

The book 'The Revelation to John' is a complex and sometimes confusing 'otherworldly' piece of literature. There are many reasons for this including it being a vision, or dream; that it is written in a style called Apocalyptic literature [see also Daniel 10 for another example] so it isn't simply telling a story as the Gospels do, for example; it is also about the Eschaton, the end of days, which means it is written about the future, not the past. There are other reasons too, but you get the idea that this book isn't straight forward and to look at it in such a way doesn't do it justice or help our understanding.

The first thing to note in our reading is that John 'is in the Spirit' so what he is seeing is not of this world. Our reading begins with 'the four creatures'. Their appearance would do justice to a Hollywood sci-fi movie but, in John's vision, they are real beings, and their role seems to be as a form of worship leading. As they chant 'Holy, Holy etc.' [Vv 8] this prompts the 24 Elders [Vv 9] to respond to 'the one who sits on the throne'.

It is also important to note that all the numbers are significant for various reasons in Hebraic numerology.

Chapter 5 begins with 'the one on the throne' holding a scroll that has 7 seals [7 is the number of completeness, order, stability and holiness see Gen 2:1-3 e.g.]. The mighty angel asking who has authority to break the seals, has no name, but then, at this stage, neither has the one on the throne.

There is nobody who can open this scroll [Vv 5:3] until the 'Lion of Judah/the Lamb/Jesus appears [Vv 5]. Note the reference to the prophecy of the nativity 'the root of David [or Jesse]'.

The four 'creatures' [4 meaning authority, rule, also time and creation see Gen 1:14-19] along with the elders [24 meaning Heavenly worship, Priesthood etc.] gather around the Lamb who picks up the scroll.

After the Lamb has the scroll the creatures and the elders begin a new song of worship and praise [Vv 9-10].

Our passage, therefore, can be pictured almost as a service. It begins with praise and worship, goes into a time of confession asking, 'who is worthy' and then goes into more prayer, [Vv 8] praise and worship [Vv 9-10].

But, as you can see, even this small passage is open to much interpretation due to its visionary nature.

Read Revelation 4:8 – 5:10

1. I read somewhere that John was working in the salt mines as a slave and may have eaten some form of hallucinogenic mushroom which brought about this vision. It is an explanation, but a very worldly one and unprovable either way. Have you ever experienced 'something of God' that you can't explain or that others find unbelievable? Discuss.
2. We all have different expectations of heaven. Some think it will be constant worshipping, others being struck down in awe, and still more thinking it like a reunion of friends and loved ones. What do you think and why?
3. Our Elders are voted in at a church meeting. Who may these heavenly elders be? Suggest names and reasons.
4. The 'four creatures' have a very strange appearance, but nothing is without purpose. Why do you think these creatures look like they do? (See Ezekiel 1 v 5-10)
5. In Judaism the name of God is too Holy to be spoken hence the four-letter word YHWH translated as Yahweh. In Islam, when the Prophet's name is used it is always followed by 'Peace be upon him'. Are such rules helpful in worship? Are there such rules in Christianity? Discuss
6. How does our worship compare with that in our reading today?

Prayer Points;

1. Pray for students who are facing 'proper' exams for the first time in two years, and those who are struggling with school after the covid restrictions have been lifted – getting back to a 'normal' life.
2. Continue to pray for those refugees coming into Bexhill, for the Town council, RVA, other organisations and the local churches as we partner together to support them
3. Pray for church leaders on the ground in Ukraine and neighbouring countries providing safe havens for refugees. Pray that the Lord will sustain them and that many people will find respite and refuge through their hard work.

**Worship in Heaven
Revelation 4:8 – 5:10**

This week we are pausing from our series of 'The bigger picture' to have a glimpse, through the Revelation given to John, of the Throne Room of Heaven and the Worship that takes place there.

These Study Guides accompany the weekly teaching at our Sunday morning services and are for use in Connect Groups and personal study.

If you would like to join a Connect Group, please contact the church office 01424 730001

