

September 14, 2010

REVELATION 4

THE ETERNAL LITURGY BEGINS!



¹After this I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven! And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this." ²At once I was *in spirit*, and behold, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne. ³And he who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian, and around the throne was a rainbow that had the appearance of an emerald. ⁴Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones were twenty-four elders, clothed in white garments, with golden crowns on their heads. ⁵From the throne came flashes of lightning, and rumblings and peals of thunder, and before the throne were burning seven torches of fire, which are the seven spirits of God, ⁶and before the throne there was as it were a sea of glass, like crystal.

And around the throne, on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind: ⁷the 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. ⁸And 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!"

⁹And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever, ¹⁰the 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."

In the Bible, there are four extended, descriptive visions of God's enthroned, heavenly glory.

- Ezekiel 1:4-28
- Isaiah 6:1-8
- Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14
- Revelation 4:1 – 5:14

v. 1- "a door standing open in heaven" – representing the idea that John is blessed to see what is usually hidden and forbidden for human eyes

v. 2- "in spirit" second time we've seen this phrase!

v. 3- jasper, carnelian, and an emerald rainbow- the stones recall the 12 beautiful stones on the breastplates of the Levitical priests. The Greek word translated "rainbow" is "iris (like in your eye)" implying it is a full circle, like a halo.

v. 4- twenty-four thrones... twenty-four elders

24 = Apocalyptic symbol for All of God's People – 12 Tribes of Israel (OT) and 12 Apostles (NT)
+ Exodus 28:21; 39:14; Josh 4:1-3; Matthew 19:28!!!

Elders = Hebrew *zagen* is related to "beard," a word for tribal leadership: Exodus 24:9 – 70 reps for tribes
Greek *presbyter* means "elder/older person" and within the Church is the NT word for "Pastor"

- Acts 14:23
- Acts 20:17, 28 → "overseer" in Greek/Latin Episkopos (Like Episcopal), old English – Bishop
- 1 Timothy 4:14, 5:17
- Titus 1:5-9

- "clothed in white garments" – similar to the appearance of angels in the Gospels (Mt. 22:11-12)

Ask the vicar why pastors and babies being baptized wear white robes!!

- "golden crowns"- exemplifies the great reversal in Christ, see also- Zech. 6:9-15, James 1:12

v. 5 - Flashes of lightning, peals of thunder- Ex. 19:16, Ezek. 1:13, Psalm 18:12-15, Rev. 8:5, 11:19, 16:18
- Seven torches- they are the seven spirits of God (Isaiah 11:2, Rev. 1:4), as in the Tabernacle and Temple of Israel, the seven torches (Menorah) sits right before the Holy of Holies and God's mercy seat.

v. 6-8a - Sea of glass, like crystal- (Ezek 1:22) Normally the sea is a symbol of chaos and evil (Rev. 13:1, 21:1). Here it is peaceful and serene. Other celestial seas in heaven are found in 2 Enoch 3:1-3, Testament of Levi 2:7-8 The sea is mixed with fire in Rev 15:2 and gone in 21:1

- Four living creatures → four is the apocalyptic symbolic number of God's animate creation.
- The living creatures may be cherubim. This account is very similar to Is. 6:1-8 and Ezekiel 1:4-28, 10:1-8

Feature	Revelation	Ezekiel	Isaiah
Faces	1 face each	4 faces each	No mention
Wings	6 wings each	4 wings each	6 wings each
Eyes	Full of eyes	Ch1- wheels w/ eyes, ch10 full	No mention
Speech	Singing "holy" x3	Ez. 3:12-13, rumbling speech	Singing "holy" x3

WHERE DO CHERUBIM USUALLY APPEAR???

Genesis 3:24 – The entrance to God' holy garden has a Cherub.

Exodus 25:17-22 – Tabernacle and Ark of the Covenant have Cherubim as the mercy seat/throne of God.

1 Kings 6:23-28 – Solomon's Temple is decorated with Cherubim.

Ezekiel 41:17-20, 25- The visionary temple of the end times has Cherubim.

What do these verses tell us about Cherubim and their purpose in creation?

- "full of eyes" – God in His ceaseless vigilance watches over creation as represented by the four creatures

v. 8b - "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come" (Rev. 1:4, 8)

+ Isaiah 6:2, Ezek 1:18, 10:12

+ Trinitarian

+ Used in the *Sanctus* of our Communion Liturgy

- This canticle has been sung since the 3rd century and possibly even the late 1st!!!!

- Why does the Church sing this heavenly chorus before taking of the Lord's Supper?

v. 9-10 - "**whenever**... the twenty-four elders fall down...and worship him"

+ it's a habitual rite, falling down like our kneeling, sitting, standing at specific parts of the liturgy! (Ps 95)

- "cast their crowns" – this action demonstrates that they share in Christ's victory only by God's grace

- "for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created"- Everyone's a creationist once they get to heaven ☺

NEXT WEEK: THE CORONATION AND ENTHRONEMENT OF THE LAMB OF GOD!!

