

1) Let's begin with a quick review of the first verses of chapter 4

Rev 4:1-2 (NIV)

- 2) The phrase “after this” or “after these things” is used throughout Revelation to mark the beginning of a new vision (cf. 7:9; 15:5; 18:1; 19:1).
- 3) The Greek word is edion.
- 4) Of course, Jesus is the one who is speaking to John.
- 5) The phrase “what must take place after this” or “these things” is reference to the letters to the churches.
- 6) John then exclaims “at once I was in the Spirit”
 - a) This expression means that the Holy Spirit was giving him this vision.
 - b) The vision will be showing him situations and events that he could not have seen with mere human eyesight.
- 7) He continues his description in verse 3.

Rev 4:3-6 (NIV)

- 8) Again, we talked about literal verse symbolic meanings and how we must try to stay out of the literal when we here many of John's descriptions.
 - a) In other words, DO NOT try to see God as a creature composed of two types of gemstones.
 - b) DO try to associate him with the having perfect judgment and decision making that these stones represent in Aaron's breast plate.
- 9) Briefly looking at the 24 elders.
 - a) **Possibility #1** – Elders may represent the patriarchs of the 12 tribes and the 12 apostles.
 - b) **Possibility #2** – These elders are the heavenly counterpart of the twenty-four priestly ranks who served the temple.
 - c) **Possibility #3** – They are and angelic group providing worship at the throne.
 - i) I personally discount this because nowhere in scripture are angels seated on thrones or reigning.
 - ii) The word elder is also never used to describe angels – only men.
- 10) John sees coming from the throne flashes of lightning, rumblings, and peals of thunder.
 - a) These things in combination throughout scripture are usually descriptive of the presence of God Almighty!
- 11) The next thing John sees is the is seven lamps blazing.
 - a) The Greek word used here really describes things more like blazing torches.
 - b) He clearly states that these represent the 7 spirits of God (complete Spirit of God).

Revelation – NOTES – 2021

- 12) In summary, this vision that he has here shows heaven and, in particular, God's throne and surroundings.
- 13) MacArthur comments on this first vision:
"Heaven is not a shadowy world of mists and indistinct apparitions. It is a world of dazzlingly brilliant light, refracting and shining as through jewels and crystal in a manner beyond our ability to describe or imagine"
- 14) The Holy Spirit gave to John the images that, to the readers of his time would best describe God and the surroundings of His throne in a manner that was the ultimate for them.
- 15) In a manner that is beyond their ability to imagine anything greater.
- 16) Even though we are not in the same mindset as John's original readers, we must take these descriptions and use them to transport our minds to the same level of understanding of the awe that is before them and us.

Rev 4:6b-8 (NIV)

- 1) Here, we meet four creatures that will play a prominent part in the remainder of our study.
 - a) The translation phrase "living creatures" is somewhat misleading.
 - i) It is derived from a single Greek word *zao* which means to live.
 - ii) They were NOT some anomalous conglomerate of parts thrown together for this occasion.
- 2) These are assumedly the same creatures that Ezekiel describes in Ezek 1:4-25. His description differs somewhat from John's, but the idea is the same.
 - a) They were also seen in Isaiah's vision in Isa 6:1-4
 - b) In Ezekiel's description, they are human in form.
- 3) They are actually angelic beings of high order.
- 4) MacArthur calls them "cherubim and exalted order of angels frequently associated in Scripture with God's holy power."
- 5) Again, looking at the symbology, our list tells us, the symbol "eyes" depicts knowledge.
 - a) We should add to that here that the number of eyes also symbolize alertness and awareness.
- 6) Their six wings denote their supreme responsibility and privilege to constantly worship God.
 - a) In Isaiah's vision, they use two wings to cover their face, two to cover their feet and two to fly.
 - i) Covering their face signified that, even though they were highly exalted beings, they could not look directly on God's glory.
 - ii) Covering their feet signified they were on Holy Ground.

- iii) The last two wings were mobility.
- 7) The faces of these creatures:
 - a) First, Ezekiel describes each creature as having all 4 faces whereas John’s vision has one face on each creature.
 - b) Nevertheless, they symbolize the created world (four primary forms of life)
 - i) the lion represents wild creatures – represents strength
 - ii) the ox domestic animals – represents service
 - iii) the eagle flying creatures – represents sovereignty and speed
 - iv) and man the pinnacle of creation – represents reasoning and intelligence.
 - c) It should also be noted that the twelve tribes of Israel camped under these four banners.
 - i) some with Reuben (symbolized by a man),
 - ii) others with Dan (symbolized by an eagle),
 - iii) others with Ephraim (symbolized by the calf, or ox),
 - iv) and the rest with Judah (symbolized by a lion).

Questions / Comments?

- 8) This is a scene of worship! The four creatures begin with "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come."
- 9) Then, continuing in verse 9

Rev 4:9-11 (NIV)

- 1) When the four living creatures praise God, it triggers the praise of the 24 elders.
- 2) This phrase “fall down” means lying prostrate in a position of submission and adoration.
- 3) Such posture is one of reverent worship.
- 4) Additionally, here, we see even further submission.
 - a) The elders cast their crowns before the throne.
 - b) This says they are not preoccupied with their own excellence or holiness.
 - c) Instead, what they are pales in the light of God’s glory.
 - d) This must compel them to give everything they are to the praise and glory of Him.

What do you think God’s purpose is in the vision He gives John in these verses?

(No right or wrong answer – just looking for your thoughts)

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To me, if we assume the elders and living creatures know what this is about, they cannot help but be in awe and worship of the God who is about to judge Satan, sinful man, and take his creation back.

Rom 8:19-22 (NIV)

Rev 5:1-5 (NIV)

- 1) As we continue here, the scene is still the great throne room of God.
- 2) John sees a scroll in God's right hand – some translations use the term "book."
- 3) This scroll plays an integral part in the remainder of the book of Revelation and as such, is the most important object of John's vision.
- 4) As we will see, all of the events of the seals, trumpets, and bowls all have their origins in the scroll.
- 5) We have made the point that anyone in John's time would readily understand what is being said here.
- 6) In that regard, I think Dr. Robert Thomas nails what the scroll really is – it is a contract.
- 7) He says:

"This kind of contract was known all over the Middle East in ancient times and was used by the Romans from the time of Nero on. The full contract would be written on the inner pages and sealed with seven seals. Then the content of the contract would be described briefly on the outside. All kinds of transactions were consummated this way, including marriage-contracts, rental and lease agreements, release of slaves, contract-bills, and bonds. Support also comes from Hebrew practices. The Hebrew document most closely resembling this scroll was a title-deed that was folded and signed, requiring at least three witnesses. A portion of text would be written, folded over and sealed, with a different witness signing at each fold. A larger number of witnesses meant that more importance was assigned to the document."

(Revelation 1-7: An Exegetical Commentary [Chicago: Moody, 1992], 378)

(from The MacArthur New Testament Commentary, Copyright © Moody Press and John MacArthur, Jr., 1983-2005.)

- 8) Coffman points out the importance of this scroll can be attributed to the fact that it is on or in God's hand.
- 9) Other things the scroll is:
 - a) As we will see, as it is revealed, it contains the climax of human history, overthrow of evil and the gathering of the redeemed.
 - b) It is the written future of mankind.
 - c) It is a new covenant which tells how God will save the church, Israel, the world, and the universe.

Revelation – NOTES – 2021

- 10) Though John does not know the content of the scroll at this point (since it has not been opened) he nevertheless understands its importance and begins to weep bitterly (some translations).
- 11) Now, we have a new entity introduced into the scene. “Then one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals.”
- 12) From the messianic titles used, it is obviously the Christ. No other creature in all the universe is capable and worthy of opening the scroll.

But John does not see Christ as the Lion or a Davidic King. Instead, beginning in verse 6