

THE REVELATION

APRIL 7, 2024

Chapter 4

VI. The Events of the Book

When the LORD approached John to have him record the words in this book, everything within its pages was still prophecy for the future. But with the passing of almost 2000 years, some of the prophecies have now become history. For instance, as of 1922 AD, all seven of the Churches referenced in the first three chapters of REVELATION are gone – their lamps have been put out. The LORD called them “the things which are,” and they are no more. Those Churches were important to the story of Jesus’ Second Coming because they were part of the timeline leading to His arrival. With their candles extinguished, the prophecies of chapter 4 can begin to be fulfilled – even in our lifetimes.

A. The Invitation in Heaven (4:1)

Rev 4:1 After these things I looked, and 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."

John was on the island of Patmos when this message was given to him. He was just living his normal life in a normal way as an exile on that island surrounded by water. The LORD interrupted him and called him to the task of writing this book. From the first verse of chapter one to the last verse of chapter 3, John was aware of who he was, where he was, and what he was doing. That is not to discount the supernatural! The LORD’s calling of John to this task, as well as the LORD’s word-for-word dictation of chapters 1 – 3, was supernatural. The LORD was on the island of Patmos with John for those chapters. But then, it was time for John to see something that he had never seen before. It was time for John to see heaven.

The letters to the seven Churches were completed, and John said, “After these things I looked, and behold, a door open in heaven.” Just imagine that! John looked up from his writing and cast his gaze toward the sky and saw an open door. Through that door, he must have seen the landscape and realized that it did not look like the sky around that door. Then, all of a sudden, he heard “the first voice which I had heard, like the sound of a trumpet speaking with me.” In the first chapter, John spoke about this voice (1:12-20). It was the voice that startled him, and when he turned to see Who it was, he saw Jesus walking among the seven large lampstands. The voice was the voice of Jesus.

As John looked at the door that would transport him to heaven, he heard Jesus’ voice saying to him, “Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after these things.” We must ask a very important question, “After what things?” We may say it another way, “Why is it that the new events given at this point ‘must take place after these things?’” The answer is simple, “after these things” refers to the lights of the seven Churches of Asia. The events John will soon see cannot take

place until the lamps of the seven Churches of Asia are extinguished. In this story, those Churches acted as time markers to indicate when the events in chapter 4 will begin to be fulfilled. But, at this point, John had not seen those events. He had only seen the open door and heard the invitation from Jesus to join Him in heaven to see all its glory and the future of the LORD at His Second Coming.

B. The Throne Room in Heaven

1. The Throne in Heaven (4:2)

Rev 4:2 Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne was standing in heaven, and One sitting on the throne.

When John says, “Immediately I was in the Spirit,” it means that the Holy Spirit had taken total control of John’s mind. His body may have been on the island of Patmos, but his mind was in heaven – God’s eternal home. What a sight he was seeing at that moment. The only other living humans who had possibly seen the throne room in heaven in this way were Moses and Ezekiel. There on Mount Sinai, the LORD allowed Moses to see the Tabernacle in heaven with the original Ark of the Covenant, the Seven-candle Lampstand, the Veil, the Table of Incense, the Table of Show Bread, the Brazen Altar, the large Basin and all the utensils used in worship. Moses measured those items in heaven, and then they were reproduced in the camp of the Nation of Israel at the foot of Mount Sinai for use on earth in worship of the LORD. We will discover Ezekiel’s vision of this throne room soon.

John says, “behold.” That means *pay strict attention to this!* “... behold, a throne was standing in heaven, and One sitting on the throne.” Oh, how quickly we often skip through the eternal importance of this sentence. Everything created in heaven and on earth is for the purpose of worship and adoration of the “One sitting on the throne.” Everything and everyone else in this world is insignificant compared to the “One sitting on the throne.” This “One” is no other than, the first Person of the Trinity – God the Father. This throne room was part of the first thing Jesus created on the first day of creation before He created the earth. Fear not! Jesus, the second Person of the Trinity, also created His throne at the same time as well as a throne for the third Person of the Trinity – the Holy Spirit. We will cover this topic later in the story of this REVELATION.

2. The One in Heaven (4:3a)

Rev 4:3a And He who was sitting was like a jasper stone and a sardius in appearance;

The LORD is now allowing John to describe in his own words everything that he is seeing. It appeared to John that God the Father looked like “a jasper stone and a sardius.” Here, we must rely on the experts to interpret John’s reasoning for describing the Father in terms of two specific stones. That expert is no other than John himself. First, in Revelation 21:11, John tells us the “jasper stone” was “as clear as crystal.” That is all the information we have from the expert about this “jasper stone,” - it was clear as crystal. Crystals are quartz, and they come in almost every color on the spectrum. The word “jasper” means *a translucent stone*. Second, this same stone was used on the Urim and the Thummim and on the shoulders of the High Priest’s garment. John had not seen the High Priest’s garment in 25 years since before the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD, he had surely seen it many times. John was raised as a Jew, and with his family, he visited the Temple in Jerusalem at least once a year. We also know that because of his association with John the Baptist and Jesus, visits to

Jerusalem were extremely frequent, and he had seen the stones on the priest's garment many times. To John, simply saying it looked like a "jasper stone" was good enough for a description for everyone in the Church who would be reading this book in Greek at that time. To further explain why it is all we have about this stone can be found in the fact that about 300 years before this writing, Antiochus the Great had transported 2000 Jewish families to western Asia Minor from Babylonia. Thus, many of the inhabitants of that area were Jews. They and their descendants would have probably understood what John meant when he simply said a "jasper stone." As to its color or tint, we know nothing more than it was translucent.

As for the "sardius" stone, that is a different story. It was a stone quarried in Sardis, which was one of the towns of the Letters to the Seven Churches. It was a reddish aluminum oxide mineral that could show a hint of brownish-yellow in its color at times. It is the same three colors that we see rotating with each other in a hot burning fire – a little red, a little brown, a little yellow.

John said, "He who was sitting *was* like a jasper stone and a sardius." John was describing what he could see of God the Father, not the throne He was sitting on.

3. The Rainbow in Heaven (4:3b)

Rev 4:3b and there was a rainbow around the throne, like an emerald in appearance.

John says, "There was a rainbow around the throne." The word for "rainbow" is *iris*, and the best definition is a halo, as in *a full-circle ring hovering in the air*. Ezekiel gives the following commentary on the rainbow.

As the appearance of the rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so was the appearance of the surrounding radiance. Such was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. And when I saw it, I fell on my face and heard a voice speaking, (Eze 1:28).

When we think of a "rainbow," our minds take us to all the colors of red, yellow, blue, orange, green, etc. But the "rainbow" around the throne was only "emerald," or for us today, a beautiful *blue-green*.

The "rainbow" is a symbol of *judgment completed*. When the LORD rained judgment on the earth in the days of Noah, at its completion, He hung the rainbow in the sky as a symbol and sign that such a judgment of a worldwide flood was completed and would never occur again on earth. Although from earth we can only see part of a rainbow, it is always a full circle. A circle never ends, representing the continuous and flawless promise from the LORD. So, too, His judgment is always continuous and flawless at His throne.

4. The Elders in Heaven (4:4)

Rev 4:4 Around the throne were twenty-four thrones; and upon the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white garments, and golden crowns on their heads.

The judgment at the throne in heaven is formal, proper, and official. The jury was sitting around God's throne. When we draw a picture of this, we place this jury in a semi-circle but that is incorrect. These jury members are sitting in a full circle around God's throne. Here, John introduces us to the "twenty-four thrones; and upon the thrones, *I saw* twenty-four elders sitting." Most people in the

Church place a special emphasis on the word “elders,” however, it is the Greek word *presbuteros* and it means *old men*. John saw these twenty-four *old men* sitting on *thranois*, the Greek word for *benches*, which were around God. The function of these men, as we will see, is to give praise and honor to the righteous acts of God. Everything that occurs in this room, at this throne, is formal, proper, and official but also eternal – never-ending! These spiritual beings who looked to John like *old men* have been around the throne of God since the first day of creation. How do we know how long they have been there? They have been there since God created His home before He created ours (Genesis 1:1). We will soon see them performing their duties in this court.

But John also described their dress. Each *old man* was dressed in a white robe and adorned with a golden crown on his head. The *white robe* represented the purity of these men – sinless. As for the “golden crown,” gold is the most referenced metal in the Bible. It is always a symbol of *salvation*, which is, by all standards in God’s Word, the most important commodity that a person must obtain to enter into eternal life with Him. Of course, *salvation* means personally accepting the LORD as Savior. These *old men* did not need *salvation* because they were created to sit on the jury in God’s judgment hall. But these *old men* are part of the process of *salvation*, not that they had authority to grant *salvation*, but that they had authority to give a hardy praise and word of glory to the One who offered *salvation* – God. “Crowns” are always a symbol of authority. Not to get too far along in the story, but on earth in the REVELATION, “crowns” represent the authority of empires, horns represent the authority of countries, and *heads* represent the leaders of those countries. However, in heaven, as in this case, the word “Crowns” is *stephanos* in Greek and it means *that which surrounds*. The gold that surrounds the heads of these *old men* represents the LORD’s placement of these men at His throne to proclaim that His judgment and granting of *salvation* to those who belong to Him is righteous. As we will see later in the story, they will also proclaim the righteousness of God when those who do not belong to the LORD are exiled permanently to the Lake of Fire and Brimstone.

5. The Environment in Heaven (4:5a)

Rev 4:5a Out from the throne come flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder.

But at God’s throne, the environment in heaven is also fearful. John says, “*Out from the throne come flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder.*” The sounds and the sights were terrifying; they were greater than a full-scale booming and electrified tropical storm. At Mount Sinai, the whole camp of the Nation of Israel was terrified because of the presence of God on the mountain (Exodus 19:18). There, the whole mountain quaked with the flashes of lightning and the sounds and peals of thunder. The writer of Hebrews is correct in saying, “*it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God,*” (Hebrews 10:31).