

1. **Introduction**: John's current vision is of God seated on His Throne. At the end of last lesson, John began to describe the four living creatures he sees around the throne.

2. **Revelation 4:6b-8**: *And around the throne, on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind: ⁷ the first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with the face of a man, and the fourth living creature like an eagle in flight. ⁸ And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!"*

- The four living creatures were seen by Ezekiel in a vision where heaven opened to his view. He described each creature as having four faces – like a man, a lion, an ox, and an eagle.
- In John's description in these verses, one has the appearance of a man, another like a lion, then one like an ox, and the fourth like an eagle. What does this mean?
- One interpretation associates each creature with a gospel – the face of a man with Matthew which is focused on Jesus' humanity, a roaring lion with Mark focused on Jesus' power, an ox with Luke focused on Jesus as the suffering servant, and an eagle with John focused on Jesus' divinity and His ascension to heaven.
- Another interpretation asserts the four living creatures represent God's created world. Man is the most exalted among creatures, the eagle is the most majestic flying creature, the ox the mightiest among domesticated animals, and the lion is greatest among wild beasts.
- All four creatures embody and proclaim God's sovereign dominion over creation. Full of eyes, front and behind, means, they, on behalf of God, watch over the created order.
- These creatures appear to be angelic. Being full of eyes simply signifies their ever watchful, never sleeping, alertness to their duty. They see and perceive everything. Nothing evades them.
- Both these interpretations are attempts to make sense of these mysterious living creatures pointed out and described by John without further comment.
- The most important thing about these creatures appears not to be not their majestic splendor, and not who or what they represent. The most important thing is their message and what they are doing.
- John says that day and night, they never cease to say holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come.
- This seems to mean their every action is an expression of adoration and awe toward God. All beings in Scripture who directly witness God's presence spontaneously give Him worship.

- As exalted and magnificent as the four living creatures are, only God alone is worthy of worship. God is the eternal One, who was and is and is to come without beginning or end, the self-existent One.
- The key point of this chapter is that it is focused on communicating the greatness of God and the majesty of His throne.

3. Revelation 4:9-11: *And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever, ¹⁰ the twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever. They cast their crowns before the throne, saying, ¹¹ “Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.”*

- Whatever the 24 elders represent, they fall down and cast their crowns before God recognizing Him as the only one truly worthy of that kind of glory and honor. God is reason, purpose, and source for all existence. They know *“Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.”*
- God’s sovereignty and rule are eternal, never-ending. Our proper response is worship.
- We need to recognize who God is and what He has done in the past, is doing in the present, and will do in the future. Knowledge about God, without acting in accordance with His character and standing firm in His truth, leads to disaster.
- God is the author of all creation, the basis for all hope, the source of love, the standard for truth, the One who knows all things, the One who has unlimited power, the One who is always present with His people, the One who will bring all things to consummation in a manner consistent with His character and satisfying to His people.
- Holy, holy, holy is God. He is worthy of worship, sovereign in all things and over all things.
- In Chapter 5, the focus shifts from the Father sitting on the throne to the Son.

4. Revelation 5:1-5: *Then I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals. ² And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming with a loud voice, “Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?” ³ And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it, ⁴ and I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it. ⁵ And one of the elders said to me, “Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals.”*

- As the dramatic scene of the Father on His throne surrounded by worshippers ends, John sees a scroll in the right hand of the One seated on the throne. That scroll has writing on both sides and was sealed with seven seals.

- John, amazed at having seen heaven's throne room now narrows his vision to focus on God's right hand where he sees a scroll.
- In the ancient world, important documents were written on scrolls made of reedy papyrus or leathery parchment. The scrolls were often as long as 30 feet. It was rare for a scroll to be inscribed on both sides, usually done only to convey a profound message.
- The scroll in God's hand is written on both sides, signifying God's complete and unalterable plan for salvation and judgment. When the Lamb breaks the seals of John's scroll, great and terrible events of salvation and judgment occur (6.1–8.5).
- Ezekiel saw a similar scroll having both sides covered with ***“words of lamentation and mourning and woe”*** (Ezek. 2.9, 10). Revelation (10:1-11) John is given ***“a little scroll”*** to eat. He must ***“again prophesy about many peoples and nations and languages and kings.”***

5. **Ritual Scrolls**: For ritual purposes, such as the Torah, the Talmud specifically says that writing on the back side would invalidate the scroll.

- Legal documents closed with a listing of its witnesses, usually about six in number.
- The document was sealed shut, with hot wax poured over the threads that tied the scroll closed. Witnesses would press their personal seals into the hot wax, usually with a signet ring. The seals attested to the witnesses.
- No one could open the scroll without breaking the hard wax seals holding the threads in place. If the wax was broken, the seal couldn't be replaced without the signet rings of the witnesses. No one could tamper with such legal documents until it was time to publicly open them. The seals reserved the contents of the document for its rightful recipient.
- Seven is the number of perfection indicating the scroll is perfectly and completely sealed and secured. Daniel was given a scroll by God regarding the end days. He was told to seal up what was written. His words were to be sealed and hidden until the end days had arrived.
- OT eschatology begins with Genesis 3:15. It is an eschatology focused on the coming of Messiah who will fix the mess caused by Adam and Eve's sin. “End times” began when Jesus came. Not all OT prophecy concerned with end times has yet been fulfilled.
- But the beginning of end times was established with Jesus' arrival. Not all Jews of the time recognized Jesus as Messiah. To this day many Jews continue to await Messiah.
- Christians (both Gentiles and Jews) do recognize Jesus as Messiah and believe they currently live in “end times.” That end days had arrived was the signal that the time for unsealing the scroll has arrived. What had been concealed is now to be revealed.
- NT eschatology looks back at the fulfillment of OT expectations of Messiah but looks forward to completion of God's plan for humanity in Christ. The event that completes God's plan is termed the eschaton meaning the final event in human history.

- Though end times have begun, the end has not, the eschaton is yet to come. OT anticipation of Messiah has been realized, but the final gathering of a holy people who can and will live eternally in God's presence has not yet occurred. End times are both already and not yet.
- Who is qualified to open the scroll? At first no one seems qualified. John understands, if no one can be found to open the scroll, there will be no solution to correct the condition of fallen humanity. John weeps. As John weeps, one of the elders says, ***"weep no more," "The Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals."***
- Jesus Christ, Messiah, is the Root of David, the hope of Israel and all the world. Without the conquering Messiah, there would be no hope for fallen people to be restored to God.

6. Revelation 5:6-8: *And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.⁷ And he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne.⁸ And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.*

- John turns to look at what the elders had seen, expecting to see a majestic lion, the Lion of the tribe of Judah. But what John sees is ***"a lamb, standing as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes which are the seven spirits of God."***
- Think of it, the expected mightiest of predators replaced by a weak, helpless, lamb. But that is the way it is. Jesus has conquered not by force but through sacrificial love, not by annihilating His enemies, but by sacrificing Himself in suffering love. John 3:16-17.
- Jesus didn't come into the world like a lion conquering, judging, and overthrowing Roman oppression through strength as the Jews thought Messiah would do. John 3:17 says, ***"For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him."***
- Only through His death and suffering on the cross, paying the penalty for our sins, could anyone be saved. Remember the words of John the Baptist when he sees Jesus approaching to be baptized. Did he say, behold the mighty lion of the tribe of Judah?
- No, he said, behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.
- In the Garden of Eden immediately after Adam and Eve sinned, they realized they had disobeyed. They were afraid of consequences, and in their newly fallen nature, they were ashamed of their nakedness.
- They took fig leaves and attempted to cover themselves, but there was no way they could cover the changes in them wrought by sin.
- So, Jesus came into the world to enable Adam and Eve and all their descendants to cover their sins with His own blood.
- What is in the scroll taken from God's hand by the Lamb? We will see next time.