

Revelation Q&A Chapters 4-7

Could the 24 elders have been a man and a woman from each of the 12 tribes because man was considered complete once Eve was made? (Revelation 4:4)

Remember: numbers don't have to be solved, they can just help us see.
Most interpreters consider the 24 elders to represent all of God's people glorified. That 12 patriarchs (OT) and 12 apostles (NT) represent the faithful people of God throughout time - and both the old and new covenant.
Remember, in apocalyptic literature: the number 12 and its multiples represent God's people and presence.

Another (less common) interpretation is to see these 24 elders as heavenly counterparts to the earthly church. Throughout the rest of the Bible, the term elder is used to represent man, not heavenly beings. The imagery of those given a white robe and a crown is consistent with what we see in reference to the great multitude of people in chapter 7. Listed are those "from every nation, tribe, people, and language."

At any rate, the concepts that rise to the surface in these verses are unity, faithfulness, and praise to God who is worthy... and isn't that something that we have an invitation to as followers of Jesus?

What is the sevenfold spirit of God? Can you explain the significance of the 7 flaming torches and 7 spirits in Revelation 4:5?

"From the throne came out flashes of lightning and roaring and crashes of thunder. Seven flaming torches, which are the seven spirits of God, were burning in front of the throne."

7 Spirits of God = the fullness of Spirit (7= full/complete)

A visual representation of the complete work of the Holy Spirit.

Whatever the Spirit is accomplishing here, it is a full and complete work, not in part. This is found in a pretty glorious description of the throne room of heaven. (4:1-6). I think we are meant to be in awe as we read what is being seen here. Perfect, complete, and full before God's throne... It's an amazing sight.

What is the meaning of Revelation 4:6?

“...and in front of the throne was something like a sea of glass, like crystal.”

To meditate on this question I think we should ask: what is the Biblical imagery that we have for the sea? The theme we witness throughout scripture for the sea is one of chaos and disorder. It's a place where humans cannot live and thrive. A sea of glass contrasts this imagery that we've learned to recall for the sea as we journey through scripture. Instead of being chaotic it is calm. Instead of dark/deep it is clear as crystal. The new earth is all about redeeming creation... I think this imagery is pointing to that.

In Revelation 4:7 my Bible says the first creature was a lion and the second creature like a calf. Pastor Tim said it was an ox. Is this difference important or not?

Our english words calf and ox, depending on what translation you are reading, are translated from the same Gk word *μοσχος* *moschos*. This word implies that the animal here is young.

So these translations are not depicting two different animals. However, if we consider that this word is used to express a young animal... the lion and the calf together could represent that Jesus is both king and servant. While the man and the eagle remind us that Jesus is both God and man. These 4 creatures also represent all of creation. We gather that from the use of the number 4 and the representations we discussed when we were in chapter 4: wild and domesticated animals, and the dominion of sky and the dominion of earth.

In Revelation 5:5-6 how is Jesus the Lion of Judah and the slaughtered lamb?

At the beginning of Revelation 5, Christ is called the Lion of Judah, but when the lion actually appears he is a slain lamb. Throughout the remainder of this book, Christ will be referred to as the lamb. The lion certainly represents a kind of power, but Christ's appearance as a lamb reveals to us that ultimate victory and power is found in Jesus' suffering and death. His death was not an unfortunate thing that happened to him, but it is a picture of who Jesus is. He is not powerful despite being the slain lamb, but *because he is* the slain lamb.

Who gave the crown to the rider on the white horse? (Rev.6:2)

The short answer to this question is... I don't know. (and the Word doesn't specify) But if I were meditating on these verses and this question, I would take into consideration that this rider is a "conqueror bent on conquest" and that the crowns described here in Gk are a *stephanos*, the garland of a victor, in contrast to a *diadema*, the crown of a king.

διάδημα - crown representing royal authority (kingship)

Στέφανος - crown representing victory (conquer)

Neither crown is exclusively good or bad, they just represent different things. Diadema is used for the crown of the rider of the white horse in Revelation 19 and for the dragon in chapter 12. Stephanos is used in reference to the martyrs in chapter 2 and for the woman in chapter 12. So, don't think bad vs good, think in terms of meaning and what the author is trying to communicate.

So... instead of who gave the crown, it would seem the question the text may actually be nudging us towards is how did the rider get this crown? Or what value did this crown have? In this instance I believe it is a nod at the theme of conquest that we see embodied in this white horse and rider. And remember, there are two ways to conquer By force/grab at control or by trust/as a living sacrifice. (And only one of those ways is *true* conquering!)

What does "under the altar" mean in Revelation 6? (5th seal)

Altars represent sacrifice. The martyr's life is like a sacrifice. (Gen8:20) Altars commemorate an encounter with God. (Gen35:3)(Deu 27:4-7)

Blood was poured out at the base of the altar, as a sacrifice was made on the altar. (Exod.29:12) The life of a being is in the blood (ancient context), so the slain lives of martyrs being poured out "under the altar" links us to the concept of life-blood and eternal life. Even the word "soul" used here means "breath" or "breath of life". I think what's being highlighted here is a rich hope for eternal life *even* in the face of violent death.

Have we seen seals 1-5 throughout time, leading us to seal 6? It seems like seal 6 is more full of wrath.

In regards to time, there are different views about how each seal is seen, represented, or happening throughout time. We went over some of those differences last time, and highlighted their commonalities as well. We didn't do that for seal 6, but we can. (:

Hist. - Codes this text to the fall of paganism to Christianity in the Roman Empire.

Pret. - codes this text to the end of the Jewish State and the fall of its leaders. They may say that this is also the "great and terrible day of the Lord" spoken of by the prophets.

Fut. - codes this text to the beginning of the last days, and may see assume these descriptions are either symbolic, literal, or a combination of both.

Id. - Uses this text as a lens to view the second coming of Christ through. That his return will include an ultimate judgment that will be great and will impact all of creation.

(So then, of course, each view holds different thoughts on what the signs actually point to/mean. We don't have time for all that.)

You're right in observing that seal 6 seems to be "more full of wrath". The commonality we see in this seal across each of the 4 views of Revelation is the theme of ultimate judgment and wrath. Each seal reveals an aspect of judgment, but seal 6 in particular describes a more ultimate/encompassing experience of judgment where all of creation is not only moved, but turned completely upside down. It's valuable to note that while the other 5 seals included judgments that are impacted by human lives (war, famine, etc...) the 6th seal involves the cosmos and natural disasters... which exists completely outside of human influence. *All of the seals can only be opened by the lamb*, but this seal in particular packs a unique punch because it involves forces of nature that we can't even begin to comprehend controlling. 6:17 sums up this concept: "the great day of their wrath has come, and *who is able to withstand it?*"

What is the meaning of Revelation 6:15-17?

“Then the kings of the earth, the very important people, the generals, the rich, the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains. They said to the mountains and to the rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of the one who is seated on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb, because the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to withstand it?”

This was a prophecy from Isaiah concerning “The Day of the Lord” in Isaiah chapter 2:

Isaiah 2:19-22 “People will flee to caves in the rocks and to holes in the ground from the fearful presence of the LORD and the splendor of his majesty, when he rises to shake the earth. On that day people will throw away to the moles and bats their idols of silver and idols of gold, which they made to worship. They will flee to caverns in the rocks and to the overhanging crags from the fearful presence of the LORD and the splendor of his majesty, when he rises to shake the earth.

Stop trusting in mere humans, who have but a breath in their nostrils. Why hold them in esteem?”

I believe that last sentence really is at the heart of what we should glean from these verses in both Isaiah and Revelation. That those who trust in themselves will face judgment and wrath in its intensity, and that those who put their trust in God will have a promise and inheritance to cling to, no matter what they face in this life.

(Concerning the tribes listed in Chapter 7) Why is Manasseh listed and not Ephraim? Are Levi and Joseph replacing Dan and Ephraim?

Note: In this list, Manasseh is mentioned, so Joseph might be assumed to refer to Ephraim. (Since Joseph can refer to both.)

It's unclear why Dan and Ephraim are left off, or seemingly replaced on this list. It is worth noting that this list is not the only one in scripture that doesn't include all of the tribes. In Numbers 1, 2, 13, and 26, the tribe of Levi is left out.

Dan is also left off of the list of tribes in 1 Chronicles 4-7. Some interpreters consider that this could be because the tribe of Dan historically embraced idolatry and immorality. This could be said for Ephraim as well.

So then does Joseph stand in the place of Dan and Ephraim?

What is the meaning of Revelation 7:13-14

“Then one of the elders asked me, “These dressed in long white robes—who are they and where have they come from?” So I said to him, “My lord, you know the answer.” Then he said to me, “These are the ones who have come out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb!”

John is prompted by the elder to consider and know who the ones dressed in robes are and where they came from. And the elder answers these two questions:

They came out of the great tribulation.

While there are many views about the how/when/where concerning the great tribulation in Revelation (we discussed in more detail when we talked about rapture) we can find common ground in the anticipation of the second coming of Jesus. He is going to return and we will be with him. It would seem that part of that process includes the hardships and great suffering that we read about throughout this book. Just as Christ suffered, his followers can anticipate suffering, and some even martyrdom. It is from this suffering that those in white robes around the altar have come to be. And if the great tribulation involves a series of judgments, how do people survive the judgment of God? It's certainly not by anyone's own doing, but by being covered in the blood of the lamb. So, that's the second question the elder answers: *They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb!*

It would seem to me that this description, and really the whole of chapter 7, is a great reminder that those who suffer faithfully for Jesus are not forgotten and their endurance is part of the glory and goodness seen before the throne. All of this considered, the verses that follow, (Rev. 7:15-17) are an intense and beautiful promise.

“Therefore, they are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them.

Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat. For the lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”

Is it reasonable to interpret the 144,000 as a symbolic number of Israelites being sealed during End Times because they are righteous but not Christian, while the vast multitudes were Christians who had been sealed by the Holy Spirit as they repented and accepted Jesus? (Rev.7:4)

I think it is reasonable, but I also think that as I read the text it may not be the only reasonable or meaningful wisdom within it. There are lots of opinions about who the 144,000 actually are. There are some views that I find more likely than others and I'm sure each of you could probably say the same thing.

No matter what the “answer” is here, there are a couple things that I do think are important to consider:

-numbers are adjectives in apocalyptic writing. If we've been using numbers to express meaning and not to count for the rest of the book, then shouldn't we continue to read that way? Unless the context hints to the idea that we should see this text differently. (But I'm not noticing that.)

-I think there is contrast in these verses between 144,000 from the tribe and a number too much to be counted from the multitude just like there is contrast in the verses about the lion and the lamb.

What could that contrast reveal to us? I think there is wisdom here about what the kingdom of God looks like, just like there was wisdom about the character of Jesus earlier in the book. Our assumptions and expectations may not be how things play out - are we ok with the Lord surprising us and changing the way we see the world? Jesus is not going to conquer the world the way some thought he would. I think that is definitely something to reflect on in these verses.

Rev. 4-7 summary, first paragraph, page 188