

Revelation Chapter 4

Verses 4:1 – 5:14: The third major section of Revelation begins here: “the things which shall be hereafter” (1:19). Chapters 4 and 5 establish Christ’s right and authority to act as the Judge of the earth. God on His throne invests the Lion of the tribe of Judah with the authority to establish His dominion and kingdom on earth because of His redeeming work as the Lamb.

Revelation 4:1 "After this I looked, and, behold, a door [was] opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard [was] as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter."

What do you think is being talked about in this first verse? (Some believe this is depicting the Rapture).

The door signifies entrance by way of revelation into heaven. The command "Come up hither probably does not refer specifically to the Rapture, but rather to the change in scene for John who is to receive revelation about future events. This begins the final section of the book describing the events that follow the church age.

The phrases “after this” and “things which must be hereafter” move to the future, beyond the age of the church. The “door” signifies entrance by way of revelation into heaven. Chapters 4 and 5 picture a heavenly scene. The “trumpet” signifies an authoritative voice.

Matthew 24:31 “And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.”

All the elect are gathered and assembled before Christ. This is the culmination of world history, ushering in the millennial reign of Christ.

This will be the trumpet of assembly (the silver trumpet of redemption), "four" (in Matthew 24:31), means the entire world. We've all heard the saying: "from the four corners of the earth I'm sure. This assembly will not be just Americans, but the true believers from every country of the world. These "angels" are ministering spirits who carry out these orders of their Lord and Master. The "He" here is Jesus (Messiah), but now He is Lord of lords and King of kings.

This "sound of a Trumpet" could be a literal trumpet blowing, or it could be the voice of our Lord sounding like a trumpet. This is the last chronological mention of silver in the Bible. There will be no silver in heaven. "Silver" means redemption, and there is no silver there; because we have already been redeemed. There is only gold in heaven. In the Holy of Holies, there was only gold, because in the presence of God, there was only gold. This gathering together of His elect is what is commonly referred to as the rapture of the church. His church has no denomination. It is "all" who truly believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 15:52 "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 "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:" "Then we which are alive [and] remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

To really understand read all of this account. I have chosen just two verses from the account for here. This will happen so quickly that you would not even have time to blink your eye.

The "I" (in verse 1), is of course John who is writing this. Jesus has been speaking in the previous chapter directly. Now we hear from John about the things he saw. This is after Jesus finishes His messages to the seven churches.

We will see the number "seven" throughout Revelation. Seven means "spiritually complete". Perhaps in this number, God is saying, this is it. There is nothing else to read. If you can't get the message in Revelation, you cannot receive it.

John takes a look toward heaven and is startled "behold", the door of heaven is open. Jesus is the door to heaven. The door of heaven is not closed to the believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus opened the way to the very throne of God, when the temple curtain was torn from the top to the bottom (opening the way to the holy of holies), when He died on the cross (Matthew 27:51).

The word "looked" is important also. We must seek before we can find. Jesus is coming back for those who are looking for Him.

Notice, this door was "opened" in the past tense. It is not going to be opened. Jesus opened it for us. It is now open to believers.

John 10:7 "Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep."

Heaven is presently the dwelling place of God. It will also be our eternal home.

The first voice that John hears in is either the voice of Jesus Himself, or the voice of Jesus' own personal messenger. It makes no difference, the message itself is from Jesus. When the Lord calls us to meet Him in the air, when the church is caught away, we will hear the trumpet; the silver trumpet of redemption.

There are several other instances in the Bible where the door of heaven was opened. Many prophets also, have seen a vision of the heavenly.

Ezekiel speaks of his look into heaven. Daniel had a glimpse into heaven. When Stephen was stoned to death, he saw into heaven.

When Stephen looked into heaven, he saw Jesus standing at the right hand of God. Most times, Jesus is seated at the right hand because His work is completed, but I believe that He was standing to receive His faithful servant, Stephen, home.

This door has never been closed to the true believers.

The first voice that John hears (in verse 1), is either the voice of Jesus Himself, or the voice of Jesus' own personal messenger. It makes no difference; the message itself is from Jesus. When the Lord calls us to meet Him in the air, when the church is caught away, we will hear the trumpet; the silver trumpet of redemption.

In Both (Matthew 24:31 and 1 Thessalonians 4:16), I read at first the voice and the trumpet seem to be interchangeable. The voice of Jesus and His personal angel are a little confusing, as well. Either way the message is from Jesus. This trumpet was talking with John.

The voice that John heard was like a trumpet. This is a powerful voice; it gives a true sound. This voice is talking to us, as well as John.

The voice said, "come up hither" to John, but is always saying to us, "come up hither". Get your mind off the things of this world and look heavenward. The call of Jesus has always been "come". In this specific sentence, He tells John "come up hither", then adds why.

Jesus, the voice, says, "I will shew thee things which must be hereafter." John will be shown a look into the future. John could have had a vision of this, or he could have been transported into heaven for a moment in time to see all of this. We do know that viewing something from the earth makes us see just the here and now. From a heavenly point, we can see yesterday and tomorrow.

Notice that these things of the hereafter must be. Why must they be? Because God ordered it from the beginning of the world and God never changes. We must change to fit His plan, not the other way around.

John is not told a specific time in the hereafter, only that it will be later than the present time he is in.

John is now seeing into the future, after the believers in Christ are raptured into heaven, in this particular scene.

Verses 2-5: "In the spirit": John sees God the Father sitting on His "throne" in "heaven", compare (verse 8). The gems and the "rainbow" show the glory of God (compare Ezek. 1:22-28). The 24 "elders" probably represent the raptured church in heaven. Their "seats" or thrones show a reward of authority in the millennial kingdom (compare 20:4), and their "crowns" (Greek stephanos), are crowns of reward from the judgment seat of Christ (compare Rom. 14:10; 1 Cor. 3:12-15; 2 Cor. 5:10). The "white raiment" shows their righteousness, which has now been judged and purified. The number "four and twenty", represents the church as priests before God. David divided the Levitical priesthood into 24 sections (1 Chron. 24:7-19). Believers are seen here as a kingdom of priests (compare 1:6). Old Testament saints are not yet included, since they

will not be resurrected and rewarded until after the Tribulation period (compare Dan. 12:1-3). The "seven lamps" or "seven spirits" again symbolize the Holy Spirit of God (compare 1:4).

Revelation 4:2 "And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and [one] sat on the throne."

John was already in the Spirit we know from a previous lesson, but this means a deeper experience in the Spirit. A double dose of the Spirit, you might say.

"Throne": Not so much a piece of furniture, but a symbol of sovereign rule and authority (7:15; 11:19; 16:17-18; compare Isa. 6:1). It is the focus (of chapter 4), occurring 13 times, 11 times referring to God's throne.

John was changed or transported, instantly. This throne, as we said before, has been seen by many in the Bible. The word "one" does not literally mean "one" but, I believe it means the unity of the trinity.

- (1) God the Father;
- (2) God the Son or God the Word;
- (3) God the Holy Spirit.

The word "sat" is indicative that the work is complete.

A throne shows rulership and power. Notice that the "throne" was "set in heaven"; set is past tense. This throne is occupied even now in heaven, where Jesus sits at the right hand of the Father.

Revelation 4:3 "And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and [there was] a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald."

The "jasper and sardine stone" were the most precious of all stones. The beauty of God was so dazzling that John could not describe Him. The jasper was the last and the sardine the first stone in the breastplate worn by the high priest (Exodus 28:17-20). These stones are in the foundation of the new Jerusalem (Revelation 21:19-20).

The diamond and ruby are meant by these stones. These stones are known for their clearness and brightness.

There was a diamond between the breastplate and the heart of the high priest. The name engraved on this stone, I believe, is the unspeakable name of God Almighty. The diamond stone next to the heart stood for purity and mercy.

The emerald is another precious stone, green in color. Green means "earthly or of the earth". The emerald was also part of the breastplate, and of the foundation of New Jerusalem.

The value of these three different stones is greater than other stones. These are classified as precious stones and are very expensive.

This rainbow is green (earthly), to show the covenant between God and man. The first rainbow mentioned was a sign of a promise from God to man. God would never again destroy the earth by water. Sometimes it is called a bow, and sometimes a rainbow. The rainbow encircles the throne as a constant reminder to God and man of the covenant. This is a beautiful sight to behold.

Revelation 4:4 "And round about the throne [were] four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold."

The "four and twenty seats" were actually thrones. Miniature thrones in authority, subordinate to God, but nevertheless they surround the throne of God.

"Four and twenty elders": Their joint rule with Christ, their white garments, and their golden crowns all seem to indicate that these 24 represent the redeemed (verses 9:11; 5:5-14; 7:11-17; 11:16-18; 14:3; 19:4). The question is which redeemed? Not Israel, since the nation is not yet saved, glorified, and coronated. That is still to come at this point in the events of the end. Their resurrection and glory will come at the end of the 7 year tribulation time (compare Dan. 12:1-3). Tribulation saints aren't yet saved (7:9-10). Only one group will be complete and glorified at that point, the church. Here elders represent the church, which sings the song of redemption (5:8-10). They are the overcomers who have their crowns and live in the place prepared for them, where they have gone with Jesus (compare John 14:1-4).

The twenty-four elders who represent the redeemed in heaven acknowledge that humans were created by God for His good pleasure. Their response of praise recognizes the sovereignty of God over our lives.

One of the most controversial questions raised by this vision of the throne of God is the identity of the 24 elders.

In (Rev. 5:9), the Scriptures tells us the four and twenty elders sung a new song.

Rev. 5:9 "And they sung a new song, saying, Thou are worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed "us" to God by the blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation".

Notice "and hast redeemed us", thus revealing their human nature. These 24 elders are redeemed men. Once their human nature was confirmed, it became obvious that the Rapture was pictured by (Rev. 4:1), as occurring before the Tribulation. Rapture for this scene, which is of the throne of God in heaven just before the 7 year Tribulation as defined (in chapters 6-19), pictures twenty four men or "elders" in the presence of God.

There are many significances tied to the number 12, but suffice it to say that God prescribed this number to have meaning and purpose of which were governmental authority, a completeness or perfection, and the authority given to mankind by God.

Twelve is a spiritual number which has to do with representation. The number twenty-four, I believe, could be two twelves'.

- (1) One twelve for the Old Testament
- (2) One twelve for the New Testament

The twelve prophets represent the believers of the Old Testament. The twelve disciples represent all believers from the New Testament.

There are many other schools of thought on the twenty four.

John, "the faithful witness" observes these events immediately after the church age has been concluded and just prior to the beginning of the Tribulation. These men, whether 12 who represent Israel and 12 who represent the church, or 24 outstanding Christian leaders in all church history, makes no difference, they all are redeemed men! They are redeemed saints who are in heaven just before the revelation of the Tribulation that follows. Like John, they are part of the pre-tribulation rapture in their glorified bodies worshiping all three members of the Trinity. This scene in heaven does not occur in the middle of the Tribulation or at its end, but before it begins.

These Old Testament believers were looking forward to Messiah and were preached to, when Jesus preached in hell and brought captivity captive out with Him.

Notice all twenty-four were dressed in white robes. White robes are worn by believers in Jesus, who have washed their robes in the blood of Jesus and are made white as snow. All through the Old Testament people like David were looking for the Savior. They believed, even though they were looking forward instead of backward to Him.

There are over thirty-seven Old Testament scriptures which mention the coming of Jesus Christ. These were fulfilled, every one. It is not absurd to speak of Old Testament believers.

These crowns that they had on their heads were gold. This showed that they had nothing to do with these crowns being put on their heads. Gold means the purity of God. God placed these crowns on their head. The grace of God placed these crowns on their head. They did nothing to earn them. It was a free gift from God for believing. Crowns show rulership, and we believers are promised that we will reign with Jesus.

Revelation 4:5 "And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and [there were] seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God."

The "lightnings and thunderings" showed the majesty and awesomeness of God. Lightning, earthquakes, and thunderings throughout the Bible have been an outward proclamation of God. Even at the foot of Mount Sinai the people were afraid of God, because of just such manifestations.

This is not the fury of nature, but the firestorm of righteous fury about to come from an awesome, powerful God upon a sinful world (8:5; 11:9; 16:18).

The "seven lamps" are a symbolic number covering all the workings of the Spirit of God.

The seven spirits of God refers to the seven eyes of the Lord or characteristics of God (Zech. 4:10 and Isaiah 11:2). "The seven Spirits" mean the entirety of the power of the Spirit is manifest there at the throne and emanates out to the twenty-four or all Christendom. Fire throughout the Bible has been symbolic of God, as in the burning bush (Exodus 3:2). In (Hebrews 12:28-29), we are told to serve God with reverence and Godly fear, because God is a consuming fire.

We do not completely understand God, but we must accept and trust God. This Spirit of God which is burning is to illuminate the minds and Spirits of all who will accept it. Jesus is the Light. Somehow, all three are present in these lamps (Spirit), that illuminate.

I would like to mention here that Revelation is not written in chronological order. Just as a dream sometime skips around, so does this.

Revelation Chapter 4 Questions

1. When John looked to heaven, what did he see?
2. What did the first voice he heard sound like?
3. What did the voice say to John? Two things.
4. What could be one reason for God using "seven" repeatedly in Revelation?
5. What single word shows us that John is startled?
6. Who is the door to heaven?
7. When did He open the door to believers?
8. Who is Jesus coming back for?
9. Where is the present dwelling place of God?
10. Who saw Jesus standing at the right hand of God?
11. Why is Jesus generally seated at the right hand of God?

12. Name two instances where the voice of Jesus and the trumpet mean the same thing.
13. Why did Jesus tell John to come up?
14. Do you believe John was transported to heaven, or do you believe it was just a vision?
15. When was this all to happen?
16. When John got even deeper in the Spirit, what did he see in heaven?
17. What two things does this throne symbolize?
18. The one who sat on the throne was like what two stones?
19. What was round about the throne?
20. What color was it?
21. What other places will we find all three of these stones?
22. What name does the author believe is engraved on the diamond behind the breastplate?
23. What does the rainbow remind us of?
24. What does green mean?
25. How many seats were around the throne?
26. Who sat upon them?
27. What was on their heads?
28. Why was it made of gold?
29. What is the number twelve symbolically?
30. This twenty-four is actually what?
31. What were they dressed in? Why?
32. Crowns indicate what?
33. What three things proceeded from the throne and what do they show?
34. What were burning before the throne?
35. What is fire symbolic of?
36. What order is Revelation written in?

37. What do you think heaven is like?