

The People of the Apocalypse

“The Four Beasts”

This group of beings or living creatures is called the four beasts. They, like the twenty-four elders, are also found in the throne room of God in the very beginning of the prophetic section of the Revelation and, they are thoroughly described:

“And round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind. And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle. And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: And they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.” (Revelation 4:6-8)

This description is similar to the heavenly vision of Ezekiel recorded in Ezekiel 1:5-10. The beasts, or living creatures as they are called in Ezekiel, are supernatural heavenly beings created for the express purpose of worshipping the God of heaven. In the Revelation they appear on seven different occasions and perform a variety of necessary ministry services to the Lord.

Their pronouncement of “*Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was and is and is to come*” (Revelation 4:7) is also similar to the heavenly seraphim’s declaration in Isaiah 6:3: “*Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory.*”

This opening panoply of praise to the Lord God of heaven are the first words of praise to be uttered in heaven, emphasizing His unique essence of holiness, the characteristic for which He is the most well known and the one characteristic by which He most desires to be remembered.

This threefold praise of “*Holy, holy, holy*” ascribed to God continues:

“And when those beasts give glory and honor and thanks to Him that sat on the throne, who lives for ever and ever, The four and twenty elders fall down before Him that sat on the throne, and worship Him that lives for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power, for Thou hast created all things and for Thy pleasure they are and were created.”

(Revelation 4:9-11)

The four living creatures team up with the twenty-four elders as a second group of worship leaders in the throne room of God. These two groups are seen together on four separate occasions in the Revelation and each time they join in full adoration and worship of God, which seems to be their primary purpose for being alive.

After their introductory appearance to bring praise to God the Father in the throne room, they appear in chapter five when the Lamb of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, makes His entrance into the heavenly throne room:

“And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent forth into all the earth” (Revelation 5:6).

The importance of the four beasts and the twenty-four elders is underlined, as they are present when the Lamb is introduced at His heavenly coronation. He is the central figure of all of history and now takes His place in the throne room at the closing stage of time and continues to serve His Father by taking the scroll and eventually breaking each seal, opening the scroll which reveals the final judgments of God’s wrath also known as the eschatological Day of the Lord.

“And when He had taken the book (scroll), the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb having every one of them harps and golden vials full of odors which are the prayers of the saints. And

they sung a new song saying, Thou art worthy to take the book and to open the seals thereof: for Thou was slain, and hast redeemed us (men) to God by Thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us (them) unto our (their) God kings and priests and we (they) shall reign on the earth.” (Revelation 5:8-10.

The four beasts' ministry of praise to the Lamb continues:

“And I beheld and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousand of thousands; Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing” (Revelation 5:11,12)

This opening throne room scene is the most glorious and majestic praise and worship scene in all of Scripture. It first of all ascribes holiness and praise to the Father in chapter four. Then the Lamb that is slain, the Lord Jesus Christ, is introduced as the only One worthy to open the book, the One Who now ushers in the events of the time of the end. The four beasts bring this magnificent throne room scene to a close:

“And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped Him that lives for ever and ever.” (Revelation 5:13,14)

Their ministry continues as they play an introductory part in the opening of the first four seals which are located on the outside of the book (scroll). While the four beasts previously acted as a group involved in worshipping the Lord, now, in Revelation chapter six they perform individual duties as each one is identified with one of the first four seals located on the outside of the scroll.

When the Lamb opens the seal they simply say “*come and see*” inviting all present to observe the activities and outcome of each event. These first four seals are set apart from the last three as they are introduced by the four beasts and are symbolized by four horsemen.

The events of the seals are authored by the Antichrist who is the symbolic rider on each of the four horses. The seals comprise the Satanically sourced preparation of the earth for the final cataclysmic events of the Day of the Lord's wrath which is contained inside the scroll in the trumpet and vial judgments.

The last three seals focus upon God's Day of the Lord wrath/judgment as the martyrs of the fifth seal are inquiring of God's wrath, the sixth seal is the sign indicating God's Day of the Lord wrath/judgment is impending, and the seventh seal introduces God's Day of the Lord wrath/judgment through the seven trumpet and vial judgments.

The four beasts play an important part in this sequence as their appearances in the Revelation demonstrate. The next scene they are involved in is found in chapter seven:

“And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders, and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.” (Revelation 7:11.

In this heavenly scene which occurs between the sixth and seventh seal, the 144 Thousand have been sealed (Revelation 7:3-8), the saints of the ages have been resurrected, and the church has been raptured to (Revelation 7:9,10) followed by the praising response of all in heaven (Revelation 7:11,12) with the resurrected/raptured saints being identified in (Revelation 7:13-17).

These four beasts are once again an integral part of the heavenly worship scene of celebration when the

redeemed of the ages experience the final phase of their redemption by the Lamb and appear in the throne room before God.

Their next place of activity and worship is in heaven with the twenty-four elders as the Lamb and the 144 Thousand Israelites appear on earth on Mt. Zion:

“And they (the harpers) sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.” (Revelation 14:3)

Once again, these four beasts appear with the twenty-four elders at another major event in the throne room and now the harpers also are with them singing “*a new song*” in the presence of God the Father. The Lamb makes His first end of the age appearance on earth as the Redeemer that comes to Zion (Isaiah 59:20) to accomplish the redemption of the nation of Israel represented by the 144 Thousand from each of the twelve tribes of Israel.

When God’s Day of the Lord judgment draws to a close, one of the four beasts appears in the final stage:

“And one of the four beasts gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, Who lives for ever and ever.” (Revelation 15:7)

This seemingly minor detail involving one of the four beasts demonstrates the continuity and progressive nature of the Revelation and also supports the chronological sequence of the book as these heavenly creatures are seen in the throne room of God Almighty in a supporting role during the progressive outpouring of God’s judgment at the end of the age. The last time they appear is in chapter nineteen:

“And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia.” (Revelation 19:4)

They join their throne room companions, the twenty-four elders, in the three-fold Hallelujah Chorus of praise to God Almighty for His judgment of the great whore Babylon just prior to the King of king’s return to earth to “smite the nations” at the battle of Armageddon (Revelation 19:11-21).

The four beasts presence on this momentous occasion underscores their ongoing ministry to God the Father and the Lamb as praise and worship leaders in heaven along with their direct involvement in the administration of God’s program of judgment during the Day of the Lord.