

## **Revelation Chapter 4**

*Bible verses are from the New American Standard Bible and are highlighted in blue and italics.*

The 1<sup>st</sup> three chapters of the book of Revelation take place on earth, on the island of Patmos where the last surviving apostle, the apostle John, is exiled. The glorified Lord Jesus Christ tells John to "Write in a scroll what you see and send it to the 7 churches of Asia Minor."

Then the Lord addresses each of these 7 churches that are along the coast of Western Turkey, and he concludes each address with the words, "He who has an ear, let him hear what the spirit says to the churches."

Their message to be meditated upon and heeded by the church in general and by every born-again person down through the centuries. The emphasis of the 7 messages is, generally speaking, on the life and the walk before the Lord of the church and its people on earth and the emphasis is on the promises and rewards to be had by them after life on this earth.

Beginning in chapter 4, the scene changes from this earth and the emphasis changes from the life of God's church on earth, to Heaven.

### **Verse 1**

*1 After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven, and the first voice which I had heard, like the sound of a trumpet speaking with me, said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after these things."*

### **After these things**

What things? After the things having to do with the 7 churches of Asia and those down through the centuries who have ears to hear what was spoken to the 7 churches.

### **Door standing open in Heaven**

The prophet Ezekiel, in 593 B.C., saw much the same thing: *"The Heavens were opened and I saw visions of God."* (Ezekiel 1:11)

### **After these things**

Again, after what things? John will see visions of what will take place after these things.

### **Verse 2**

*2 Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne was standing in heaven, and One sitting on the throne.*

John sees the throne room of Heaven and its grandeur. John is not the only one who has seen some of these things, but it is very rare that someone does.

Paul may have. He says, "I know a man in Christ who was taken up into the 3<sup>rd</sup> Heaven and heard things not lawful for a man to speak." He was referring to himself when he said that he didn't know if he was taken up bodily or in spirit. John does know. John was taken up in spirit.

Isaiah saw some of these things. Ezekiel did. Daniel didn't see exactly what John sees, but he saw some other things. Ezekiel saw a throne and said it was *"something like a sapphire stone"*. (Ezekiel 10:1)

### **Verse 3**

*3 And He who was sitting was like a jasper stone and a sardius in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, like an emerald in appearance.*

### **Jasper Stone**

Scholars are not agreed on what a Jasper stone is. The best estimate is that it's a clear, diamond-like crystal; very beautiful and precious. It very well may be a diamond.

### **Sardius**

It's well understood that sardius is a deep, fiery red gemstone.

### **Rainbow... Like emerald in appearance**

Ezekiel saw much the same thing:

*"...on that which resembled a throne, high up, was a figure with the appearance of a man... and there was radiance around him. As the appearance of a rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so was the appearance of the surrounding radiance."* (Ezekiel 1:26, 28)

Do you remember after the flood, the Lord made a promise, a covenant, with Noah, that he would never again destroy the earth with a flood? God said, "Whenever you see the rainbow in the sky, that's the sign of my covenant." He was saying, in effect, that his promise never to destroy life with a flood again is as sure and certain as the throne of God.

The one who sat on the throne was like a jasper stone and a sardius and there was a rainbow around the throne like an emerald.

For some reason, precious stones are characteristic of the things of Heaven. The material of the walls of the new Jerusalem, that come from Heaven to earth after the recreation of the cosmos, is jasper - the clear diamond-like crystal. There are 12 foundation stones of the wall, each a different precious gemstone. The breastplate of the priest of ancient Israel has 12 precious stones according to God's specific design. God addresses Lucifer in Ezekiel 28:13 saying, *"You were in Eden, the garden of God, every precious stone was your covering."*

Why precious gemstones are important in this way, no one knows. Perhaps it's just because of the beauty and splendor they add. The supreme, other-worldly grandeur of the throne room of Heaven is a major feature of Revelation chapter 4.

### **Verse 4**

*4 Around the throne were twenty-four thrones; and upon the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white garments, and golden crowns on their heads.*

### **24 Thrones**

John has seen 1 throne and 1 sitting on the throne. That one sitting on the throne was God. Now John sees 24 thrones with 24 elders sitting on them. Who are these 24? By comparing scripture with scripture, we identify who they are.

## **Clothed in White Garments**

We talked previously about how nakedness is a symbol for lack of righteousness in scripture. Adam and Eve had been naked all along, even before they fell. As they been righteous, they would not have fallen. Neither were they unrighteous. They could not see that they were naked, and they had a choice, one way or another, to make. When they rebelled, the first thing scripture says is that immediately their eyes were opened and they saw they were naked and had been all along and they were ashamed. They were repentant and wanted to be clothed. Trying to cover that nakedness with fig leaves was an impossible attempt to cover it by their own effort.

God had to cover their nakedness by killing an innocent animal and covering them in its skin. Just like our nakedness is covered by the innocent lamb, that is slain, Jesus Christ.

These 24 clothed in white garments the Lord said to the church at Laodicea in chapter 3, "*I counsel you to buy from me white garments so that you may clothe yourself, that shame of your nakedness will not be revealed.*"

**He said to the church is Sardis**, "*You have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their garments; and they will walk with me in white, for they are worthy. He who overcomes will thus be clothed in white garments.*" These 24 are clothed in white garments. These 24 are saved, redeemed human persons now glorified in Heaven.

The crowns on their heads indicate the same thing. Crowns in scripture are symbolic of rewards given by the Lord to a redeemed person.

**To the church at Smyrna** He said, "Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life."

**To the church in Philadelphia** He said, "*I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have so that no one will take your crown.*"

Crowns are symbolic of rulership and these 24 are sitting on thrones.

To the church in Thyatira, He said, "*He who overcomes and he who keeps my deeds until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron.*"

So, our scriptural evidence is that these 24 are redeemed persons now in Heaven. But why 24? Some say these 24 represent the 12 elders from the Old Testament saints and 12 from the New Testament. That's possible, but there is an alternative understanding that I find persuasive.

In the days of David and Solomon, the priesthood was divided into 24 divisions. Scripture says they had "*Charge of the Holy place... for the service of the house of the Lord.*" (1 Chronicles 23:32).

The musicians of the house of the Lord were divided into 24 groups "who were to prophesy with lyres, harps and cymbals... They prophesied in giving thanks and praising the Lord." (1 Chronicles 25:6)

In verses 10 and 11, these 24 "worship him who lives forever" and they praise the Lord. In 5:8, 9, they offer incense before the Lord and sing a song of praise to him. In 5:14, they fall down and worship.

These are 24 redeemed persons now in Heaven. They are elders of a priesthood of singer/praisers. They have royal position. The scriptural evidence would indicate to me that they are elders of the church, existing now in Heaven and not on earth.

Ezekiel in 593 B.C. saw everything that John is now seeing except these 24 elders. I believe Ezekiel didn't see them because the church didn't even come into existence until about 600 years after Ezekiel's time. He didn't see them because they weren't there yet.

## **The Throne and Worship of the Creator**

### **Verse 5**

*5 Out from the throne come flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God;*

Anger of God about to break over the unrepentant earth. Reminiscent of when Moses ascended Mt. Sinai to get the Ten Commandments. People then were so fearful they said let God depart from here or we'll all perish.

Only one Holy Spirit, why 7 spirits, or 7 – fold spirit, I am not sure. I know Isaiah 11 lists 6 attributes of the spirit resting on messiah in millennial reign, but I don't find it definitive.

Something else I don't understand: Why is 7 the number of perfection, 10 completeness, 12 people of God. Why are multiples of those numbers important?  $24 = 12 \times 12$   $144,000 = 12 \times 12 \times 10^3$ . Some things we won't know until we get to Heaven.

### **Verse 6**

*6 and before the throne there was something like a sea of glass, like crystal; and in the center and around the throne, four living creatures full of eyes in front and behind.*

### **Sea of Glass**

Some scholars: Shows set apart holiness of God

Some Scholars: Glory of God refract through it so His glory is evident to the universe.

It is a real item (structure) and not just symbolic. Ezekiel saw it and said it has "*the awesome gleam of crystal.*" (Ezekiel 1:22) Part of other worldly splendor of God's throne room.

Full of eyes around and within (in front and behind). Ezekiel saw them too: "*there while body, their backs and their hands, their wings... were full of wyes all around.*" (Ezekiel 10:12)

### **Verse 7**

*7 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.*

Ezekiel describes them in much the same way and called them cherubim.

Isaiah saw them and called the seraphim. Evidently Lucifer of this class of angel because scripture says he had been "anointed cherub who covers..."

They're a class of angel described as having eyes all over because of what they do. They observe and study and have penetrating insight into God's creation. They praise God in verse 11 because of what they observe in creation. Daniel describes a class angels he simply calls "the watchers". They so not cease to praise God.

Not only observe and have insight into creation. Described as they are, with these 4 different faces because they also have authority over and within God's creation, especially the animate animal creation. We'll see that in chapter 6. By the way, 4 is the number of creation. 4 living ones with 4 faces.

### **Verse 8**

*8 And the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings, are full of eyes around and within; and day and night they do not cease to say, "HOLY, HOLY, HOLY is THE LORD GOD, THE ALMIGHTY, WHO WAS AND WHO IS AND WHO IS TO COME."*

Holy, Holy, Holy triune nature of God. Here's what Isaiah said of them:

### **Isaiah 6:1-3**

*1 In the year of King Uzziah's death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple.*

*2 Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.*

*3 And one called out to another and said,  
"Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts,  
The whole earth is full of His glory."*

Get our hymn, Holy, Holy, Holy  
Joy to the world  
Victory in Jesus

"...whole earth is full of this glory." (Isaiah 6:3)

Created earth shouts forth the glory of the Lord.

Psalms 19 says:

*"Day unto day pours forth speech, night unto night reveals knowledge." (Psalm 19:1-4)*

"The Heavens are telling of the glory of God."

Fool has said in his heart, "There is no God." Fool because the Heavens – creation – declares Him.

### **Romans 1:18-22**

*18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,*

*19 because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them.*

*20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.*

*21 For even though they knew God, they did not <sup>[c]</sup>honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.*

*22 Professing to be wise, they became fools,*

An atheist is not only a fool, according to scripture; he's ignorant and is ignorant by an act of will. He suppresses truth in unrighteousness, becomes futile in his speculations, his foolish heart is darkened.

**Verse 9**

*9 And when the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, to Him who lives forever and ever,*

**Verse 10**

*10 the twenty-four elders will fall down before Him who sits on the throne, and will worship Him who lives forever and ever, and will cast their crowns before the throne, saying,*

**Verse 11**

*11 " Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created."*