

The Book of Revelation Lesson 7 – Chapter 4

1. The central message of the Book of Revelation is the ultimate victory of Christ and the church over the forces of evil. Perhaps the clearest expression of this message is found in **Rev. 17:14**, where the beast from the sea who bears the harlot is arrayed together with its kings against the Lamb. "These shall war against the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them, for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings, and they also shall overcome that are with him, called and chosen and faithful."
 - 1.1. This promise of victory at the end, pictured from the beginning, is as certain as the God who ordained it among "... the things which must shortly come to pass ..." (**Rev. 1:1**). This does not, in any way, deprive individuals from exercising their wills in the matter of right and wrong (**Rev. 22:17**). Those who overcome with the Lamb do so because they choose to be with him. They were called through the gospel (**2 Thess. 2:14**), and when they responded they became the elect or chosen (**1 Pet. 2:9**), and in their faithfulness they are destined for victory.
 - 1.2. When the church is struggling against the forces of evil, behind which the devil himself lies (**Rev. 12:9**), the formidable strength of the enemy calls for all the assurance the Lord can give his faithful ones as they encounter this enemy in their time of trial (**Rev. 2:10**). Rev. 4 and Rev. 5 are designed to furnish this assurance; For Rev. 4, we may read, "Believe in God;" and for Rev. 5, "Believe also in me." The subject of Rev. 4 is indeed God Himself in all his glory upon his throne (**Ps. 93**). The all-over thrust of the message here is clear: God is in control of his universe. No matter what happens on earth, no matter how severely the church is persecuted. God still reigns (**Ps. 47:8**)! The subject of Rev. 5 is Christ.
 - 1.3. Rev. 5 reinforces Rev. 4 with the good news that the Lamb that has been slain, but is now standing, has purchased with his blood men of every tribe, tongue, people and nation, and made them to be a kingdom and priests unto God; and they reign upon the earth (**Rev. 4:9-10**). This Lamb, who is none other than the Lion that is of the tribe of Judah, the root of David (**Rev. 4:5-6**), and, therefore, our Lord Jesus Christ is also the only one worthy to open the book of the seven seals and unfold the destiny of his church.
 - 1.4. What greater assurance could the faithful possess than the knowledge that God reigns supreme, and that Christ has died for their sins and controls their destiny?
2. There are few scenes in the Bible as majestic as the throne scenes of **Isa. 6**, **Ezek. 1**, and **Rev. 4**. Together they inspire that mixture of awe, fear and joy that one experiences when he feels he is in the presence of God.
 - 2.1. Chapters four through eight verse five form a unit in the book of Revelation, which covers the entire Christian Age. It shows the church letting its light shine. As it shines, it is persecuted by darkness and it has tribulation.
 - 2.2. In order to get the picture as a whole in **Rev. 4** and **Rev. 5**, it may help to summarize the list of objects and persons in order as John presents them to us. They are as follows:
 - 2.2.1. A throne set in heaven (**Rev. 4:2**)

- 2.2.2. One sitting upon the throne (**Rev. 4:2-3**)
- 2.2.3. Twenty-four thrones around the one throne (**Rev. 4:4**)
- 2.2.4. Twenty-four elders sitting on the thrones (**Rev. 4:4**)
- 2.2.5. Seven lamps of fire burning before the throne (**Rev. 4:5**)
- 2.2.6. A sea of glass like unto crystal before the throne (**Rev. 4:6**)
- 2.2.7. Four living creatures in the midst of and round about the throne (**Rev. 4:6-8**)
- 2.2.8. A Lamb standing in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders (**Rev. 5:6**)
- 2.2.9. Many angels around the throne, the living creatures and the elders (**Rev. 5:11**) and every created thing (**Rev. 5:13**)
- 2.3. **The emphasis of chapter 4 is the majesty of God the Father.**
 - 2.3.1. This is more than just a view of heaven. The idea is that God is upon his throne ruling the universe with Jesus.
- 3. **Rev. 4:1 - After these things I saw, and behold, a door opened in heaven, and the first voice that I heard, [a voice] as of a trumpet speaking with me, one saying, Come up hither, and I will show thee the things which must come to pass hereafter.**
 - 3.1. "After these things I saw" means, "after the visions of the preceding chapters." John is not here speaking of after the fulfillment of previous visions.
 - 3.2. John records that he saw a door "opened" in heaven (**4:1**).
 - 3.2.1. This is strikingly similar to the way Ezekiel's visions commenced.
 - 3.2.2. "The heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God" (**Ezek. 1:1**).
 - 3.2.3. The significance of the door is that John is now going to be allowed to look behind the scenes and see things as God sees them.
 - 3.2.4. It should be observed that it is not properly heaven as such that John sees through the "door opened in heaven," but rather, "the entire universe from the aspect of heaven."
 - 3.2.5. Nor is it a literal, material throne John describes, but a symbol conveying the truth that God reigns from the center of the universe and is in complete control. All the other symbols reinforce this great truth and contribute to the power of its majesty and glory.
 - 3.3. The voice he heard which sounded like a trumpet was the same voice of **Revelation 1:10** which was Jesus.
 - 3.3.1. The apostle heard a voice bidding him to "come up hither" so that he may be shown "the things which must come to pass hereafter."
 - 3.3.1.1. The key word here is **must**.
 - 3.3.1.2. This means that not only these things will happen, but also they must happen, as they are a part of God's eternal plan.
 - 3.3.2. There are many woes on the earth, but in the midst of all of this, God is ruling upon his throne.
 - 3.3.3. Events are not just happening by chance; God is in control and is working out his eternal plan.
 - 3.3.4. Christians in the first century and the twenty-first century can take heart; the will of God will be done.

4. **Rev.4:2 - Straightway I was in the Spirit: and behold, there was a throne set in heaven, and one sitting upon the throne;**
 - 4.1. John was in the Spirit as in chapter one. As he looked into heaven, he saw God sitting upon a throne.
 - 4.1.1. John mentions the throne over forty times in the book of Revelation and seventeen times in chapters four and five.
 - 4.1.2. This was re-assuring to the Christians who were undergoing tribulation at that time even as it is to Christians today. God rules the universe.
 - 4.2. John no longer sees with his physical eyes; he no longer hears with his physical ears. His soul is drawn away from all surrounding objects and wholly fixed on the things which are shown to him in the visions." Perhaps, like Paul, John could not be sure whether he was in the body or apart from the body (**2 Cor. 12:3**).
 - 4.2.1. The Jews usually spoke of three heavens. The first heaven is where the birds fly and where the clouds are (**Genesis 1:6-8**). The second heaven is where the sun, moon and stars are (**Genesis 1:14-18; Matthew 24:29**). The third heaven is the habitation of God (**Matthew 5:16, 45**). Evidently, Paradise is the same as the third heaven in this context (**verse 4**).
 - 4.2.2. John is provided such a measure of spiritual proficiency that he could fully see and describe the visions that passed before him.
 - 4.2.3. He was so deeply absorbed that the things in his mind appeared as if material objects.
5. **Rev. 4:3 - and he that sat [was] to look upon like a jasper stone and a sardius: and [there was] a rainbow round about the throne, like an emerald to look upon.**
 - 5.1. Heaven *is* real, but it *is not* physical. Physical things are being used to describe the glory of God.
 - 5.2. He saw a throne set in heaven and upon this throne was Almighty God (**4:3**).
 - 5.2.1. The throne symbolizes the sovereignty of Jehovah.
 - 5.2.2. God reigns over the nations; God sits upon his holy throne (**Psa. 47:8**).
 - 5.2.3. It is always important for saints to know that regardless of how adverse our physical circumstances appear to be, God is still in control.
 - 5.2.4. We do not know the precise form God assumed as John saw him upon the throne. There is some resemblance to a human figure (**5:1**), although the language is certainly used to describe deity in human form.
 - 5.3. There is no attempt to picture God Himself, but only to describe his likeness to precious stones (**Ezek. 1:26-28**).
 - 5.3.1. The jasper stone is probably not to be identified with the modern stone of that name which is opaque; but rather, since it was "clear as crystal" (**Rev. 21:11**), it should be identified with the diamond.
 - 5.3.2. This stone, together with the red sardius (suggesting blood) and the emerald rainbow before the throne, would seem to symbolize the holiness, justness (in this case, expressed in his wrath) and mercy, respectively, of the one sitting on the throne.
 - 5.3.3. The entire scene presents the indescribable majesty of God.

- 5.4. God is infinitely holy and cannot tolerate wicked men (**Hab. 1:13; Ps. 11:4-7**); and yet, his judgments are tempered with mercy (**Gen. 9:16-17**).
6. **Rev. 4:4 - And round about the throne [were] four and twenty thrones: and upon the thrones [I saw] four and twenty elders sitting, arrayed in white garments; and on their heads crowns of gold.**
- 6.1. At this point the 24 elders are introduced. In addition to the fact they are called elders, they are characterized by three other symbols: they wear crowns of victory, are arrayed in white garments and sit on thrones (**Rev. 4:4**).
- 6.2. The King James Version says seats, but thrones is a closer translation of this Greek word, which means seat of authority and power.
- 6.3. The number of them is an additional symbol and furnishes the clue with which to attempt an interpretation.
- 6.3.1. It seems clear that 24 combines the two covenants, that of Israel and that of the church under the figure of the 12 tribes and the 12 apostles (**Rev. 21:12, 14**).
- 6.3.1.1. This in turn leads to the conclusion that these elders symbolize the idea that the interests of the faithful, regardless of which covenant they lived under, have always been and will always be represented before the throne of God.
- 6.3.2. An alternate interpretation has been offered that they could denote an order of angelic beings.
- 6.3.2.1. The word “elders” seems to be used in that sense in **Is. 24:23**.
- 6.3.3. In my opinion, twenty-four elders represent the twelve patriarchs of the Old Covenant and the twelve apostles of the New Covenant. This would be in harmony with **Revelation 21:12-14**, which shows the name of the patriarchs on the twelve gates of the new Jerusalem and the names of the apostles on the twelve foundations of the city.
- 6.4. They are pictured as the redeemed of God in an idealized state as already possessing the crowns of victory (**Rev. 2:10**), and the garments of white or purity (**Rev. 7:9, 14**).
- 6.4.1. The thrones verify that they reign with God (**Rev. 5:10; Rom. 5:17**) and sit in judgment over the wicked (**Dan. 7:22**).
- 6.4.2. It is significant that it is one of these elders that introduce John to the redeemed coming out of tribulation arrayed in white robes (**Rev. 7:13-14**).
- 6.4.3. Why are they designated “elders”? Perhaps because elders, as leaders among God's people, typify both covenants so characteristically.
7. **Rev. 4:5 - And out of the throne proceed lightnings and voices and thunders. And [there was] seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God;**
- 7.1. Immediately following the description of the elders, lightning and voices and thunders, which are symbols that indicate the majesty and power of God as in **Exodus 19:16**, and judgments on the wicked (**Ps. 18:13-14**), proceed from the throne.
- 7.1.1. Perhaps here they emphasize God's taking up the cause of the faithful against their enemies.
- 7.1.2. This scene should impress us greatly with the magnificent nature of God.

- 7.2. Seven lamps burning indicate the scene was perfectly and continuously illuminated.
- 7.2.1. Nothing is unseen or unclear
- 7.3. The seven Spirits will make a complete and accurate revelation to John of all the things to come to pass just as he has provided a correct revelation in all other scripture.
- 7.3.1. The Holy Spirit's readiness to fulfill his role in God's providential care of his people is depicted by the seven lamps burning before the throne (**Rev. 1:4**).
- 7.3.2. As suggested in connection with **Rev. 1:4**, my belief is that the numeral seven denotes the perfection of the Spirit's role as the revealer of divine truth made known through the scriptures (**2 Tim. 3:16-17**).
8. **Rev. 4:6 - and before the throne, as it were a sea of glass like a crystal; and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, four living creatures full of eyes before and behind.**
- 8.1. Before the throne is as it were a sea of glass, not a sea of glass as the King James states.
- 8.1.1. I do not believe it matters what the sea symbolizes, but many opinions exist.
- 8.2. Two schools of thought as it relate to this passage:
- 8.2.1. The broad expanse may suggest the world wide extent which God's rule can go.
- 8.2.2. The likeness of a sea of glass before the throne (**Rev. 4:6**), suggests a symbol of the infinite distance between God and his sinful creatures.
- 8.2.2.1. God is holy and unapproachable except through Jesus Christ the Mediator.
- 8.2.2.2. It can only be bridged by overcoming through the trials and persecutions which Peter (**1 Pet. 4:12**) and Paul (**1 Cor. 3:15**) refer to under the term "fire."
- 8.2.2.3. It seems that the passing through of the sea of glass when mingled with fire (**Rev. 15:2**), is the process of overcoming, and when it is over, the sea is no more (**Rev. 21:1**).
- 8.2.2.4. In **Revelation 22:1** the sea is no more. There will be personal fellowship with God in heaven, which is indicated by the absence of the sea.
- 8.2.3. Some suggest it is a sign of victory much like the parting of the Red Sea was a victory for Israel.
- 8.3. The King James Version incorrectly translates "beast" in this passage. It is a completely different word than what is used for "beast" in **13:1, 11**. "Creatures" is correct.
- 8.4. The locations of the creatures closely associate them with the throne (in the midst and round about).
- 8.4.1. Could mean their ability to see in all directions or comprehend all of God's glory and be ready to give the proper adoration.
- 8.4.2. They have an all-seeing eye that can see in every direction which allows nothing to escape from the knowledge of the throne of God. "Nothing escapes their notice."

9. **Rev. 4:7 - And the first creature [was] like a lion, and the second creature like a calf, and the third creature had a face as of a man, and the fourth creature [was] like a flying eagle.**
- 9.1. In Jewish tradition, the lion represented strength. The ox (calf) represented service. Man represented intelligence. The eagle represented swiftness.
- 9.2. The four living creatures (Rev. 4:6) are described in terms of four similar ones introduced in Ezek. 1. John's creatures are adaptations of these.
- 9.3. The description in Ezekiel is more detailed. Whereas Ezekiel's creatures each had four faces, the 'facial scheme is dropped in John's vision except for the third creature who has "a face as of a man" (**Rev. 4:7**). The other faces of Ezekiel's creatures become complete likenesses of the creatures John saw.
- 9.4. Each of the four creatures represent some attribute associated with God. The lion suggests strength; the calf (ox), service; the man, intelligence; and the flying eagle, swiftness.
10. **Rev. 4:8 - and the four living creatures, having each one of them six wings, are full of eyes round about and within: and they have no rest day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, [is] the Lord God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come.**
- 10.1. The six wings are reminiscent of Isaiah's seraphim (**Isa. 6:2**), but the total picture accords better with Ezekiel's cherubim (**Ezek. 10:1; Gen. 3:24; Exo. 25:20**). The wings, together with the eyes round about and within (**Ezek. 1:18**), convey mobility (Ezekiel saw wheels for the creatures also, **Ezek. 1:15-21**), and ability to see and know all. "Nothing escapes their notice."
- 10.2. They are mentioned 20 times throughout Revelation, and the context each time is either one of praise and worship (**Rev. 4; Rev. 5; Rev. 7; Rev. 14; Rev. 19**), or judgment against the wicked (**Rev. 6 and Rev. 15**).
- 10.3. Either they represent the highest (since they are closest to the throne) order of angels or heavenly beings who eternally worship and carry out God's will in every corner of the universe (**Ps. 18:10**), or they are simply personifications of all divine attributes necessary to the execution of God's will.
- 10.4. They worship God by singing his praises continually without letup (day and night). Holy indicates that God is separate and different from man or any other created creature. God is holy. The term God the Almighty always refers to God the Father. The picture here is the throne of God, with the Father sitting on it. His eternal nature is indicated by the clause, who was, who is and who is to come.
- 10.5. "Holy, Holy, Holy" indicates the perfect sacredness of God as a supreme and faultless Being to be worshipped.
- 10.6. His eternal nature is indicated by the clause, **who was, who is and who is to come.**
11. **Rev. 4:9 - And when the living creatures shall give glory and honor and thanks to him that sitteth on the throne, to him that liveth for ever and ever,**
- 11.1. In **Rev. 4:8-9**, the living creatures are found engaged in ceaseless praise of the one on the throne, the Lord God, Almighty.
- 11.2. In **Rev. 4:8**, God is exalted by the living creatures with regard to his divine attributes of holiness, power and eternal nature (**Rev. 1:8**). The thrice

expressed "holy" (**Isa. 6:3**) indicates the perfect sacredness of God as a supreme and faultless Being to be worshipped. Some state it implies the Trinity, alluded to in **Rev. 1:4-5**, or possibly the absoluteness of his holiness.

11.3. The living creatures worship God by singing to him and honoring him and giving glory and thanks. This is the same way that Christians must worship God today. His eternal nature is again emphasized.

12. **Rev. 4:10 - the four and twenty elders shall fall down before him that sitteth on the throne, and shall worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and shall cast their crowns before the throne, saying,**

12.1. They are joined by 24 elders who fall down in worship before the one on the throne, and cast their crowns before his throne (**Rev. 4:10**), acknowledging as the redeemed ones, not only his supremacy, but "that he is the source or cause of their salvation and victory."

12.2. The casting of the crowns before the throne showed complete submission to God.

12.3. Only Deity is to be worshipped.

13. **Rev. 4:11 - Worthy art thou, our Lord and our God, to receive the glory and the honor and the power: for thou didst create all things, and because of thy will they were, and were created.**

13.1. In **Rev. 4:11**, the 24 elders praise God as Creator. He purposed the things of his creation in his will ("they were"), and then brought them into actual existence ("and were created"). Not only do the redeemed give praise for the heavens and earth, but also for the new creation in Christ (**Eph. 2:10; 2 Cor. 5:17**).

13.2. **Verse 11** clearly reflects that God is worthy of adoration because of his role as the Creator.

13.3. "**Power**" indicates that he has the strength to do all that he has promised, and being the Creator he has the right to do as His infinite wisdom and justice decide.

14. God is worthy to receive their praise. It is he who created the world and brought it into existence. He rules the world today from his throne in heaven. In chapter four, the main emphasis is God upon his throne in heaven. In the midst of trials and persecutions, the church sees that God reigns. It is not mankind who rules the universe, but the Almighty God. He is eternal. He is the Creator. He will look after his people. This is still true today.