

REVELATION

CHAPTER FOUR

The Throne, the Four Living Creatures, and the 24 Elders

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- I. **Revelation 4:1 (NASB)** *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.”*
- A. “trumpet”
1. because a trumpet sounds at the “rapture” (I Thess 4:16), pretribbers say 4:1 refers to the rapture
 - a. **1 Thessalonians 4:16 (KJV)** For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:
 - b. answer
 - i. John heard Jesus’ voice like a trumpet in the first vision, is there a double rapture?
A/ **Revelation 1:10** “I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, “
- B. “come up here”
1. pretribbers claim . . .
 - a. since church not mentioned from here through the seal, trumpet, and bowl great tribulation
 - i. therefore, church not present in the goings on in Revelation
 - b. answers
 - i. the church not mentioned after the Second Coming (usually put at Rev 19:11)
A/ **Revelation 19:11 (ESV)** Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war.
B/ so, the church not mentioned in premil’s millennium, or the final state
C/ does lack of mention of “church” teach the pretrib *annihilation* of the church?
D/ will church not be in the final state?
 - ii. just because the *term* “church” is not mentioned, the *concept* is
A/ example → 24 elders around the throne
 - iii. John only uses “church” to refer to individual churches in Revelation
A/ not the whole church
1/ and he’s finished talking about the individual churches
 2. note: the only one who was “raptured” here was John, not the whole church
 3. quite ironic for pretribbers to complain that preterists destroy relevance for present-day Xns
 - a. for pretribbers, Revelation has no relevance for *anybody*
 - i. not for the original seven churches
 - a. because everything supposedly happens in the future
 - ii. not even for present day Xns
 - a. because everything supposedly happens in the future
 - iii. not even for those living at time of X’s Second Coming
 - a. because they are going to be raptured out of it all!
- C. “these things”
1. take place after what has already occurred regarding the 7 churches
- II. **Revelation 4:2 (NASB)** *Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne was standing in heaven, and One sitting on the throne.*

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A. “in the Spirit”

1. not an expression of John’s subjective feelings
2. a technical term meaning that a prophet is receiving a revelation
 - a. means to be caught up into heaven

B. “throne”

1. One who sits on a throne is a ruler, a king who has dominion.
 - a. **Daniel 7:14 (KJV)** And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

III. Revelation 4:3 (NASB) *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;*

A. “jasper”

1. opaque quartz of any of several colors (Mirriam-Webster)
 - a. in antiquity, could designate any opaque precious stone
2. represented one of Israel’s tribe’s on the high priest’s breastplate
 - a. **Exodus 28:20 (CSBBible)** and the fourth row, a beryl, an onyx, and a jasper. They should be adorned with gold filigree in their settings.
3. mentioned among the jewelry littered on ground in Garden of Eden (Ezek 28:13)
4. white, blue, red, green, yellow, orange, ...

B. “sardius”

1. dictionary.com
 - a. the precious stone, thought to have been a ruby, in the breastplate of the Jewish high priest.
 - i. **Exodus 28:17 (KJV)** And thou shalt set in it settings of stones, *even* four rows of stones: *the first row shall be* a sardius, a topaz, and a carbuncle: *this shall be* the first row.
 - ii. represented one of Israel’s tribes
2. a reddish stone (Chilton)
3. represented one of Israel

C. “emerald”

1. represented one of tribes of Israel on high priest’s breastplate
 - a. **Exodus 28:17 (CSBBible)** Place a setting of gemstones on it, four rows of stones: The first row should be a row of carnelian, topaz, and emerald;
 - b. mentioned among the jewelry littered on ground in Garden of Eden (Ezek 28:13)
 - i. **Ezekiel 28:13 (CSBBible)** You [Tyre’s king] were in Eden, the garden of God. Every kind of precious stone covered you: carnelian, topaz, and diamond, beryl, onyx, and jasper, lapis lazuli, turquoise and emerald. Your mountings and settings were crafted in gold; they were prepared on the day you were created.
2. green

D. “rainbow”

1. symbol of grace in the midst of judgment
 - a. the rainbow usually contrasted with the black clouds behind it
 - b. this is like the book of Revelation
 - i. Christians sealed (grace), anti-Christians judged

E. “throne”

1. resembles much the throne in Ezekiel’s vision (Ezek 1:26-28)
 - a. a rainbow surrounded both thrones
 - i. **Ezekiel 1:26-28 (CSBBible)** ²⁶ Something like a throne with the appearance of lapis lazuli was above the expanse over their heads. On the throne, high above, was someone who looked like a human. ²⁷ From what seemed to be his waist up, I saw a gleam like amber, with

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what looked like fire enclosing it all around. From what seemed to be his waist down, I also saw what looked like fire. There was a brilliant light all around him. ²⁸ The appearance of the brilliant light all around was like that of a *rainbow* in a cloud on a rainy day. This was the appearance of the likeness of the Lord's glory. When I saw it, I fell facedown and heard a voice speaking.

2. John is in the heavenly temple
 - a. the pattern from which Moses constructed the Tabernacle
 - i. correspondences (Chilton)
 - A/ throne = mercy seat
 - B/ seven torches of fire (ESV) = seven- branched lamp
 - C/ four living creatures = cherubim
 - 1/ but there were only two in the tabernacle
 - D/ sea of glass = bronze sea
 - E/ 24 elders = 24 courses of priests
 - 1/ I prefer 12 tribes, 12 apostles

IV. Revelation 4:4 (NASB) *Around the throne were 24 thrones; and upon the thrones I saw 24 elders sitting, clothed in white garments, and golden crowns on their heads.*

A. “thrones”

1. shows the elders ruled with God
 - a. “crowns” shows the same thing

B. “elders”

1. many take to be a class of angels
2. rather, they represent the people of God, both OC and NC
 - a. reasons why
 - i. everywhere in Bible “elder” refers to men, not angels
 - ii. they are sitting on thrones

A/ represents that the church is *ruling*

1/ already in Revelation . . .

a/ Christians reign with X

i/ **Revelation 1:6** “And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him *be* glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.”

b/ Christians wear crowns

i/ **Revelation 2:10** “be thou [Smyrna church] faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”

ii/ **Revelation 3:11** “hold that fast which thou [Philadelphia church] hast, that no man take thy crown”

c/ Christians given authority to reign with Christ over the nations

i/ **Revelation 2:26-27** “And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: ²⁷ And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; “

A) to the church at Thyatira

d/ apostates will be forced to bow before Christians

i/ **Revelation 3:9** “Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee. “

A) to the church at Philadelphia

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- e/ Christians are seated with Christ on His throne
 - i/ **Revelation 3:21** “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.”
 - A) to the church at Laodicea
- iii. they are wearing “crowns”
- iv. “twenty four”
 - A/ good symbol for the church
 - 1/ Old covenant had 12 tribes, plus 12 apostles in New covenant
 - a/ **Revelation 21:12,14** “¹² And had a wall great and high, *and* had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are *the names* of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel...¹⁴ And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.”
 - 2/ there were 24 divisions of priests in the OT temple (I Chron 24)
 - a/ so the church is PRIESTS as well as KINGS (“throne,” “crown”)
 - 3/ there were 24 divisions of singers in the temple (I Chron 25)
 - a/ worship had been an idea of God’s people for over a millenium

V. **Revelation 4:5 (NASB)** *Out from the throne came 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.*

- A. “lightning,” “thunder”
 - 1. shows God is awesome, and able to judge (DT)
 - a. the judgment is coming up shortly (DT)
- B. “seven lamps”
 - 1. Holy Spirit
 - a. cf. “seven spirits of God” at end of verse
 - 2. “seven” stands for the perfect, the divine
 - 3. lamps refers to the fact the Holy Spirit enlightens
- C. “throne”
 - 1. HS before the throne same way the *seven*-branched candlestick before the ark in the Holy of Holies

VI. **Revelation 4:6** *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.*

- A. “sea”
 - 1. Ezek saw the same sea from below (John saw from above)
 - a. **Ezek 1:4-5,22,26**
 - i. ⁴ And I looked, and, behold, a whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud, and a **fire** infolding itself, and a brightness *was* about it, and out of the midst thereof as the colour of amber, out of the midst of the **fire**. ⁵ Also out of the midst thereof *came* the likeness of four living creatures. And this *was* their appearance; they had the likeness of a man. ... (ESV)(v10) As for the likeness of their faces, each had a human face. The four had the face of a lion on the right side, the four had the face of an ox on the right side, and the four had the face of an eagle. . . (v22) And the likeness of the firmament upon the heads of the living creature *was* as the colour of the terrible crystal, stretched forth over their heads above.
²⁶ And above the firmament that *was* over their heads *was* the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone: and upon the likeness of the throne *was* the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it.
 - 2. the bronze laver in the Tabernacle symbolized it

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- B. “center and around”
 - 1. one in front, one in back, and one on each side (DT)
- C. “four living creatures”
 - 1. **Ezekiel 1:5 (CSBBible)** The likeness of four living creatures came from it, and this was their appearance: They looked something like a human, (v10)
 - 2. “four”
 - a. a relationship to the earth
 - i. Biblical ideas of...
 - A/ four corners of the earth
 - B/ four winds
 - C/ four directions
 - D/ four rivers in Eden that watered the whole earth
 - ii. Michael Wilcock, John Calvin
 - A/ stands for God’s world, “nature”
 - 1/ which does nothing wo/ God’s control
 - a/ see Ezek 1 and 10
 - i/ the wheels turn, the animals follow
 - b. they correspond to the (two) cherubs around the altar in the Tabernacle
 - 2. there are similarities and differences between Ezekiel 1 and Ezekiel 10 and Isaiah 6:1-4
- D. “eyes”
 - 1. no matter where you go, God sees through his creation

VII. **Revelation 4:7 (NASB)** *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.*

- A. “creature”
 - 1. all four symbolize all aspects of nature
 - a. lion
 - A/ wild beasts in nature
 - b. calf
 - A/ domesticated beasts in nature
 - c. man
 - A/ has dominion over nature
 - d. eagle
 - A/ fowls of the air
- B. these four creatures were like the four faces of each of the four creatures in Ezekiel 1:10
 - 1. **Ezekiel 1:10 ESV** As for the likeness of their faces, each had a human face. The four had the face of a lion on the right side, the four had the face of an ox on the right side, and the four had the face of an eagle. . .

VIII. **Revelation 4:8 (NASB)** *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.”*

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A. “six wings”

1. to associate 4 creatures with seraphim of Isaiah
 - a. **Isaiah 6:1-3** “¹ In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. (v2) Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. ³ And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, *is* the LORD of hosts: the whole earth *is* full of his glory.”
2. swiftness for carrying out God’s providence (Lenski)
3. possible symbolism
 - a. two wings covering the face
 - i. holiness
A/ an unholy creature can not look upon a holy God
 - b. two wings in the middle enabling flight
 - i. God’s providence
A/ God’s angels swiftly carry out God’s providential instructions
 - c. two wings covering the feet
 - i. God’s holiness
A/ angel’s feet can’t touch the holy ground around God because they would profane it

B. “eyes”

1. they can see all the affairs of men
2. “to mark the universal vigilance of divine providence.” (Barnes)

C. “Holy”

1. major Revelation theme: praise

D. “was”

- i. is, was, is to come
A/ present, past, and future
I/ God is eternal

IX. Revelation 4:9-11 (NASB) *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. (v10) 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, (v11) “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.”*

A. “give glory”

1. antiphonal praise with the 24 elders
2. everyone’s giving glory to God
 - a. angels
 - i. we are told this in 5:11
A/ **Revelation 5:11 (CSBBible)** Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels around the throne, and also of the living creatures and of the elders. Their number was countless thousands, plus thousands of thousands.
 - b. nature
 - i. represented by the four living creatures
 - c. men
 - i. the church is represented by the 24 elders

B. “cast their crowns”

1. to show that elders’ rule is subordinate to the Lord of Lords

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X. Application

1. We have joint dominion with the Father and the Son
2. We need to join in the worship that's going on in the throneroom of God