both sides suggests that this is a complete and full disclosure (there is nothing missing). The opening of the scroll is important because it means that what is written there can take place.

7. Why do you think John weeps when no one is found who is worthy to open the scroll (v 4)?

DICTIONARY

The tribe of Judah (v 5): one of the 12 tribes of Israel—the one from which God's chosen King would come.

The Root of David (v 5): a descendant of King David, Old Testament Israel's greatest king.

Lamb (v 6): used in sacrifices in the Jewish tabernacle/temple for the forgiveness of sin.

Horns (v 6): symbol of power.

Harp (v 8): musical instrument associated with praise and celebration.



8. What is announced in verse 5, and what appears in verse 6?

- What is unique and striking about the king that John now sees on God's throne?

9. How do we know who this is? What do the following verses indicate?

- Genesis 49 v 1, 8-10; Luke 1 v 30-33

- John 1 v 29

- What do all these passages together tell us about him?



10. What does the “new song” in verses 9-14 tell us about who Jesus is and what he has done?



optional

explore more

▶ Read Hebrews 9 v 24-28

What has Christ done in the past (v 26, 28)?

What is Christ doing now (v 24; see also 1 John 2 v 1)?

What will he do (v 28)?

Christ's rescue of his people is far bigger than we often realise. Christ's people:

- have been saved from sin's penalty through Christ's death on the cross
- are being saved from sin's power as God works in them and Christ represents them before the Father's throne
- will be saved from sin's presence when Christ returns as King.

How does this help you to join in the songs of Revelation 5?



apply

11. How does what is described in this chapter affect the destiny of those who have been purchased by Jesus' blood?

- What about those who haven't?



- Think of one way in which that will affect how you live this week.

12. How can we give honour, glory and praise to Jesus in our daily lives?

- What do verses 10 and 12-13 suggest about how we do this?



getting personal

God the Rescuer is on the throne of heaven. In what ways does this encourage you today?



pray

Praise the God who is seated on the throne of heaven: God the Father and the Son—the God who is both Creator and Rescuer.

Re-read Revelation 4 v 11 and 5 v 9-10. To help you praise God, you might also like to use the words of Timothy Dudley-Smith's hymn: *Heavenly hosts in ceaseless worship* (see www.hymnary.org/text/heavenly_hosts_in_ceaseless_worship).

