

The second major section of the book

- 4' – 8'
- The throne of God
- Worship
- The seven-sealed scroll
- Opened by the Lamb who is worthy

Vision of a heavenly place

- John is invited to look at earth from the viewpoint of heaven
- Heaven is a place where the glory of God is obvious

Now we come to a new major section of the book of the Revelation. The next section of the book runs from 4:1 to 8:1. Let us first of all try to get an overview of the entire section. John sees an open door. By the Holy Spirit he knows that he is seeing a doorway into heaven. He is invited to enter into heaven and he does so<sup>□1</sup>. There in heaven he sees the throne of God<sup>□2</sup>, the elders around the throne<sup>□3</sup>, and the special character of the throne itself<sup>□4</sup>. There also are living beings who are giving glory to God<sup>□5</sup>. The elders join in the worship of the living beings<sup>□6</sup> and sing a song about creation<sup>□7</sup>.

Then John's attention is attracted to a scroll in the hand of God<sup>□1</sup>. The question is asked: who can open the scroll<sup>□2</sup>? No one can be found<sup>□3</sup>, but then an announcement is made. The Lion of the tribe of Judah can open the scroll<sup>□4</sup>. The Lamb takes the scroll<sup>□5</sup> and a song of redemption is sung by the elder and the living beings<sup>□6</sup>. The entire world of the angels joins in the worship<sup>□7</sup>.

The Lamb opens the seals, the first<sup>□1</sup>, the second<sup>□2</sup>, the third<sup>□3</sup>, the fourth<sup>□4</sup>, the fifth<sup>□5</sup> and the sixth<sup>□6</sup>. Then there is a pause before the seventh seal is opened. Angels seal a multitude of God's people with a seal of protection<sup>□7</sup>. Then the seventh seal is opened<sup>□8</sup> and the section ends with an awesome silence.

**Revelation chapters 4–5 are a vision of a heavenly palace.** It echoes and takes up themes that are to be found in Isaiah 6, Daniel 7 and Ezekiel chapters 1–2.

**John is invited to look at earth from the viewpoint of heaven.** After his vision of the glorified Lord Jesus Christ, he is invited to ascend into heaven. <sup>1</sup>*After these things I looked and there in heaven was an open door! And the voice that I at first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, 'Come up here, and I will reveal to you what must happen after these things.'* John sees an open door in the sky (one can see almost anything in spiritual visions like these). After he has been invited into heaven he sees a throne. <sup>2</sup>*Immediately I became 'in the Spirit', and there before me was a throne set up in heaven, and someone was sitting on it.* <sup>3</sup>*The One who sat on the throne shone with the brilliance of precious stones, like jasper and carnelian, and there was a rainbow resembling the colour of an emerald, all around the throne.*

The first time we have the words 'after these things' it refers simply to a new phase of the vision. It does not mean that the events referred to are after the events of Revelation 1–3.

What is heaven like? **It is a place where the glory of God is obvious.** John sees God's authority as a king. Heaven is a throne-room. It is the location of God's sovereignty as ruler of the universe. The jewellery gives sparkles of intensely flashing light. The flashing light of the jewels speaks of God's holiness, majesty, purity. The rainbow recalls the story of the flood and God's grace amidst judgement.

□1 4:1-2a  
□2 4:2b-3  
□3 4:4  
□4 4:5-6a  
□5 4:6b-8  
□6 4:9-10  
□7 4:11

□1 5:1  
□2 5:2  
□3 5:3-4  
□4 5:5  
□5 5:6-7  
□6 5:8-10  
□7 5:11-14

□1 6:1-2  
□2 6:3-4  
□3 6:5-6  
□4 6:7-8  
□5 6:9-11  
□6 6:12-17  
□7 7:1-17  
□8 8:1

• *Heaven is the home of the entire people of God*

**Heaven is the home of the entire people of God.** <sup>4</sup> *And around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and twenty-four elders were sitting on them. They were clothed in white robes and upon their heads were golden crowns.* The elders represent the entire people of God. The twenty-four is a symbolic twelve plus twelve, speaking of the twelve tribes from twelve brothers who were the origin of Israel, and the twelve apostles who were the origin of the new covenant church. The vision pictures the entire people of God gathered around the throne of God. <sup>5</sup> *And from the throne went out flashes of lightning and noises and thunders. Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne; these are the seven spirits of God.* The lightning reminds us of what happened on Mount Sinai<sup>1</sup>. It speaks of powerful, destructive, swift, unexpected judgement, flashing from the throne of God's sovereignty. The Holy Spirit (symbolized by the seven lamps of fire) is before the throne of God. That is, he is ever ready to be the One who executes the Father's will. He is ready to act in his seven-fold fullness (the use of 'seven spirits' recalls Isaiah 11:2).

<sup>1</sup> Exodus 19:16

• *We must not press the details of these visions too literally*

We shall one day be taken to heaven ourselves. What is heaven like? The answer is here in Revelation. We must remember it is a vision. We must not press the details too literally. Yet at the same time these pictures help us to think about heaven.

• *The blessed hope is not 'going to heaven' but the public resurrection at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ in glory*

In the Bible the 'blessed hope' of the Christian is not dying-and-going-to-heaven. A lot of ideas about 'going to heaven' come from Greek philosophy and the ideas of the philosopher Plato. In the Bible the Christian's 'blessed hope' is the public resurrection at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ in glory. It is not what happens when we die. What happens at the end of history is a major theme of the Bible. What happens when we die is important but it is not so great a topic as 'the last day' and 'the blessed hope'. Heaven becomes our home when we die. It is the place where we enjoy the presence of God until the day when Jesus is fully glorified and the new heavens and new earth come into being<sup>1</sup>. But even in heaven we shall be waiting for the coming of Jesus.

<sup>1</sup> 2 Peter 3:13

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