

REVELATION Chapter 4

Teacher: John M. Brown, Olive Hill Church of Christ, Sunday Bible Class, July 2014

This is the beginning of the “apocalyptic” part of the book, as John receives a vision of God in heaven on His throne as REIGNING CREATOR: GOD ON THE THRONE!

I. THE VISION, 4:1-2

- A. John had previously heard a voice and received a prior vision (1:9-20; chapters 2-3).
- B. Now John hears the voice and receives a vision again.
 - 1. John saw a door opened in heaven and a voice saying, “*Come up hither...*”
 - 2. He was immediately in the spirit (1:10).
 - 3. The setting is HEAVEN itself: *a throne, and One sitting on the throne.*

II. THE THRONE, 4:3-8

- A. There was One on the throne, v. 3
 - 1. Throne = A KING.
 - 2. Two stones:
 - a. Jasper – like a diamond (purity, strength: God’s beauty, holiness, glory, power).
 - b. Sardine – a blood-red stone in appearance (God’s wrath).
 - 3. A rainbow: symbolic of God’s mercy and faithfulness (see Genesis 9:8-17; Hebrews 10:23).
- B. There were twenty-four around the throne, v. 4
 - 1. There were twenty-four seats, with twenty-four elders sitting.
 - a. Clothed with white raiment = PURITY
 - b. Crowns of gold on their heads = VICTORY CROWN
 - 2. Who are these? Symbolically, these ELDERS represent the REDEEMED!
 - a. Remember that there were 12 tribes of Israel, and 12 original apostles.
 - b. Also, the priests of the Old Testament were organized into 24 orders for service in the sanctuary (1 Chronicles 24).
 - c. These are GOD’S PEOPLE, His PRIESTS, who are redeemed, reigning, and victorious (compare 1 Peter 2:5, 9) – both Old Testament Israel (the physical nation) and New Testament Israel (the church, the spiritual kingdom) combined.

C. Something comes forth from the throne, v. 5

1. Lightening, thundering, voices: *a manifestation of God's power and wrath* (compare Exodus 19:16; Revelation 8:5): there is a storm brewing – God's Judgment!
2. Seven lamps of fire = seven Spirits of God (HOLY SPIRIT)

D. There is something before the throne, vv. 6-8

1. SEA OF GLASS – like crystal (clear)
 - a. Remember that before the Holy Place in the Jewish Temple sat Solomon's brazen sea (1 Kings 7; 2 Chronicles 4) where the priests cleansed themselves
 - b. The figure here is separation, holiness!
2. FOUR BEASTS – full of eyes (omniscience – seeing all)
 - a. *FIRST BEAST – like a lion (strength, courage, boldness – 2 Samuel 1:23)*
 - b. *SECOND BEAST – like a calf (service; endurance under a yoke – Isa. 11:6)*
 - c. *THIRD BEAST – like a man (intelligence, reason – Jer. 5:1-3)*
 - d. *FOURTH BEAST – like an eagle (swiftness, vision – 2 Sam. 1:23; Jer. 4:13)*
3. Description of the four living beasts:
 - a. Six eyes, full of eyes, rest not day and night, saying “Holy, holy, holy...”
 - b. These must be symbolic of angels (compare the cherubim in Ezekiel 1:4-10 and 10:8-15 – see also Isaiah 6:1-4); they never cease praising!

God: “was...is...is to come” – PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE (1:8).

The vision is of a powerful God, with His angelic order, poised for judgment!

III. THE WORSHIP, 4:9-11

A. The beasts have given glory, honor, and thanks to the One on the throne.

B. The 24 elders now fall down before Him to worship.

1. They fall down: *submission to God*.
2. They cast their crowns before the throne: *dependence on God; God rules!* (Psalm 103:19-22).
3. They say, “Thou art worthy...”: *Worship!* (see Psalm 96).
4. Throne in heaven: see Isaiah 6:1-4; Ezekiel 1:26-28; Daniel 7:8-14.

The whole picture is of man (24 elders) and the angels (four beasts) all around God's throne to honor and worship Him! Revelation 4 shows us the REIGNING CREATOR, who is ever on the throne, ever in control, ever ruling, and ever worthy to be praised! We see God's omniscience, omnipotence, and omnipresence. God is holy, just, merciful, gentle, strong, faithful, resolute, fierce, and consuming, and is worthy of our love and reverence.