

eagle. 8 And the four living creatures, having each one of them six wings, are full of eyes round about and within: and they have no rest day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come.

Initial Questions 4:1-8

1. Has there been a transition from earth (considering the seven churches of Asia) to heaven - vs. 1?
2. What does it mean to be "in the Spirit" - vs. 2?
3. Do you know the Old Testament source of the imagery of vs. 4ff? (See Ezekial, chp. 1)
4. Wherein the Old Testament do we find the "thrice holy" praise of God - vs. 8? (See Isaiah chp. 6:3)

Second Vision: Process of World Judgment 4:1-16:21

The Vision of the Throne in Heaven

Chp. 4:1-11

(First Section 4:1-8)

Verse 1

"After these things (*meta tauga* - K.J. falsely translates "after this") I saw." What is John's point of reference when he says "after these things"? The immediate context would point to the vision concerning the seven churches in chapters two and three. The act of seeing (prophetic vision) provided John with the context of his vision.

It is very important to note the transition from earth, in the preceding two chapters, to heaven - H. E. Dana calls this the beginning of the "Drama of Redemption." (See his *The Epistles and Apocalypse of John*: Baptist Book Store, 1937, p. 112.) Chapter four sets the stage for the remainder of the book. Though we will not here enter into a technical discussion concerning the literary structure of the remaining sections of *The Revelation*, it is *highly probable* that the various scenes repeat the same things (i.e., from the general situation in John's Day to the second coming of Christ) from differing perspectives. Chapter five strengthens the foundation of Chapter 4 by revealing the sovereignty of God through the ultimate victory of Christ.

Note: There is nothing in the literary structure of The Revelation which implies that it is a *Drama* re: *Dana, op. cit.*, Ray Summers, *Worthy is the Lamb*, Broadman, Nashville, 1951; and Edward A. McDowell, *The Meaning and Message of the Book of Revelation*, Broadman, 1951; but it might make the preaching and teaching of the book simpler, and therefore more accessible to the general Bible Student.

John "saw" a door having been opened (*ēneōgmenē* - per. pass. part) in heaven." (See Matt. 3:16, Acts 7: where heaven is open - A.V.) The 1901 translation implies that John witnessed the opening of the door, but he "saw a door having been opened" - already before his vision.

Sermon Note: There are three important opened doors mentioned in The Revelation: (1) The door of opportunity - Rev. 3:8; (2) Door of the heart - Rev. 3:20; (3) the Door of Revelation - Rev. 4:1. For good teaching see W. Barclay, *The Revelation of John* - volume I St. Andrews Press, Edinburgh, 1962 - pp. 189. This two volume set is a very inexpensive set of paper backs.

Note the transition in imagery from seeing to hearing. John declares that "the first voice which I heard as of a trumpet speaking with me (this verb of speaking breaks the silence), saying (*legōn* - the second verb is the act of addressing John) come up (*anaba* - sing. 2 aor. imperative - John was commanded to come up immediately) here, and I will show you things which must (*dei* - necessary, must) occur after these things. Immediately I became (*egenomēn* - sing. 2 aor. middle voice - John was in the Spirit in one immediate act) in (*the* not in text) spirit. (The King James and 1901 version place this clause with verse 2. It is concerned with the problem of verse divisions, and we need not discuss it further for our purposes here.)

Verse 2

John's vision placed him in the very Throne Room of the Universe. From here we are to have vouched safe to us the will and purpose of the Lord of history. We are here privileged to see the providential hand of the Living God in the things which pertain to earth until the coming again of Jesus Christ.

Before we begin our journey through these challenging pages of the Word of God, we must call attention to the many possible pitfalls and dangers. We must pay close attention to the specific words of the scriptures. We must avoid attempting to interpret the following material from some "anti-biblical system of interpretation," such as Dispensationalism, Premillennialism, Post millennialism, etc.

Note: We shall speak critically of these "systems of interpretation" in a *Special Study* of this textbook. We would like to call your attention to one specific source of scandalous distortion, i.e., *The Scofield Reference Bible*, the new edition. This is the source of much very irroneous "help" in interpreting the Word of God. Another, more general source of error can be found in the legion of popular works on *The Book of Revelation*. There are so many of these that a list here would be very impractical. One must wisely query—if that is so, why another popular work such as the present volume? This present, popular work differs from the hundreds of other popular study aid commentaries in that the author strives to stick to an analysis of the specific declarations of the "Postman of Patmos" by striving to throw light on the text through a word and phrase study. There are two very good but by no means complete studies of the vital vocabulary and fearful phrases of *The Revelation* in A. T. Robertson, *New Testament Word Studies*, Broadman, Press, and Marvin Vincent, *Word Studies in The New Testament*, Eerdmans, 1946. These two older works, by two of the most competent Greek scholars of a past generation, can be used to great advantage, but there are so many words and phrases which they do not see fit to analyze, that further work along this line is called for. The present author believes this approach to be the safest way to begin studying this majestic work of divine symbolism, so as not to be led astray by the "clear and distinct systems of interpretation" mentioned above. The author is providing some additional bioliographical help so that the concerned student who so choses, can go on to another stage of analyzing this revealed word.

John said - "Look here (or behold) a throne was set (*ekeito* - imperfect tense - means that John did not witness the placing of the throne. It was already there when he saw a throne) in heaven, and one sitting on (*epi*) the throne (*kathēmenos* - present part., continuously setting).

Verse 3

John begins to describe the one sitting on the throne of the universe. This description is, of course, in human language. "And the one sitting was like an appearance to a jasper (*iaspidi*) stone. . . . It is most important that John sees no form for God in this vision (Exodus 24:10). This valuable stone was the first of the twelve stones placed in the foundation of the new Jerusalem (Rev. 21:19). It was also used in the wall of the heavenly Jerusalem (Rev. 21:18). The stone was also used on the breastplate of the Highpriest (Exodus 28:20, 29:13). The imagery of this stone would therefore have been common knowledge in John's age. "And a sardius" was the sixth stone in the foundation of the new Jerusalem (Rev. 21:20). Its name is derived from its place of discovery - Sardis. "And there was a

rainbow round the throne". . . . The rainbow imagery is used here and in chapter 10:1. (See Ezekial 1:26,28 for the phrase round the throne.) "Like in appearance to an emerald." The beautiful imagery of this verse strove with the finest building blocks available in the human tongue to describe the throne room of the Lord of the heaven and earth. The materials which form the backbone of John's description have been taken primarily from Isaiah 6:1f, Ezekiel 1:1f, and Daniel 7:1f. Though the imagery is Old Testament, we must never forget that John's is a Christian and not a Jewish vision. John reaches into the past for his masterful imagery, in order that he might project far beyond the time of Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel, yea, even his own time, until the Messiah of the prophets and the saviour of John comes again.

Verse 4

"And round the throne were (verb added not in text) twenty-four thrones: and on the thrones *I saw* (added to translation - not in the text) twenty-four Elders sitting" (*kathēmenous* - present part., continuously sitting). Who were these twenty-four Elders? The number 24 occurs only in The Revelation and with respect to these Elders (see 4:4,10; 5:8; 11:16; 19:4). The twenty-four Elders have no Old Testament counter part. Though there are many identifications suggested the present writer thinks that they are angelic beings who constantly worship God.

Note: See the brilliant discussion by the late Ned. B. Stonehouse in *Paul Before the Areopagus*, The Tyndale Press, 1957, chp. 4. The Elders and the Living-Beings in the Apocalypse, pp. 88-108. Dr. Stonehouse's (of the Westminster Theological Seminary) unexpected death robbed us what would have been the greatest conservative commentary on The Revelation.

"The twenty-four Elders sitting having been clothed (*periblemenous*, perfect passive part. - which means that act of clothing is complete and that the act of clothing was performed by someone else (passive voice)). (The prefix *peri* means that their garment was wrapped around them (see 3:5) "in white garments and on their heads golden crowns" (*stephanous* - crowns of lesser persons than kings). The ordinary word for the crown of a king is *diadema*. The distinction between these two words lost some significance in later Greek, but in *The Revelation* the distinction seems to hold.

See Arndt and Gingrich, *A Greek and English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, University of Chicago Press, 1952. *Stephanos* pp. 774; *Diadema*, p. 181.

Verse 5

"And out of the throne come forth (*ekporeuoutai*) present ind. the tense graphically changes to the present - keeps on proceeding) lightnings and voices (sounds) and thunders" (Exodus 19:16). This imagery can mean God's judgment, strength, etc. "And the seven lamps of fire are burning (*kaiomenai* - present, passive, participle) before (in front of) the throne, which are the seven spirits of God." Here the seven burning lamps are identified as (*ha eisin* - which are) the seven spirits and these have already been discussed in chapter 1:4.

Verse 6

The imagery of this verse plainly comes from Ezekiel 1:5-10; 10:5-20; and Isaiah 6:2-3. We must not permit ourselves to become lost in the details of the imagery. John is describing The Throne room of the universe and chooses that great imagery of the prophets.

Verse 7

John now identifies the four living creatures of verse 6. "The first is like a lion, and the second living creature is like a calf, and the third living creature having the face like a man and the fourth living creature like a flying eagle." Though the imagery cannot be identified with absolute certainty by anyone, I believe Swete provides the sanest statement - "The four forms suggest whatever is noblest, strongest, wisest, and swiftest in animate nature. Nature, including man, is represented before the Throne, taking its part in the fulfillment of the Divine will, and the worship of the Divine Majesty." Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John*, *op cit.*, p. 71, 72.

Verse 8

This imagery comes from Isaiah 6:1ff. The four living creatures "they have no rest day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God, the Almighty, who was; who is and the coming one." Isaiah's great vision in the Temple provided John with these powerful words.

SECTION 12

Text 4:9-11

9 And when the living creatures shall give glory and honor and thanks to him that sitteth on the throne, to him that liveth for ever and ever, 10 the four and twenty elders shall fall down before him that sitteth on the throne, and shall worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and shall cast their crowns before the throne, saying,

11 Worthy art thou, our Lord and our God, to receive the glory and the honor and the power: for thou didst create all things, and because of thy will they were, and were created.

Initial Questions 4:9-11

1. Who are the "living creatures" - vs. 9.
2. Is the imagery of vs. 10 that of lesser sovereigns surrendering completely to the Lord?
3. Who alone is worthy to receive the "glory and the honor and the power" - vs. 11?
4. What is the source of all created things according to vs. 11?

Verse 9

"And whenever (*hotan* - plus future tense implies constant repetition of the act of worshipful praise) the living creatures shall give glory and honour and thanks to the one sitting on the throne to the living one unto the ages of the ages; The same is the constant worship of God which takes place in The Throne room itself.

Verse 10

"The twenty-four Elders will fall (*pesountai* - future ind.) before the one sitting on the throne, and they will worship (*proskunesousin* - future ind.) the living one unto the ages of the ages, and will cast (*balousin* - future) their crowns (see comment on vs. 4) before (in front of) the throne saying: The "will cast" down their crowns relates their act of surrender or complete submission to the Lord.

Verse 11

Compare this verse with Paul's declarations in Colossians 1:16. The only one worthy to receive the continued praises

is the Lord God Himself. This verse is important for what follows in chapter 5. The declaration has been made that the only one who is found worthy of praise is almighty God, then in chapter 5 - we see that Jesus Christ is found worthy. This is a clear assertion of the deity of Christ.

Note: Compare vs. 11 with John 1:1-18 and Hebrews 1:1-4. Jesus Christ is there declared to be the source of creation. For an excellent analysis of those eighteen verses see, M.E. Boismard, *St. John's Prologue*, Blackfriars Pub., 34 Bloomsbury Street, London, W. C.1 M. E., Boismard's Commentary on *The Revelation* is one of the best Roman Catholic Commentaries available. We shall discuss this work later.

Review Questions

Chp. 4:1-11

1. What is the point of reference when John says after these things - vs. 1?
2. How important is chp. 4 for the remaining parts of The Revelation - vs. 1?
3. What and who did John see - vs. 2?
4. What is the possible difference between *stephanous* and *diadēma* as discussed in vs. 4? Discuss the significance of the difference.
5. What Old Testament sources were mentioned for the imagery in vs. 6? Read the Old Testament passages, and then discuss.
6. Much of the imagery of The Revelation is taken from the Old Testament. Is there anything added as it is used in this Christian book which would enable us to see a transition from Jewish to Christian imagery?

SECTION 13

Text 5:1-10

And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the back, close sealed with seven seals. 2 And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a great voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? 3 And no one in the heaven, or on the earth, or under the earth, was able to open the book, or to look thereon. 4 And I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open the book, or to look thereon: 5 and one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not; behold, the Lion that is of the tribe

of Judah, the Root of David, hath overcome to open the book and the seven seals thereof. 6 And I saw in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, having seven horns, and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent forth into all the earth. 7 And he came, and he taketh it out of the right hand of him that sat on the throne. 8 And when he had taken the book, the four living creatures and the four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having each one a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. 9 And they sing a new song, saying,

Worthy art thou to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and didst purchase unto God with thy blood men of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation, 10 and madest them to be unto our God a kingdom and priests; and they reign upon the earth.

Initial Questions 5:1-10

1. In the World of the New Testament, what was the place of a seal on official documents - vs. 1?
2. What were the requirements which must be fulfilled before one would have been worthy to "open the book and loose the seals thereof"? The highest expression of manhood was unworthy!
3. Do these messianic titles (e.g., the Lion - that is of the tribe of Judah, Root of David) relate the Kingdom come through Christ with the Old Testament prophecies of the Messianic Kingdom?
4. What symbolism does the "Lamb standing as though it had been slain" call to mind - vs. 6? (e.g., sacrifice, atonement, etc.)
5. What view of the person of Christ is implied in His accepting the worship and praise of creatures - vss. 9-10?
6. What were the results of Christ's work mentioned in vss. 9-10?

The Sealed Book and The Lamb

Chp. 5:1-14

5:1-10

Verse 1

John's vision continues—"And I saw (*eidon* - aorist. - in a single act John saw) upon (*epi*) the right hand (hand - not