

25. The Book of Revelation—4:9-5:1

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(11/18/20)

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We are currently in Revelation 4—which opens up with John the apostle (and the entire Church of Jesus Christ) being 'caught up' to heaven in the rapture.

John immediately begins to describe what he sees—as best as he can since he is seeing things that go beyond his comprehension and his ability to accurately describe them.

Revelation 4:2-11 (NKJV)

² Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and *One* sat on the throne. ³ And He who sat there was like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance; and *there was* a rainbow around the throne, in appearance like an emerald. ⁴ Around the throne *were* twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads. ⁵ And from the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices. Seven lamps of fire *were* burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God. ⁶ Before the throne *there was* a sea of glass, like crystal. And in the midst of the throne, and around the throne, *were* four living creatures full of eyes in front and in back. ⁷ The first living creature *was* like a lion, the second living creature like a calf [ox], the third living creature had a face like a man, and the fourth living creature *was* like a flying eagle. ⁸ *The* four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!" ⁹ **Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever,** ¹⁰ **the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying:** ¹¹ **"You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created."**

As the cherubim worship, the twenty-four elders (who represent the Church) join in, casting their crowns before the throne.

The Bible speaks of five crowns available to believers in Christ—

1. *The crown of **righteousness** is given to those who love His appearing (2 Timothy 4:8).*
2. *The crown of **life** is given to those who love Him (James 1:12).*
3. *The crown of **glory** is given for faithful service to Jesus (1 Peter 5:4).*
4. *The **soul-winners** crown is given to those who share their faith (1 Thessalonians 2:19).*
5. *The **martyr's** crown is for those who lay down their life for Jesus (Revelation 2:10).*

1 Corinthians 9:24-25 (NASB)

²⁴ Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but *only* one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. ²⁵ Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then *do it* to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable.

Revelation 4:11 (NKJV)

¹¹ "You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created."

"Created" not evolved (not 'theistic evolution')—created for God's will (pleasure).

Revelation 4:11 (KJV)

¹¹ Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

God doesn't exist to make *you* happy—you exist to make *Him* happy!

What pleases the heart of God is worship—worship was the purpose for which we were created (John 4:23-24)

You see, *everything exists for one reason—to please God by giving Him glory.*

Therefore, to the extent you please Him will be the extent to which you will fulfill your purpose in life and experience fulfillment and joy in the deepest part of your soul. True spiritual worship is *one* of the greatest if not **THE** greatest activity we can engage in, in our lives and churches.

To *worship* means "*to ascribe worth*" and is a contraction of the word "worthship".

It means to use all that we *are* and *have* (the greatest of which being the 'sum total' of our entire lives—Romans 12:1) to praise God and worship Him for all that He is and for all that He has done and will do (future promises fulfilled).

How do we worship—and understand, there is a right way and a wrong way?

The only kind of worship the Father is seeking, the only kind He will accept is worship in *spirit* and in *truth*—

John 4:24 (NKJV)

²⁴ God *is* Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

Notice how emphatic and definitive this injunction by Jesus is—"**must worship.**" There is no ambiguity, there is no room for compromise, or discussion or negotiation in the matter—this "*must*" is absolute and final.

The only kind of worship the Father will accept is:

1. **In Spirit**—which a person cannot do until they are first "born again" of the Spirit—

John 3:3 (NKJV)

³ Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again ['born of the Spirit'], he cannot see the kingdom of God."

Proverbs 15:8 (NKJV)

⁸ The sacrifice [worship] of the wicked *is* an abomination to the LORD, But the prayer of the upright *is* His delight.

No one, no matter how religious they are, can offer God acceptable worship if they haven't been born of the Spirit (a genuine born-again Christian).

And then once a person is born of the Spirit (saved)—they must also then worship God:

2. In Truth—according to the truth of God as revealed in His Word.

Matthew 15:8-9 (NKJV)

⁸ *These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me.* ⁹ *And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.* "

Romans 10:2-4 (NKJV)

² For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. ³ For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. ⁴ For Christ *is* the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

Self-styled forms of 'worship' are not according to the truth in God's Word—He never commanded or prescribed them—they are rooted in ignorance. Even as Jesus said to the Samaritan woman in John 4:22—"*You [Samaritans] worship what you do not know.*"

So, Revelation Chapter 4 has presented quite a scene—a glorious view of heaven!

However down on the earth "*storm clouds*" are gathering as the '**salt**' has been removed from the earth through the rapture of the Church.

Jesus called His Church 'salt'—

Matthew 5:13 (NKJV)

¹³ "You [plural--"*you and you alone*"] are the salt of the earth..."

In the ancient world salt was a very valuable commodity—the Greeks even went as far as to say it was divine (not really a 'big deal'—there wasn't much the Greeks didn't consider divine!).

The Romans said that nothing was more valuable than "sun and salt." Roman soldiers were actually paid with salt and if the man was a rotten soldier they would say, "*He's not worth his salt.*"

Now back in Jesus day salt had three main purposes or influences—and each of these apply spiritually to our influence as Christians upon those we come in contact with.

1. Salt created thirst

We Christians are to make people thirsty for the Living Water of Jesus.

2. Salt was used to season

It's our responsibility to add flavor to life—as life apart from Jesus can become routine, bland and boring most of the time.

The Psalmist said, "*Taste and see that the Lord is good*" (Ps.34)—but unbelievers will never desire to 'taste' if the people of God aren't living in such a way that makes people 'crave' what we have.

3. Salt retarded decay

Back in Jesus' day they had no refrigeration which meant meat would spoil and decay quickly—so they would rub salt on their meat to kill surface bacteria and retard decay.

Look, there's a lot of 'bacteria' out there in this world—a lot of *corrupting influences* in our society which are causing the decay of morals and decency.

We can see the effects of the process in the high divorce rate, in the disintegration of the family, corruption in government, in the number of murders, rapes, and other violent crimes and so on.

A corrupt society is bearing witness to the fact that the 'salt' (the Church) is not doing its work—and as Jesus went on to say in verse 13—

Matthew 5:13 (NKJV)

¹³ "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men."

If we who profess to be Christians aren't standing up and speaking out against sin, then just like salt that no longer retains its saltiness and is good for nothing—our Christianity becomes irrelevant and meaningless.

So many Christians are content to keep their Christianity confined within the four walls of their churches where it will remain hidden and ineffective in impacting the world outside the church.

I think that by calling His Church "**the salt of the earth**"—Jesus was referring mostly to our role in this fallen world as a preservative for good to retard the decay that the world's attitudes and values have on our society (which is why the world hates the Church and Christianity so much!).

Once the Church is gone (the 'salt' is removed) in the rapture, the world will begin to degenerate and decay rapidly into wickedness, idolatry and violence (as we will be seeing starting in Chapter 6)— but for right now we are still in heaven with John.

REVELATION CHAPTER 5

Revelation 5:1 (NKJV)

¹ And I saw in the right *hand* of Him who sat on the throne a scroll written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals.

As John looks at the throne of God, he notices something in the Father's **right hand**. In Scripture the right hand is the hand of authority, power, favor and control. As John looks more closely, he sees that what the Father has in His right hand is a **scroll**.

Scroll Historical Facts

If similar to other scrolls in John's day, the scroll described in Revelation 4 was:

- made of eight-by-ten-inch sheets of papyrus
- made from the inner bark of the papyrus reed that grew near the Nile River in Egypt on which ancient scrolls were written
- they were connected horizontally and wound around wooden handles
- the scrolls generally were rolled from both ends into the middle.

The Greek word for 'scroll' is *biblion*—the same word we get the word 'Bible' from which in Greek means 'book'—the Bible being the Book of books!

John is describing a scroll *not a book* as we would think of one—such scrolls were commonly used before the invention of modern-style books consisting of square pages that were bound together end to end and then rolled up.

Epistles the size of Jude, Philemon, and 2nd & 3rd John would all be written on one single piece of papyrus.

The Book of Revelation, on the other hand, would require a scroll fifteen feet long and the scroll of Isaiah would have been 45 feet long! Due to the coarse back of the papyrus, the 3, three-inch-wide columns of writing were penned on only the smooth side— however, here we see a scroll written on *both* sides and sealed with seven seals.

From what I understand, only really important documents were written on both sides—like wills and deeds.

And while Roman wills by law had to be sealed with seven seals—I believe this scroll is not a *will*, but a deed or contract.

Dr. Robert L. Thomas explains:

"This kind of contract was known all over the Middle East in ancient times and was used by the Romans from the time of Nero on. The full contract would be written on the inner pages and sealed with seven seals. Then the content of the contract would be described briefly on the outside. All kinds of transactions were consummated this way, including marriage-contracts, rental and lease agreements, release of slaves, contract-bills, and bonds. Support also comes from Hebrew practices. The Hebrew document most closely resembling this scroll was a title-deed that was folded and signed, requiring at least three witnesses. A portion of text would be written, folded over and sealed, with a different witness signing at each fold. A larger number of witnesses meant that more importance was assigned to the document."
(Explain a folded scroll and how it would have been sealed with 7 seals)

Jeremiah 32 provides a good illustration of the use of such a document.

Jeremiah 32:6-15 (NKJV)

⁶ And Jeremiah said, "The word of the LORD came to me, saying, ⁷ 'Behold, Hanamel the son of Shallum your uncle will come to you, saying, "Buy my field which *is* in Anathoth, for the right of redemption *is* yours to buy it.'" ⁸ Then Hanamel my uncle's son came to me in the court of the prison according to the

word of the LORD, and said to me, 'Please buy my field that *is* in Anathoth, which *is* in the country of Benjamin; for the right of inheritance *is* yours, and the redemption yours; buy *it* for yourself.' Then I knew that this was the word of the LORD. ⁹ So I bought the field from Hanamel, the son of my uncle who *was* in Anathoth, and weighed *out to* him the money--seventeen shekels of silver. ¹⁰ And I signed the deed and sealed *it*, took witnesses, and weighed the money on the scales. ¹¹ So I took the purchase deed, *both* that which was sealed *according* to the law and custom, and that which was open; ¹² and I gave the purchase deed to Baruch the son of Neriah, son of Mahseiah, in the presence of Hanamel my uncle's *son*, and in the presence of the witnesses who signed the purchase deed, before all the Jews who sat in the court of the prison. ¹³ "Then I charged Baruch before them, saying, ¹⁴ 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: "Take these deeds, both this purchase deed which is sealed and this deed which is open, and put them in an earthen vessel, that they may last many days." ¹⁵ For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: "Houses and fields and vineyards shall be possessed again in this land." '

One author writes—

"In the waning days of the southern kingdom, shortly before the fall of Jerusalem, Jeremiah's cousin Hanamel approached him. Hanamel was desperate to sell a field he owned in Jeremiah's hometown of Anathoth, not far from Jerusalem. Hanamel knew that once the Babylonian army conquered (actually, the Babylonians may have already occupied the land in question; cf. Jeremiah 32:2, 24–25), he would lose his plot of ground. Jeremiah, in obedience to God's command (Jeremiah 32:6–7), purchased the field in spite of its potential loss as a sign that the Babylonian captivity would not be permanent (Jeremiah 32:15). Jeremiah 32:6–15 records the details of his purchase.

We will continue this important concept next time and see how it fits into Revelation 5!

If you would like to know more about what it means to be a Jesus-follower—please reach out to us. It would be our greatest privilege to lead you into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

Want to know more? Click [here](#).

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