

# The Throne Scene

## Revelation 4 Notes

### ***The Throne (vss. 1-3)***

- For consolation and courage in the coming tribulation (cf. 2:10; 3:10; 7:13), John is now swept up in the Spirit to the very door of heaven. There he beholds a vision of a sovereign God in full command of the course of human affairs as they move swiftly to their conclusion.
- At His appointed time the scroll of destiny is to be handed to the Lamb, who Himself will open the seals, bring history to a close and usher in eternity.
- The throne scene vision follows the earlier vision (1:12-20) apparently without delay. While God is eternally adored in heaven, the book of Revelation reveals those specific events with which history is brought to a close.
- Whether John goes through the door into heaven or only to the door to look within is not certain. The voice, which in chapter 1 commanded John to write (1:10), now bids him to come to the door on heaven.
- This section is parallel to Ezekiel 11:1, 15 where the prophet is first carried away to the east gate by the Spirit, and then the Spirit of the Lord falls upon him to prophesy. Because John does not record a physical relocation from heaven suggests that we are to understand the heavenly ascent in a spiritual sense.
- The One seated upon the throne of heaven does not appear in human form but is portrayed as the brilliance of light reflected from precious stones (cf. Ezekiel 1:26-28). Jasper, sardine and emerald held an honorable place in antiquity. The stones portray in symbolic form the majesty of God, clothed in unapproachable light. As in the parables of Jesus, many of the details are merely descriptive and not intended to carry a special significance of their own.

### ***The Multitude (vss. 4-8)***

- The number twenty-four suggests a combination of the twelve patriarchs of the tribes of Israel and the twelve apostles, thus representing the redeemed of both covenants now united through Christ. This view seems to be further confirmed by the victorious multitude who sing the song of Moses and the Lamb (15:3), thereby combining both groups into one and acknowledging their redemption as being from God.
- The lightnings and thunderings that proceed out of the throne are

symbolic of the awesome power and majesty of God. They remind the reader of the great visible manifestation at Sinai when God descended in fire and smoke heralded by thunder and lightning (Exodus 19:16). In Revelation the symbols of thunder and lightning are always connected with a temple scene and make an event of unusual significance.

- This majestic scene is enhanced by the description of a glassy sea before the throne upon which shimmers in reflection the sparkling glory of the jasper and sardine, symbolic of God who sits upon the throne. This sea of glass before the throne indicates the transcendence of God and marks the differential between creature and Creator, between believer and God. This differential will always exist in time, and the saint's approach to God and His throne must be accomplished as through the fire before one can sing the victory song (15:2). But when the present order will have passed away and the saints are at home with God, the sea is no more (21:2); for we shall be like Him (1 John 3:2).
- The four living creatures of John's vision are related to the cherubim of Ezekiel 1, although there are several differences between the two. Their being "full of eyes before and behind" indicates the ability to see in every direction, thus maintaining total insight of God's creation.
- It cannot be determined with certainty whether the form of each is different or whether only the faces are diverse. The four forms point toward the noblest, strongest, wisest and swiftest in the animal world. These qualities are combined in the living creatures to carry out the divine purpose.
- Like the seraphim of Isaiah 6:2 each of the four living creatures had six wings. The wings may suggest swiftness to carry out the will of God. Continuous adoration is a common feature in apocalyptic descriptions of heaven.
- To acknowledge God as holy is to declare His complete separateness from all created beings. Praise of His holiness leads to an affirmation of His omnipotence; He is the Almighty. To churches about to enter a period of severe testing and persecution a declaration of God's unlimited might would bring strength and encouragement. His holiness and omnipotence stretch from eternity to eternity.

### ***The Praise (vss. 9-11)***

- To fall down is a proper response to the majesty of God; to worship is appropriate for His eternal being. The word "worship" originally involved the idea of prostrating oneself before deity to kiss His feet or the hem of His garment. As an act of reverence and respect it was

not uncommon in the East.

- In casting down their crowns before the throne the elders acknowledge that their authority is a delegated authority. The honor given them is freely returned to the One who alone is worthy of universal honor.
- The praise of the elders differs from that of the living creatures in that it is addressed directly to God and is based on His work in creation rather than His divine attributes.
- Because of His infinite and eternal quality of being and His excellent greatness, He merits this recognition as Lord and God. Anyone who would recognize the emperor or his statue as Lord or God is not worthy to offer such praise to God, and conversely, any one who recognizes the true God as Lord cannot pay homage to a man or idol.
- For the Christian, only the One upon the heavenly throne is worthy; the claims of all others are blasphemous. The earlier hymn of praise in 4:8 ascribed might and power to God. To this the elders now add "glory" and "honor." He is worthy because in accordance with His will all things "are and were created." This unusual phrase suggests that all things which are, existed first in the eternal will of God and through His will came into actual being at His appointed time.