

THE BOOK OF REVELATION  
"The Thrice Holy God"  
Revelation 4:6b-11

Introduction

1. Prior to the description of "the throne" is the call to John to "come up hither" (v. 1). This is the expression indicating the pre-tribulation Rapture of the Church (cf. 1:13; 3:10; 4:2; 5:5; 13:6; 19:11-21).
2. Following the Rapture call, the focus in this chapter is on the word "throne" (vv. 2-6, 9, 10). God's "throne" is the center, but there are "thrones" associated with His.
3. Relating this incredible emphasis are several prepositions. Consider: 1. On ( ) v. 2. 2. Round ( ) vv. 3, 4, 6. 3. Out ( ) v. 5. 4. Before ( ) vv. 5, 10. Taking these prepositions, a significant picture of God's Throne emerges.
4. Now comes what is "in the midst . . . and round about the throne" (v. 6b). These two prepositions state the creatures occupied the four sides of the throne and share an integral part of it. The translation "beast" implies ferocity, but vitality would be more appropriate, hence the preferred rendering "living ones." Here is the record about them:

1. THEIR NUMERATION v. 6

"Four" in Scripture is the signature of the world as "three" the signature of God. Think of four divisions of the race (Rev. 7:9), four empires (Dan. 7), four judgments (Ezek. 14:21). Certain rabbinical writings support this. The whole scene under heaven will be visited with judgment, hence the employment of the number "four." The judicial nature of God's attributes are demonstrated here through angels or men according to His sovereign will. So, these four living beings represent the judicial authority of the throne in action.

2. THEIR COMPARISON v. 7

The four living beings are likened ( ) to four creations. Similar likenesses are presented in Ezekiel (1:4-28; 10:1-22), in Numbers (2:1-2:39), and in Revelation (21:10ff). Here the creations represent different aspects of His attributes: The lion is divine majesty; the ox divine strength; man divine intelligence; the eagle divine swiftness. These all suggest God's faithful and full expression of operation toward man in a judgmental fashion.

3. THEIR QUALIFICATION vv. 6, 8

a. Action

This is signified by the six wings. Here is supernatural activity. By comparison, the creatures (Cherubim) of Ezekiel had four wings (1:4, 6), but the Seraphim of Isaiah had six as here (Isa. 6:2). Generally, Cherubim cared for the public governmental glory of God (Ezek 10) while the Seraphim cared for the holiness of God (Isa. 6). The living creatures of Revelation appear to be a combination (cf. vv. 8, 11).

b. Perception

Utilizing three prepositions (before, behind, and within) John speaks of spiritual perception of the governmental purposes of God inwardly, previously, and eventually.

4. THEIR EXPRESSION vv. 8, 9

It is noteworthy that the living ones exercise no relaxation in their happy worship of the Lord on the throne. They have ceaseless expression to Him. There is no imperfection in their service.

a. What They Say v., 8

- 1) About His holiness. This trisagion. is effective worship of the Triune God -- Father, Son,

Holy Spirit. The utter transcendence of God in His unspeakable purity is the opening doxology to God around the Throne.

2) About His Name. The ascription to God distinguishes Him as Lord (Jehovah the Covenant keeping God of Israel), God (Elohim the Creator-God of Israel) and Almighty (El Shaddai the all sufficient sustaining satisfying omnipotent God of Israel). These are dispensational notations for God as Father is relational and normally a N.T. designation for the Church.

3) About His Eternality. While denoting His ineffable being from eternity, the eschatological significance of Revelation is accented by the phrase "Who is to come" (present tense participle, cf. 1:4, 8). Think of it -- when Jesus returns, God returns (cf. Jn 14:9).

b. What They Give v. 9

In this statement of praise, there is a three-fold phrase -- glory, honor, thanks in that order (cf. v. 11 -- glory, honor, power). What a peon of praise to God! The vitality of God is viewed in the participles "sat" (actually "sitteth," present tense) and "liveth." Obviously He exists for eternity! Helpfully, "thanks" is given here (cf. Ro. 1:21; Phil. 4:6; 1 Thess. 5:18).

5. THEIR ASSOCIATION vv. 10, 11

At the expressions of the living ones, the 24 elders are prompted to respond:

a. What They Do

1) Fall Down. The terrors from the throne do not move the elders, but the expression of the living ones moves them directly. Their prostration is "before" God on the Throne.

2) Worship This verb ( ) means obeisance, reverence. Coupled with the previous verb, this is a far cry from the modern "worship" activity. Note this worship relates to the eternal God. No fleshly nonsense here.

3) Cast Actually the crowns (victor crowns cf. 2:10) are "thrown down" ( ) before the Throne. What was gained is given back to the Giver!!

b. What They Say v. 11

Here is the rationale for the "doing" of the previous verse.

1) Praise The words used are the same as those of the living ones, save for the replacement of "power" for "thanks" (cf. v. 9). Some texts expand the address from "O Lord" to "O Lord our God the Holy One." There is no question but that He is "worthy" to receive the offered praise.

2) Reason Why should God be worshipped with such powerful words as recorded? The reason is that the total universe, "the all things" ( ) are the creation of God. Who can ever deny the direct creative act of God IF he believes the Bible to be God's Word?

3) Purpose The full purpose is outlined. The creation of "the all things" were in the mind of God prior to actual emergence. Thus they "were created" (aorist passive ) . This verb tense points to an historical event (Genesis) and not a process (evolution).

Conclusion

The emphatic personal pronoun "Thou" ( ) with the verb "created" shows He alone is worthy. Creation is a reason for worship and not an apologetic discussion. Amen.