

CHAPTER 5

INTRODUCTION TO REVELATION 5

This chapter contains the vision of the sealed book, and the opening of it by Christ, which occasions universal joy among all ranks and sorts of creatures. The book is described by the place where it was, in the right hand of God; by the uncommon manner in which it was written within and without; and by the seven seals it was sealed with, (~~(**REB**)~~ Revelation 5:1), next follows a proclamation made by a mighty angel, with a loud voice, to find out a person worthy and able to open this book, and loose its seals, (~~(**REB**)~~ Revelation 5:2), upon which a declaration is made, that none could be found in heaven, earth, or hell, (~~(**REB**)~~ Revelation 5:3), which had such an effect upon John, that it set him a weeping, (~~(**REB**)~~ Revelation 5:4), but was comforted by one of the elders suggesting, that there was a person that could, and would do it, when he calls the lion of the tribe of Judah, and the root of David, which are names of Christ, (~~(**REB**)~~ Revelation 5:5), of which he was assured by what he quickly saw, namely, the same person the elder spoke of, described by his position, standing between the throne, and the living creatures, and elders; and by his similitude and likeness, as a Lamb that had been lately slain, with seven horns and eyes in him; and by what he did, he went and took the book out of the right hand of God, his Father, (~~(**REB**)~~ Revelation 5:6,7). This occasioned a general joy among all kind of creatures; first among the four living creatures, and four and twenty elders, who are described by what they had, harps and golden vials, the one for praise, the other for prayer; and by what they did, they fell down in a worshipping posture before the Lamb, and sung the new song of redeeming love to him; in which they ascribe worthiness to him, to take the book and open its seals; declare their redemption unto God, by his blood, out of all nations of the earth; take notice of the honour done them by him, in making them kings and priests to God; and express their assurance that they shall reign with him on earth, (~~(**REB**)~~ Revelation 5:8-10), and next an innumerable company of angels join the living creatures and elders, in a doxology or ascription of glory to him, (~~(**REB**)~~ Revelation 5:11,12), yea, every creature in heaven and earth, upon it, and under it, and in the sea, are introduced as giving glory both to him that sat upon the throne, and to the

Lamb, (^{<6613>}Revelation 5:13), and the whole is closed by the living creatures saying “Amen”, to all, and by the elders prostrating themselves, and worshipping the living and eternal God, (^{<6614>}Revelation 5:14).

Ver. 1. *And I saw on the right hand of him that sat on the throne*, etc.] Of this throne, and who it was that sat upon it, (see Gill on “^{<6602>}Revelation 4:2”); and who had “in” his right hand, or “at”, or “upon” his right hand, as the Syriac and Arabic versions render it, lying by, or near his right hand; though according to (^{<6607>}Revelation 5:7), the book appears to have been in his right hand, as our version, and others render it:

a book written within, and on the backside, sealed with seven seals: this book was very much like Ezekiel's roll, (^{<3009>}Ezekiel 2:9,10); which was written **rwj aw mʾynp**, “within” and “without”, before and behind, and indeed it was in the form of a roll: the manner of writings in those times was on sheets of parchment, which, when finished, were rolled up in the form of a cylinder; hence a book is called a “volume”. This book seems to have consisted of seven rolls, to which was annexed seven seals; and there being not room enough within, contrary to the common way of writing, some things were written upon the backside of the outermost roll; and such writings were by the ancients called “Opistographi”: and the word is used by them sometimes for very prolix writings^{f146}. By this book some understand the Scriptures of the Old Testament, which were written in rolls; (see ^{<3005>}Hebrews 10:5 ^{<4017>}Luke 4:17,20); and which came out of the right hand of God, and were given forth by him; and being written within, and on the backside, may denote the fulness of them, they containing a variety of matter, useful and profitable, for different purposes; or else the literal and mystical, or spiritual meaning of some parts of them: or, as others think, the more clear explanation of the books of the Old Testament, by those of the New Testament; and its being sealed may signify the authenticity of those writings, having the seal of God's truth, and the impress of his wisdom, power, and goodness on them; and also the hidden sense and meaning of them, they being, especially in the prophetic and spiritual part of them, a sealed book to natural men, and of which Christ is the truest and best interpreter; but then this book was opened, and looked into, and read, and, in some measure, understood, even by the Old Testament saints, and had been before this time expounded by Christ, concerning himself; yea, he had opened the understandings of his disciples to understand those Scriptures, and had counted them, and others, worthy to open and explain this book to others, and had sent them into all the

world for this purpose; and for the same reasons it cannot be understood of the Gospel published to Jews and Gentiles, the one within, and the other without; rather therefore the book of God's decrees is here meant, which respects all creatures, and all occurrences and events in the whole world, from the beginning to the end of time; and so Ezekiel's roll, according to the Targum on (^{אֶתְּ}Ezekiel 2:10); which was written before and behind, signified that which was *aywrç ^m*, “from the beginning”, and which *apwsb ywhml dyt [d*, “shall be in the end”, or hereafter. This book God holds “in [his] right hand”, as the rule and measure of all he does, and of the government of the world, and which he constantly fulfils and executes; and its being written “within and without” may denote the perfection and comprehensiveness of it, it reaching to all creatures and things, even the most minute; and its being “sealed” shows the certainty of its fulfilment, and the secrecy and hiddenness of it, until accomplished; though it seems best of all to understand it of that part of God's decrees relating to the church and world, particularly the Roman empire, which from henceforward, to the end of time, was to be fulfilled; and so is no other than the book of the Revelation itself, exhibited in the following scenes and visions; and this may be truly said to be in the right hand of God, and from thence taken by the Lamb, it being the revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, (^{אֶתְּ}Revelation 1:1); and may be said to be written, both “within and on the backside”, to show that it contains a large account of things, a long train of events to be accomplished; as also to signify, that it regards the church, and the members of it, who are those that are within, in the several ages of time, and the world, or those that are without; for this book prophecy regards both the state of the Roman empire, and of the Christian church; and its being “sealed” shows the authenticity, certainty, and also the obscurity of what was contained therein; and with “seven” seals, with respect to the seven periods of time, in which the prophecies in it are to be fulfilled.

Ver. 2. *And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice*, etc.] This was not the uncreated angel, Jesus Christ; for he is after spoken of as the lion of the tribe of Judah, and as the Lamb in the midst of the throne, but a created one; though who he was, whether Gabriel, as some say, because his name signifies the strong or mighty One of God, is not material to be known; angels are said to be mighty, and to excel in strength: this is called so here, chiefly with respect to his voice, which he, by reason of his great strength, exerted so loudly, as to be heard by all the creatures in heaven,

and in earth, and under the earth however, this was not John the Baptist, but if a minister of the Gospel, rather some one since, making the following proclamation:

who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? suggesting, that if there was any such person, that he was desired to come, and do it; and it seems, that he must not only be one of power and ability, but of dignity and authority, a person of greatness and worth, from whence his ability arises; as he ought to be that can engage his heart to draw nigh to God, and take a book out of his right hand, this mysterious book of the Revelation, as it was indeed while sealed; and open and explain it to others, unseal it or exhibit it, as it afterwards was in the following scenes and visions, and gave a view of all that is contained in it; and not only so, but fulfil and accomplish all the prophecies in it; and who can, or is worthy to do all this, but he that sits at the right hand of God, and who is God as well as man? and this proclamation was made to stir up an earnest desire in John, and all the saints he represents, to know what was in this book; and to show the impotence of all creatures to make any discovery of it; and to illustrate, and set off with a greater foil, the glory, excellency, ability, and worth of Jesus Christ. There seems to be an allusion to the president of the temple calling to the priests under him, to attend to the several parts of service assigned them, saying unto them, **hkzç ym**, “whosoever is worthy, let him” do so and so ^{f147}.

Ver. 3. *And no man in heaven*, etc.] Or “no one in heaven”, whether angels, or the souls of departed saints; neither the one nor the other know anything of what is to come, until it is revealed unto them:

nor in earth: among all the men on earth, even those of the greatest sagacity and penetration, the wise, the prudent, the scribe, the disputer of this world, such who are most conversant with books, and have the greatest reach into the things of nature, or of grace:

neither under the earth; the dead buried there, good or bad; which may be said agreeably to the notions of the ancient Jews, who believed the immortality of souls, and that they were rewarded or punished, **υπο χψονος**, “under the earth”, according to their virtue or vice in life ^{f148}: or the devils in hell; or whoever on the earth are influenced by them, as magicians, sorcerers, soothsayers, and necromancers:

was able to open the book, neither to look thereon; or in it, so as to read it, understand it, and show to John what was in it; for the sense is, there was no creature in heaven, earth, or hell, who were masters of the deepest knowledge, and made pretensions to any, that were able to foresee and foretell things to come; or to exhibit the prophecies in this book, and represent them to John in the manner they afterwards were, and much less to accomplish them.

Ver. 4. *And I wept much*, etc.] Not so much on his own account, because he feared his curiosity would not be gratified, and that strong desire answered, which were raised in him upon sight of the book, and increased by the angel's proclamation; but for the sake of the church of God, whose representative he was, and to whom the knowledge of this book, and the things contained in it, he judged must be very useful and profitable. The Ethiopic version reads, "and many wept"; many of those that were about the throne, as well as John:

because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon; because there was no creature in heaven, earth, or under it, that were of dignity and authority, as well as of ability, to open the book by unsealing it; and read and deliver out the prophecies in it upon the taking off of every seal; and so not to look into it, and foresee and foretell what was hereafter to come to pass, in the church and world: the phrase of being worthy to look on it seems to be Jewish; of the book of the generation of Adam, (~~GEN~~ Genesis 5:1), the Jews say ^{f149} that

"it descended to the first man, and by it he knew the wisdom which is above; and this book came to the sons of God, the wise men of the age, *hyb aj gçal ykzd ^am*, "whoever is worthy to look in it", knows by it the wisdom which is from above."

The whole verse is left out in the Alexandrian copy; and the phrase, "to read", is neither in the Vulgate Latin, nor in any of the Oriental versions.

Ver. 5. *And one of the elders said unto me*, etc.] The Ethiopic version reads, "one of these elders"; that is, one of the four and twenty elders that were round about the throne; not the first of the four and twenty books of the Old Testament; nor the patriarch Jacob, because of the prophecy concerning Shiloh, Judah's son, which stands in (~~GEN~~ Genesis 49:10), nor Moses, who spoke of the Messiah as the great prophet of the church; nor John the Baptist, who pointed out the Lamb of God; these are all fancies

and conjectures. It was one of the members of the Christian church, who was near the throne of God, had communion with him, and knowledge of his will, who in this visionary way is represented as comforting John under his sorrow and concern, and giving him information: and sometimes persons of superior abilities may receive instruction from meaner persons, as did Apollos from Aquila and Priscilla: the same said unto John,

weep not; cease sorrowing, do not be cast down, nor despair;

behold the lion of the tribe of Judah; by whom is meant Christ, who, according to the flesh, was to come of the tribe of Judah; and certain it is, that our Lord sprang from thence: and he is said to be the lion of that tribe, in allusion to the prophecy concerning Judah in (⁰⁴⁰⁹Genesis 49:9), where he is said to be a lion, an old lion stooping down and couching, and on whose standard was the figure of a lion. Christ may be compared to one, because of his great strength, he being the mighty God, the able Saviour, and strong Redeemer, and protector of his church and people, and the avenger of their enemies; and because of his courage and intrepidity when he engaged with Satan, and his principalities and powers, when he bore the sins of his people, sustained his Father's wrath, and the terrors of death set themselves in array against him; and because of the fierceness of his wrath, and fury against the wicked, and for his generosity and lenity towards those that stoop unto him, and obey him. So the Jews say ^{f150}, that

“of Messiah, the son of David, who comes forth from Judah, is it said, (⁰⁴⁰⁹Genesis 49:9), “Judah is a lion's whelp”;

and a little after, Messiah, the son of David, who is *hyra*, “a lion”, shall be on his right hand, and Messiah, the son of Joseph, who is an ox, on his left hand; so the word of the Lord frequently, in the Chaldee paraphrase, is said to be a lion ^{f151}.

The root of David; in like manner is Christ called the root of Jesse in (²⁸¹⁰Isaiah 11:10); and the meaning either is, that he is a branch that springs out of the roots of Jesse and David, is David's son and offspring, according to his human nature; (see ⁶²¹⁶Revelation 22:16); or that he is David's Lord, according to his divine nature: and the metaphor of a root well agrees with him as Mediator, he being hidden out of sight, and unknown to a natural man; and may denote his meanness in his state of humiliation, when he was as a root out of a dry ground; and because he is the root from whence all the elect of God spring, in whom they have their being, and by whom they

are bore and supported, and from whom are derived to them all the blessings of grace, all their spiritual life, holiness, fruitfulness, and perseverance. Now this illustrious Person, so described,

hath prevailed; or overcome all difficulties, being one of worth and value, of great authority and ability:

to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof; and deliver out all the prophecies in it, and fulfil them; and this through the merits of his blood, and in consequence of his sufferings and death: hence, in the next verse, he is represented as a lamb as it had been slain; and the four living creatures, and the four and twenty elders, put his worthiness to take the book, and open it, upon his having been slain, and having redeemed them by his blood, (~~400~~ Revelation 5:9). And as he, upon his resurrection from the dead, had all power in heaven and in earth given him, as Mediator, for the protection of his church, so he was deserving; and it was fit and necessary that he, as the great prophet of the church, should have and deliver out the prophecies concerning the state and condition of his redeemed ones in all ages.

Ver. 6. *And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts*, etc.] These words, “in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts”, are left out in the Syriac version:

and in the midst of the elders stood a Lamb; John, upon the intimation given him by the elder, lift up his eyes, and with great earnestness looked about, and saw the person he pointed at, though not in the form of a lion, but in the appearance of a lamb, to which Christ, both in the Old and New Testament, is often compared; and that very aptly, for his innocence and purity of nature; for his harmless and inoffensive conversation; and for his meek and humble deportment throughout the whole of his life; and for his patience at the time of his sufferings and death; and for his usefulness both for food and clothing to his people; and chiefly for his sacrifice for them, typified both by the passover lamb, and by the lambs of the daily sacrifice: hence it follows,

as it had been slain; or “as having been slain”; Christ had been really slain by the wicked hands of the Jews, and not in appearance only; the *as*, here, is not a note of mere similitude and likeness, but of reality and truth; (see ~~401~~ John 1:14 ~~402~~ Philippians 2:7); but he was now risen from the dead, and therefore is said to have been slain some time before, though now alive;

and he appeared to have the marks of his sufferings and death upon him, as he had after his resurrection the print of the nails and spear, in his hands, feet, and side; and he was as a lamb that had been newly or lately slain: and it may denote the continued efficacy of his blood, to cleanse from all sin, and of his sacrifice to take it away; he was as a Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, with respect to the continual virtue of his blood and sacrifice; and he will be, on the same account, the Lamb as it had been slain, unto the end of the world. The position and situation of this Lamb were, he “stood in the midst of the throne, and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders”; he “stood”, being risen from the dead, and ascended up into heaven, but was not as yet set down upon the throne with his Father, but was very near it; he stood before it, ready to be placed upon it, and receive his power and his kingdom; he stood between the throne, and between the living creatures, and the elders, being the Mediator between God, and his church, and people; he, appeared before the throne for them, as their advocate, and stood ready to give them all the assistance, and to do them all the good he could: and this his situation may also denote, that he is continually in view, is always in the sight of God, as the Lamb that had been slain; his blood is carried within the vail, is sprinkled upon the mercy seat, and is always in sight, and calls for peace and pardon; and God the Father always looks upon it, and to his righteousness, sacrifice, and satisfaction, on account of his people: moreover, his being in the midst of the four living creatures, and elders, may signify his presence in his churches, and with his ministers, which he has promised them to the end of the world. This Lamb is further represented,

as having seven horns; it is very unusual for a lamb to have horns, and especially seven: these horns are expressive of the power of Christ, of his dominion and government, even of his kingly power and authority; so kings are signified by horns in (²⁷⁸¹Daniel 8:20,21 7:24); and Christ himself is called the horn of David, and the horn of salvation, (³⁹²⁷Psalm 132:17 ²⁰¹³Luke 1:69); and signify, that upon his resurrection from the dead, and ascension to heaven, he was made and declared Lord and Christ; and the number “seven” expresses the fulness and perfection of his power and authority, having, as Mediator, all power in heaves and in earth given him; and what is above all power, might, dominion, and every name in this world, and that to come; and may have some relation to the seven states of his churches in so many periods of time; and show not only that he has power sufficient to protect and defend his people in all times, and to push

at and destroy his and their enemies, but to open the then sealed book, and unloose the seals: and as another qualification for this work, it follows,

and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent into all the earth; which some understand of angels, and of a sufficient number of them, which belong to Christ, and are at his command, and who are ready to do his will, and to be sent forth by him, into the several parts of the earth, to execute his pleasure: but these rather design the Spirit of God and his gifts, which Christ received without measure, both in his human nature, at his incarnation, and after his resurrection from the dead, and ascension; which he bestowed on his apostles and ministering servants, whom he sent forth into all the world, to preach his Gospel with them; and which he has, more or less, ever since continued to do. The Ethiopic version reads in the singular number, “and this is the Spirit of God which is sent into all the earth”; (see Gill on “⁽⁴⁰⁰⁾ Revelation 1:4”); these “seven eyes” may design the perfect knowledge of Christ, his foresight of future events, and his all wise providence, which is always and everywhere concerned to fulfil and accomplish them; so that he is every way qualified to take the book of future events, as to the church and world, and reveal it, open and explain it, and fulfil the things contained in it; (see ⁽³⁰⁰⁾ Zechariah 3:9).

Ver. 7. *And he came*, etc.] He drew nigh to the throne of God, he engaged his heart to approach unto him, and came up even to his seat, which a mere creature, without a Mediator, cannot do:

and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne; (see Gill on “⁽⁴⁰⁰⁾ Revelation 5:1”); it being given unto him, as in (⁽⁴⁰⁰⁾ Revelation 1:1); and a commission and authority to open it, and make it manifest to others, and to accomplish the several events, in the several periods of time, it points unto.

Ver. 8. *And when he had taken the book*, etc.] The Vulgate Latin version reads, “when he had opened the book”, very wrongly; for the opening of it by unloosing the seals, one after another, is hereafter mentioned, in (⁽⁴⁰⁰⁾ Revelation 6:1,3,5,7,9,12), but when it was observed, that the Lamb took the book, and his commission to open, unseal, and fulfil it,

the four beasts, and four [and] twenty elders, fell down before the Lamb; by way of religious worship and adoration of him; which shows that he was not a mere creature, who assumed human nature, suffered, and died, and is the Mediator between God and men, but is truly God, and is the proper

object of worship; and so he is regarded by all his faithful ministers, and true churches, which are here signified by the four living creatures, and four and twenty elders; who are represented as

having everyone of them harps; which were instruments of music, and with which the saints formerly used to praise God, (~~Psalm~~ Psalm 33:2); and so may here intend the praises and thanksgivings of the saints, of everyone of them, greater or lesser, upon the present occasion; having their hearts in right tune, making melody with them to the Lord, and giving thanks unto him for all their blessings, temporal and spiritual, and particularly for the Lamb, and his worthiness to open the book, and unloose the seals:

and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints; this is said in allusion to the golden censers full of incense, which ascended upwards, and was of a sweet smell; the vessels on the shewbread table, in which incense was put, are by Josephus^{f152} called “golden vials”, as here; his words are, upon the loaves were put two *φιαλαι χρυσεαι*, “golden vials”, full of incense: the prayers of the saints are compared to “odours”, or “incense”, as the word may be rendered, and as they are called, (~~Psalm~~ Psalm 141:2); partly because as incense goes upwards, so do they go up to God, and are received, regarded, and had in remembrance by him; and partly because as incense is of a sweet smell, so the prayers of the saints, put up in the name and faith of Christ, are very grateful and acceptable to God: the “golden vials” said to be “full” of them, may design the hearts of believers, in which they first are, and from whence they proceed; true prayer is that which is inwrought in the soul, and comes from the heart, even from a heart pure like gold, purified by faith in the blood of Christ, a true heart, that asks in faith, nothing wavering; such as are really saints, true believers in Christ, are praying souls; they are full of prayers for themselves and others; they pray always, and for all saints: this makes nothing for praying to angels and saints departed; for these prayers were their own, and not others; and besides, these four living creatures, and four and twenty elders, were not angels, for they are said to be redeemed by the blood of Christ, and are distinguished from angels in the following verses; nor the saints in heaven, but ministers and churches on earth, and who were to reign with Christ on earth, (~~Revelation~~ Revelation 5:10); it may be observed, that the Jews sometimes represent prayer in such like figures as here;

“prayer (they say) ascends with those spices which are mentioned in (²⁰⁴⁴Song of Solomon 4:14); and at the time that prayer ascends it is perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, and of this the holy blessed God asks, “who is this that comes up”, etc. ^{f153} (²⁰⁶Song of Solomon 3:6);”

and they say, prayer is greater than all offerings ^{f154}. (see ⁶⁸⁸Revelation 8:3).

Ver. 9. *And they sung a new song*, etc.] Upon a new occasion and subject, redemption by the blood of the Lamb, and his worthiness to open the sealed book; and in distinction from the old song of Moses and the children of Israel at the Red sea; and this was a most famous and excellent song, an unheard of one, and which none could learn, or sing, but the redeemed of the Lamb:

saying, thou art worthy to take the book, and open the seals thereof. The Arabic version reads, “thou, O Lamb”; the reasons why they ascribe such fitness, ability, and dignity to him, are as follow:

for thou wast slain: by men, and for the sins of men; whereby, as he became worthy in his priestly office to take away the sins of his people, and to have all the glory of their salvation, and, in his kingly office, to have all power and authority, and to be exalted above every name, so, in his prophetic office, to have perfect knowledge, as man and Mediator, of all the future events that were to befall his church and people, and to make them known, and fulfil them:

and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; this shows, that as the four living creatures, and four and twenty elders, were not angels, so they were not representatives of the Jewish church; or the patriarchs and prophets of the Old Testament; not even the apostles of the New; for they were all Jews, and could not be said to be redeemed out of every tongue, nation, and people; and also that not the Jews only were redeemed by Christ, but the Gentiles also, and not all mankind, or every individual of human nature, but some out of all the nations of the earth; for God hath chosen some, both of Jews and Gentiles, and these Christ has redeemed and therefore the Gospel is sent unto all nations, that these among them may be called and saved. The redemption of them supposes them to have been in a state of slavery and bondage, as they are by nature, to sin, Satan, and the law; and signifies

a deliverance from such a state, which Christ has obtained, not barely by power, but by price, as the word here used signifies, and may be rendered, “and hast bought us” and the price with which he has bought them in his own “blood”, and which is of full and sufficient value, it being not only the blood of a man, of an innocent man, but of one that is God as well as man: and this price was paid “to God”, and to his justice, against whom men have sinned, whose law they have broken, and whose justice they have injured and affronted, that he might reconcile them to God, bring them near to him, and that they might serve him in righteousness and true holiness.

Ver. 10. *And hast made us unto our God kings and priests*, etc.] (See Gill on “⁶⁰⁰⁶Revelation 1:6”). The Alexandrian copy, and Complutensian edition, and the Syriac, Arabic, and the Ethiopic versions, read “them”, instead of “us”:

and we shall reign on the earth; meaning not merely in a spiritual sense, through grace reigning over sin and corruption, through Satan being bruised under their feet, and through the victory they have in Christ over the world, but in the millennium state, in the thousand years' reign with Christ in the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness; (see ⁶⁰⁰⁶Revelation 20:4-6). The Alexandrian copy, and the Complutensian edition, Syriac and Arabic versions, read “they shall reign”.

Ver. 11. *And I beheld, and heard the voice of many angels*, etc.]

Immaterial spirits, made by Christ, and worshippers of him, and ministering spirits to him and his, the holy and elect angels, who are confirmed in their state by Christ; these John beheld in a visionary way, and heard the voices and articulate sounds formed by them; and there were many of them; how many there are, or were here, cannot be said; we read of a multitude of heavenly host that appeared at the incarnation of Christ, and of more than twelve legions of angels, that Christ could have had of his Father for a word speaking, at the time of his apprehension, who would have rescued him out of the hands of his enemies; yea, that company is innumerable. The Syriac version reads, “as the voice of many waters”; these were

round about the throne; were near to God, stood before him, behind his face, hearkened to his voice, and observed his orders: so with the Jews, the four angels, Michael, Gabriel, Uriel, and Raphael, are said ^{f155} to be *raskl bybs*, “round about his throne”, the throne of God: it follows here,

and the beasts and the elders; the sense is not, that John heard the voice of the living creatures, and of the elders, as well as, and together with, the voice of many angels; for he had heard their voice and song before, but that the angels whose voice he heard, as they were round about the throne, so they were round about the living creatures, and round about the elders: the angels are near unto, and encompass the ministers of the Gospel; they are about them, and give them intimations and discoveries of the mind and will of God, as an angel did to John, (^{<600>}Revelation 1:1), and another to Paul, (^{<427>}Acts 27:23,24), and sometimes direct them where to go and preach the Gospel, as in (^{<440>}Acts 16:9,10), and surround them for their safety and protection: so horses and chariots of fire, by whom angels are meant, were round about the prophet Elisha, (^{<216>}2 Kings 6:16,17), and they were also round about the elders, the churches, and particular believers; angels and saints are near to one another; and angels are very friendly to the saints, and so them many good offices; they all belong to the same family, and are social worshippers of God; the angels are the guards that encamp round about them that fear the Lord, and often protect them from enemies and dangers; and it may be observed, that the saints are nearer the Lamb and the throne than the angels be; according to this account, there was a throne, and one that sat on it, who is the living God; nearest to the throne stood the Lamb; next to the Lamb stood the four living creatures, the ministers of the Gospel; next to them the elders, or churches, and members thereof; and in the outermost ring, and as encompassing all, stood the ministering angels, they being servants; whereas the saints are the heirs of salvation, and the bride, the Lamb's wife, and therefore nearer him:

and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; that is, an innumerable company of them; a like number is mentioned in (^{<207>}Daniel 7:10) to which this seems to refer; (see ^{<987>}Psalms 68:17). The Jews speak of nine hundred and six thousand millions of ministering angels, that stand constantly before the Lord ^{f156}.

Ver. 12. *Saying with a loud voice*, etc.] To signify their zeal, fervour, and affection for Christ, and to make a free, open, and public acknowledgment of him, and that all might hear of his worthiness, and of the praise and glory that were due unto him:

worthy is the Lamb that was slain; they address him as the Lamb, and not as the Lord of lords, and their Lord; and speak of him as having been slain, and celebrate the virtue and efficacy of his sufferings and death, and ascribe

his worthiness to receive glory and honour thereunto; but do not add, as the living creatures and elders do, “and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood”; because, though they were the subjects and objects of confirming grace by Christ, yet not of redeeming grace: it follows,

to receive power and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing; as the book has seven seals to be unloosed, and Christ had seven horns of power and ability to loose them, and fulfil the things contained in it, and seven eyes to look into it, and discover and reveal what is in it, so here are “seven” words made use of, to express the praise that was due unto him; a like number is used by the angels in (⁴⁶⁷¹² Revelation 7:12); and when he is said to be worthy to receive these, it is not to be understood of his receiving the things themselves, but of the praise of them; and that these are to be observed in him, and to be ascribed to him: power belongs to him, as he is the mighty God; and as the Saviour and Redeemer of his people; and as risen from the dead, and as exalted at God's right hand, and made or declared Lord and Christ; having all power in heaven and in earth: “riches” may well be ascribed to him, who has all the perfections of deity in him; whose are the heavens and the earth, and the fulness thereof; and who, as Mediator, is heir of all things, and has both the riches of grace and glory in his hands: “wisdom” also is his; he is wisdom itself, he is the only wise God; and he is the author of all wisdom, natural and spiritual; and, as Mediator, he has the spirit of wisdom and knowledge resting on him, and the treasures of both hid in him: and “strength” may be well attributed to him, which he has shown in making and supporting all things; in saving and redeeming his people with a mighty hand and outstretched arm; and in subduing and vanquishing all his and their enemies; and in giving strength to them to discharge their duty, resist temptations, oppose corruptions, and do their generation work: “honour” is due to him, as the Son of God, he being to be honoured equally as the Father; and who, as man and Mediator, is crowned with glory and honour: “glory” is what ought to be ascribed unto him, even the glory of true and proper deity, and also the glory of salvation; and who, as Mediator, had a glory promised him, and which was due unto him upon his having finished his work, and which he now enjoys: wherefore “blessing” is to be given to him, who is God over all, blessed for evermore, in himself and the perfections of his nature; in whom all spiritual blessings are, and in whom all the nations of the earth are blessed; and to whom praise and thanks are

to be rendered, for the blessings of pardoning, justifying, and redeeming grace, and for all other.

Ver. 13. *And every creature which is in heaven*, etc.] Animate or inanimate, angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect, sun, moon, and stars, and the fowls of the air:

and on the earth; men and beasts, and every creeping thing, mountains, hills, fruitful trees, and all cedars: and under the earth: in the bowels of it, metals, minerals, and everything of that kind:

and such as are in the sea; that sail in ships upon the mighty waters, and fishes great and small that are therein:

and all that are in them; in heaven, earth, and sea:

heard I saying, blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever; all creatures in their way praise God, and are subservient to the glory and interest of Christ, and are the occasion of glorifying of both; and even the enemies of Christ, wicked men and devils, will be obliged to own Christ to be Lord, to the glory of God the Father, as well as angels and saints; and the same glory and honour which are given to the one are ascribed to the other, which shows the proper deity of Christ, and his equality with the Father. The Syriac version reads, “and I heard him who sitteth upon the throne, saying, to the Lamb be given blessing and honour”, etc. with which compare (^{Ⓡ172}John 5:22,23).

Ver. 14. *And the four beasts said, Amen*, etc.] Giving their assent to what the angels and every creature said, and expressing their desires and wishes that so it might be, and also their faith, that so it was, and would be:

and the four [and] twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever; either God the Father, who sat upon the throne, and is so described, (^{Ⓡ173}Revelation 4:9,10); or else the Lamb who had been slain, and was now alive, and lives for evermore; or both of them, for the Alexandrian copy, the Complutensian edition, and the Syriac and Arabic versions, omit the words “him that liveth for ever and ever”; and leave it to be understood of either of them, or both; and the Ethiopic version reads, “and the elders worshipped him”; as the four living creatures and four and twenty elders led the chorus, and begun the song, so they close it, as being the persons more immediately concerned in the death and sufferings of the

Lamb, and redemption by him, and in the sealed book, and in the things contained in it; the seals of which are next opened, and an account is given of them in some following chapters.