

Living Creatures

Revelation 4:5-6



Although the class is titled Living Creatures, the information about the living creatures are not actually included in the two verses highlighted for our study. So we will just content ourselves with some preliminary remarks, otherwise we will not have anything to talk about next time!

We notice also that the words living creatures are not included in the King James Version of these two verses, so hopefully this will be explained as well.

Bro Dancun Mululu put together a helpful Language Dictionary, and there is an entry there for “Living Creatures”

It says: *4 LIVING CREATURES/4 BEASTS/CHERUBIMS=Figures of God glory /representation of the saints in the Kingdom Age /the division of the kingdom of Israel into 4 camps. 2Chron 25:1-5,Gen 3:24,Rev 4:4-6,Isa 6:1-6,Eze 10:1,12,1:5-10,Rev 5:8-11,Num 2:1-34,Ex 25:17-22.*

A study of these verses listed are very helpful in considering this subject.

Recap

Just to recap where we are... In chapter 1, John was told *19 Write the things (1) which you have seen, and the things (2) which are, and the things (3) which shall be hereafter; ...* - three natural divisions of the book are here described.

John wrote the seven letters, which were during his present day – These were the things *which are...*(2)

He described visions of future glory in chapter 1, and **also here in chapter 4**. These are the things that he *had seen* (1) and soon he would begin describing visions (3) *things which shall be hereafter* the grand plan and outpouring of history from the time of John, to the establishment of the Kingdom of God and beyond.

Here in chapter 4 John is shown an expansion of the vision given in chapter 1. He was even shown himself in this vision of future glory. Seeing himself in such a vision, must have been a tremendous encouragement to him. How many of us live in doubt, and although confident before God, and grateful for His grace and mercy, we cannot assume we will be extended the right hand of favour and invited into the Kingdom. That is for the Judge to decide. But for John to be given a vision where he, himself was actually in the presence of the Almighty, the Saviour, and all the saints- to be given that assurance that yes, he would be in the Kingdom, - what a wonderful way to end a long life!

We were introduced to what he saw in that vision on 28th November. An artist's impression of this vision is at the start of this introduction.

John was invited up to 'heaven' to look into the future. It must be remembered that this heaven is not talking about up in the sky. But 'up' signifies a higher moral and political standard than man is capable of – it is the Godly standard – free from sin that only belongs to God, and His son, and to the state of immortality. John was invited to have a look into this state, which belongs at the moment,

just to where God dwells, in heaven. He then, being in the vision in the state of immortality, would be shown things that it was not possible for a mere mortal man to appreciate. In fact he would be shown the complete sweep of history from his day stretching forward in time to the Kingdom of God on earth.

So we have to be elastic in our minds, to imagine John was taken forward in time, to look back – at being taken forward in time!

Before he would be shown all these amazing events in symbol – the things that *which shall be hereafter* (3), he was shown this tremendous vision of glory.

There before him was a scene striking in being so unusual. A throne, and one sat on the throne. There is no immediate description of The One, in verse 2, but the One is described partly in verse 6 ... *in the midst of the throne and out of the throne*... the image too complex and dazzling to immediately take in.

Around the throne was rainbow, which had an emerald hue. Brother Russel suggested that it was the throne that is emerald, and not the rainbow, which is understandable, but the Diaglott, NET, and Bro Thomas in Eureka focus on it being this rainbow which is no longer multi coloured but of a green hue. (See above picture at header) To explain this new colour, Bro Thomas says this:

The symbol of all this blessedness and glory in the day of rain is the "rainbow circling about the throne in appearance like to an emerald". The light green, the predominant colour, typifying the fertilising effect of the rain that forms the bow. The grass of the earth has become tender. It is then no longer tough and withered, and parched. The old grass has perished; and emerald fertility obtains on every side; for the covenanted glory of Yahweh covers the earth as the waters the area of the deep.

The significance of the rainbow was brought out in our last class, and needs not be repeated here, except to say it represents many individual characteristics, being fused together to make one glorious

heavenly crown – representing the fruits of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, patience, and hope, many into one, - God manifestation, seen in a multitude of people, being united in One through the operation of the Gospel in action. This being achieved, the overall impression is of this greenish tinge, pointing to the renewal and revival of all things under the righteous reign of Jesus.

Bearing in mind, Jesus message to John which was repeated to him seven times was still ringing in his ears... *To him that overcomes I will give...* (Rev 2,3)

The twenty four elders sitting on the 24 seats (*thrones*) around the Throne represent those who Overcame, and in overcoming and taking the advice of the Lord Jesus in the day of their flesh they proved themselves to be worthy Kings and Priests. Clothed in white, - similar language to Jesus in his parable speaking of the wedding garments, those once blotted with sin, but washed clean in the blood of the Lamb, through the answer of a good conscience and a pure heart. They are referred to as 24 Elders (1 Chronicles 24:1-19) – to remind us of the original design of the Kingdom of God on earth, with God as the King of the nation of Israel, how this Hope of Israel underpins salvation, all subsequent being adopted into this Commonwealth. In Chronicles the Elders are described as *Chief men of the House of their Fathers...* The symbolic 24 represent those who when dwelling in the House of their Father – The Ecclesia – have excelled in faith and endured and fought a good fight to the end.

Lightnings and Thunderings

5 *And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.*

This vision was not static, but a moving and living picture, and depicted the power of the immortal kings and priests under the authority of Christ the King, and the Divine Presence – in action.

The crowns the 24 Elders wore are (in Greek) *stephans* – a word which describes a wreath of evergreen laurel leaves wound into a circle and placed on the head as a symbol of victory – given to athletes after the Greek or Roman games.

The Elders were given these victory wreathes because they had Overcome! But were involved in Overcoming.

John sees this vision of a picture of authority and rulership – but ruling over what?

The thunders and lightnings and voices explain. So does the Old Testament:

Isaiah 30:30: And the LORD shall cause his glorious voice to be heard, and shall shew the lighting down of his arm, with the indignation of his anger, and with the flame of a devouring fire, with scattering, and tempest, and hailstones.

Zechariah 9:14-15: And the LORD shall be seen over them, and his arrow shall go forth as the lightning: and the Lord GOD shall blow the trumpet, and shall go with whirlwinds of the south. The LORD of hosts shall defend them; and they shall devour, and subdue with sling stones; and they shall drink, and make a noise as through wine; and they shall be filled like bowls, and as the corners of the altar.

This is descriptive of the subduing of the whole world by the armies of the Messiah, with the immortal saints the captains, generals and officers (Psalm 149:6-9) and the survivors of the seed of Jacob the foot soldiers, in the battle of Armageddon, and the vortex of war in the Catholic and Muslim hot beds of rebellion, to resolve the controversy of Zion. The Lightning depicts the sudden and unexpected speed (Matthew 24:27 and Luke 10:18) the universal revelation and manifestation of the General in Command – the literally shocking and stunning event, which will immobilise and transfix the world – (just as when one gets an electric shock and ends up trembling in a ball in the corner of the room)

Swiftly following this will be the thunders rolling – and voices... the edicts and laws, the judgements and ordinance (Micah 4:2) rumbling forth from Zion, fearful and painful to the unprepared. Overturning, and again, world economics, societies, traditions, submerging the feeble cries of worldly resistance (oh what about Christmas sob sob)

Seven Lamps of Fire

These words remind us of the seven eyes mentioned in Zechariah 3:9, 4:10 which symbolised omniscience and all seeing all power. But here we are told that these represent the seven Spirits of God. What are the Spirits of God? Scripture tells us that God is a Spirit. What about seven Spirits then? In His over-riding purpose of being Manifest in Multitude, God has elected to reveal Himself using the angels as ministering Spirits – see Hebrews 1:14. However, once the Saints have been given eternal, immortal life, they will be higher than the angels, in that they have served God of their own free will. They will aptly be described as the Spirits of God, as they have overcome the Flesh – their nature by the Spirit – the Word of God. Seven – being the symbol of completeness, the number being fulfilled, these Spirits are Lamps of Fire – emitting Light, but through Judgement, through the consumption of the temporal and the exercise of Divine Will.

Sea of Glass

6 And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: ...

Such will be the effectiveness of the Judgement of Fire, Lightnings and Thunderings, that the world over which the 24 Elders, will rule on behalf of the King will be subdued. No more will the world be described as *...the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt* (Isaiah 57:20) Because as we can read in Isaiah 17: 13 *The nations shall rush like the rushing of many waters: but God shall rebuke them,...* the continual thrashing of the waves upon the shore, a huge noise, but then quickly receding remind of the rise and fall of empires, and the continual march of the

history of man, characterised by warfare, but the tides are controlled by God, and it is the Almighty who controls the elements, reducing the empires and ceasing the endless warfare of man. As we shall see as we continue our study of the Revelation the state of the 'sea of nations' is regularly referred to. But in the time of the Kingdom of God, the nations will become calm, and settled, so still, it will be possible to see through, nothing hidden, the intentions of nations transparent, because their politics will be reflecting the clearness of the heavenly politics

Four Beasts

6 ... and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind.

Four beasts. The Greek is ζῶον *zoon* and so should properly be read as living creatures. (Greek for life is *zoe*). These living creatures are also symbolic of the immortal saints, - but focus on different aspects than the 24 Elders. The emphasis is on living! That is they were once dead, but have been raised to life from the dust where they were laid at the end of their tribulation, and days of probation.

Again this symbolising is taken from the Old Testament, for example Ezekiel 1:5 *Also out of the midst thereof came the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance; they had the likeness of a man.* Also 10:15: *And the cherubim were lifted up. This is the living creature that I saw by the river of Chebar.*

From these passages, it can be seen that the four living creatures have one origin, one unity, one purpose – a multitude manifest in one, or one manifest in a multitude.

In this vision of John, they were in the midst and around the throne – the same location where One was sitting. They were part of and connected to the One.

This representation of the Immortal Saints, is not one of Kings and Priests as the 24 Elders depict – of the ruling and administration of

the Kingdom , but instead these Living Creatures are designed to teach the attributes and features of the Saints which rendered them suitable to perfection for the purpose of God in subduing the nations, and empires, and guarding the way to the Tree of Life, - - that is maintaining the Holiness and Sanctity of the Name of God.

We will not trespass on the next verses and will leave the discussion about the number 4, but note that these Living Ones, or Cherubim as Ezekiel describes them, John sees them as being *full of eyes*. As the 24 Elders were associated with the seven lamps of fire, so too, these symbols are also connected with a complete and clear view of all that is going on- reminding us of the operation of God described in 2 Chronicles 16:9 *For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him.* Hebrews 4:13: *but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.*

It is not always easy to remember we are always in the presence of God, and He sees all that we do, through His Spirit. His angels able to easily access the furthest recesses and corners of the Kingdoms of men. So how much more in the Kingdom of God? When every village, town, and city will be ruled over by a Righteous Immortal One, able to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart through the Power of the Eternal!

Brother Terry