

Lessons 10-II: Chapter 4

A Beautiful Segue

We have spent the past four weeks in chapters 2 and 3 studying the letters from Jesus Christ, who delivered His word to the 7 angels of the 7 churches. In these letters we have learned about 7 churches, good and bad. We have seen how they have been faithful and also their failures. We have learned that there are churches that are following in obedience to God's word and some that are not. The church on earth, even when doing the best that it can, pales in comparison to what we look forward to one day. This makes chapter 4 of Revelation a beautiful segue between what the church and worship looks like here and what it will be like in heaven one day when the Bridegroom comes to take His bride to be with Him for all of eternity!!!



[1] After this I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven! And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this." [2] At once I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne. [3] And he who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian, and around the throne was a rainbow that had the appearance of an emerald. [4] Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones were twenty-four elders, clothed in white garments, with golden crowns on their heads. [5] From the throne came flashes of lightning, and rumblings and peals of thunder, and before the throne were burning seven torches of fire, which are the seven spirits of God, [6] and before the throne there was as it were a sea of glass, like crystal.

And around the throne, on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind: [7] the first living creature like a lion, the

second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with the face of a man, and the fourth living creature like an eagle in flight. [8] And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say,

"Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!"

[9] And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever, [10] the twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever. They cast their crowns before the throne, saying,

[11] "Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created."

(Revelation 4, ESV)

"Come up here" (v. 1)

After this I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven! And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this."

John, being caught up in the Spirit, is now being called to behold the next vision that He is to witness and record for us. Some have tried to use verse 1 as a defense for a "secret rapture." A better understanding of this is not for a "secret rapture" of the church, but rather a call from God to John as he is invited to peer into the next doorway and behold future events. This does not take away from any of the preceding events. Revelation switches back and forth through the timeline as it deepens and broadens the overall picture as we view subsequent details. This is a journey that John had the privilege of recording that shows multiple layers from deepening perspectives. We see this as John is caught up in the Spirit in [Revelation 1:7](#), called to "come up here" in [4:1](#), sees the "temple of God" be

opened [11:19](#), sees the opening of the “temple of tabernacle in heaven” [15:5](#), and heaven itself opened up as John views the coming of Christ in [19:11](#).

The Throne Room (vv. 2-3)

At once I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne. And he who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian, and around the throne was a rainbow that had the appearance of an emerald.

Revelation 4 is a profound chapter that offers a glimpse into the heavenly throne room and highlights themes of worship, God's sovereignty, and His majesty.

Who is the “One”?

In [4:2](#), the “One” seated on the throne is understood to be God (the Father), the Almighty Creator. This vision portrays God's sovereignty, authority, and holiness as the ruler over all creation. The imagery emphasizes His majesty and His central role in the worship of heaven. This chapter doesn't directly name God, as the “One,” but the context of Revelation consistently points to the One on the throne as God the Father. It aligns with the overarching message of God's ultimate authority and His worthiness to receive worship and praise. Additionally we have a second description of Christ in the throne room with God the Father in chapter 5.

What do the stones mean?

In [Revelation 4:3](#), the stones mentioned—jasper and carnelian (or sardius)—are part of the vivid imagery describing the One on the throne. These stones symbolize certain attributes of God:

- In ancient times, *jasper* was often associated with a clear, crystal-like stone, possibly resembling a diamond. Its brilliance and clarity could represent God's purity, holiness, and glory.
- *Carnelian (Sardius)* is a reddish stone, symbolizing God's justice, wrath, or His fiery passion, love, and atonement that He provided through His Son. The red color is often associated with intense emotion and power along with the atoning blood of Christ.

Together, these stones emphasize the majesty, radiance, and multifaceted nature of God's character. Additionally, the rainbow that encircles the throne, appearing like an emerald, suggests God's covenant faithfulness, mercy, and grace. The combination of these elements portrays a God who is awe-inspiring, holy, and yet full of compassion.

Around the Throne (v. 4)

Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones were twenty-four elders, clothed in white garments, with golden crowns on their heads.

Who are the 24 elders?

The [24](#) elders symbolize the redeemed people of God—representing both the 12 tribes of Israel (Old Testament) and the 12 apostles (New Testament). Together, they encompass the entirety of God's faithfulness, both under the old and new covenants. Their white robes symbolize purity, and their golden crowns suggest victory and reward—common imagery for the faithful in Scripture. In spite of there being any uncertainty of who the 24 elders are, their primary role in this passage is to honor and glorify God. The very simple fact that we are not told who the 24 elders specifically are points very clearly to the fact that only the One on the throne is worthy of praise. This is *HIS* story. This is for His glory and we are blessed recipients of His grace and His mercy. There is also a beautiful picture of the close relationship and fellowship that God desires to have and does have with those whom He has called. This will be the full consummation of what we look forward to when we one day experience our complete glorification and get to be forever in His presence!

From and Around the Throne (vv. 5-7)

From the throne came flashes of lightning, and rumblings and peals of thunder, and before the throne were burning seven torches of fire, which are the seven spirits of God, and before the throne there was as it were a sea of glass, like crystal.

And around the throne, on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind: the first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with the face of a man, and the fourth living creature like an eagle in flight.

As we continue reading about this majestic scene in heaven and are in awe of the absolute beauty of the One on the throne. We are captivated by this picture when suddenly we read about the lightning and thunder that come from the throne. I believe this is given as a reminder of the holiness of God.

What are the seven spirits of God in v. 5?

The "seven spirits" mentioned represent a significant and symbolic element in the heavenly vision. They are described as being "before the throne." Many theologians believe the 7 spirits symbolize the sevenfold ministry or completeness of the Holy Spirit. The number 7 often signifies perfection or completeness in the Bible. The 7 spirits are interpreted as a symbolic representation of the Holy Spirit in His fullness. Their inclusion in this vision highlights God's complete power, wisdom, and presence.

The "Sea of Glass" (v. 7)

As we continue through John's vision, he sees

"and before the throne there was as it were a sea of glass, like crystal."

Unfortunately, we cannot with crystal clarity know exactly what this is. Here are a few thoughts and ideas that make sense and are certainly true.

- The sea, calm and as clear as crystal, represents God's perfect peace and unapproachable holiness. It emphasizes His majesty and the serene order of heaven, where all is under His control.
- The sea might reflect the vast distance between God's divine nature and humanity's limited understanding. It signifies His otherness and the awe of approaching Him.
- Glass, especially crystal-clear, often symbolizes purity. This could point to the holiness required to stand in God's presence, a theme echoed throughout Scripture.

The living creatures vs 6b-7.

John gives us a vivid description of 4 creatures,

And around the throne, on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind: the first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with the face of a man, and the fourth living creature like an eagle in flight.

The living creatures are covered with eyes, symbolizing their awareness and knowledge along with the omniscience of God. These creatures are or are like the cherubim and seraphim from [Ezekiel 1](#) and [Isaiah 6](#). Each creature has a distinct appearance of an animal with symbolic characteristics of creation that emphasize God's glory and authority over all creation.

1. One is like a lion. The lion symbolizes strength, majesty, and kingship.
2. One is like a calf or ox. The ox represents service, power, and patience.
3. One has a face like a man. The man reflects intelligence and reason.
4. One is like a flying eagle. The eagle signifies swiftness, vision, and majesty.

What does worship in Heaven look like? (vv. 8-11)

And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!" And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever. They cast their crowns before the throne, saying, "Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created."

There are many uncertainties about what it is like in heaven, but one thing that the Bible is exceedingly clear on is the worship that will take place in heaven. The picture of worship that takes place in **Revelation 4** echoes the prophets Ezekiel and Isaiah and what they saw in the throne room.

Ezekiel witnessed the creatures worshipping and the glorious throne room and eventually fell on his face in **Ezekiel 1**. Isaiah, likewise, is undone as he recognizes his sinfulness in the presence of the holy and righteous God declaring,

*Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts! (**Isaiah 6:5, ESV**)*

The Six Wings

The six wings of the living creatures in **Revelation 4:8** are rich with symbolism and closely parallel the imagery in **Isaiah 6:2**, where the seraphim also have six wings. Here are a few ideas of what the symbolism may very well represent.

- **Two Wings Covering the Face:** These signify reverence and humility before God's holiness and majesty. Even these exalted beings, who dwell in His presence, shield their faces in awe of His glory.
- **Two Wings Covering the Feet:** This symbolizes modesty and submission, acknowledging their creaturely status and unworthiness in the presence of their Creator.
- **Two Wings for Flying:** These represent their readiness to serve God and carry out His will swiftly and without hesitation.

The flying imagery emphasizes their active role in worship and service. Together, the six wings portray a perfect balance of worship, humility, and service—core themes in heavenly worship scenes. This also emphasizes the creatures' total devotion and unceasing praise as they cry out,

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty.

This expression of the "Lord God Almighty" appears only 9 times in the New Testament, 8 of which are in Revelation. These creatures and angels that are before the throne share in expressing their adoration for God. They fall before Him recognizing God's creation, eternity, holiness, sovereignty, and grace. Even the beings that have not been enslaved by sin still worship in complete reverence for the goodness and holiness of their creator.

The redeemed people of God who are represented by the **24** elders fall on their face, cast their crowns before the throne, and declare,

Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.

The Bible talks about believers receiving crowns as rewards.

- **Crown of Life:** **James 1:12** and **Revelation 2:10** mention this crown, which is given to those who remain steadfast under trials and persecution.
- **Imperishable Crown:** **1 Corinthians 9:25** speaks of this crown, awarded to those who practice self-discipline and live a life dedicated to God.

- Crown of Righteousness: 2 Timothy 4:8 refers to this crown, promised to all who long for Christ's appearing.
- Crown of Glory: 1 Peter 5:4 describes this crown for faithful shepherds and leaders in the church.
- Crown of Rejoicing: 1 Thessalonians 2:19 and Philippians 4:1 associate this crown with those who lead others to faith in Christ.

As believers we should pursue godly and faithful living, but even the crowns that are given to those who are redeemed are cast back to God! This only continues to highlight the absolute majesty and supreme authority of God.

Our Worship Response

We live in a fallen and broken world. We are born into slavery as sinners. Our fleshly desires point us towards destruction. Ephesians 2 declares,

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. (Ephesians 2:1-10, ESV)

We were called from darkness into light. We are no longer enslaved to sin but slaves to Christ. We are to be holy as He is holy! No doubt that there are difficulties, trials, and tribulations. Just as this would have been an encouragement to the believers that were experiencing intense tribulation 2000 years ago, this should continue to be an encouragement to us now as we continue through tribulation. To keep our eyes upward focusing on Him who saved us and is worthy of all our praise and worship. God is unapproachable because of His purity and holiness unless we have received the atoning work of Christ's sacrifice on the cross. We are called to live a life of obedience following His commandments. Any achievements that we receive as a result of our obedience to Him are all because of Him. All glory, praise, and honor are due to Him now and forever. May our posture reflect these truths.

The redeemed of God and all of creation exists only by the Word of the Lord and by Him holding all things together. He is holy, holy, holy. He is, was, and is to come. God is worthy of all of our praise and worship.