

THE GOSPEL PROJECT CHRONOLOGICAL COME, LORD JESUS THE GOD WHO MAKES ALL THINGS NEW *Heaven's Songs*

Music within the church has become a debatable topic over the years – a contest almost over singing the old hymns or the new praise songs. God's Word tells us in **Psalm 96:1 (ESV)** ¹ *Oh sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth!* And in **Isaiah 42:10 (ESV)** ¹⁰ *Sing to the LORD a new song, his praise from the end of the earth...*

In the book of Revelation there is a time when an old song and a new song are sung together. We might call it a 'blended' service! **Revelation 15:3 (ESV)** ³ *And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, "Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations! The old song of Moses combined with the new song of the Lamb both praise the Lord God Almighty!*

Whatever our musical preference as children of God, the music of our souls should be rooted in praise and worship. **Lamentations 3:22-23 (ESV)** ²² *The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end;* ²³ *they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.* Since the mercies of our Lord are new to us every morning our songs of praise and worship to the Lord should be new as well. Whether or not we are musically inclined does not matter – if the words or melodies we sing are old or new does not matter – what matters is that we continually lift up new praises to our Lord. Our words may be the same as yesterday but our praise should always be new, fresh and genuine.

Today, we come to the third division of the book of Revelation. As we look into the things which are to come, we see Jesus personally inviting John to come into heaven: **Revelation 4:1 (ESV)** ¹ *After this I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven! And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this."* Notice the mention of the voice John had heard earlier that sounds like a musical instrument – the trumpet.

John was *in the Spirit* meaning the Holy Spirit gave John this vision. As I think of the picture of the open door into heaven where John was invited to enter, I am reminded of what Jesus said concerning Himself during His earthly ministry. He explained in **John 10:9 (ESV)** ⁹ *I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved...* One glorious day, those of us who have put our faith in Jesus will walk through the open Door into heaven. In the meantime Jesus through John's experience provides us a glimpse into heaven. And, oh, what a wonderful sight we see! **Praise the God who is holy, powerful and eternal.**

Read Revelation 4:2-3 (ESV) ² *At once I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne.* ³ *And he who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian, and around the throne was a rainbow that had the appearance of an emerald.*

Immediately, in a twinkling of an eye, John was transported through the open door. Keep in mind that John describes what he saw in human words – he provides us with pictures of scenes that the human mind can fully comprehend.

This throne in the vision was not a piece of furniture. It symbolizes the majesty of God – the King of kings and Lord of lords. Our God is on His throne and His rule is sovereign and He has authority over all. This is something for all of His children to sing about.

How can you describe a vision of God? John did so by using pictures of precious stones he knew about. There is a lack of scientific terminology from that time frame regarding gemstones. We can be absolutely positive that the jasper was a clear stone because it is described in **Revelation 21:11** *as being as clear as crystal*. Different translations use different names for the second stone. What the ESV calls a carnelian the KJV calls a sardine.

Ironside said that the jasper is probably the diamond, the most brilliant of all the precious jewels. The other stone is blood-red and in our day may be called the ruby. Ironside suggests that the two stones together present a picture of glory and sacrifice. Around the throne there was a rainbow, like an emerald. This rainbow was a complete circle, not just the half arc we see from our side of the heavens today. In heaven all things are completed – even the rainbow. The rainbow reminds us of God’s promise that He would never again destroy the earth with a flood. Judgment is about to fall, but the rainbow reminds us that God in His wrath remembers to be merciful. Usually, a rainbow appears *after* the storm; but here, we see it *before* the coming storm of judgment upon the earth.

Read Revelation 4:4-6 (ESV) ⁴ *Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones were twenty-four elders, clothed in white garments, with golden crowns on their heads.* ⁵ *From the throne came flashes of lightning, and rumblings and peals of thunder, and before the throne were burning seven torches of fire, which are the seven spirits of God,* ⁶ *and before the throne there was as it were a sea of glass, like crystal. And around the throne, on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind:*

Scholars identify the 24 elders in this picture differently. It would be unwise to be dogmatic about their identity. Some say they are angelic beings. David Jeremiah suggests they represent the church age. Since there were 12 tribes of Israel and 12 Apostles, some think the number 24 symbolizes the completion of God’s people. Their white robes reflect the righteousness that is found in Christ. Possibly the crowns picture how we will reign with Him. Personally, I have concluded that who these elders literally represent does not matter as much as the praises they sing to the Lord.

Flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder are ‘storm signals’. Judgment is coming. **Psalm 9:7 (ESV)** ⁷ *But the LORD sits enthroned forever; he has established his throne for justice.* Our God is a God of grace, but His grace reigns *through righteousness*. The seven torches symbolize completeness. John defines them as being

the seven Spirits of God. Don't forget what we learned last week – there is only one Spirit but that Spirit is defined by seven qualities (*Isaiah 11:2*).

The Sea of Glass describes the area surrounding God's throne. John describes what he saw as **like** a sea of glass – he put what he saw in human terms. There was a time when Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu and 70 elders together saw something similar. *Exodus 24:10 (ESV)*¹⁰ *and they saw the God of Israel. There was under his feet as it were a pavement of sapphire stone, like the very heaven for clearness.* Their seeing God must be understood in light of other scriptures. *John 1:18* tells that no one has ever seen God but Jesus made God known to us. My opinion is Moses and the others only described the pavement under the God of Israel's feet because they were on their faces on the ground at the time.

*Read Revelation 4:7-8 (ESV)*⁷ *the first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with the face of a man, and the fourth living creature like an eagle in flight.*⁸ *And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!"*

Just like with the 24 elders, there are differences of opinion concerning the identity of the four living creatures. Some see the creatures as representing the four gospels. Others point out that they are similar to the cherubim as seen by Ezekiel. Their description and their words are similar to the scene Isaiah saw and heard when he had his glimpse into heaven. More important than their identities are the words they spoke: *Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!* **Praise the God who created everything.**

*Read Revelation 4:9-11 (ESV)*⁹ *And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever,*¹⁰ *the twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever. They cast their crowns before the throne, saying,*¹¹ *"Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created."*

John described how the living creatures led out in worship like a choir or praise team in church today should lead out. And the 24 elders responded like the congregation of our churches should respond in praise and worship. I love these words. I memorized them many years ago as a prayer in my early years at First Baptist: Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power. For thou has created all things and for thy pleasure they were and are created. Need words for a prayer of praise – there you have it – straight from the throne room of God Himself – *thou art worthy O Lord!*

As we move to Revelation 5, we continue with the same scene in the throne room. Revelation 4 concerns God the Creator. Revelation 5 concerns God the Redeemer. **Praise the Lamb who redeemed people by His blood!**

*Read Revelation 5:1-8 (ESV)*¹ *Then I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within....*² *And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?"*³ *And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll...,*⁴ *and I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll....*⁵ *And one of the elders said*

to me, “Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals.”⁶ And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.⁷ And he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne.⁸ And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

The focus of attention now shifts to a seven-sealed scroll in the hand of God. The scroll could not be read because it was rolled up and sealed (like a Roman will) with seven seals. A title deed or will can only be opened by the appointed heir and the heir to the title deed to the earth is Jesus Christ. The scroll represents all that the Father promised Him because of His sacrifice on the cross. **Psalm 2:8 (ESV)**⁸ *Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession.* Jesus is the heir of all things. (**Hebrews 1:2**)

Jesus Christ is pictured as both a Lion symbolizing His authority and power and also a Lamb symbolizing his submission to God's will as the perfect sacrifice. As one of the elders speaks of the Lion of the tribe of Judah, John sees the Lamb. What a beautiful picture of Jesus – Lion and Lamb! And the prayers of the saints are mentioned. **Psalm 141:2 (ESV)**² *Let my prayer be counted as incense before you, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice!* Just think – our prayers give off a beautiful aroma in heaven. And next we hear a ‘new song’ being sung.

Read Revelation 5:9-10 (ESV)⁹ *And they sang a new song, saying, “Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation,¹⁰ and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.”*

This passage calls us to worship our glorious Jesus on a grand scale! Notice those who voiced praise around the throne sang their new song on our behalf! They gave praise that He died for the purpose of ransoming us with His blood. They praised Jesus for the gathering of His followers into His Kingdom. They praised Him for what He will do in the future when He makes His children into priests and appoints us to reign on the earth.

Personally, my praise of God is often finite in nature – thinking mostly of day to day events. And this is scriptural. **Psalm 34:1 (ESV)**¹ *I will bless the LORD at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth.* However, I also believe that the heart of God desires for us to worship and praise Him on higher levels as we grow in our knowledge of the magnificent things He has done and will do. When we realize the glorious future that awaits us, we cannot help but praise the Lord. **Psalm 150:6 (ESV)**⁶ *Let everything that has breath praise the LORD! Praise the LORD!* Let’s peek into the throne room one more time. **Revelation 5:11-14 (ESV)**¹¹ *Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands,¹² saying with a loud voice, “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!”¹³ And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, “To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and*

*ever!”¹⁴ And the four living creatures said, “Amen!” and the elders fell down and worshiped. **AND ALL GOD’S PEOPLE SAID ‘AMEN!’***