

## Why does John weep in Revelation 5:4?

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September 2, 2017

**“Increasingly, scholars are looking at Revelation as a Jewish text that reveals a heavenly Christ rather than a Christian text with Jewish attributes.”** –*The Jewish Annotated New Testament*, (New York, Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 465.

### I. Revelation chapters 4 & 5 show concentric circles around the throne.

1. **Jesus** is in the center of the throne (Rev. 5:6).

2. **Four living creatures** are around the throne (Rev. 4:4).

Revelation 4:4-6 (NKJV) – <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!”

[Almighty = pantokrator. 9 of 10 times are in Rev.]

[The *pantokrator* – omnipotent ruler – rules over all things that are coming.]

The creatures around the throne are the seraphim (שרָפִיִּם, *saraph*) of Isaiah 6. They are speak the same words. *Seraph* is a Hebrew word that refers to *fiery creatures*.

Isaiah 6:1-3 – <sup>1</sup> I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His *robe* filled the temple. <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. <sup>3</sup> And one cried to another and said:

**“Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts;**

The whole earth *is* full of His glory!”

[The *pantokrator* is bringing His glory!]

Rev. 4:6 mentions the living creatures (NKJV/NIV; Old KJV says beasts KJV). The Greek is *zoon*. In Rev. 13, the anti-Christ is called the "beast," but the Greek is a different word (*therion*). Each of these 4 living creatures has a different aspect of God's majesty.

- **Lion:** King of the beasts represents majesty and omnipotence; Lion of the Tribe of Judah. **Matthew.**
- **Calf** (NKJV) / Ox (NIV): most important of domestic animals shows patience and continuous labor; servant of Adonai. **Mark.**
- **Man:** is the most intelligent of all animals and represents rationality; Son of Man. **Luke.**
- **Eagle:** greatest of all birds is symbolic of sovereignty and supremacy; divine Son of God. **John.**

3. **24 elders** (4:4) are dressed in white with crowns of gold. 1 Chron. 24:7-18 gives 24 divisions of Israel's priesthood. The church is also a kingdom of priests (Rev. 5:10 & 1:6 & 20:6). 24 elders are the priesthood of all humanity (Israel and Church). In the New Jerusalem, the foundations have the names of 12 apostles of the church (21:13). And, the gates have the names of Israel's 12 tribes (21:12). Twelve apostles (church) + twelve tribes (Israel) = 24 priests of humanity gathered around the throne.

4. **Many angels** join the worship (5:11).

5. **All of creation** eventually joins (5:13).

## II. The description (revelation / *apokalupsis* / unveiling) of Jesus is central.

1. **Jesus is the Lion of the Tribe of Judah (5:5)**. This picks up on Genesis 49:9-10, one of the 1<sup>st</sup> prophecies about the Messiah. This is the only place where Revelation calls Jesus a "lion." "Lion" speaks of His second coming: majesty, sovereign, Judge, and the government of God. (The lion is a symbol of the Second Coming in Isaiah 65:25.)

2. **Jesus looks like a Lamb that had been slain (5:6)**. The "Lamb" speaks of His first coming. He came in meekness as Savior to be judged.

3. **He is the Root of David (5:5)**. "**The Lord said to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand** (Psalms 110:1; Luke 20:42, NIV).

4. **Jesus is standing in the center of the throne (5:6)**.

5. **Jesus is encircled by the four living creatures and the elders of heaven (5:6)**.

6. **Jesus has seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth (5:6)**. With seven eyes, the Almighty sees and knows everything including all that is to come. With the seven spirits of God sent out into all the world, He is omnipresent. Just as God the Father is on the throne (Rev. 4:3, 10-11), so is God the Son also on the Throne (Rev. 5:6). The *omnipresent* God has a *localized presence* on the throne in heaven.

7. **He has seven horns (5:6)**. Horns are symbols of authority (Deut. 33:17 & 2 Sam. 2:2-3). They are also symbols of the prerogative of a king (Daniel 7:24 and Revelation 13:1). Seven is the number of perfection (Psa. 12:6). So, this Lamb has total authority and perfect power.

8. **He takes the scroll from the Father's right hand (5:7)**. Jesus is seated at the Father's right hand, and He's not afraid of taking something out of the all-powerful right hand of God – even if it is a book on judgment! There's no fear in Jesus because He is altogether pure and powerful! Jesus can judge because He has received the authority to judge from His Father. See John 5:26-27.

9. **He receives worship in the presence of the Father (5:8-10, 13) proving His divinity.**

- A. Elders of heaven **worship** Him with **music** (the harp, Rev. 5:8).
- B. Elders of heaven burn **incense** to Him with the prayers of the saints (Rev. 5:8).
- C. Elders of heaven sing a **new song** (Rev. 5:9-10) to Him.
- D. He is **worshipped** on an **equal basis with the Father** (Rev. 5:13)

And I heard every creature in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea and everything in them, responding,

"To the One seated on the throne  
and to the Lamb

[He is seated on the throne]  
He is standing on the throne – Rev.  
5:6. But, He is also seated on the  
throne in Eph. 1:20 & Heb. 8:1]

be blessing and honor  
and glory and power forever and ever!" (TLV)

### Revelation chapters 4 – 5 are similar to Numbers 1-4.

- ❖ **Numbers, chapter 1** – The census of 11 tribes (not Levites who are counted in Numbers 3)
- ❖ **Numbers, chapter 2** – **The 11 tribes are camped in order around the throne with a leading tribe on each side.**  
(The 3 clans of the Levites are told where to camp as they are counted in Numbers 3:23, 29 & 35)

#### North

**Dan** (62,700), Lead Tribe 1<sup>st</sup> born of Jacob's concubines  
**Asher** (41,500)  
**Naphtali** (53,400)  
 Total: 157,600

#### Levite Clan: Merari

#### West

**Ephraim** (40,500), Lead Tribe honored by Jacob, Gen 48:14  
**Manasseh** (32,200) Levite clan: Gershon **ARK OF COVENANT**  
**Benjamin** (35,400)  
 Total: 108,100

#### East

Levites: **Judah** (74,600), replaced Reuben (Gen. 49:3-4)  
**Moses** **Issachar** (54,400)  
**& Priests –** **Zebulun** (57,400)  
**Aaron & sons** Total: 186,400

#### Levite clan: Kohath

#### South

**Reuben** (46,500), Lead Tribe is First born  
**Simeon** (59,300)  
**Gad** (45,650)  
 Total: 151,450

### The tribes are largely camped according to the mothers:

- Leah: **Reuben** (1), **Simeon** (2), **Levi** (3), **Judah** (4), **Issachar** (9), **Zebulun** (10) --- Levi is often not counted as 1 of the 12 due to their calling. They are replaced by the 2 tribes that came out of Joseph: Ephraim and Manasseh.
- Bilhah: **Dan** (5), **Naphtali** (6)
- Zilpah: **Gad** (7), **Asher** (8),
- Rachel: **Joseph** (11), **Benjamin** (12) (Jacob adopts Joseph's sons (**Ephraim** & **Manasseh**) as his thus making 2 tribes out of Joseph, Gen 48)

**Order of marching is similar to the order of camping:** Judah (Num. 2:9); Reuben (Num. 2:16); Ephraim (Num. 3:24), Dan. (Num. 2:31).

**Similar to Revelation 4 & 5, there are circles around the ark of the covenant.** God sits on a throne between the cherubim on the mercy seat over the ark.

Numbers 7:89 – Now when Moses went into the tabernacle of meeting to speak with Him, he heard the voice of One speaking to him from above the mercy seat that was on the ark of the Testimony, from between the two cherubim; thus He spoke to him.

### ❖ Numbers, chapter 3 –

- Two priests, **Eleazar** and **Ithamar** (the 2 surviving sons of Aaron) are dedicated to ministry (3:4).
  - **Eleazar** is given charge of one Levitical clan (3:32). **Kohathites** carry the ark and other sancta (3:27-31). They are given **NO carts for carrying** (Num. 7:9).
  - **Ithamar** is given charge of the Levitical clans of the **Gershonites** (3:28) and **Merarites** (3:33). The Gershonites carry the curtains (3:25-26). The Merarites carry the boards and pillars (3:33-36). They are given carts for carrying (Num. 7:7-8).
- Levites are called to serving the tabernacle (3:8)
- Census of the Levites is taken (3:15).
- Levites are given designated duties by their clan (3:17-39)
- Levites are taken in the place of the firstborn (3:12 & 3:40-51).

### ❖ Numbers, chapter 4 –

- **Kohathites** are assigned the ark, table for the bread of the presence, & other sancta (4:1-20). (Under Eleazar the priest)
- **Gershonites** are assigned the curtains (4:21-28). And, the **Merarites** are assigned the bars, pillars and sockets (4:29-33). (Under Ithamar, the priest.)
- When the ark is about to be moved, the priests take down the veil and walk it forward covering the ark (4:5) before the Kohathites show up to carry it.
- Kohathites are forewarned of **DEATH**.
  - Numbers 4:15 (NKJV) – And when Aaron and his sons have finished covering the sanctuary and all the furnishings of the sanctuary, when the camp is set to go, then the sons of **Kohath** shall come to carry *them*; but they shall **not touch** any holy thing, **lest they die**.
  - Numbers 4:20 (NKJV) – But they shall **not** go in to **watch** while the holy things are being covered, **lest they die**.”
- Kohathites are warned that they would be **CUT OFF**.
  - Numbers 4:18 (NKJV) – Do not **cut off** the tribe of the families of the Kohathites from among the Levites.
  - **Cut off** = removal from the covenant that had been “cut.” It involves death, denial of life in the hereafter, and removal of one’s children from the covenant – Jacob Milgrom, Numbers, (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1990), Excursus 36, pg. 405-408.

### Uzzah touched the ark!

2 Samuel 6:6-8 (NKJV) – <sup>6</sup> And when they came to Nachon’s threshing floor, Uzzah put out *his hand* to the ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen stumbled. <sup>7</sup> Then the anger of the LORD was aroused against Uzzah, and God struck him there for *his* error; and he died there by the ark of God. <sup>8</sup> And David became angry because of the LORD’s outbreak against Uzzah; and he called the name of the place Perez Uzzah to this day.

- Josephus says that Uzzah was a Levite but there is no biblical basis for believing it.
- Both David and God were angry. Who do you think won that argument?
- In 1 Chronicles 15, David realizes his error and has the Levites carry the ark. His wife Michal is not teachable and does not realize the severity of the story.

**Jewish Publication Society (not-messianic) explains Numbers 4 (An exact quote) –**

“The sanctuary guards must cut down the criminal before God cuts down everyone else!

The right to kill with which the sacred cordon is empowered is not to be confused with the legal category of capital punishment whereby death is set as a just payment for a particular crime. The action of the guards has nothing to do with justice. The proper category for describing their function goes back to the root purpose of their guarding: *mishmeret* as a military category. The encroacher, though he be an Israelite, is the enemy who has it in his power to cause the death of all Israel. Since he is bent on encroachment, words will not dissuade him; in fact, to argue can only augment the danger. He must be struck down in his tracks.” – Jacob Milgrom, Numbers, (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1990), Excursus 6, pg. 343.

Revelation 5:1-5 (NKJV) – <sup>1</sup> And I saw in the right *hand* of Him who sat on the throne a scroll written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals. <sup>2</sup> Then I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, “Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?” <sup>3</sup> And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to **open the scroll**, or **to look at it**.

<sup>4</sup> So I wept much, because no one was found worthy to **open** and **read** the scroll, or to **look at it**. <sup>5</sup> But one of the elders said to me, “Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals.”

The JPS Publication society says that if a Kohathite touched the ark, the entire clan would be cut off. This would suggest that perhaps Uzzah was not a Levite? Or, perhaps the reason that the Kohathites were not wiped out in 2 Samuel 6 when Uzzah touched the ark is because God saw the sin in the light of Jesus’ sacrifice?

**Considering Revelation 5: if no one is found worthy to touch or look upon the sancta of heaven – there is no relationship between God and man. More than that: all of humanity is doomed to death and to being cut off! But, Jesus has prevailed!**