Revelation 4

The Throne Room: Holy, Holy, Holy

OBSERVATION · INTERPRETATION · APPLICATION

"These were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so."
Acts 17:11

CHAPTER THEME

Before John sees one judgment, he sees who is in charge. Heaven's center is an occupied throne, and everything around it worships. God is holy, He is Creator, and every crown we wear belongs at His feet.

Ed Smith · Started 20 October 2026

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00 The Text

REVELATION 4 (KJV), MARKED

Gold God — His character & actions
Green Command / instruction
Sky Key repeated word
Rose Sin / warning
Violet Promise / blessing
Amber Time / place / contrast

1 After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter .

2 And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne.

3 And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.

4 And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold.

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

6 And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind.

7 And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle.

8 And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was , and is , and is to come .

9 And when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever,

10 The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying,

11 Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

Marked in the text

- **v1** a door was opened in heaven
- **v1** Come up hither
- **v1** things which must be hereafter
- **v2** I was in the spirit
- **v2** throne *(every occurrence)*
- **v3** like a jasper and a sardine stone
- **v3** a rainbow round about
- **v4** four and twenty elders *(every occurrence)*
- **v4** clothed in white raiment
- **v4** crowns of gold
- **v5** lightnings and thunderings and voices
- **v5** the seven Spirits of God
- **v6** a sea of glass like unto crystal
- **v6** four beasts *(every occurrence)*
- **v6** full of eyes *(every occurrence)*
- **v8** six wings

- **v8** they rest not day and night
- **v8** Holy, holy, holy
- **v8** Lord God Almighty
- **v9** glory and honour *(every occurrence)*
- **v9** liveth for ever and ever *(every occurrence)*
- **v10** fall down before him
- **v10** cast their crowns
- **v11** Thou art worthy, O Lord
- **v11** thou hast created all things
- **v11** for thy pleasure they are and were created

Marks are drawn on the KJV text. Quotations in the notes are from the NASB95, so their wording may differ from the KJV above.

01 Observation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

KEY VERSE · REVELATION 4:8 (KJV)

8 And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was , and is , and is to come .

Setting

The letters to the seven churches are finished (chs. 2–3). Now the scene shifts from earth to heaven. "After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven" (v1). Jesus had told John to write "the things which will take place after these things" (1:19), and the same phrase returns here: "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after these things" (v1). Before any seal is broken or any judgment falls, John is shown the throne.

Structure

- vv1–2 — **the open door:** the same voice John heard in chapter 1, "like the sound of a trumpet speaking with me," calls him up (v1). "Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne was standing in heaven, and One sitting on the throne" (v2).
- v3 — **the One on the throne:** no face, no form — only light and color. He was "like a jasper stone and a sardius in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, like an emerald in appearance" (v3).
- vv4–6a — **around and before the throne:** twenty-four thrones, and on them "twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white garments, and golden crowns on their heads" (v4). From the throne "come flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder," and "seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God" (v5). Before it, "something like a sea of glass, like crystal" (v6).
- vv6b–8 — **the four living creatures:** "full of eyes in front and behind" (v6) — one like a lion, one like a calf, one with "a face like that of a man," one "like a flying eagle" (v7). Each has six wings, "and day and night they do not cease to say, 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come'" (v8).

- vv9–11 — **the elders answer:** whenever the creatures give "glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne," the elders "fall down before Him," worship "Him who lives forever and ever," and "cast their crowns before the throne" (vv9–10). Their song: "Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created" (v11).

Repeated words

throne (vv2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10 — the word is everywhere in this chapter); sitting / sits (vv2, 3, 4, 9, 10); twenty-four elders (vv4, 10); living creatures (vv6, 8, 9); full of eyes (vv6, 8); glory and honor (vv9, 11); lives forever and ever (vv9, 10); like / in appearance (vv1, 3, 6, 7).

Contrasts

the churches on earth with their failures (chs. 2–3) ⟷ the throne in heaven, steady and occupied (v2). Lightning and thunder from the throne (v5) ⟷ a rainbow of covenant mercy around it (v3). Creatures who never stop saying "holy" (v8) ⟷ elders who fall silent and bow (v10). Crowns on their heads (v4) ⟷ crowns cast before the throne (v10). Creatures made (v11) ⟷ the One who made them and "lives forever and ever" (v9).

Chapter theme (my words)

Before John sees one judgment, he sees who is in charge. Heaven's center is an occupied throne, and everything around it worships. God is holy, He is Creator, and every crown we wear belongs at His feet.

02 Interpretation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN?

KEY VERSE · REVELATION 4:11 (KJV)

11 ▲ Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive ⇄ glory and honour and power: for ▲ thou hast created all things, and ★ for thy pleasure they are and were created.

Where Revelation turns (v1)

Guzik uses 1:19 as the outline of the book: what John saw (ch. 1), the things which are (chs. 2–3), and the things which will take place after these things (chs. 4–22). The Greek *meta tauta*, "after these things," appears in 1:19 and twice in 4:1, marking the turn. Guzik reads chapters 4–19 as future — God's judgment on the world before Christ's earthly reign — and sets aside preterist and historicist readings. Other Christians read these chapters differently: preterists see much of it fulfilled in the first century, idealists see timeless pictures of the church's struggle in every age. Whatever view I hold, this chapter does the same thing for all of us: it shows the throne before the storm.

A picture of the rapture?

Guzik notes that many see John's call — a door, a trumpet, "Come up here" — as a picture of the church caught up (1 Thess 4:16–17), and that the word "church" does not appear again in chapters 4–19.

That fits his pre-tribulation view. Others answer that John's call is his own visionary experience, not a doctrine of the church's timing. It is wise to hold the picture loosely and the Person firmly.

"In the Spirit" (v2)

John was already "in the Spirit" in 1:10; this is a new depth of the same experience. Whether his body went with him, Guzik says, we cannot know — Paul had the same uncertainty (2 Cor 12:2–4).

The occupied throne (vv2–3)

The throne is the center of the chapter and of the whole book. Morgan, in Guzik: "At the center of everything is an occupied throne." Atheism has no throne; humanism puts man on it. John describes no figure — only light. Clarke, in Guzik: the description aims "to point out the surrounding glory and effulgence." Jasper may be a clear, diamond-like stone; sardius is blood-red. Guzik notes they were the first and last stones on the high priest's breastplate (Exod 28:17–20). The rainbow recalls God's covenant with Noah (Gen 9:12–17). Trapp calls it *signum gratiae et foederis* — a sign of grace and covenant. Judgment comes from this throne — but it is a throne wrapped in a promise.

The twenty-four elders (v4)

Commentators debate whether they are angels or glorified people. Guzik: they "certainly seem to represent God's people." Angels wear white, but crowns are promised to believers (1 Cor 9:25; 2 Tim 4:8; 1 Pet 5:4). The number may echo the twenty-four courses of priests (1 Chr 24), or the twelve tribes and twelve apostles together (compare 21:12–14).

Lightning, lamps and glass (vv5–6a)

The lightning and thunder echo Sinai (Exod 19:16). The seven lamps are "the seven Spirits of God" — the Holy Spirit in His fullness (1:4; Isa 11:2). Guzik notes the Spirit is usually unseen, and when He is seen He appears as a dove or as fire (Matt 3:16; Acts 2:3). The sea of glass is calm, clear, still — nothing in heaven is in turmoil. Guzik connects it with the tabernacle laver, where the priests washed (Exod 30:18–21; Eph 5:26).

The four living creatures (vv6b–8)

The KJV says "beasts," but Guzik corrects it: these are living creatures — cherubim, like those of Ezekiel (Ezek 1:5–10; 10:20) and the seraphim of Isaiah (Isa 6:2–3). Full of eyes, they see everything. Guzik: failure to worship comes from failure to see. The four faces have been read as the four Gospels (lion–Matthew, ox–Mark, man–Luke, eagle–John), as the standards of Israel's camp (Num 2), or as the noblest of creation — wild beast, tame beast, man and bird. Guzik says the Gospel link has no firm basis. Their song is the thrice-holy of Isaiah 6:3. Johnson, in Guzik: the threefold repetition is the superlative — God is infinitely holy. *Pantokratōr*, "the Almighty," means the One who has His hand on everything.

Casting crowns (vv9–11)

The elders worship because the creatures do. Their crowns are *stephanos* — victory wreaths, like an Olympic prize — not royal diadems. Clarke, in Guzik, compares kings laying their crowns before the Roman emperor. Whatever they won, they give back. They worship God first as Creator: all things exist "because of Your will" (v11). We were made for Him, not He for us (Col 1:16). Spurgeon, in Guzik, warns that heaven's choir has no place for untrained voices — the time to learn to worship is now.

Word study (Greek)

- **after these things — *meta tauta* (G3326 + G3778):** "after this," the hinge phrase of 1:19 and 4:1.
- **door — *thyra* (G2374):** a door or entrance; Jesus stood at one in 3:20, now one opens in heaven.
- **trumpet — *salpinx* (G4536):** a trumpet — the sound of a summons.
- **throne — *thronos* (G2362):** a seat of royal authority; the key word of the chapter.
- **jasper — *iaspis* (G2393):** a precious stone, probably clear and brilliant.
- **rainbow — *iris* (G2463):** a rainbow or halo of light encircling the throne.
- **elder — *presbyteros* (G4245):** an older person, a leader or representative.
- **crown — *stephanos* (G4735):** a victor's wreath, not a king's diadem.
- **lightning — *astrapē* (G796):** a flash of lightning.
- **lamp — *lampas* (G2985):** a torch or lamp burning with fire.
- **crystal — *krystallos* (G2930):** ice, rock crystal — clear and transparent.
- **living creature — *zōon* (G2226):** a living being — not "beast" (*thērion*).
- **holy — *hagios* (G40):** set apart, utterly pure.
- **Almighty — *pantokratōr* (G3841):** ruler of all, the One who holds everything.
- **worship — *proskyneō* (G4352):** to bow down, fall prostrate in reverence.
- **worthy — *axios* (G514):** deserving, of equal weight.
- **created — *ktizō* (G2936):** to create, bring into being.

Cross-references

Gen 1:1; Gen 9:12–17; Exod 19:16–19; Exod 24:10; Exod 28:17–21; 1 Kgs 22:19; 1 Chr 24:1–19; Ps 11:4; Ps 47:8; Isa 6:1–4; Isa 11:2; Ezek 1:4–28; Ezek 10:20; Dan 7:9–10; 2 Cor 12:2–4; Col 1:16; 1 Thess 4:16–17; 2 Tim 4:8; Heb 4:16; 1 Pet 5:4; Rev 1:4, 8, 10, 19; Rev 3:20–21.

03 Application

HOW DOES IT CHANGE ME?

KEY VERSE · REVELATION 4:1 (KJV)

1 After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter .

Command to obey — "Come up here."

Before John could understand what was happening on earth, he had to see the throne in heaven (v1). I need the same order. When the news, the bills or the diagnosis are loud, my first move is to go up — to prayer and to the Word — before I try to make sense of anything down here. For a man fresh out of prison or in early recovery, the world feels like chaos. The first step is not to fix it all; it's to look up and see Who is on the throne.

Sin to confess — sitting on the throne myself

Guzik's line stays with me: humanism puts man on the throne. I do it every time I insist on my own way, my own timing, my own glory. I confess the crowns I keep wearing — reputation, achievement, even ministry — that belong at His feet.

Warning to heed — worship is learned here

The creatures never stop; the elders fall down every time (vv8–10). Heaven is full of worship, and if I don't love worship now, I am not ready for heaven. Spurgeon's warning about untrained voices is a warning for me: I can't save my praise for later.

Promise to trust — the throne is occupied

"A throne was standing in heaven, and One sitting on the throne" (v2). It is not empty, and it is not shaking. And a rainbow surrounds it (v3) — the God of judgment is also the God who keeps His promises. To the man who has lost all hope: whatever is falling apart in your life, the throne is not.

Example to follow — the elders cast their crowns

They won those crowns, and they gave them back (v10). Every victory I've had — sobriety, a finished book, a man who comes to Christ — I want to lay at His feet and say, "Worthy are You." The men I disciple need to see that the strongest thing a man can do is bow.

Worship

"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come" (v8). He made all things, and by His will they exist (v11) — including me. I join the elders and the living creatures: worthy are You, our Lord and our God.

Prayer

Lord God Almighty, You sit on the throne and nothing is out of Your hand. Lift my eyes to heaven before I try to understand the earth. Get me off the throne of my own life. Take every crown I've been clinging to; they were Yours all along. Teach me to worship now, and let the men I serve see a man who bows before You. Holy, holy, holy. Amen.