

# Revelation of Jesus Christ

## Study 26

### Cont'd Preview of Heaven

*Rev 4:5-11*

*<sup>5</sup> And from the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices. Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God. <sup>6</sup> Before the throne there was a sea of glass, like crystal. And in the midst of the throne, and around the throne, were four living creatures full of eyes in front and in back. <sup>7</sup> The first living creature was like a lion, the second living creature like a calf, the third living creature had a face like a man, and the fourth living creature was like a flying eagle. <sup>8</sup> The four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!" <sup>9</sup> Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever, <sup>10</sup> the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying: <sup>11</sup> "You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created."*

In this passage we have seen the throne in heaven through the Apostle's eyes, and then we have looked to behold who was on the throne, in all of His beauty, and then we talked about who was around the throne, the elders on their thrones.

Today we want to look at what is proceeding from the throne.

### From the Throne

*Rev 4:5a*

*<sup>5</sup> And from the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices.*

Flowing out from God's presence symbolized by the **throne**, John saw a precursor to the firestorm of divine fury about to burst on the sinful world.

**Flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder or voices** are associated with God's presence in;

*Exodus 19:16*

*<sup>16</sup> Then it came to pass on the third day, in the morning, that there were thunderings and lightnings, and a thick cloud on the mountain; and the sound of the trumpet was very loud, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled. <sup>17</sup> And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain.*

Also in;

*Ezek 1:13*

*<sup>13</sup> As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance was like burning coals of fire, like the appearance of torches going back and forth among the living creatures. The fire was bright, and out of the fire went lightning.*

They also are associated with God's judgment during the Tribulation.

*Rev 8:5*

*5 Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and threw it to the earth. And there were noises, thunderings, lightnings, and an earthquake.*

*Rev 11:19*

*19 Then the temple of God was opened in heaven, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple. And there were lightnings, noises, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail.*

When the seventh angel pours out his bowl there will be;

*Rev 16:18*

*18 And there were noises and thunderings and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such a mighty and great earthquake as had not occurred since men were on the earth.*

John saw a preview of the divine wrath that will be poured out on the earth, described in chapters 6-19

### **Before the Throne**

*Rev 4:5b-6a*

*Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God. 6 Before the throne there was a sea of glass, like crystal.*

As he looked at the scene in heaven John saw two things before the throne.

**1<sup>st</sup> were the seven lamps of fire.** Unlike the lampstands mentioned in *chap 1:12-13*, these were outdoor torches, giving off not the soft gentle light of an indoor lamp, but the fierce, blazing light of a fiery torch.

John identifies them as **the seven Spirits of God.**

As noted in the discussion of *chap 1:4* of Rev, the phrase describes the Holy Spirit in all His fullness

*Isa 11:2*

*2 The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, The Spirit of wisdom and understanding, The Spirit of counsel and might, The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD*

*Zech 4:1-10*

*1 Now the angel who talked with me came back and wakened me, as a man who is wakened out of his sleep. 2 And he said to me, "What do you see?" So I said, "I am looking, and there is a lampstands of solid gold with a bowl on top of it, and on the stand seven lamps with seven pipes to the seven lamps. 3 Two olive trees are by it, one at the right of the bowl and the other at its left." 4 So I answered and spoke to the angel who talked with me, saying, "What are these, my lord?" 5 Then the angel who talked with me answered and said to me, "Do you not know what these are?" And I said, "No, my lord." 6 So he answered and said to me: "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' Says the LORD of hosts. 7 'Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain! And he shall bring forth the capstone With shouts of "Grace, grace to it!" ' " 8 Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying: 9 "The hands of Zerubbabel Have laid the foundation of this temple; His hands shall also finish it. Then you will know That the LORD of hosts has sent Me to you. 10 For who has despised the day of small things? For these seven rejoice to see The plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel. They are the eyes of the LORD, Which scan to and fro throughout the whole earth."*

The sevenfold representation of the Holy Spirit in Isaiah speaks of **wisdom, understanding, counsel, strength, knowledge, reverence, and deity**;

In *Zechariah* of power; In *Rev 1:4* of Grace and peace; and here in this passage of fiery judgment.

Torches are associated with war in *Judges 7:16, 20* and *Nahum 2:3-4*

Let's look at them for a moment;

*Judges 7:16,20*

*16 Then he divided the three hundred men into three companies, and he put a trumpet into every man's hand, with empty pitchers, and torches inside the pitchers.*

*20 Then the three companies blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers--they held the torches in their left hands and the trumpets in their right hands for blowing--and they cried, "The sword of the LORD and of Gideon!"*

*Nahum 2:3-4*

*3 The shields of his mighty men are made red, The valiant men are in scarlet. The chariots come with flaming torches In the day of his preparation, And the spears are brandished. 4 The chariots rage in the streets, They jostle one another in the broad roads; They seem like torches, They run like lightning.*

John's vision here then depicts God as ready to make war on sinful, rebellious mankind and the Holy Spirit is His war torch.

The Comforter of those who love Christ will be the Consumer of those who reject Him.

2<sup>nd</sup> Second in front of God's throne **was something like a sea of glass like crystal**. That sea is metaphorical, since there is no sea in heaven

*Rev 21:1*

*1 Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea.*

What John saw at the base of the throne was a vast pavement of **glass**, shining brilliantly like sparkling **crystal**.

*Exodus 24:10*

*9 Then Moses went up, also Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, 10 and they saw the God of Israel. And there was under His feet as it were a paved work of sapphire stone, and it was like the very heavens in its clarity.*

*In Ezek 1:22, 26*

*22 The likeness of the firmament above the heads of the living creatures was like the color of an awesome crystal, stretched out over their heads.*

*26 And above the firmament over their heads was the likeness of a throne, in appearance like a sapphire stone; on the likeness of the throne was a likeness with the appearance of a man high above it.*

Heaven is not a shadowy world of mists and indistinct apparitions. It is a world of dazzling brilliant light, refracting and shining as through jewels and crystal in a manner beyond our ability to describe or imagine

*Rev 21:10-11, 18*

*<sup>10</sup> And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, <sup>11</sup> having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal.*

*<sup>18</sup> The construction of its wall was of jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass.*

### **In And Around The Throne**

*Rev 4:6b-8a*

*And in the midst of the throne, and around the throne, were four living creatures full of eyes in front and in back. <sup>7</sup> The first living creature was like a lion, the second living creature like a calf, the third living creature had a face like a man, and the fourth living creature was like a flying eagle. <sup>8</sup> The four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within.*

This passage introduces **the four living creatures** who will play a significant role in the events that unfold in Revelation.

That they are said to be **in the center and around the throne** means that their station is in the inner circle nearest the throne.

Now let's look at another aspect of these creatures;

*Ezek 1:12, 17*

*<sup>12</sup> And each one went straight forward; they went wherever the spirit wanted to go, and they did not turn when they went.*

*<sup>17</sup> When they moved, they went toward any one of four directions; they did not turn aside when they went.*

This passage indicates and suggests they are in constant motion about the throne.

The translation **living creatures** is somewhat misleading, since these are not animals.

The phrase derives from a single word in the Greek text, the noun form of the verb *zao*, which means "to live"

Ezek gives a detailed description of these incredible beings and of the glorious magnificence of heaven and God's throne:

*Ezek 1:4-25*

*<sup>4</sup> Then I looked, and behold, a whirlwind was coming out of the north, a great cloud with raging fire engulfing itself; and brightness was all around it and radiating out of its midst like the color of amber, out of the midst of the fire. <sup>5</sup> Also from within it came the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance: they had the likeness of a man. <sup>6</sup> Each one had four faces, and each one had four wings. <sup>7</sup> Their legs were straight, and the soles of their feet were like the soles of calves' feet. They sparkled like the color of burnished bronze. <sup>8</sup> The hands of a man were under their wings on their four sides; and each of the four had faces and wings. <sup>9</sup> Their wings touched one another. The creatures did not turn when they went,*

but each one went straight forward. <sup>10</sup> As for the likeness of their faces, each had the face of a man; each of the four had the face of a lion on the right side, each of the four had the face of an ox on the left side, and each of the four had the face of an eagle. <sup>11</sup> Thus were their faces. Their wings stretched upward; two wings of each one touched one another, and two covered their bodies. <sup>12</sup> And each one went straight forward; they went wherever the spirit wanted to go, and they did not turn when they went. <sup>13</sup> As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance was like burning coals of fire, like the appearance of torches going back and forth among the living creatures. The fire was bright, and out of the fire went lightning. <sup>14</sup> And the living creatures ran back and forth, in appearance like a flash of lightning. <sup>15</sup> Now as I looked at the living creatures, behold, a wheel was on the earth beside each living creature with its four faces. <sup>16</sup> The appearance of the wheels and their workings was like the color of beryl, and all four had the same likeness. The appearance of their workings was, as it were, a wheel in the middle of a wheel. <sup>17</sup> When they moved, they went toward any one of four directions; they did not turn aside when they went. <sup>18</sup> As for their rims, they were so high they were awesome; and their rims were full of eyes, all around the four of them. <sup>19</sup> When the living creatures went, the wheels went beside them; and when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up. <sup>20</sup> Wherever the spirit wanted to go, they went, because there the spirit went; and the wheels were lifted together with them, for the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels. <sup>21</sup> When those went, these went; when those stood, these stood; and when those were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up together with them, for the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels. <sup>22</sup> The likeness of the firmament above the heads of the living creatures was like the color of an awesome crystal, stretched out over their heads. <sup>23</sup> And under the firmament their wings spread out straight, one toward another. Each one had two which covered one side, and each one had two which covered the other side of the body. <sup>24</sup> When they went, I heard the noise of their wings, like the noise of many waters, like the voice of the Almighty, a tumult like the noise of an army; and when they stood still, they let down their wings. <sup>25</sup> A voice came from above the firmament that was over their heads; whenever they stood, they let down their wings.

Now Ezekiel's description appears incomprehensible, almost incoherent, as he struggled to make sense out of the spectacular, supernatural, scene that he witnessed.

Both Ezekiel's description and that in Revelation 4 describe what could be called **the divine war machine ready to unleash judgment.**

In the following verse in Ezek. He identifies these four living beings;

*Ezekiel 10:15*

*<sup>15</sup> And the cherubim were lifted up. This was the living creature I saw by the River Chebar.*

The **four living creatures** are cherubim, and they are frequently associated in Scripture with God's presence and His holy power;

*1 Sam 4:4*

*<sup>4</sup> So the people sent to Shiloh, that they might bring from there the ark of the covenant of the LORD of hosts, who dwells between the cherubim. And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God.*

*2 Sam 6:2*

*<sup>2</sup> And David arose and went with all the people who were with him from Baale Judah to bring up from there the ark of God, whose name is called by the Name, the LORD of Hosts, who dwells between the cherubim*

*2 Sam 22:11*

*11 He rode upon a cherub, and flew; And He was seen upon the wings of the wind.*

*Psa 80:1-3*

*1 To the Chief Musician. Set to 'The Lilies.' A Testimony of Asaph. A Psalm. Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, You who lead Joseph like a flock; You who dwell between the cherubim, shine forth! 2 Before Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh, Stir up Your strength, And come and save us! 3 Restore us, O God; Cause Your face to shine, And we shall be saved!*

After Adam and Eve sinned God drove them out of the garden and stationed **cherubim** at the entrance to keep them from returning.

*Gen 3:24*

*24 So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.*

Two carved cherubim were placed in the Holy of Holies (also called the Most Holy Place), symbolically guarding God's holiness;

*1 Kings 6:23-28*

*23 Inside the inner sanctuary he made two cherubim of olive wood, each ten cubits high. 24 One wing of the cherub was five cubits, and the other wing of the cherub five cubits: ten cubits from the tip of one wing to the tip of the other. 25 And the other cherub was ten cubits; both cherubim were of the same size and shape. 26 The height of one cherub was ten cubits, and so was the other cherub. 27 Then he set the cherubim inside the inner room; and they stretched out the wings of the cherubim so that the wing of the one touched one wall, and the wing of the other cherub touched the other wall. And their wings touched each other in the middle of the room. 28 Also he overlaid the cherubim with gold.*

Satan before his fall, was "*the anointed cherub who covers*"; his duty was to attend God's throne

*Ezek 28:14, 16*

*14 "You were the anointed cherub who covers; I established you; You were on the holy mountain of God; You walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones.*

*16 "By the abundance of your trading You became filled with violence within, And you sinned; Therefore I cast you as a profane thing Out of the mountain of God; And I destroyed you, O covering cherub, From the midst of the fiery stones.*

John, like Ezekiel, struggled to capture the reality in comprehensible terms to describe the indescribable scene before him.

He said the living creatures were **full of eyes in front and behind**.

This symbolizes their awareness, alertness, and comprehensive knowledge. Though they are not omniscient, nothing pertaining to their duties escapes their scrutiny.

Ezekiel's description of these creatures notes that each one possessed all four facial features;

*Ezek 1:6*

*<sup>6</sup> Each one had four faces,*

But from John's vantage point, **the first creature was like a lion, and the second creature like a calf, and the third creature had a face like that of a man, and the fourth creature was like a flying eagle.**

These descriptions view the four cherubim in relation to the created world;

The **lion** represents wild creatures,  
The **calf** domestic animals,  
The **eagle** flying creatures,  
The **man** the pinnacle of creation.

Symbolically the **lion** represents strength,  
The **calf** service,  
The **man** reason,  
And the **eagle** speed.

Also we might see them as the Gospels see and present Jesus;

Matthew = the Lion = **King**  
Mark = the Calf = **Servant**  
Luke = the Man = **Human**  
John = the Eagle = **Messiah**

The **four living creatures**, along with the angels are deeply involved in the coming judgments of the Tribulation, in which they will play an integral role.

They will be there at the outset of divine judgments as one of their number calls forth the rider on the white horse (*6:1-2*) and another will decree economic disaster upon the earth (*6:6*), and another will give the seven angels involved in the bowl judgments their bowls (*15:7*)

Their **six wings** denote that their supreme responsibility and privilege is to constantly worship God.

From Isaiah's vision, we learn that the seraphim (another group of creatures similar to the Cherubim) used their six wings in the following manner;

*Isa 6:2*

*<sup>2</sup> Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.*

Four of their six wings related to worship; **with two they covered their faces**, since even the most exalted created beings cannot look on the unveiled glory of God without being consumed.

They also **with two of their wings covered their feet.**, since they stood on holy ground.

Worship is thus their privilege, calling, and permanent occupation.

**Next week we will see what it is that is pointed toward the throne.**