

Heavenly Worship

Key Verse:
***“Immediately I was
in the spirit: and,
behold, a throne
was set in heaven,
and one sat on the
throne.”***
—Revelation 4:2

Selected Scripture:
Revelation 4

THE HIGHLY SYMBOLIC

nature of Revelation has proven challenging to understand. There are, however, portions of this final book of the Bible that appear to be easier to comprehend than others, and among commentators there is a greater sense of unanimity as to what they may signify. “After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first

voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter.”—Rev. 4:1

Our Key Verse indicates that the Apostle John, who penned the words found in Revelation, was ‘in the spirit’ and described the things he saw. Since it would not be possible for any human with flesh and blood to actually enter the presence of God, it is likely that John received a vision depicting the Eternal sitting upon a heavenly throne.

The Heavenly Father’s appearance is described as being like “a jasper and a sardine stone.” These precious gems may well symbolize some of God’s glorious character attributes, while the “rainbow round about the throne” is reminiscent of the rainbow covenant following the flood during Noah’s day. (Rev. 4:3; Gen. 9:12-17) Thus, in the Revelation account, this depiction may

picture the ultimate fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant whereby all humanity will be blessed by a new and righteous social order which will be established on earth. "We, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." (II Pet. 3:13) In the lesson under consideration, John also describes other heavenly scenes he viewed in the vicinity of God's throne.—Rev. 4:4-8

Concerning the four beasts (living creatures—*Weymouth Translation*), a clue as to what they might picture may be found elsewhere in the Bible. (Ezek. 1:10) They appear to represent God's attributes of justice represented by a lion, power depicted as a calf (ox in Ezekiel), love pictured by the face of a man, and, finally, wisdom as suggested by an eagle.

Various suggestions have been put forward for the identity of the twenty-four elders. These elders appear to be symbolic and somehow directly connected with the Creator. One suggestion as to what the twenty-four elders represent might be that they are the prophetic testimony which God gave in scripture as the surety that everything foretold will be fulfilled exactly as promised. This thought seems to harmonize with the closing benediction of this chapter. "The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou has created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created."—Rev. 4:10,11

God is described as being from everlasting to everlasting. "LORD, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations. . . . even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God." (Ps. 90:1,2) It seems reasonable to conclude that the Father has always occupied the throne of supreme universal authority, even before the creation of any intelligent beings, either spiritual or earthly. ■