

# Part I

## Publication of the Prophecy: Its Future Expectation (4:1–22:5)

# Chapter 1

## The One Sitting on the Throne (4:1–11)

### 1.1 Overview

1. After writing in chapter 1 the vision of the glorified Christ and in chapters 2 and 3 of the present conditions in the churches, through the seven letters, John now turns in chapter 4 onward the series of visions about future judgement. This begins the major prophetic portion of the book.

2. First, chapters 4 and 5 pictures the throne room in heaven from where the scroll (judgement) eventually come.
3. Chapter 4 focuses on God the Creator (Father) who delivers the seven-sealed scroll, and chapter 5 on God the Redeemer (Jesus), the only one found worthy to take it and open the seals.
4. Chapter 4 describes John's transition to a state that enabled him to view the appearance of the person sitting on the throne in heaven and related heavenly scenes.
5. Chapters 2 and 3 are happening on the earth and 4 onwards the scene changes to heaven (occasionally it comes to earth as in Chapter 12 and 13)

## 1.2 Invitation to heaven

### Revelation 4:1

After these things I looked, and behold, a door opened in heaven, and the first sound that I heard [was] as [that] of a trumpet, speaking with me, saying, "Come up here, and I will show you things that must happen after these things."

1. **After these things:** points change in scene from Christ in authority over the churches and their messengers to a vision of the court in heaven. These words are very important as it indicate a distinct separation of church from these events (6-19) applicable for Israel. These word appear a second time also in this verse.
2. **I looked:** recognition of the prophetic vision.
3. **Behold:** the response, which is an invitation to the reader to come and have a look. Special attention needed to be given to this door as it opens to heaven.
4. **Door opened:** It is not a closed door, but kept opened. Door to the heaven is now opened through the work of Christ. John did not opened the door. Entry to heaven is an opportunity given by God, not by human effort!
5. **In heaven:** the doors location which is the dwelling place of God. John is transported to heaven and stays there till Rev 12 where he seems to be on the earth. He will be again transported to heaven in Rev 14.
6. **First voice:** that of the glorified Christ (1:10).
7. **Trumpet:** authoritative and calls for special attention.
8. **Come up here:** revelation to the heavenly mysteries

Exo 19:20. Then the LORD came down upon Mount Sinai, on the top of the mountain. And the LORD called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up

Rom 10:6. But the righteousness of faith speaks in this way, "Do not say in your heart, "Who will ascend into heaven?"' (that is, to bring Christ down from above)

2 Cor 12:2. I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a one was caught up to the third heaven

9. **I will show you:** the revelation Father has given to John and in turn to the churches.
10. **Must take place:** these events are certain and according to the will of God. Not to satisfy the human curiosity but to show who is in control of the affairs

## 1.3 The Heavenly Throne

### Revelation 4:2

Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne.

1. **Immediately:** Johns instant translation into a prophetic trance.
2. **I was in the Spirit:** John returned to his normal senses after the first vision ended in 3:22 and now returns to the same state in which he had been to receive the second vision.
3. **Behold:** marks a new special diving intervention.
4. **Throne (thronos):** OT pictures heaven itself as Gods throne and sees Him enthroned in heaven. This word is used 13 times this chapter and 37 time in the whole book). The focus of this chapter is Gods sovereignty exercised in judgment. Though veil reign for a time on the earth God will ultimately prevail.

Isa 6:1. In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple

Isa 66:1. Thus says the LORD: "Heaven is My throne, And earth is My footstool...

1 Ki 22:19. Then Micaiah said, "Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing by, on His right hand and on His left

Ps 11:4. The LORD is in His holy temple, The LORD's throne is in heaven; His eyes behold, His eyelids test the sons of men

Ps 47:8. God reigns over the nations; God sits on His holy throne

Ezk 1:26. And above the firmament over their heads was the likeness of a throne, in appearance like a sapphire stone; on the likeness of the throne was a likeness with the appearance of a man high above it

Dan 7:9. I watched till thrones were put in place, And the Ancient of Days was seated; His garment was white as snow, And the hair of His head was like pure wool. His throne was a fiery flame, Its wheels a burning fire

5. **One:** This person is God the Father. He is distinguished from the Lamb

Rev 5:5,7. But one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals. 7 Then He came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne

Rev 6:16. and said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!

Rev 7:10. and crying out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"

He is also distinguished from the Spirit

Rev 4:5. And from the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices. Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God

6. **Sitting:** denotes the activity of reigning and continuation of the priestly functions

Heb 1:3. who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high

Heb 10:12. But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God,

Heb 12:2. looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God

Revelation pictures God as the one who sits on the throne

### Revelation 4:3

**And He who sat there was like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, in appearance like an emerald.**

1. He who sat there was **like**: A variety of symbols are used to broadly describe the glory of God

Ex 24:10. and they saw the God of Israel. And there was under His feet as it were a paved work of sapphire stone, and it was like the very heavens in its clarity

1 Ki 22:19. Then Micaiah said, "Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing by, on His right hand and on His left

Ezk 1:26-28. And above the firmament over their heads was the likeness of a throne, in appearance like a sapphire stone; on the likeness of the throne was a likeness with the appearance of a man high above it. 27 Also from the appearance of His waist and upward I saw, as it were, the color of amber with the appearance of fire all around within it; and from the appearance of His waist and downward I saw, as it were, the appearance of fire with brightness all around. 28 Like the

appearance of a rainbow in a cloud on a rainy day, so was the appearance of the brightness all around it. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD

Dan 7:9. I watched till thrones were put in place, And the Ancient of Days was seated; His garment was white as snow, And the hair of His head was like pure wool. His throne was a fiery flame, Its wheels a burning fire

However, details are significant and there must be a reason for the use of each symbol for the revelation was signified (Rev 1:1).

2. **Jasper:** modern Jasper is opaque, taking clue from

Rev 21:11. having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal

the stone must be diamond radiating bright white light. It symbolizes the holiness and majesty of God.

3. **Sardis:** a fiery deep red stone most likely carnelian (quartz) and it symbolizes justice or anger of God seen in the judgment

Ezk 1:4. 4 Then I looked, and behold, a whirlwind was coming out of the north, a great cloud with raging fire engulfing itself; and brightness was all around it and radiating out of its midst like the color of amber, out of the midst of the fire

Note that the city of Sardis was named after this stone.

4. **Rainbow (iris):** It is reminiscence of the covenant God made with Noah

Gen 9:11-13. Thus I establish My covenant with you: Never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood; never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth." 12 And God said: "This is the sign of the covenant which I make between Me and you, and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: 13 I set My rainbow in the cloud, and it shall be for the sign of the covenant between Me and the earth

It symbolizes the mercy or covenantal faithfulness of God. Note that there will be no triumph of Gods sovereignty at the expense of His mercy.

5. **Emerald:** This precious stone is green in color and represents the grace and mercy of God. Note that this is the colour of the rainbow and probably different shades of green may be its apperance.

## Revelation 4:4

Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads.

1. **Thrones:** not specified their sizes but arranged around the throne. They are symbolic of authority.
2. **Elders (presbyterous):** denotes official position of authority. What is their identity? Two possibilities exists: they can be either men or angels.

(a) Reason why they are **men** and the associated problems:

- i. The word normally applied to men in the bible who are rulers or representatives

1 Chr 24:7-19. Now the first lot fell to Jehoiarib, the second to Jedaiah . . . 18 the twenty-third to Delaiah, the twenty-fourth to Maaziah. 19 This was the schedule of their service for coming into the house of the Lord . . . as the Lord God of Israel had commanded him

Act 14:23. So when they had appointed elders **presbyteros** in every church . . .

Act 15:6. Now the apostles and elders came together to consider this matter

Act 20:17. From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church

Act 21:18. . . . Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present

Heb 11:2. For by it the elders obtained a good testimony

**But** angels are also referred. The word elder implies one having authority.

Isa 24:23. . . . the Lord of hosts will reign On Mount Zion and in Jerusalem And before His elders **zaqen**, gloriously

- ii. White robes are generally for the redeemed (3:5, 18) but angels also appear white

John 20:12. And she saw two angels in white sitting . . . where the body of Jesus had lain

Mat 28:3. His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow

Mark 16:5. And entering the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a long white robe sitting on the right side . . .

Acts 1:10. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel

- iii. Crowns of gold is usually given as a reward to the redeemed (3:11), but golden crown can also refer to royal dignity associated with the throne of God

1Ki 22:19. Then Micaiah said, "Therefore hear the word of the Lord: I saw the Lord sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing by, on His right hand and on His left

Ps 89:7. God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, And to be held in reverence by all those around Him

- iv. The number 24 symbolizes the 12 tribal fathers of Israel (Ex 4:29; 12:21; 19:7; 24:1; Heb 11:2) and the 12 apostles of the church (Mt 19:28; Lk 22:30; Act 14:23; 20:17; 21:18) and Rev 21:12-14 verifies this, but to conceive the redeemed as fusion of Israel and Church is foreign to the early church.

Rev 21:12-14. Also she had a great and high wall with twelve gates, and twelve angels at the gates, and names written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel . . . 14 Now the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb

(a) Reasons why they are likely to be **angles** although few problems exist

- i. Lk 2:13-14 and 1 Pet 1:12 indicate angels are interested in the redemption of humanity

Luke 2:13-14. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: 14 "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!"

1 Pet 1:10-12. 10 To them [prophets] it [salvation] was revealed that . . . which angels desire to look into

ii. The book distinguishes elders from the saints (7:13-14; 14:3; 19:4-8).

Rev 7:13-14. Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?" 14 And I said to him, "Sir, you know." So he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb

Rev 14:3. They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth

Rev 19:4-8. 4 And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who sat on the throne, saying, "Amen! Alleluia!" 5 Then a voice came from the throne, saying, "Praise our God, all you His servants and those who fear Him, both small and great!" 6 And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, "Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns! 7 Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready." 8 And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

iii. They are closer to angels than saints are

Rev 7:9-11. After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues ... 11 All the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God

Rev 19:1-4. ... the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who sat on the throne

iv. Chapter 4 is too early for the saints to occupy the throne

Rev 20:4. And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus ... and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years

v. One of the elder acts as an agent of revelation, which is an angelic activity

Rev 7:13-14. Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?" 14 And I said to him, "Sir, you know." So he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation ...

Rev 1:1. The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John

Rev 17:3. So he [angel] carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness. And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast . . .

Rev 22:6. Then he said to me, “These words are faithful and true.” And the Lord God of the holy prophets sent His angel to show His servants the things which must shortly take place

Hence, these 24 elders are a special class of angels with high authority in the court of God (1Ki 22:19; Ps 89:7; Is 24:23).

## 1.4 Activities around the throne

### Revelation 4:5

And from the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices. Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.

1. **Lightnings, thundering, and voices:** a reverent way of saying that the one who sits upon the throne is responsible for them. Similar things happened in OT

Ex 9:23. And Moses stretched out his rod toward heaven; and the Lord sent thunder and hail, and fire darted to the ground. And the Lord rained hail on the land of Egypt.

19:16. Then it came to pass on the third day, in the morning, that there were thunderings and lightnings, and a thick cloud on the mountain; and the sound of the trumpet was very loud, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled

Also, 1Sam 7:10; 12:17-18; Ps 29:3; and Ezk 1:4, 13, 24 . All these indicates the glory of God, His omnipotence, judgment against the sinful world. It also depicts the wrath of God as seen with 7th seal (8:5), 7th trumpet (11:19), and 7th bowl (16:18).

2. **Seven lamps of fire:** they should be distinguished from the earlier lamp stands (1:12, 20) which are calm and soft indoor fire. On the other hand, the lamps of fire indicates blazing and fierce torches

Rev 8:8. Then the second angel sounded: And something like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea, and a third of the sea became blood

Rev 8:10. Then the third angel sounded: And a great star fell from heaven, burning like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water

They also indicate Gods war march against the humanity

Jud 7:20. Then the three companies blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers—they held the torches in their left hands and the trumpets in their right hands for blowing—and they cried, "The sword of the LORD and of Gideon!"

Nah 2:3-4. The shields of his mighty men are made red ... chariots come with flaming torches in the day of his preparation ... 4 The chariots rage in the streets ... they seem like torches, They run like lightning

3. **Seven Spirits of God:** point to Holy Spirit (1:4). Here, His role is as the consumer of the ungodly. All these show the picture of heaven about to launch a massive program to purify Gods creation.

#### Revelation 4:6

**Before the throne there was a sea of glass, like crystal. And in the midst of the throne, and around the throne, were four living creatures full of eyes in front and in back.**

1. **Sea:** OT mentions about watery expanse between earth and haven or a clear ether in which the throne of God is supported. (Gen 1:7; Ex 24:10-11; 1Ki 7:23; Job 37:18; Ps 104:3; Ezk 1:22, 26). It shows the splendor of

the throne of God. It enhances Gods separateness from His creature just as the sea separates John from the throne. Walvoord connects this with both the lavers in the Tabernacle (Ex 30:18-21, 1Ki 7:38-39) and the molten sea in Solomons temple (1Ki 7:23-37) intended for priestly purification. It then points to the picture of purity needed because of the holiness of God, calmness, and majesty of Gods throne and the sanctifying power of the Word of God.

2. **Four living creatures:** Some connect them with four gospel (Mathew to lion – Jesus as King, Mark to ox – Jesus as a Servant of the Lord, Luke to man – Humanity of Jesus, and John to Eagle – Deity of Jesus) but it is very difficult to derive from the bible. They symbolizes the attributes of God

- (a) lion for courage,
- (b) ox for patience,
- (c) man for sympathy, and
- (d) eagle for soaring aspiration.

The living beings are worshipper and these attributes pertain to God. These four picture the standards of the tribes of Israel (Num 2:2, 10, 18, 25) but in Rev 5:13 they are distinguished from the creation. However, note that they are exalted order of angels due to their proximity to God, they have judicial authority due

to their participation in judgment (6:1, 3, 5, 7), they represent animate creation (4:9-11, 15:7), and, their description points them to seraphim (Isa 6:2) and cherubim (Ezk 1:4-14; 9:3; 10:1, 2ff, 20ff) although some details differ.

3. **Full of eyes:** emphasizes alertness and comprehensive knowledge of these beings.

#### Revelation 4:7

**The first living creature was like a lion, the second living creature like a calf, the third living creature had a face like a man, and the fourth living creature was like a flying eagle.**

1. **Like:** or similar to indicates some kind of representation. Hence, lion indicates nobility or royalty, ox pictures the strength or meekness, face that of a man is emblematic of intelligence and reason, and flying eagle is symbolic of swiftness and separation.

#### Revelation 4:8

**The four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying: “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!”**

1. **Wings:** depicts swiftness and unlimited mobility in responding to Gods command (Ps 18:10| Ezk 10:16). Taking clue from Is 6:2, covering the eyes with two wings indicate holy awe, covering the feet with two wings points to humility at the presence of a Holy God, and the two wings to fly symbolizes obedience because they are ready to carry out His commandments.
2. **Eyes around and within:** signify alertness and comprehensive knowledge and they are able to move with their wings without obstructing the vision.
3. **Do not rest day or night:** denotes continuous praise. It does not mean that they do not do anything else. Rev 6:1, 3, 5, 7 show they have other responsibilities. This is similar to the night and day usage of Paul (1The 2:9; 2The 3:8) .
4. **Holy, holy, holy:** refers to the threefold ascription (*Trisagion*) of the holiness, which is the very nature of the Trinitarian God who is clearly distinguished from the creation.
5. **Lord God Almighty:** is title by which Father is known in this book (1:8) and points to the omnipotence.
6. **Who was, who is and who is to come:** is also a title of the Father (Rev 1:4, 8; 11:17) points to the eternal nature of God unlike the finiteness of the creation who also look forward to His coming (Rom 8:19-22) which was fulfilled in Rev 20:11; 21:1.

## Revelation 4:9

Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever,

1. **Whenever:** indicate as noted earlier the worship is not non-stop and the elder await the signal of the four living beings.
2. **Glory, honor and thanks:** describe the content of the song where the first two points to the perfections of God (holiness, omnipotence, and eternity) and the last indicates the gratitude evidenced in the creation.
3. **Lives forever and ever:** is another way of describing the eternal nature of God (Dan 6:26; Deut 32:40)

## Revelation 4:10

the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying:

1. **Fall down:** the elders probably out of submission to the living beings initiate the worship. This is the first of the six times they prostrate (5:8, 14; 7:11; 11:16; 19:4). Three times joined by the four living being (5:8;

7:11; 19:4) and once by all angels (7:11). This act indicate that they consider them nothing in spite of the proximity to the throne, their deep reverence and complete humility.

2. **Cast their crown:** which they might have received from God they voluntarily surrender by casting them before the throne so that greater honor may be accrued to God

### Revelation 4:11

**You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created."**

1. **You are worthy:** is the song focus more on the wonders of Gods creation as evidence of His glory and power. This song addressed directly to God. The word worthy was popularly used by Romans to address the emperor in triumphal procession.
2. **Our:** indicate they they are the redeemed saints. However, angels are also part of the redeemed in broad sense.
3. **Glory and honor and power:** the first two are same as v 4:9 and ascription of power is because of the creative work of God (Ps 336-9; 102:25; 136:5-9).

4. **By Your will:** God created all things for Himself and for His own pleasure.
5. **You created . . . exist and were created:** threefold statement give emphasis of the creative work out of nothing.
6. **Note:** The vision points to the headquarters of the holy omnipotent and eternal God who requires His standards to be seen by His creation. If they did not meet His standards, then His wrath must inflict penalties upon the rebellious who are among the works of His hand.

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