

Notes on the Greek New Testament
Day 347 – December 13th – Revelation 4:1-11

Works frequently referenced in these notes on the book of Revelation

Morris, Leon	<i>The Revelation of St John</i> (Tyndale New Testament Commentaries), Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1969
Mounce, Robert H	<i>The Book of Revelation</i> (New International Commentary on the New Testament), Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1977
Peterson, Eugene H	<i>Reversed Thunder</i> , San Francisco, HarperCollins, 1991
Witherington, Ben	<i>Revelation</i> (New Cambridge Bible Commentary), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2003

Verse 1

Μετὰ ταῦτα εἶδον, καὶ ἰδοὺ θύρα ἠνεωγμένη ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, καὶ ἡ φωνὴ ἡ πρώτη ἦν ἥκουσα ὡς σάλπιγγος λαλούσης μετ' ἐμοῦ, λέγων· Ἀνάβα ὧδε, καὶ δεῖξω σοὶ ἃ δεῖ γενέσθαι. μετὰ ταῦτα

εἶδον Verb, aor act ind, 1s & 3pl ὄραω trans
see, observe

θύρα, ας f see 3:20

ἠνεωγμένη Verb, perf pass ptc, f nom s
ἀνοίγω see 3:20

Cf. Ezek 1:1. The perfect tense suggests a door permanently opened, "perhaps as a result of Jesus' death and resurrection. The church has permanent and open access to heaven and to their God." Witherington.

οὐρανός, ου m heaven

πρῶτος, η, ον first

σάλπιξ, ιγγος f see 1:9

λαλεῶ speak, talk

ἀνάβα Verb, aor act imperat, 2 s ἀναβαίνω
go up, come up

ὧδε adv here

Cf. 1:19. "A true insight into history is gained only when we view all things from the vantage point of the heavenly throne." Mounce.

δείξω Verb, fut act indic, 3 s δείκνυμι
show, point out, reveal

δει impersonal verb it is necessary, must

There is a necessity about what will happen, it is in the sovereign hand of God.

Verse 2

εὐθέως ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι· καὶ ἰδοὺ θρόνος ἔκειτο ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, καὶ ἐπὶ τὸν θρόνον καθήμενος,

θρόνος, ου m see 3:21

Fiorenza says that the central question of concern in the book of Revelation is "To whom does the earth belong? Who is the ruler of this world? The book's central theological symbol is therefore the *throne*, signifying either divine and liberating or demonic and death-dealing power."

κειμαι lie, be laid; exist; stand

καθῆμαι sit, sit down, live

Cf. 1 Kings 22:19; Isa 6:1.

Witherington argues that "John's portrayal of the throne scene [that follows] owes something ... to Roman scenes of the enthroned Emperor surrounded by his council and holding an open scroll in his hand. The hymns that emanate from the throne room in heaven can be seen in the light of the hymnic acclamations and acts of bowing down before the Emperor not only in the Roman court but also in the imperial cult in Asia, where the statue of the Emperor might have obeisance done before it. The scenes in Rev 4-5 then become John's rhetorical means of offering an alternative vision of who is really in charge of the world in which John's audience lives."

Verse 3

καὶ ὁ καθήμενος ὅμοιος ὁράσει λίθῳ ἰάσπιδι καὶ σαρδίῳ, καὶ ἴρις κυκλόθεν τοῦ θρόνου ὅμοιος ὁράσει σμαραγδίνῳ.

ὅμοιος, α, ον like

The repeated use of ὅμοιος reflect John's attempt to describe the indescribable.

ὄρασις, εως f vision, appearance

λίθος, ου m stone, precious stone

ἰασπις, ιδος f jasper (a semi-precious stone of varying colours, but the jasper of the NT was probably green)

σαρδῖον, ου n carnelian or cornelian (a semi-precious stone, usually red in colour)

Cf. Ezekiel 1.

ἴρις, ιδος f rainbow; varicoloured halo

The rainbow is also the symbol of the covenant. The covenant of mercy is part of the crowning glory of God.

κυκλόθεν prep with gen round, about
σμαραγδινος, η, ον made of emerald

Verse 4

καὶ κυκλόθεν τοῦ θρόνου θρόνοι εἴκοσι τέσσαρες, καὶ ἐπὶ τοὺς θρόνους εἴκοσι τέσσαρας πρεσβυτέρους καθημένους περιβεβλημένους ἐν ἱματίοις λευκοῖς, καὶ ἐπὶ τὰς κεφαλὰς αὐτῶν στεφάνους χρυσοῦς.

εἴκοσι twenty

τέσσαρες neut τέσσαρα gen τεσσαρων four
πρεσβυτερος, α, ον elder, eldest

Most take as a symbol of the 12 Israelite patriarchs plus the 12 apostles – the totality of the Church. Mounce, however, argues that they are an exalted angelic order who serve and adore God. Witherington comments, "Whatever the twenty-four are, their function in the drama is secondary, for all they do in this book is fall down and worship God or play a harp and so are contributors to heavenly worship (cf. 5:8, 14; 11:16; 19:4 cf. 5:5; 7:13 where an elder is an interpreter). One thing is certain: there is no known parallel to these twenty-four elders in other Jewish apocalyptic literature, so this is a new and perhaps important element in John's vision... That these are symbols of the Christian elect is shown by their reaction when God acts on behalf of earthly Christians."

περιβεβλημένους Verb, perf pass ptc, m acc
pl περιβαλλω see 3:5

ἱματιον, ου n see 3:4

λευκος, η, ον see 3:4

κεφαλη, ης f head

στεφανος, ου m see 2:10

χρυσους, η, ουν made of gold, golden

Their white garments speak of holiness and their golden crowns of royalty.

Verse 5

καὶ ἐκ τοῦ θρόνου ἐκπορεύονται ἀστραπαὶ καὶ φωναὶ καὶ βρονταί· καὶ ἑπτὰ λαμπάδες πυρὸς καίόμεναι ἐνώπιον τοῦ θρόνου, ἃ εἰσὶν τὰ ἑπτὰ πνεύματα τοῦ θεοῦ,

ἐκπορευομαι go or come out

ἀστραπη, ης f lightning, ray

βροντη, ης f thunder

Symbolic of the awesome power and majesty of God. Cf. Ex. 19:16ff.

ἑπτα seven

λαμπας, αδος f lamp, lantern

πυρ, ος n fire

καιω light; pass be lit, burn

ἐνώπιον prep with gen before

Witherington writes, "The burning lamps before the throne are said to be the seven spirits, again the angelic representatives of the churches keeping the churches' fires burning, in part by returning and being in the presence of God."

Verse 6

καὶ ἐνώπιον τοῦ θρόνου ὡς θάλασσα ὑαλίνῃ ὁμοία κρυστάλλῳ.

Καὶ ἐν μέσῳ τοῦ θρόνου καὶ κύκλῳ τοῦ θρόνου τέσσαρα ζῶα γέμοντα ὀφθαλμῶν ἔμπροσθεν καὶ ὀπισθεν·

θάλασσα, ης f sea

ὑαλινος, η, ον of glass, clear as glass

ὁμοιος, α, ον see v.3

κρυσταλλος, ου m crystal; ice

"A visual phenomenon which adds to the awesome splendour of the throne-room scene." Mounce.

Witherington comments, "In view of 13:1, where the sea monster rises out of the glass sea, it is probably a reference to the reality of evil symbolised by the ancient image of the chaos waters. Even the source of evil is not outside the control of God."

μεσος, η, ον middle; ἐν μ., εἰς μ. in the middle, among

Here meaning 'in the immediate vicinity'.

θρονος, ου m throne

κυκλω prep with gen round, around

τέσσαρες neut τέσσαρα gen τεσσαρων four

ζωον, ου n living creature; animal

Cf. Ezekiel 1.

γεμω be full, be covered with

ἔμπροσθεν adv in front

ὀπισθεν adv. behind, on the back

"A consistent interpretation of the entire throne-room vision requires us to understand the living creatures as an exalted order of angelic beings who as the immediate guardians of the throne lead the heavenly hosts in worship and adoration of God. It is possible that they also represent the entire animate creation. That they are full of eyes before and behind (cf. vs. 8: 'round about and within') speaks of alertness and knowledge. Nothing escapes their notice." Mounce.

Verse 7

καὶ τὸ ζῶον τὸ πρῶτον ὅμοιον λέοντι, καὶ τὸ δεύτερον ζῶον ὅμοιον μόσχῳ, καὶ τὸ τρίτον ζῶον ἔχων τὸ πρόσωπον ὡς ἀνθρώπου, καὶ τὸ τέταρτον ζῶον ὅμοιον ἀετῷ πετομένῳ·

πρωτον adv. first

ὁμοιος, α, ον like

λεων, οντος m lion

δευτερος, α, ον second
 μοσχος, ου m calf, young bull
 τριτος, η, ον third
 προσωπον, ου n face, appearance
 τεταρτος, η, ον fourth
 αετος, ου m eagle, vulture
 πετομαι fly

Hendriksen thinks this a fourfold picture of the qualities of these angelic beings: they have the strength of a lion, the ability to serve of an ox, the intelligence of a man, and the swiftness (to serve) of an eagle.

Verse 8

καὶ τὰ τέσσαρα ζῶα, ἕν καθ' ἕν αὐτῶν ἔχων
 ἀνά πτέρυγας ἕξ, κυκλόθεν καὶ ἔσωθεν
 γέμουσιν ὀφθαλμῶν· καὶ ἀνάπαυσιν οὐκ
 ἔχουσιν ἡμέρας καὶ νυκτὸς λέγοντες· Ἅγιος
 ἅγιος κύριος, ὁ θεός, ὁ παντοκράτωρ, ὁ
 ἦν καὶ ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος.

εἷς, μια, ἐν gen ἑνος, μιας, ἑνος one

ἕν καθ' ἕν each.

ἀνα prep used distributively with acc. each,
 each one

πτερυξ, υγος f wing

ἕξ six

Cf. the seraphim of Is 6:2.

κυκλόθεν adv all around, all about
 ἔσωθεν adv. within, inside

Maybe, since they encircle the throne, the picture is of eyes both looking out, away from the throne, and in, towards the throne.

γέμω see v.6

ἀναπαυσις, εως f rest, resting-place,
 stopping

νυξ, νυκτος f night

ἅγιος, α, ον holy

παντοκράτωρ, ορος m Almighty

"To churches about to enter a period of severe testing and persecution a declaration of God's unlimited might would bring strength and encouragement...

"Beyond this, his holiness and omnipotence stretch from eternity to eternity: he is the One 'who was and who is and who is to come' (cf... 1:4). The truth which finds expression in this phrase – an expression of God's 'I AM WHO I AM' in Exodus 3:14 – is repeated in the following verses where God is twice designated the one 'that liveth for ever and ever' (vss. 9-10)." Mounce.

Verse 9

καὶ ὅταν δώσουσιν τὰ ζῶα δόξαν καὶ τιμὴν καὶ
 εὐχαριστίαν τῷ καθημένῳ ἐπὶ τῷ θρόνῳ, τῷ
 ζῶντι εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων,

ὅταν when, whenever

δώσουσιν Verb, fut act indic, 3 pl δίδωμι
 δόξα, ης f glory; praise
 τιμὴ, ης f honour
 εὐχαριστία, ας f thanksgiving
 καθῆμαι sit, sit down, live
 ζῶω live, be alive
 αἰῶνας Noun, acc pl αἰών, αἰωνος m age,
 eternity

Verse 10

πεσοῦνται οἱ εἴκοσι τέσσαρες πρεσβύτεροι
 ἐνώπιον τοῦ καθημένου ἐπὶ τοῦ θρόνου, καὶ
 προσκυνήσουσιν τῷ ζῶντι εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν
 αἰώνων, καὶ βαλοῦσιν τοὺς στεφάνους αὐτῶν
 ἐνώπιον τοῦ θρόνου, λέγοντες·

πεσοῦνται Verb, fut midd/pass dep indic, 3 pl
 πιπῶ fall, fall down

εἴκοσι twenty

τέσσαρες see v.6

πρεσβυτερος, α, ον elder

ἐνώπιον prep with gen before

προσκυνεῶ worship

βαλοῦσιν Verb, fut act indic, 3 pl βαλλῶ

throw, throw down

στεφανος, ου m wreath, crown

Acknowledging that their authority is a delegated authority. "The honour given them is freely returned to the One who alone is worthy of universal honour." Mounce.

Verse 11

Ἄξιος εἶ, ὁ κύριος καὶ ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν, λαβεῖν τὴν
 δόξαν καὶ τὴν τιμὴν καὶ τὴν δύναμιν, ὅτι σὺ
 ἔκτισας τὰ πάντα, καὶ διὰ τὸ θέλημά σου ἦσαν
 καὶ ἐκτίσθησαν.

ἄξιος, α, ον worthy, deserving

"Lilje notes that the first words of the hymn are taken from the political language of the day: 'Worthy art thou' greeted the entrance of the emperor in triumphal procession, and 'our Lord and God' was introduced into the cult of emperor worship by Domitian... For the Christian only the One upon the heavenly throne is worthy: the claims of all others are blasphemous." Mounce.

λαβεῖν Verb, aor act infin λαμβανῶ

δύναμις, εως f power, strength, might

κτιζῶ create, make

θέλημα, ατος n will, wish

ἐκτίσθησαν Verb, aor pass indic, 3 pl κτιζῶ

"This unusual phrase suggests that all things which are, existed first in the eternal will of God and through his will came into actual being at his appointed time." Mounce.

Witherington concludes concerning chapter 4,
"This chapter is a vision in praise of the
Creator God. The next is a vision in praise of
the Redeemer God."