

The Heavenly Throne

Chapter 4

I. Introduction:

The book of Revelation is a book of the throne. The word throne appears 45 times in the book of Revelation. This is significant in light of the fact the word appears only 15 times throughout the rest of the New Testament. It appears 17 times in chapters 4&5 alone. The throne represents the universal sovereignty or rulership of God. God reigns throughout the entire universe, not just upon the earth.

Key Verse: Revelation 4:2 (ESV) At once I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne.

Theme: God sits on a magnificent throne, surrounded by attendants and worshipers, for He alone is worthy of such worship and rule.

II. John's entrance into the throne room of God.

A. John was given entrance into heaven.

Revelation 4:1 (ESV) 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."

B. John is invited to enter heaven

Revelation 4:1 (ESV) 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."

This is similar to the invitation that Moses received to come up on the Mount and talk with God.

Exodus 24:1 (ESV) Then he said to Moses, "Come up to the LORD, you and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and worship from afar.

C. John is invited to look into the future.

Revelation 4:1 (ESV) 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."

D. In heaven what John sees is the throne of God. God's throne is the central figure to the coming events that John is to see.

Revelation 4:2 (ESV) At once I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne.

It is because God is on the throne (sovereign) that the future is not only knowable but certain.

III. A description of the throne and the one sitting upon the throne.

Revelation 4:3 (ESV) 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.

A. It should be noted first of all that we have a series similes in this verse.

Revelation 4:3 (ESV) 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.

Rev 4:3 (NASB) And He who was sitting was like a jasper stone and a sardius in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, like an emerald in appearance.

1. It does not mean that the one who sat on the throne was a stone.
2. Nor does it mean that the one who sat upon the throne was stone like.
3. What it does mean is that the one who sat upon the throne had something in common with a Jasper and Sardius stone.
4. Perhaps the next phrase in the verse will help us to understand that significance.

B. There was a rainbow that encircled the throne.

Revelation 4:3 (ESV) 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

1. We are first introduced to the rainbow in Genesis 9:13 ff.

Genesis 9:13 (ESV) I have set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth.

Genesis 9:14 (ESV) When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds,

Genesis 9:15 (ESV) I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh. And the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh.

2. The rainbow represented God's covenant that he made with the earth.

3. Thus the rainbow is to serve as a reminder of God's grace and that He will not destroy the entire earth.

4. Thus John sees sitting upon the throne a covenant keeping God.

IV. A description of the 24 elders round about the throne.

A. We note the righteousness of these elders.

Revelation 4:4 (ESV) 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

1. Elsewhere in the book of Revelation the white garments are viewed as symbols of righteousness.

Revelation 7:13 (ESV) Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, "Who are these, clothed in white robes, and from where have they come?"

Revelation 7:14 (ESV) I said to him, "Sir, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

Revelation 7:15 (ESV) “Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence.

2. Note however, that they are made righteous by the blood of the crucified lamb.

Revelation 7:14 (ESV) I said to him, “Sir, you know.” And he said to me, “These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

- B. Next we note the relative permanence of these elders round about the throne.

1. There were thrones for them.

Revelation 4:4 (ESV) 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.

2. Thus these elders were subordinate rulers to the one who was on the throne.
3. The possibility has already been revealed that the apostles would sit on thrones and reign.

Luke 22:29 (ESV) and I assign to you, as my Father assigned to me, a kingdom,

Luke 22:30 (ESV) that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

- C. The crowns that are described are then in essence a sign of rulership - a kingly crown.

Revelation 4:4 (ESV) 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.

Perhaps this is helpful in understanding the crowns that will be given to us.

2 Timothy 4:8 (ESV) Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.

1 Peter 5:4 (ESV) And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

D. The identification of the 24 elders.

1. Their identification can not be made with absolute certainty for the Bible does not explicitly identify them.
2. However, we do know that Jesus promised the apostles that they would be seated on thrones. This is also consistent with the apostles' role in the rest of the book of Revelation.

Revelation 18:20 (ESV) Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you saints and apostles and prophets, for God has given judgment for you against her!"

Revelation 21:14 (ESV) And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

3. There is also a common linking of the apostles with the "prophets" of the Old Testament.

Revelation 18:20 (ESV) Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you saints and apostles and prophets, for God has given judgment for you against her!"

Ephesians 2:19 (ESV) So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,

Ephesians 2:20 (ESV) built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone,

- a. To try to identify the 12 individuals that this might be seems to me to be futile.
- b. It does seem reasonable to assume that they are 12 Old Testament Saints.

4. What is noteworthy is that there are 24 elders that occupy an exalted position around the throne.

V. God speaks from the throne.

- A. They are God's speaking to mankind

Revelation 4:5 (ESV) 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,

KJV Rev 4:5 And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunders and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.

- B. When God speaks His voice is often like thunder.

1. Illustrated in the life of Jesus.

John 12:28 (ESV) Father, glorify your name.” Then a voice came from heaven: “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.”

John 12:29 (ESV) The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, “An angel has spoken to him.”

2. Illustrated in Paul’s experience on the road to Damascus.

Acts 9:7 And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man.

Acts 22:7 And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

Acts 22:8 And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest.

Acts 22:9 And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not (did not understand) the voice of him that spake to me.

3. Illustrated in the Mt. Sinai experience.

Heb 12:18 For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest,

Heb 12:19 And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more:

Heb 12:20 (For they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart:

Heb 12:21 And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake:)

Exodus 19:16 (ESV) On the morning of the third day there were thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud on the mountain and a very loud trumpet blast, so that all the people in the camp trembled.

VI. The majestic throne and its attendants.

A. The throne is majestic.

Revelation 4:6 (ESV) 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:

B. The throne is attended by heavenly creatures.

Revelation 4:6 (ESV) 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:

Revelation 4:7 (ESV) 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.

C. The four living creatures are filled with knowledge and wisdom.

Revelation 4:8 (ESV) 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!"

1. This portion is similar to Isaiah 6.

Isaiah 6:1 (ESV) In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple.

Isaiah 6:2 (ESV) Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.

Isaiah 6:3 (ESV) And one called to another and said: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!”

Isaiah 6:4 (ESV) And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke.

2. The throne and the surrounding attendants were testimonial to a the magnificence of a king and his kingdom.

1 Kings 10:4 (ESV) And when the queen of Sheba had seen all the wisdom of Solomon, the house that he had built,

1 Kings 10:5 (ESV) the food of his table, the seating of his officials, and the attendance of his servants, their clothing, his cupbearers, and his burnt offerings that he offered at the house of the LORD, there was no more breath in her.

1 Kings 10:6 (ESV) And she said to the king, “The report was true that I heard in my own land of your words and of your wisdom,

1 Kings 10:7 (ESV) but I did not believe the reports until I came and my own eyes had seen it. And behold, the half was not told me.

Your wisdom and prosperity surpass the report that I heard.

3. Such a king is worthy of praise and gifts.

1 Kings 10:8 (ESV) Happy are your men! Happy are your servants, who continually stand before you and hear your wisdom!

1 Kings 10:9 (ESV) Blessed be the LORD your God, who has delighted in you and set you on the throne of Israel! Because the LORD loved Israel forever, he has made you king, that you may execute justice and righteousness.”

1 Kings 10:10 (ESV) Then she gave the king 120 talents of gold, and a very great quantity of spices and precious stones. Never again came such an abundance of spices as these that the queen of Sheba gave to King Solomon.

- VII. The continuous worship of the creatures round about the throne.

Revelation 4:8 (ESV) 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!”

- A. Three aspects of God’s person and rule are acknowledged.

1. His holiness.

Revelation 4:8 (ESV) 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!"

2. His power

Revelation 4:8 (ESV) 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!"

Power corrupts. Absolute power corrupts absolutely - but not in the case of God.

3. His eternity

Revelation 4:8 (ESV) 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!"

B. The form of the worship of the 24 elders.

Revelation 4:9 (ESV) And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever,

Revelation 4:10 (ESV) 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,

1. The elders do obeisance before the throne.

Revelation 4:10 (ESV) 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,

2. The elders acknowledge God's worthiness.

Revelation 4:10 (ESV) 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,

3. The elders submit all that they are and have to God.

Revelation 4:10 (ESV) 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,

- C. The 24 elders pronounce the appropriateness of worshipping God.

1. It is appropriate to worship God.

Revelation 4:11 (ESV) "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."

2. In the worship of God it is appropriate to ascribe three adorations to God.

- a. He is to receive glory.

Revelation 4:11 (ESV) "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.

We give glory to God in humbling ourselves before Him.

Revelation 4:10 (ESV) 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,

- b. He is to receive honor.

Revelation 4:11 (ESV) "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."

We give honor to God by reserving all of our worship for Him alone.

Revelation 4:10 (ESV) 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,

- c. He is to receive power.

Revelation 4:11 (ESV) “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.” We give power to God by submitting all our being to His authority.

We give power to God by submitting our whole being unto God.

Revelation 4:10 (ESV) 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,

- D. The reasons that it is appropriate to worship God.

- 1. All things belong to God and owe their existence to God.

Revelation 4:11 (ESV) “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.”

- 2. God has made all things for His good purpose and pleasure.

Revelation 4:11 (ESV) “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.”

VIII. Conclusion:

