

## THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

### Revelation 4:1-11 | Session 8 | The Throne in Heaven | Notes

We have completed chapters 2 and 3, which reveal the content of letters sent to the leader of seven churches in Asia (modern-day Turkey). Those letters detail how the leader and his congregation can *overcome* during the Tribulation. The letters will greatly help Jews living during the Time of Jacob's Trouble. All seven letters are prophetic and point to the matter we come to in this session regarding the events in heaven and on earth during the latter days.

#### THE VISIONS IN REVELATION (4:1-20:15)

The book of Revelation was not some haphazardly written prophecy. God gave it to His angel, who sent it to John. We would expect that it be written in an organized, systematic manner. Throughout the rest of the book, we will read about seven pairs of visions given to John. The book is so well laid out that the first of each pair of visions pertains to events that are taking place in heaven, and the second part of the pair concerns events taking place on earth. The brilliant E.W. Bullinger<sup>1</sup> points out the seven pairs of visions:

- ❖ The First Vision "In Heaven" (4:1-5:14).
  - The First Vision "On Earth" (6:1-7:8).
- ❖ The Second Vision "In Heaven" (7:9-8:6).
  - The Second Vision "On Earth" (8:7-11:14).
- ❖ The Third Vision "In Heaven" (11:15-19).
  - The Third Vision "On Earth" (11:19).
- ❖ The Fourth Vision "In Heaven" (12:1-12).
  - The Fourth Vision "On Earth" (12:13-13:18).
- ❖ The Fifth Vision "In Heaven" (14:1-5).
  - The Fifth Vision "On Earth" (14:6-20).
- ❖ The Sixth Vision "In Heaven" (15:1-8).
  - The Sixth Vision "On Earth" (16:1-18:24).
- ❖ The Seventh Vision "In Heaven" (19:1-16).
  - The Seventh Vision "On Earth" (19:17-20:15).

---

<sup>1</sup> E.W. Bullinger, theologian, and scholar. 1837-1913. He points out the outline above to the reader; Bullinger did not create it. It would have made more sense to divide chapters by considering the seven visions; notice they do not align with the chapters and verses in our Bible, which man in the 1500s added. The first Bible with chapter divisions was the Geneva Bible of 1557. The Holy Spirit created the outline above; Bullinger only spotted it.

## 1.1 THE FIRST VISION IN HEAVEN (4:1-5:14).

### 1.1.1 THE THRONE ROOM OF GOD (4:1-3).

Verses 1-3—

When Jesus began His earthly ministry, He came to the Jordan river to be baptized by John, *“And...coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending on upon Him.”* For Jesus, the heavens were opened. For John, a **door was opened**. In 11:19, the *door of the Temple of God is opened* to John, and in 15:5, *the door of the Tabernacle of the Testimony is opened*. It appears John is getting a glimpse of heaven, one room at a time. Later in chapter 19:11, all of heaven will open for Jesus’s return and for the *armies in heaven which followed Him*.

**The first voice I heard was as it were of a trumpet.** In chapter 1:10, John *heard a great voice, as of a trumpet*. We noted in that passage how a trumpet is a sound of strength and that it sounds forth an alarm, even a call to battle or war. The voice invites him in; it is likely the angel who is speaking here: **Come up...and I will show thee things which must be hereafter**, that is the *latter days* as when God made known to King Nebuchadnezzar the secrets of the *latter days* and the Times of the Gentiles (See Daniel 2:28).

The phrase **Come up hither** has been one of great misunderstanding. Many believe this is the Rapture of the Church. C.I. Scofield is partly responsible for propagating this misunderstanding. In the Scofield Study Bible (which I use), he wrote this note: *“This call seems clearly to indicate the fulfillment of 1 Thessalonians 4:14-17.”* But we should be careful to *rightly divide* here. Notice the **voice** is speaking only to John as indicated by the singular pronoun **thee**. Taking the entire book of Revelation as the future prophecy of the *Lord’s Day*, the Rapture will have already occurred, and the Body of Christ will be with the Lord.

**I was in the Spirit;** he can see the latter days by the power of the Holy Spirit (also in 1:10).

**Behold a throne.** If this throne is the throne of God (which we will see that it is), it is possible John may have only been able to see it and write down the words he heard only by being **in the Spirit**. The apostle Paul wrote how he was *caught up in the third heaven...paradise, but the words he heard were unspeakable and were impossible for a man to utter* (2 Corinthians 12:2-4). It looks like Paul only caught a visual glimpse of Heaven. John sees and hears.

**He that sat on the throne was to look upon like a jasper and a sardius (sardine) stone.** In pictures and art, God is depicted on the throne as an old man with white hair and a beard. This

description comes from Daniel 7:6; Daniel refers to Him as the Ancient of Days<sup>2</sup> (See also 1 Kings 22:19; Isaiah 6:1; Ezekiel 1:26; 10:1), and John describes the One sitting on the throne as resembling precious stones. Probably he means the colors of these stones. We do not know why these colors; they are difficult to identify today.

**A rainbow round the throne...like unto an emerald.** We can picture a rainbow, but this was emerald in color. The rainbow in Scripture was connected with judgment; think of the rainbow in the sky after the flood and God's promise not to judge the world by flood again. Why emerald, which is a green color? That is another unknown.

### 1.1.2 AROUND AND BEFORE THE THRONE (4:4-8A).

Verse 4—

**Around the throne were four and twenty seats.** Why the KJV uses the word **seats** is debatable. The Greek word is *thronos*. It is the same word that is translated as **throne**. I conjecture that they translate as **seats** to make the verse read smoothly and help the reader distinguish these 24 thrones from the throne of God. But the **four and twenty seats are thrones**, maybe smaller and lower?

**I saw four and twenty elders sitting** on these thrones. The Greek word **elder** is *presbuteros*. This word is usually translated as *elders*, but also means *old man, eldest*, someone advanced in life. The apostle Paul instructed Titus to *ordain presbuteros in every city* (Titus 1:5). Elders in the church are to *rule well* and to *labor in word and doctrine*. It carries the idea of possessing maturity and wisdom. These **four and twenty elders** are not earthly since they sit on thrones in heaven.

Everyone wants to know the identity of these **four and twenty elders**. Their identity ranges from "They are representative of the Church" to "They represent Israel" to "They are the twelve apostles and the twelve tribes of Israel" or, "The twelve apostles and twelve prophets," etc. They are neither of those. What a mess has been made of their identity.

The general rule of interpretation is always to let Scripture interpret Scripture. Is there anywhere in Scripture where we find the answer? Yes, there is.

In the Old Testament, the Tabernacle, the Temple, and the Priests were *the example and shadow of heavenly things...the pattern of things in the heavens...figures of the true* (See Hebrews 8:5, 9:23,24, read the context). In 1 Chronicles 28:11-13, King David is turning over to

---

<sup>2</sup> Psalm 90:2, "Before the mountains were brought forth, Or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, Even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God."

his son Solomon the plans for the building of the Temple. Everything David gave Solomon was *“the pattern of all he had by the spirit...of the house of the Lord...Also, for the courses of the priests and the Levites.”* The *courses* were the divisions of the priests who would serve in the Temple. The division is found in 1 Chronicles 24:1-5, *“The sons of Eleazer there were sixteen chief men...and eight among the sons of Ithamar,”* Twenty-four.

Since the Temple and all of its elements, including the priests, are a pattern of the things in the heavens, The **four and twenty elders** are created beings (not angels) in heaven, performing a priestly role before the Throne of God. Their purity or *unfallen state* is indicated by their clothing of **white raiment** and their **crowns of gold**.

Verse 5—

**And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings**, likely speaking of God’s judgment coming in the Tribulation, which is what Revelation is about. The **lamps of fire** are the **seven spirits of God** which we discussed in 1:4 and indicated the plain sense that they are servants (created beings) **before the throne**.

Verse 6, 7, 8a—

There are no pictures to show us what the Throne room of heaven looks like. John could only describe it in the best way he knew possible, **before the throne...a sea of glass like unto crystal**. How large, how wide, how deep? One day we will know, but now we take these unknowns by faith.

**In the midst...and round about the throne were four beasts**. The Greek word for **beasts** is the word *zoons*. We get our word “Zoo” from this. These are some kinds of *living creatures*, and the word can mean any living creature. It is a tough word to translate. When we get to chapters 13 and 17, we will read the word *beast* there, but it is another Greek word that means *a wild, untamed beast*. Here the Greek word is different, these beasts are not wild, and they are not human. Maybe we should call them by their Greek name, *Zoons*, and leave it at that. The singular is *Zoa*. Like the *elders*, the *Zoon* are not angels since chapter 5:8,11 distinguish them from angels.

Could it be that we can find their identity by looking at the earthly Tabernacle/Temple since it was designed after a heavenly pattern? They could be Cherubim. The first mention of Cherubim is found in Genesis 3:24. After Adam and Eve were expelled from the garden, God *placed...Cherubims guarded the place...to keep the way of the tree of life*. The word *placed* means to *station or dwell in a tabernacle*. Could it be that the garden of Eden became God’s dwelling place after the Fall and the very place where Cain and Abel brought their offerings *unto the Lord* (Genesis 4: 3,4)? After the flood, the garden would have been destroyed, and

there was no longer a need for the Cherubim to guard the *gates of Eden*. But, in constructing the Tabernacle and the Temple, God gave Moses, later David, and Solomon the pattern for the Ark of the Covenant, where God met with the High Priest and spoke to him. Cherubim were to be placed on either side of the Ark of the Covenant.

**The four beasts** and their description are incredible, fantastic, and strange simultaneously, each with six wings...full of eyes, and a different face.

### 1.1.3 WORSHIP AROUND THE THRONE (4:8B-11).

Verse 8a-11—

These heavenly beings **rest not day and night saying**: This is the first time we hear the spoken word coming from heaven aside from John's instruction to "Come up hither" in verse 1. In future visions of heaven, we will hear more. The word is praise and worship from the **beasts** to the One seated on the Throne, **Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty** to the Sovereignty eternal (**was, is, and is to come**) God over all Creation.

The **four and twenty elders fall down before** the Lord God Almighty and **cast their crowns before the throne**. This is where Christians get the wrong idea that "we" will cast our crowns before the Lord.

Why is the praise uttered, and why are they falling before the throne? We will see it soon because judgment is about to be announced and pronounced on the earth. Satan has taken the dominion of God's creation and has hijacked earth as his domain. But the Earth does not belong to Satan. **All things were created by God and for His pleasure**. Earth is about to be taken back from the grip of Satan, but Who will be the one to do it? Next week we will find out in part two of the first heavenly vision.