

The Revelation of Jesus Christ – Revelation Chapter 4

Bible Study Notes

Outline of the Chapter – The Throne Room of Heaven

Verse 1	The Open Door in Heaven
Verses 2-3	The Throne of God
Verses 4-5	Around the Throne of God
Verses 6-8	The Four Living Creatures
Verses 9-11	The Song of The Elders

Revelation Chapter 4 verse 1: The Open Door in Heaven

V 1 *‘Meta Tauta’*

What do the First Three Words of v1 tell us about the Prophetic Timing of the events of Ch. 4?

The chapter begins with the words *meta tauta* (‘After these things’) and the verse concludes with the same words (‘hereafter’ or ‘after this’)

After what?

After Chapters 2 and 3 – the Seven Churches

Not just letters to 7 churches existing in John’s day

But...Also...Prophetic of Church history

In sequence they lay out the whole of the Church Age

We live today in the age of the Laodicean Church

See Notes of the Bible Study on ‘The Seven Churches’ (Rev. Chs. 2& 3)

After the Church Age or Church history

When does the Church Age end?

When the church is raptured

So we should expect to see evidence in this chapter of the church in heaven!

Outline of the Book of Revelation in *Chapter 1 v 19*

The things which you have seen Ch 1: 12-18

The things which are Chs 2 & 3

The things which shall be hereafter (*meta tauta*) Chs 4 to 22

The things which you have seen

The Vision of the Glorified Risen Christ

The things which are

The Seven Churches – which existed then and which set out church history

The things which shall be hereafter (*meta tauta*)

Those End-Time Events which come after the (Pre-Millennium) Rapture

All these things John is to write to the churches (the 7 churches...and us)

V 1 **The Open Door and An Invitation**

What does John See and what does he Hear?

John Sees – ‘a door opened in heaven’

The Greek word *anoigō* means to open up – John sees the door being opened to him

We are entering a new chapter – a new phase – no longer on earth but in heaven - in the very Throne Room of Heaven

Who is it that Opens Doors?

Yeshua – see *Revelation 3: 7-8*

John Hears – ‘a voice like a trumpet’

Whose voice is it?

It is the Lord Jesus Christ (the Risen Glorified Yeshua) – as in *Revelation 1: 10-11*

What is the Invitation John Receives?

John is invited to ‘come up here’

This is not a veiled reference to the rapture of the church, but a command for John to be temporarily transported to heaven to receive revelation about future events

What is the Lord’s Purpose in this Invitation?

Yeshua tells John that He ‘will show you the things which must take place after this’

Note: ‘things which must take place’ – preordained by God... certain and necessary

Chapters 4 to 21 are thus concerned with the end times (after the rapture of the church)

The Harpazo (being caught up) – known also as the Rapture – has already occurred before the events of chapter 4

John receives a similar invitation later – an invitation to ‘see the bride’ (*Revelation 21: 9*)

Revelation Chapter 4 verses 2-3: The Throne of God

V 2 **‘In the Spirit’**

What does John mean when he says “Immediately I was in the Spirit”?

‘**Immediately**’ – as if awakened from the previous experience (of seeing the risen glorified Christ and writing letters to the churches) by the voice like a trumpet – awakened to a new part of this revelation of Jesus Christ (*Revelation 1: 1*) – it is all one revelation

- “I looked” 70 times in Revelation
- “I saw” 35 times in Revelation
- “I beheld” 7 times in Revelation
- “I heard” 23 times in Revelation

‘I was in the Spirit’ – John was transported by the Spirit

His body may have been on Patmos but John in his spirit was transported into the throne room of heaven

This was not a dream

These are not 'visions' – this is quite different...John is transported into the future and into another domain and dimension

John was supernaturally transported out of the material world awake – not sleeping – to an experience beyond the normal senses, as earlier in *chapter 1, verse 10*

The Holy Spirit empowered his senses to perceive revelation from God (similar to Peter in *Acts 10: 10-16*)

V 2 'A Throne set in Heaven'

What is the significance of a Throne?

Not so much a piece of furniture, but a symbol of God's sovereign rule and authority (*Revelation 7: 15, 11: 19, 16: 17-18; see also Isaiah 6: 1*)

It is the focus of chapter 4 – occurring thirteen times, eleven times referring to God's throne

The Greek word for 'set' is '*keimai*' which literally means to lie outstretched

This is the Throne chapter of scripture

Thrones

The word 'throne' (Greek: *thronos*) appears 61 times in the New Testament (46 in the book of Revelation, of which 14 are in Chapter 4)

The Lord says that heaven is His throne and earth His footstool (*Isaiah 66: 1*)

What do we know about the Throne on which Messiah sits?

Messiah will sit

- On His Father's throne *Psalm 110: 1; Revelation 3: 21*
- On the 'Throne of His Mercy' *Hebrews 4: 16*
 - It may be that the 'mercy seat' which stood on top of the Ark of the Covenant will be that throne from which He rules
- On the 'Throne of David' *Isaiah 9: 7; Luke 1: 32*
- On the 'Great White Throne' *Revelation 20: 11-12*
 - Unbelievers will be judged by the Son *John 5: 22-23, 26-27*

What do we know about other Thrones in Scripture?

The Twelve Apostles will

- Sit on 12 thrones *Matthew 19: 28*
- Judge the 12 tribes and angels *Matthew 19: 28; 1 Corinthians 6: 3*

Twenty Four Elders sit on thrones *Revelation 4: 4*

Satan has a throne *Revelation 2: 13*

The Coming Anti-Christ will have a throne *Revelation 13: 2, 16: 10*

V 3 The ‘One’ sat upon the Throne

How does John describe the ‘One’ on the Throne?

The description of the ‘one’ who sat on the throne is in terms of gems – which seem to be a way of referring to coloured light

It is a description of the person on the throne, not a description of the throne

What do we know about Jasper?

Jasper (Greek: *iaspis*) is thought to refer to a clear gemstone, like crystal – some believe it to be an ancient term for what today we call a diamond (crystal clear)

- Jasper is a description of the New Jerusalem *Revelation 21: 11*
- The walls of the city are made of Jasper *Revelation 21: 18*
- The first foundation of the wall was Jasper *Revelation 21: 19*
- In the High Priest’s breastplate, Jasper represented Reuben, Jacob’s firstborn
Exodus 28: 20-21; 39: 13-14
 - Reuben’s name means ‘behold a son’

What do we know about Sardius?

Sardius (Greek: *sardinios* or *sardion*) is a blood red gemstone, probably like a ruby, otherwise called carnelian in scripture

- The sixth foundation of the walls of the New Jerusalem are Sardius
Revelation 21: 20
- In the High Priest’s breastplate, Sardius represented Benjamin, Jacob’s lastborn
Exodus 28: 17; 39: 10
 - Benjamin’s name means ‘son of my right hand’

The description of the two stones (the first and last in *Exodus 28: 15-20 and 39: 8-14*) is seen by some scholars as including all the stones and representing the whole of God’s people. They seem to describe the one on the throne as God in relation to the people of Israel. They also speak of the one on the throne as ‘the first and the last’ (‘Alpha and Omega’)

What do we know about Emerald?

A Rainbow (Greek: *iris*) like an emerald – the word for rainbow can also mean halo. Later in Revelation a ‘mighty angel’ is seen as having a rainbow on his head

Revelation 10: 1

- The rainbow is a pledge that God will keep His Noahic covenant (in spite of the coming judgements) *Genesis 9: 8-17*
- Ezekiel describes the rainbow around the throne as representing the glory of God
Ezekiel 1: 28
- The emerald is a green coloured gemstone
- In the High Priest’s breastplate, Emerald represented Judah, Jacob’s son in whose line Jesus was born *Exodus 28: 17; 39: 10*
 - Judah’s name means ‘praise’ or ‘the praise of the Lord’

The description of God in terms of light is reminiscent of the opening words of John’s gospel (*John 1: 4-5*) and of Yeshua’s words in *John 8: 12*

See Supplementary Note 26: ‘The Gems on the High Priest’s Breastplate’

Revelation Chapter 4 verses 4-5: Around the Throne of God

What does John see Around the Throne of God? (v.4)

Twenty Four Elders on seats (thrones – Greek: *thronos*)

Who are these 24 Elders and Whom do they represent?

There several ‘clues’ which indicate who these elders are:

- The Twenty Four Elders are
 - Sitting on thrones – they are overcomers, ruling (*Ephesians 2: 4-7; Revelation 2: 26-27, 3: 21*)
 - Clothed in white raiment – redeemed saints clothed in the righteousness of Christ (*Psalm 132: 8-9; Isaiah 61: 10; Philippians 3: 9; Revelation 3: 4, 19: 8*)
 - Crowned with gold crowns (*James 1: 12; Revelation 2: 10, 3: 11; 2 Timothy 4: 8; 1 Peter 5: 4; 1 Corinthians 9: 25; 1 Thessalonians 2: 19*) – crowns promised to believers in Yeshua
 - *See Supplementary Note 23: ‘Crowns’*
 - Jointly ruling with Yeshua (*2 Timothy 2: 12; 1 Corinthians 6: 1-3; Revelation 3: 21*)
- They are called Elders
 - The term “elder” (*presbuteros*) is only used of men in Scripture (*Luke 7: 3; James 5: 14; 1 Peter 5: 1*)
 - “Elders” is often used of leaders and representatives of the New Testament churches (*Acts 15: 2; 20: 17; 1 Timothy 3: 1-7; Titus 1: 5-9*)
- Their Song Identifies them Unmistakably

‘And they sang a new song, saying: “You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth.” **Revelation 5: 8-10**

 - The elders are seen singing a song of redemption – it appears that they sing of their own personal redemption
 - The elders are “redeemed by Yeshua’s blood” – they cannot be angels, only redeemed humanity
 - The elders are “out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation” this identifies them as those saints raptured prior to the tribulation
 - The elders are “kings and priests” – roles appointed for redeemed saints
 - Church-age believers are a royal priesthood (*Rev. 1: 6; 1 Peter 2: 9*)
 - Since Christ is a King-Priest according to the order of Melchizedek (*Hebrews 5-7*), believers who are in Christ are also king-priests
 - Kings & Priests - there are 3 ‘King – Priests’ in scripture:
 - Melchizedek *Genesis 14: 18-20*
 - Jesus *Hebrews 4: 14-15; 5: 5-11*
 - Believers (the Church) *1 Peter 2: 9-10; Revelation 1: 6*
 - The elders are “shall reign on the earth” – a role appointed for redeemed saints
 - The elders are carefully distinguished from both the four living creatures and the angels in *Revelation 5: 11* and *7: 11*
- These 24 Elders are clearly representative of the redeemed saints who have been raptured before the start of the tribulation

Which Redeemed Saints are these 24 Elders?

- Not Israel – the nation is not yet saved, glorified, or crowned; that is still to come at this point in the events – happening at the end of the tribulation (*Daniel 12: 1-3*)
- Not Tribulation Saints – the 3½ years of the ‘Great Tribulation’ have yet to begin (when the Lamb opens the seven sealed scroll – see *Revelation Ch 6* and *8: 1*)
 - The salvation and glorification of Tribulation Saints is yet to happen (see *Revelation 7: 9-17*)
- Only one group will be complete and glorified at this point – the church
 - **It is the raptured church** which sings the song of redemption (*Rev. 5: 8-10*)
 - They are the overcomers who have their crowns and live in the place prepared for them, where they have gone with Yeshua (cf. *John 14: 1-4, 17: 24*)

See Supplementary Note 2: ‘The Harpazō – A Summary’

Why 24 Elders?

- Twenty Four Elders
 - David’s 24 courses (Levitical priests) *1 Chronicles 24: 1-19*
 - They served in turn in the temple on a weekly basis but on certain holidays they were all involved
 - The 24 together represented the whole priesthood
 - Each order represented the entire priestly tribe and the whole nation of Israel as it functioned before God
 - These 24 Elders thus represent whole assembly of king-priests of the raptured church – ‘rapture’ derived from Latin *rapiemur*: the Greek word is *harpazō*
 - This is a non-Levitical order of king-priests
 - Other, non-Levitical, Priesthood Orders
 - Jethro (a priest of Midian) *Exodus 3: 1*
 - Jacobs tithes – to whom? *Genesis 28: 22*
 - Melchizedek *Genesis 14: 18-20*
 - ❖ Messianic *Psalms 110: 4; Hebrews 5, 6 and 7*
 - ❖ A King and a Priest – almost unique
 - ❖ An eternal priesthood (unlike the temporary Levitical)

What does John see and hear Coming from the Throne of God? (v.5)

From the Throne proceeded Lightnings, Thunders and Voices

- These seem to feature at moments of significance
 - After the seventh seal *Revelation 8: 5*
 - After the seventh trumpet *Revelation 11: 19*
 - After the seventh bowl *Revelation 16: 18*
- It may be that these things which proceed from the throne of God give us a clue as to the chronology of the rapture
 - They may help explain gaps in the narrative of the tribulation
 - Between the 6th and 7th seal (*Revelation 7*)
 - Between the 6th and 7th trumpet (*Revelation 10 and 11: 1-14*)

See Supplementary Note 1: ‘A Suggested Chronology of the Great Tribulation Period’

- Lightnings speak of Yeshua
 - At His Coming *Matthew 24: 27; Luke 17: 24*
- Thunderings & Voices speak of the Multitudes of Heaven
 - The 144,000 Jewish Evangelists *Revelation 14: 1-5*
 - The Multitude of Heaven *Revelation 19: 6-8*

What does John see Before the Throne of God? (v.5)

Seven Lamps of Fire were burning before the Throne

What are these Lamps of Fire?

- We have encountered these lamps earlier – Yeshua explains these images – they are the seven churches *Revelation 1: 20*
 - In chapter 1 the lamps (churches) are on the earth
 - In chapter 4 the lamps (churches) are in heaven – before the throne
- John says the seven lamps are “the seven spirits of God”
 - The ‘seven spirits of God’ is representative of the Holy Spirit and the fullness of the person of the Holy Spirit
 - It is an Old Testament idiom for the Holy Spirit and refers back to the seven Spirits before the Throne (*Revelation 1: 4*) and to the seven Spirits described in *Isaiah 11: 2*
- There is thus a possible double meaning to this:
 - The seven lamps are undoubtedly the church; now glorified in heaven and before the throne of God
 - The seven spirits of God are undoubtedly the Holy Spirit; He has been in the believers at their spiritual birth (Born again of the Spirit) and He is present within the church as the body of Messiah on earth...now in heaven

Revelation Chapter 4 verses 6-8: The Four Living Creatures

What does John see Before the Throne of God? (v.6)

Before the throne was a “sea of glass”

There is no Sea in Heaven – So What Is It?

- There is no sea in heaven (*Rev. 21: 1*), but the crystal pavement that serves as the floor of God's throne stretches out like a great, glistening sea (*Exodus 24: 10; Ezekiel 1: 22*)
- This is possible a biblical idiom for the ‘Washing of The Word’ (*Ephesians 5: 26*)
 - In the tabernacle there was a laver for washing before entering the holy of holies – washing for cleanliness and purity before the Lord
 - Believers are sanctified by the washing of water by the word – a process of the Word, applied by the Spirit, purifying us
 - In heaven there is no need of washing for purity – Christ purifies us – but we are standing on it (the Word of God) – standing on the sea of glass
 - The Tribulation Saints, having overcome by faith, are seen by John standing on a ‘sea of glass’ (*Revelation 15: 2-4*)

What does John see in the Midst of and Around the Throne of God? (v.6)

The Four Living Creatures (Greek: *zoon*) - strange creatures, beasts (KJV) – but not ‘wild animals’ (Greek: *therion*)

- In the midst of (Greek: *mesos*) – in the middle or among
- Around (Greek: *kuklō*) – round about (KJV), as in a ring or circle
 - The Elders thrones are described thus in v. 4

What Sort of Beings are these Living Creatures?

These creatures are generally assumed to be Cherubim (Greek: *kerûb*), angelic beings

- These angels are frequently referred to in the OT in connection with God's presence, power, and holiness
 - See *Genesis 3: 24* (the first mention); *Numbers 7: 89*; *Psalms 80: 1, 99: 1*; *Isaiah 37: 16*
- Cherubim and Seraphim are found Elsewhere in Scripture
 - *Ezekiel 1* (Four Creatures) and *10* (Cherubim)
 - *Isaiah 6* (Seraphim)
- Although John's description is not identical to Ezekiel's (*Ezekiel 1: 4-25*), they are obviously both referring to the same supernatural and seemingly indescribable beings

How are they Described – and What should we Understand from the Description?

Their Features:

- Full of Eyes - in front and in back (v.6) – around and within (v.8), i.e. from inside
 - Although not omniscient (an attribute reserved for God alone) these living creatures have a comprehensive knowledge and perception; nothing escapes their scrutiny
- Four Different Creatures – Lion, Calf, Man, Flying Eagle

Why These Four Creatures?

- There is a Link to the Camp of Israel (see Numbers Ch. 2)
 - The lead tribes of each section (compass direction) of the camp were:
 - East – Judah (symbol – Lion), with Issachar and Zebulun
 - South – Reuben (symbol – Man), with Simeon and Gad
 - West – Ephraim (symbol – Bull/Ox), with Manasseh and Benjamin
 - North – Dan (symbol – Eagle), with Asher and Naphtali
 - The Camp in its layout models the cross – with the tabernacle at its centre – pointing to Yeshua
 - It is a model of the Throne of God with the tabernacle (the place of God's dwelling) in the centre and surrounded by the tribes – symbolically by the lion, the ox, the man and the eagle – as in Revelation Ch. 4 – the redeemed saints, Jew and Gentile, the one new man are around the throne

See Supplementary Note 27: 'The Camp Of Israel'

- There is a Link to the Four Gospels
 - Matthew
 - Focus on Yeshua as Messiah...the Lion of the Tribe of Judah
 - Genealogy from Abraham, the Legal line
 - Writing focussed on the Jews
 - Ends with the Resurrection
 - Mark
 - Focus on Yeshua as the Servant...the Ox who Came to Serve
 - No Genealogy
 - Writing focussed on the Romans
 - Ends with the Ascension
 - Luke
 - Focus on Yeshua as the Son of Man – Son of God who became a Man, a son of Adam
 - Genealogy from Adam, the Blood line
 - Writing focussed on the Greeks
 - Ends with the Promise of the Spirit
 - John
 - Focus on Yeshua as the Son of God...the Eagle whose youth (life) is renewed (*Isaiah 40: 31*)
 - Genealogy from Pre-Existence, the Eternal line
 - Written to the Church
 - Ends with the Promise of Return

- Six wings
 - Like the Seraphim which Isaiah saw (*Isaiah 6: 2*)
 - The Creatures seen by Ezekiel had four wings (*Ezekiel 1: 6*) but the Cherubim he saw were described simply as having wings (*Ezekiel 10: 5*)

- Resting not, day or night
 - Always Active – always seeing (eyes) and always worshipping
 - A ceaseless song
 - It places this event in an earthly time frame – probably the early part of the tribulation
 - During the millennium Yeshua will be ruling and reigning from Jerusalem

- They cry out in Praise and Worship
 - ‘Holy, holy, holy’ – often God is extolled for His holiness in this threefold form, because it is the summation of all that He is
 - It is His most salient attribute (*Isaiah 6: 3*)
 - Many manuscripts have the word ‘holy’ nine times here
 - Lord God Almighty (the supreme and divine sovereign), who was and is and is to come (3 tenses of Yeshua – see *Isaiah 9: 6*)
 - Titles Christ speaks of Himself (*Revelation 1: 8*)
 - They give Glory, Honour and Thanks to Him who sits on the throne
 - Glory (Greek: *doxa*) – praising Him for who He is, His character
 - Honour (Greek: *timē*) – esteem and expressing His worth
 - Thanks (Greek: *eucharistia*) – gratitude and thanksgiving for His attributes and His grace and mercy towards His creation and His redeemed ones
 - Worship lifts our perspective from the earthly to the heavenly

Revelation Chapter 4 verses 9-11: The Song of the Elders

When is this Song Sung?

Sung whenever the four living creatures give glory and honour and thanks to Him who sits on the throne

That is...ceaselessly!!!

In the Book of Revelation we continually come across worship and praise to God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit – Worship in Revelation:

- The Four Living Creatures – *Revelation 4: 8*
- The Elders song of Praise – *Revelation 4: 11*
- The Elders song of Redemption – *Revelation 5: 9-10*
- The Worship of All in Heaven of the Lamb – *Revelation 5: 12*
- The Worship song of All Creation – *Revelation 5: 13*
- The Cry of the Tribulation Saints – *Revelation 6: 10*
- The Salvation Song of the Tribulation Saints – *Revelation 7: 10*
- The Worship of the Angels, Elders & Four Living Creatures – *Revelation 7: 12*
- The Kingdom Worship Song of the Elders – *Revelation 11: 17-18*
- The Song of the 144,000 – *Revelation 14: 3*
- The Song of the Seven Angels – *Revelation 15: 3-4*
- The Judgement song of the Angel of the Waters – *Revelation 16: 5-6*
- The Exultation song of Babylon's Fall – *Revelation 19: 1-4*
- The Wedding song of the Lamb and His Bride – *Revelation 19: 6-7*

What is the Attitude of the Elders in Worship?

They fall down before Him – prostrate on their faces in profound humility, reverence, and godly fear

They cast their crowns before the throne – acknowledging His Lordship

- Acknowledging that they owe all their graces and all their glories to him
- Acknowledging that his crown is infinitely more glorious than theirs, and that it is their glory to be glorifying God

What do the Elders Sing?

Content of their song:

- The Lord is worthy (Greek: *axios*) - worship is deserved, due reward
- To receive
 - glory (Greek: *doxa*) - doxology
 - honour (Greek: *timē*) – sometimes translated 'price'
 - power (Greek: *dunamis*) – associated with the Holy Spirit
- Because He created all things – and sustains all things (*Colossians 1: 15-18*)

The vision prepares us for what is to follow – God is seen as the Almighty Ruler of the universe sitting on the throne of His glory, surrounded by worshiping creatures, and about to send judgment on the earth.