

Revelation Chapter 4

Chapter 4

The Throne in Heaven

¹ After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven. And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this." ² At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it. ³ And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian. A rainbow, resembling an emerald, encircled the throne. ⁴ Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders. They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads. ⁵ From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder. Before the throne, seven lamps were blazing. These are the seven spirits of God. ⁶ Also before the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal.

In the center, around the throne, were four living creatures, and they were covered with eyes, in front and in back. ⁷ The first living creature was like a lion, the second was like an ox, the third had a face like a man, and the fourth was like a flying eagle. ⁸ Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under his wings. Day and night they never stop saying:

"Holy, holy, holy
is the Lord God Almighty,
who was, and is, and is to come."

Rev 4:1-8 (NIV)

William Barclay - The Court of Heaven

Vs 1 – a door was opened in heaven for the seer.

- a. maybe a further look into heaven**
- b. a look from earth into heaven**

Earlier doors in Revelation:

- i. door of opportunity 3:8 and open door
By which the message of the gospel
could be taken to the regions beyond.
- ii. Door of the human heart 3:20 knock at
the door of every human heart.
- iii. Door of revelation door that leads to
knowledge and eternal life.

Being opened

1. a vision for us
2. Descent of the Spirit (to meet man)
3. Revelation of the glory of Christ
 - 1 john 1:51 – disclose the glory of Christ

Vs 2 The Throne of God

The Throne of God is a common OT picture. The Throne of God is mentioned in every chapter of Rev except 2, 8 and 9.

Throne of God = majesty of God.

No attempt to describe God in any human shape.

Light

John sees his vision in terms of the lights which flash from precious stones. 1 Tim 6:16 – describes God as “dwelling in the light that no man can approach unto.

John is not speaking of ordinary physical sight.

Stones

Jasper, sardian and emerald

Foundation of the holy city – 21:19

Breast plate of the High Priest - Exodus 28:17

King of Tyre – Ezekiel 28:13

Jasper – then a translucent rock crystal (possible diamond)

Unbearable brightness of purity of God

Sardis – found mainly near Sardis. Blood red

Avenging wrath

Lit us think of the flashing white light of the diamond and of the brilliant, burning of the glowing carnelian, of **majesty joined to judgment.**

Emerald – most likely the green emerald which we know.

Mercy

See Ezek 1:26-28 rainbow...

Green symbolizes grace.... The other seven colors of the rainbow are not needed.

This jewels represent the divine attributes of the Person himself; the green bow indicates the effect of this Person's rule manifested in these attributes. Green = hope and peace.

God's rule of peace on the earth.... After the storm.

Verse 4

One of the most difficult passages 24 elders and 4 living creatures

Notice how often "Throne" is repeated in this chapter. This is the **great Throne Vision** which presents God's rule, power, dominion as these are symbolized to mortal vision.

24 elders in Rev

Elders point to the ministry of the **Word**.

They sit around the throne (symbolizes power) clothed in white robes (symbolize the holiness) and wearing crowns. (symbolizes royalty and the glory of their office)

Cast crowns before the throne 4:10

Continually worship 5:11, 14; 7:11; 11:16, 14:3; 19:4

Bring to God the prayers of the saints 5:8

Encourages the seer 5:5

Acts as interpreter 7:13

i. it may be that the idea of the elders has something to do with the idea of God's council surrounding him.

ii. from the 24 star gods (Babylonians thinking) = 24 angels.

iii. 24 elders of the priest. So the 24 elders man stand for the heavenly idea of the earthly worship of the priests and Levites in the Temple.

iv. 12 patriarchs and 12 apostles combined.

12 + 12 = 24 both the old and new T combined.

(note that John is one and they are seen by John)

v. **likeliest**= symbolic representatives of the faithful people of God. Their white robes are the robes promised to the faithful 3:4

and the crowns are promised to the death faithful. Thrones are promised to those who follow Him.

Why 24? Both the Jews and Gentiles 12 doubled...

The Word that is committed to the holy ministry as God's won Word rules the whole world and thereby glorifies God.

Given to men, yet abides forever (1 Peter 1:23)

Governs in the church

Judges those who reject it (John 12:48)

Penetrates all hearts (Heb. 4:12-13)

Elders = the office of the Word given to the church... No personal names for those sitting.... Not to honor man, but God's word lived out.

Reference to stones = Always, in all ages, the Word spoken in God's holy office is as though it were spoken from heaven, whether in peace or in judgment; its majesty is divine.

The Word is not valued as highly as God values it.

Verse 5

^{5a} From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder.

Thunder and lightning are often connected with the manifestation of God. (Ezekiel 1:13 – lightning comes out of the fiery haze around the throne – in his vision)

Lightning, rumbling and thunder = are seen as one. Lightning comes from above = heaven, with the omnipotent power going out from God. The Word tells us about it, God also displays it.

John is using imagery which is regularly connected with the presence of God.

^{5b} Before the throne, seven lamps were blazing. These are the seven spirits of God.

Note 7 lamps here are not the same lamps seen in chapter 1:13 & 20

These are 7 great torches of fire blazing before the throne, torches because they are to be carried afar from the throne.

Barclay – says that the seven torches are the 7 Spirits of God we have already met in Rev 1:4; 3:1

Imagery which is regularly connected with presence of God.

Verse 6

⁶ Also before the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal.

In the center, around the throne, were four living creatures, and they were covered with eyes, in front and in back.

Linski – there is no space in heaven. Until this symbol receives a better interpretation we shall abide by this one – All the wisdom of God – in heaven one can see clear to its bottom, it is so transparent, crystal-clear and yet so vast and deep. (15:2) As a sea, is actually solid ground.

Glass – smooth, unruffled waters and thus of heavenly peace. Glass of the time of the writing was not clear, but opaque and dull.
Crystal = transparent.

Barclay – There was something which was beyond all description, but which could be likened only to a great sea of glass.

3 things that this sea like shining glass does symbolize.

1. preciousness – not dull but as precious as gold
2. dazzling purity – too much for the eyes to behold, blinding light reflected from the glassy sea.
3. immense distance – across a sea.

John paints its picture in terms of light and distance.

In the center, around the throne, were four living creatures, and they were covered with eyes, in front and in back.

Living creatures – does not do well to translate it to beast. It has the life principle whether it is with or without a physical body.

Do these living creatures include the angels? Answered in 5:11,14 both appear side by side and re thus different beings. **Angels are never symbolized in Revelation.**

The 4 living creatures appear frequently in the heavenly scene.

About them from Rev.

- a. always found near the throne and the Lamb
- b. constantly engaged in praising and in worshipping God.
- c. They have certain functions to perform.
- c. they invite the dreadful manifestations of the wrath of God to appear.
- d. One of them hands over the vials of the wrath of God.

Barclay finds them in Ezekiel's vision (1:6,10,22, 26) Linski – does not. (there are differences, but of the same family) He sees them as the cherubim... the guardians of the throne of God – Enoch 71:7

Throne vision – this is not a vision of heaven in general and of those dwelling there, nor a vision of heaven as it shall be at the time of consummation.

It is a vision of God's rule and dominion as it is now....

Number 4 = indicates the earth or the world where providence reigns until the end of time.

The 4 living ones are immediate agencies of the rule and power that uses them – God.

Eyes in front and back – ability to see in every direction. Backward and forward... multitudinous in detail.

Palmer – John's allusion to Old Testament writings begin to increase. This vision is filled with movement and sounds and color. The vision is a flood of O T symbols and experiences. There are similarities to the vision of Isaiah (Isa. 6:1-5) and Ezekiel (chapter 1). The green jasper(jade) and red sardius (cornelian) remind us of the breastplate stones of the High Priest. (Exod 28:17-21) The rainbow reminds us of both Noah's rainbow (Gen 9:16) and Ezekiel's bow (Ezek 1:28). The 24 elders may refer to the 24 priestly divisions who conducted the worship of Israel according to the tradition of the Levites. The elders in the vision seem to represent the saints of God in their act of worship.

4 living creatures = may represent the whole of living creation as symbolized by the lion, ox, man, and bird. The mightiest among the birds is the eagle, the domestic animals is the bull, the wild beasts is the lion, and among all is man. The same four faces are also noted in the creatures of the vision in Ezekiel.

Sense and feel the color, movement, and wonder of the total scene. The individual parts in themselves are baffling, but the large scene is what we must try to see.

Verse 7

⁷ The first living creature was like a lion, the second was like an ox, the third had a face like a man, and the fourth was like a flying eagle.

Symbolize----- these 4 creatures

1. part of the imagery of heaven
2. stand for everything that is noble, strong, wise and swift in nature.

Basic idea – anything which is fulfilling the function for which it was created is praising God. Work well done rises like a hymn of praise to God.

Irenaeus 170 A.D. – 4 living creatures = 4 aspects of the work of Christ, the 4 gospels

Lion – working of the Son of God (Power and working)

Ox – priestly side of Christ work

Eagle – gift of Holy Spirit

Man – incarnation

John's gospel – Lion, all was made by him

Luke – ox, story of Zacharis and story of fatted calf

Matt – man, the human descent of Christ.

Martk – eagle, Spirit of Prophecy.

The 4 living ones are individualized (unlike ezek, where they have one likeness, each having 4 faces) Both men saw and did not compose.

1. a lion, not just the face!
2. young bull, not just the face.
3. similar to a flying eagle, not just the face

4. man, having the countenance as of a human being... the entire figure is not described.

Order is important

Lion = wild places of earth

Young bull = cultivated parts

Man = cities and towns

Eagle = whole expanse of air and sky

Discounts the 4 gospels but recognizes that we see this in the early church.

Verse 8-11

⁸ Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under his wings. Day and night they never stop saying:

"Holy, holy, holy
is the Lord God Almighty,
who was, and is, and is to come."

⁹ Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives for ever and ever, ¹⁰ the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne, and worship him who lives for ever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and say:

¹¹ "You are worthy, our Lord and God,
to receive glory and honor and power,
for you created all things,
and by your will they were created
and have their being."

Rev 4:8-11 (NIV)

Palmer –there are two parts to the chorale.

1. verse 8 "Holy, holy, holy
is the Lord God Almighty,
who was, and is, and is to come."

He relates this to Isaiah 6:3

¹ In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. ² Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. ³ And they were calling to one another:

"Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty;
the whole earth is full of his glory."

Isaiah 6:1-3 (NIV)

Plamer ---and the Alpha and Omega Rev 1:8

⁸ "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty."

Rev 1:8 (NIV)

He says that this passage affirms God's mighty name as Yahweh. This, is the force of the sentence in the Revelation "who was, and is, and is to come."

2. He states that this song is more than an adaptation of an OT song. It is the chorale praise to God the Creator, Gen 1 and John 1.

The Greeks were influence by Plato – and view life with a Gnostic understanding.

Gnosticism (Greek: γνῶσις *gnōsis*, [knowledge](#)) refers to diverse, [syncretistic religious movements](#) in [antiquity](#) consisting of various [belief systems](#) generally united in the teaching that humans are divine [souls](#) trapped in a [material world](#) created by an imperfect god, the [demiurge](#); this being is frequently identified with the [Abrahamic god](#), and is contrasted with a superior entity, referred to by several terms including [Pleroma](#) and [Godhead](#).¹

John address this in 1John... 2:18 & 4:1-2

Here, John's vision is the vision of the goodness of creation because of its good origin. It is by God's decision that the world was created, and , though the world is in crisis, the good decision of God stands immovable.

Thus this is a sharp crossgrain to the incipient Gnosticism which already in a primitive form was tempting the churches at Pergamum, Ephesus, and Thyatira.

Barclay – Night and day the living creatures never rested from their doxology of praise.... Holy, holy, holy

There is never any time when the world God made is not praising Him.

Doxology – three aspects of God.

1. His holiness (Is 6:3) He is different from men.

2. His omnipotence – (having unlimited authority)
Almighty

3. His everlastingness. God lasts for ever. He endures unchanging amidst the enmity and the rebellion of men.

Linski –Each of the living things has **six wings**. Ezek 10:21, they have only four, but in Isa 6:2 they have 6.

Wings symbolize swiftness for carrying out God's will. We need not to thing that 6 = evil as in 666

Eyes --- not before and behind, but around and within... this is seen to help them as they fly at such speeds to be better able to do the will of God. Nothing escapes them.

Eyes- agencies of the rule of providence

Seeing the will

Seeing the work to be done

Missing nothing around or within them to carry out the will of God.

3 Holys = the triune God.

"Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty;
the whole earth is full of his glory."

Isaiah 6:3 (NIV)

Like as in Isa 6:3, but we need to remember that it is now that John is seeing/hearing this... not a remembrance of past history. Also Isa restricts the angles... not here in Revelation. He is 3 times holy... the one who was in **past, now** and who is **coming**.

Verse 9-11

Here is the other section of the choir of thanksgiving...

Living creatures = nature

24 elders = united Church in Jesus Christ

Both praising God.....

Casting crowns = complete submission in the ancient world.
There can be no Christianity without submission!

The **doxology of the elders** praises God on 2 counts

a. He is Lord and God...

The roman Emperor was known as "Lord and God"
As Christians called God, "Lord and God" was a triumphant
confession of faith.

b. God is Creator...

He willed and caused all things to be created.

Man does not have the power to create.. out of
nothing... there is nothing a man can handle which God has
not given to him....

Linski – verse 9

Offering to God for all that He does, and no less. The one
sitting on the throne = the one who exists forever and acts and works.

Verse 10

The 24 = agents of the Word.

So these 2, the elders as agents of the Word and the living ones as
agents of God's providence, both related to the throne, act together in
relation to the throne as here shown.

He wears no crown – for no mission of victory, no act of
victorious enthronement, no triumph pertains to him who's majesty as
the Creator places him and his throne above and beyond anything of
this kind. So they accept no crown... throw at His feet.

Verse 11 –

Summary

John did not invent this vision. Even the mind of John could not do
that. John saw this vision and set down what he saw for us so that we
might apprehend it through his eyes. Beyond all question, this vision
is fundamental for all that follows. The throne stands supreme, stands
exalted and serene forever.