



The Revelation of Jesus Christ



Reflection Devotional – Week 3

Week commencing:

2nd Sunday after Epiphany | 16th January 2022



Letter of comfort in a dangerous world

WEEK 3:

Last Words on true Worship

Monday, 17th January 2022

Revelation 4:1-6

This week we are invited into the heavenlies to experience real, true worship. And what a host of new images accompany this vision. This week we will look at seven key images and what they mean. We will journey through chapters 4 and 5 of the book.

"Twenty-four thrones surrounded him, and twenty four elders sat on them. They were all clothed in white and had golden crowns on their heads" (Rev 4:4)

Practically the only places where the number twenty-four occurs in the Bible are the half-dozen mentions, here in Revelation, of the elders who surround the throne of God.

The number twelve, however, is frequent, and cannot help but recall the 'twelve tribes of the sons of Israel' and the 'twelve apostles of the Lamb'. These two groups are brought together in 21:12–14.

There we see the city of God, its gates labelled with the names of the former and its walls with the names of the latter. The two twelves are linked as those on whom the people of God in Old Testament and New Testament days respectively is founded. Since in any event they are given the title of 'elder', which is generally accorded to church leaders, we can scarcely doubt that the twenty-four represent the whole church of God, both before and since the time of Christ.

We learn from Ephesians 2:6 that 'in the heavenly places' (i.e. on the level of spiritual reality) we ourselves, the church still militant here on earth, are already seated with Christ. John himself has hinted as much in 1:5, 6.

How does the picture of you being seated in heavenly places with Christ alter your praying?



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WEEK 3:

Last Words on true Worship

Tuesday, 18th January 2022

Revelation 4:6

"In front of the throne was a shiny sea of glass, sparkling like crystal"

Some have suggested that this sea may be compared to a "sea", for the multitude of people in it, as many waters in this book signify people and nations, (Rev 17:15).

Others believe the sea represents the ordinance of baptism, of which the Red sea, through which the Israelites passed under the cloud, was an emblem; and which may be compared to a "sea of glass", for its transparency, it clearly expressing the sufferings, burial, and resurrection of Christ; and to crystal, for its purity; and to all this for its cleansing nature, as it leads unto the blood of Christ; and its being before the throne may denote its being the way of entrance into the Gospel church.

Others think the blood of Christ is meant, in allusion to the brazen sea in the tabernacle, which was made of the looking glasses the women brought, and for the priests to wash in, before they entered, (Exodus 30:18) (38:8), and to the molten sea in the temple, which was for the same purpose, (1 Kings 7:23).

Christ's blood is the fountain opened to wash in for sin, and may be compared to a sea for its abundant efficacy in cleansing from all sin; and it is this which makes way to the throne, and to him that sits on it; and is a special privilege enjoyed by those who come to Mount Zion, or into a Gospel church state; there is always this laver to wash their garments in, and make them white: though this sea, being of glass, seems not so much designed to wash in; and therefore rather I think by it is meant the Gospel, compared to a "sea" for the deep things of God and mysteries of grace which are in it; to a sea of "glass", because in it is beheld, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord

What do you think? What images does the crystal sea represent to you?



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WEEK 3:

Last Words on true Worship

Wednesday, 19th January 2022

Revelation 4:6b

"In the centre around the throne were four living beings, each covered with eyes, front and back". (Rev 4:6b)

The number four is repeated often throughout Scripture. Most theologians believe the four living creatures are symbolic of the created world. Starting no doubt from the universally acknowledged compass points, north, south, east, and west, the Bible speaks (as we do) of the four corners of the earth, and the four winds of heaven.

Naturally the angels who stand at earth's corners and restrain the winds are also four in number (7:1). 'Living creatures' like these were seen by the prophet Ezekiel in his first extraordinary vision (Ezk. 1), and though the six wings apiece recall the seraphs of Isaiah's vision (Is. 6), most of the description tallies with that of the beings whom Ezekiel saw, and whom he elsewhere calls cherubs (Ezk. 10:20).

The cherubs of the Bible are very far from being chubby infants with wings and dimples. They are awesome creatures, visible indications of the presence of God. So when we are told (Ps. 8:10) that the Lord travels both on a cherub and on the wings of the wind, we may begin to see a link between the four living creatures of 4:6 and the four winds of 7:1.

We might call these cherub-creatures 'nature', so long as we remember what nature really is—an immense construction throbbing with the ceaseless activity of God. At any rate they could well represent what Paul calls God's 'eternal power and deity... clearly perceived in the things that have been made' (Rom. 1:20). Perhaps their faces (4:7; Ezk. 1:10) represent his majesty, his strength, his wisdom, and his loftiness, and their numberless eyes his ceaseless watchfulness over every part of his creation. It is appropriate then that there should be four of them, corresponding to the points of the compass and the corners of the earth, and standing for God's world, as the twenty-four elders stand for God's church.

Consider that phrase, 'nature is throbbing with the ceaseless activity of God'. How is God active around you and in your neighbourhood?



Letter of comfort in a dangerous world

WEEK 3:

Last Words on true Worship

Wednesday, 20th January 2022

Revelation 5:1-4

"Then I saw a scroll in the right hand of the one who was sitting on the throne." "But no one in heaven or earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll and read it." (Rev 5:1, 3)

What is the scroll with seven Seals? Numbers of suggestions have been made; perhaps the most sensible one is to let him open it, and then we shall see!

Since, it is his redeeming death which qualifies Christ to break the Seals upon the scroll (v 9), and the cross is revealed as his great achievement, the language of chapter 5 suggests Christ's action is seen as the unveiling of events within God's divine plan.

We do not need Christ to tell us that the world is full of troubles. But we do need his explanation of history if its troubles are not to be meaningless. We may link this thought with an incident in Christ's earthly life, when at the outset of his ministry (as here at the beginning of his Revelation) he 'went to synagogue' one sabbath day. There before the assembled elders 'he stood up to read the lesson and was handed the scroll of the prophet Isaiah' (Lk. 4:16, 17).

His reading concerned the fulfilment in his own person of God's plan for humanity, as foretold in the Old Testament. Only in Christ crucified is to be found the answer to the riddle of life; no angel 'in heaven', no man 'on earth', no teacher from the past, now 'under the earth', can explain it—only Judah's Lion, David's Root, the Jew from Nazareth who is also the Lamb of God.

The whole Scene, then, if it is not too prosaic to look at it diagrammatically, is a series of concentric circles. From every point on every circle a radius of praise is drawn inwards to the centre: and at the centre, by his Father's throne, is Christ.

So, he was among the lampstands in Scene 1. So, he will be throughout the drama.

The mysterious plan of God, the scroll, has now being revealed! How does knowing that God's plan has been revealed give you reassurance for the future?



Letter of comfort in a dangerous world

WEEK 2:

Last Words on true Worship

Thursday, 21st January 2022

Revelation 5:1-6

"Then I saw a Lamb that looked as if it had been slaughtered, but it was now standing between the throne and the four living beings and among the twenty-four elders. He had seven horns and seven eyes, which represent the sevenfold Spirit of God that is sent into every part of the earth." (Rev 5:6)

Some would say that this chapter is perhaps the pivotal chapter of the whole Book.

There is so much commotion when no one can be found who is competent or accredited to open the seven-sealed book which appears before us.

John the Seer is deeply moved, for it seems he knows what it is about. In visions something of their meaning comes through the viewer, and in this case he wishes there was one able to open the scroll.

One is found, and it is the Lion of the tribe of Judah, with all the connotations that title has.

When John looks, he sees not a Lion but a Lamb. The fact that such a one has prevailed to open the book and its seven seals again causes celestial worship to break out.

At first the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders begin the worship, but then it is taken up by a numberless multitude, which includes angels and all creatures in heaven and on earth.

Their thunderous praise and adoration is for the Father and the Lamb and their redemptive action in history.

It is noteworthy to see the Lamb accorded the same kind of praise as that given to the Father.

What comfort, if any, does Jesus' position as now being seated on His throne beside His heavenly Father bring you, particularly in regards to 'what must take place' before Jesus' return?



Letter of comfort in a dangerous world

WEEK 3:

Last Words on true Worship

Friday, 22nd January 2022

Revelation 5:1-8

"And when he took the scroll, the four living beings and the twenty-four elders ... each had a harp, and they held gold bowls filled with incense, which are the prayers of the God's people." (Rev 5:8)

When the Lamb takes the scroll, the response is immediate. High-ranking angels and redeemed man join together in worship of the Lamb. The "prayer of Christ" for believers in John 17 is answered in the elders: our Lord's prayer that they might know Him, that they might be with Him, and that they might behold His glory is all answered in this scene of the elders in heaven-it is another reason I believe that the church is in heaven now during this scene.

Each has a harp - maybe now there are guitars! When we participate in heavenly worship, everyone gets to sing praises to His name.

But they have something else – golden bowls of incense which represents the prayers of the saints.

You may think that your prayers are not heard but they are and here we see they have been collected and God loves them as incense before Him. The connection between prayer and incense is shown in Psalm 141:2:

*Let my prayer be set before You as incense,
the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.*

Incense has a pleasing aroma, it ascends to heaven, but it needs *fire* before it is of any use.

As you pray today, visualize your prayers as incense which arise before the Father. Be reassured of his listening ear.



Letter of comfort in a dangerous world

WEEK 2:

Last Words on true Worship

Saturday, 23th January 2022

Revelation 5:9-14

"... your blood has ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. And you have caused them to become a Kingdom of priests for our God. And they will reign on the earth." (Rev 5:9b-10)

Did you notice what Christ called us?

We are kings because of our royal re-birth and our destiny to reign with Jesus. We are priests because we need no mediator other than Jesus Himself. We are given the privilege to reign on earth as heavenly priests as we allow the work of the Holy Spirit of God in our life. Not only on earth but we will reign in Heaven with him as he returns to rule earth.

Then, the angel sounded the seventh trumpet and the third "woe" is begun. At the same time there was loud voices in heaven saying the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord.

1 Thessalonians 4:16 says it will be the Lord Himself that descends and blows the Trumpet. And secondly the statement of the kingdoms of our Lord and His Christ and forever are statements that pronounce that which has not happened immediately but will happen shortly. It is what is referred to as a proleptic statement. That is, it is an event so certain that it is spoken of as if it has already taken place.

The context of the chapter the kingdoms of this world are becoming the kingdoms of our Lord. Romans 8:17 says "and if children, then heirs-- heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together."

Even though the glory has not come yet it is a sure thing. Satan is the prince of the air and rules this kingdom now but not for long and certainly not forever. Such is the language of heaven, speaking as if it has already happened.

This is the way we ought to live as if it has already happened-giving and living in thankfulness to the one who is and was and is to come.

Amen