

Chapter 4

The throne Room

A Door was Opened

^{KJV} **Revelation 4:1** 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 (μετὰ ταῦτα).

^{KJV} **Revelation 1:10** I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet...

^{KJV} **Revelation 1:19** Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter (μετὰ ταῦτα).

Speaking of the vision of the exalted Christ in Rev 1.12-16, Osborne says; “It is interesting to note that the vision itself apparently does not end at 1:16 but continues through the letters of chapters 2 and 3. It is only with the “after these things” of 4:1 that this inaugural vision is ended”.¹ The phrase, “after this” or, “after these things” occurs in 1.19, 4.1, 7.1, 7.9, 15.5, and 18.1 delineating six revelatory units. The transition from one unit of revelation to the next does not necessarily indicate a change from one time period to the next, but indicates a change in point of view or subject matter. The phrase “after this” is often modified with ‘I looked’, ‘I saw’, or ‘I heard’, indicating a change in visions or perspectives.

μετὰ	τοῦτο	εἶδον
meta	touto	eidon
after	this	I-perceived

When the modifier is not applied such as in Rev 9.12 ² it can indicate a change in time but that is not the case in Rev 4.1. John is invited into the heavenly throne room (“Come up hither” cf. Rev 11.12) by the same voice that he heard in Rev.1.10 (voice like a trumpet) and informed that he will be shown things “which must take place after this” (NKJ). This gives the impression that all subsequent events from this point onwards lie in the future and **yet in Rev 5 which is a continuation of the throne-room vision of Rev 4** John sees a scroll “in the right hand of him that sat on the throne” (Rev 5.1) which is obviously a circumlocution for God.

Therefore, John is present in the throne room when the challenge is announced to find a suitable man to open the scroll and the result is that **no one can be found** who is worthy to open the scroll. Note that we have deliberately left out the part where the Lamb suddenly appears in verse six (Rev 5.6). The implication of this is that John is in the throne room when Christ is **absent**. During this time Jesus is simply not there. Therefore, the perspective of the scroll-vision lies **in the past** and the sudden appearance of the “slain Lamb” can only occur immediately after the resurrection (this will be fully explored in Rev 5). So, whatever “**here after**” implies it cannot be exclusively concerned with the future **as the context does not allow it**.

It was noted in the commentary on Rev 1.19 that the different tenses are a play on the tripartite covenant formula (was-is-will be) **which is timeless**. Our human minds are constrained by time - - therefore, this is a difficult concept to understand. Recently the very premise of “time” is questioned— i.e., does it exist (is it a fundamental or an emergent property)? Does time describe causal events that occur sequentially? To question the existence of time may seem utterly counterintuitive but science does in some models (i.e., in a block universe). In such a case an outside observer of our universe can view past and future as coordinates of a fourth dimension. In this picture past and future are not absolute; rather, they depend on the reference point of the observer. In this theory, the concept of past and future for time are as relative as the concept of right and left for location (which also depend on where the observer stands). This would accord with a God who is not “time dependent” – has no beginning or end – and knows every possible outcome. However, the whole concept of “time” is still not fully understood. ³

John is transported into the presence of the divine in a spirit induced trance; it is in this context that “here after” should be placed. It is not an absolute term **but a relative one** defined by the *terminus a quo*. The **starting point** of the vision proper, which commences the “here after” is the scroll “in the right hand of him that sat on the throne” (Rev 5.1). The “here after” cannot commence **until the scroll is opened** and the scroll cannot be opened **until a “worthy” candidate is found**. In reality this vision commences in John’s past but John is no longer on earth, in fact he is no longer time-bound as he is in the divine presence. John is given a **different perspective** – the perspective of an “outside observer” in heaven, a view that is usually **only accorded to the Creator who is enthroned in the midst of the “living creatures”**. John stands outside of himself, outside of time and space and is allowed to observe from the divine perspective, in effect he becomes **an omniscient narrator**. Therefore John can see the “beginning and the end” and this is necessary so that he can understand that **everything** is under divine control and **nothing is random**. The sufferings, persecutions, hardships and martyrdoms that follow are all essential to the divine purpose. What seems like defeat is actually a great victory. What happens to the saints has already happened to the beloved son, therefore the victorious conquers mimic their Lord; **it is a repeat pattern**.

The “foolishness” of God is indeed wiser than the wisdom of the world. The Greek **δεῖ** means that it is **a necessity in reference to what is required to attain some end** and ISA translates this literally as it-is-binding:

καὶ	δείξω	σοι	ἃ	δεῖ	γενέσθαι	μετὰ	ταῦτα
kai	deixō	soi	ha	dei	genesthai	meta	tauta
and	I-shall-be- showing	to-you	which	it-is-binding	to-be-coming	after	these

I will show you what must take place after this (NIV) what it behoveth (YLT) all that follows is **therefore necessary**, no matter how difficult, above all this includes the Lord’s sacrifice;” “Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered” (Heb 5.7-8).

The One on the Throne

Revelation 4:2-3 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.

It is fitting that there is a rainbow around the throne “like unto an emerald”. The emerald is a green stone and therefore the throne is shrouded in green light. From the ground a rainbow looks like a bow, but from above (i.e. an airplane) it is a circle⁴ and the throne sits in the “green” band of the circle (which is the middle band).⁵ It is impossible for an observer to see a rainbow from water droplets at any angle other than the critical angle of 42 degrees⁶ from the direction opposite the light source. The observation angle of 42 degrees is surely not a coincidence⁷

The green represents divine covenant mercy extended to the house of David. Just as God promised not to destroy the earth by flood, likewise He promises not **to hurt any green thing** (Rev.9.4). The tribe of Judah has replaced (first born) Reuben (the green emerald on the priestly breastplate Exod.28.18) as the firstborn son – Judah (rather than Reuben) now becomes the one destined to have the Excellency of Dignity (the priesthood) and the Excellency of Power (the kingship). Thus the “green things” are those who share Davidic covenant mercy⁸ provided by the promised messiah from the tribe of Judah. Although the one who sits on the throne is deliberately not named the reference is to Yahweh in his covenant capacity (rainbow) which focuses on the outworking of the atonement wrought by God *and* by Christ through the tribe of Judah. Atonement was a “joint venture” and the attributes of the “one who sits on the throne” are equally applicable to both parties as God reconciles the world to himself through Christ which is his “new creation”. It is for this reason that John is deliberately ambiguous and does not name the occupant of the throne.

Therefore the “one on the throne” becomes an expression of the covenant purpose of Yahweh in an abstract sense because Christ does not appear on the scene until Rev 5.6. The throne vision is a prolepsis as it anticipates the victory but that victory is owned by and set in motion by God himself. Thus “the one on the throne” is described as bearing the characteristics of Christ because those features are embedded in the covenant that God upholds --- therefore the throne presence of Yahweh becomes a personification of the covenant and this is achieved through the literary device of leaving the occupant of the throne unnamed.

He was to look upon like a Jasper and a Sardius (4.3). These are the last and first stones of the high priestly breastplate – signifying the first and last (1.17) *in reverse order*, for he was dead (last of the old covenant) and is alive forevermore (first of the new covenant 1.18). Once again the Sardius represents Judah (on the breastplate) and Jasper, the tribe of Naphtali, signifying the struggle or overcoming.

In Hebrew Sardius is *odem* signifying redness, and jasper is *Yashpebeth* signifying Yah polishes. Jasper is an opaque stone that mainly tends to be red (it can also be found in yellow, green and greyish blue). The Hebrew for Sardius is identical for the word man; Adam (from red clay) except for the vowel pointing, which is not found in the original. Although John wrote in Greek these associations with the Hebrew are not coincidental, but came from his spirit inspired mind. We have then another firstborn (Adam) who lost the birthright, which was regained by the second Adam, whose redness was polished to perfection by Yah. The Hebrew for ‘the enthroned one’ is *yôšeb* phonetically very similar to *yashpebeth* (Jasper). Since Jasper is used as a simile for the appearance of God (4.3), it is used later in Revelation as an image for the overall appearance of the New Jerusalem, which manifests the glory of God (21.11), and is the material from which its walls are constructed (21.18), as well as the first of its twelve foundations (21.19).

To summarise, the rainbow represents covenant mercy extended to all creation, with the green (emerald) light concentrating that mercy in a Davidic descendant. God’s holiness is shrouded by his covenant promises (mercy and truth), which were brought to fruition in Jesus Christ – the last and the first – the son of David – the firstborn son (emerald) from the dead. At this juncture of the vision, Christ has not yet been elevated to the “midst of the throne”, that happens later in Rev 5.6;

Revelation 5:6 And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.

The throne scene and Daniel

Once again the book of Daniel comes into play as the heavenly throne scene is based on Dan 7 and the following parallels have been noted by Beale;⁹

1. Introductory vision phraseology (Dan. 7:9 [cf. Dan. 7:2, 6-7]; Rev. 4:1)
2. A throne(s) set in heaven (Dan. 7:9; Rev. 4:2, 9)
3. God is sitting on a throne (Dan. 7:9; Rev. 4:2)
4. God's appearance on the throne is described (Dan. 7:9; Rev. 4:3)
5. There is fire before the throne (Dan. 7:9-10; Rev. 4:5)
6. Servants surround the throne (Dan. 7:10; Rev. 4:4; 6-10; 5:8, 11, 14)
7. Sea imagery is found in both chapters (Dan. 7:2-3; Rev. 4:6).
8. Books are before the throne (Dan. 7:10; Rev. 5:1ff)
9. The book(s) opened (Dan. 7:10; Rev. 5:2-5, 9)
10. A divine / messianic figure approaches God's throne to receive authority to reign forever over a kingdom (Dan. 7:13-14; Rev. 5:5-7, 9, 12-13)
11. The kingdom's scope is described as encompassing "all peoples, nations, and tongues" (Dan. 7:14; Rev. 5:9)
12. The seer undergoes emotional distress on account of the vision (Dan 7:15; Rev. 5:4)
13. The seer receives heavenly counsel concerning the vision from one of the heavenly servants (Dan. 7:16; Rev. 5:5)
14. The saints are given divine authority to reign over a kingdom (Dan. 7:18, 22, 27; Rev. 5:10)
15. There is a concluding mention of God's eternal reign (Dan. 7:27; Rev. 5:13-14).

Twenty four elders and seven spirits

^{KJV} **Revelation 4:4-5** 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.

The twenty-four elders are obviously the heavenly counterpart of the 24 courses of priests instituted (reinstated?) by David (1 Chron.24.1). They probably represent both Jew and Gentile, as does the naming of twelve tribes and twelve apostles in the New Jerusalem (Rev.21.12-14). The picture of the heavenly sanctuary is now complete, the throne (ark) with the cherubim (host of Israel) encamped around and the priests doing service (elders) and the seven spirits (candelabra) illuminating the scene.¹⁰ These elders cast their crowns (priestly diadem) before the throne (v.10) this symbolic act of submission in the heavens, is probably in anticipation of the victory on the cross, when the Aaronic priesthood was superseded by a better priesthood – the Melchizedek priesthood of the firstborn son.

The elders therefore, do not represent redeemed saints as some suggest. Although the white garments and golden crowns (v.4) may point to this conclusion, they do not require it. The elders are also encountered in 11.17 where they praise God because the time has arrived to judge the dead and to reward the saints. This demonstrates that the elders are not the same as the saints. God is eulogized in Rev 5.10 for “making us a kingdom of priests” and this is taken as referring to the elders of Rev 5.8 but various Codices¹¹ render this as “made them (i.e., the saints) a kingdom of priests”(cf. Rev 1.6, 20.6).

It is entirely appropriate to the symbolism that the “heavenly priests” (elders/angels) should praise God for elevating the earthly saints to the same status as themselves (i.e. fellows servants, see Rev 22.9). To this we might add that in 14.3 and 19.4-7 the redeemed saints appear as a group separate from the cherubim and elders and therefore cannot possibly be one and the same.

The glassy sea

^{KJV} **Revelation 4:6** 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.

The glassy sea or clear crystal is a reference to the “firmament” in the midst of the waters – “which divides the waters under the firmament from the waters which are above the firmament” – this was called heaven. (Gen.1.7-8). A “paved work of a sapphire stone, as it were the body of heaven in his clearness” was seen in the vision vouchsafed to Moses and the seventy elders of Israel at Sinai (Exod. 24.10).

Upon (or above) this “glass sea” sits the throne (v.6 literally before the throne). Similarly, in the tabernacle a brass sea sat “before the throne” (before the ark). The laver was used in connection with the services. It stood on a base of brass in the court between the altar and the door of the tabernacle. Both laver and base were made of the mirrors donated by the women who assembled to minister at the door of the tent of meeting (Exod. 38.8; 33.7). In Solomon’s temple there was a molten sea and ten lavers (2 Chron. 4.6). The molten looking glasses (i.e., the brass mirrors of the women) from which the “sea” (laver) was fashioned represented the expanse of heaven; “Hast thou with him spread out the sky, which is strong and as a molten looking glass?” (Job 37.18)

Heaven and earth is a transient, temporal order. The heaven (glass sea) forms a barrier which the redeemed must pass through in a new exodus, if they are to win access to the Promised Land. God will again make the depths of the sea a path for the ransomed to cross (Isa.51.9-10) he will break the head of dragons that emerge from the sea (Rev.13.1) and will divide the waters by his strength (Ps.74.13-14). It is significant that, when John comes to speak of the new heaven and earth, the first thing he has to say is that the sea was no more (21.1). The throne is no longer situated above an impenetrable barrier, but amongst his people. No longer is there a glassy crystal sea, but a clear crystal river flowing from beneath the throne (22.1).

This river functions like the smaller lavers; it is for the healing or cleansing of the nations, specifically the Jewish nation, for, “there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and uncleanness” (Zech.13.1). Washed from sin they are now presented as a living sacrifice to their God.

The four beasts

^{KJV} **Revelation 4:7-11** 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.

The overriding themes of the throne room are ones of mercy and glory. The “throne” was the covering on the Ark of the Covenant known as the “mercy seat” (*kapporet*) --- the rainbow was also a token of divine mercy. The “living creatures” are the four faced cherubim on the ark, symbolising that the divine presences (glory) dwells in the midst of the natural and spiritual creation. Inside the Ark were the tokens of new life –resurrection life (imperishable manna, the new Law tablets, the rod that budded) leading some commentators to call the Ark “a resurrection box”.¹² This has Jesus declare that Yahweh is a God of the living (Living creatures) not of the dead (Matt 22.31-32).

The four faces of the Cherubim (living creatures) originally represented the tribal ensigns of the tribes of Judah, Reuben, Ephraim and Dan¹³ looking towards the mercy seat in a formation reminiscent of the Zodiac.¹⁴ When the earth was destroyed by flood God made a rainbow covenant with Noah and “and every living creature that *is* with you” (Gen 9.12), which included domesticated and wild animals as well as birds (Gen 9.10).

In other words, the four faces of the “living creatures” represent all of creation as well as the tribes of Israel. They also project further spiritual dimensions, with the glory of God reflected in the man-face (Christ),¹⁵ the Ox-face (Israel under the law),¹⁶ the Lion-face (Davidic king that tames death)¹⁷ and the eagle face (immortalized saints).¹⁸ The “heavenly sanctuary” (itself is a symbol of a more profound reality), formed the template for earthly worship --;

The Temple and the Tabernacle

Revelation 4	The Tabernacle and Temple
(1) The throne (Rev 4.5)	(1) The ark (Exod.25:10, 1Kgs.8.6)
(2) God seated on the throne (4.2)	(2) The glory of God on the ark (Exod.25.22, 40.34, 1Kgs.8.11)
(3) Four cherubim(6-8)	(3) Cherubim (Exod.25.19, 1Kgs 6.24)
(4) Seven lamps (4.5)	(4) The Lampstand (Exod.25.31)
(5) The sea (4.5)	(5) The sea (1 Kgs 7.23) and the laver (Exod.30.18, 1 Kgs 7.30)
(6) The altar (6:9)	(6) The altar (Exod.27:1, 1 Kgs.8.22)
(7) The incense altar (8.3)	(7) The incense altar (Exod.30.1)

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¹ Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation*, (Baker Academic, 2002), 85

² One woe is past; *and*, behold, there come two woes more hereafter (μετὰ ταῦτα).

³ Whereas the block universe is the outworking of General Relativity where the space- time continuum is the result of the curvature of space in Quantum Mechanics “time” is used as a variable. Thus a contradiction is present between General Relativity and Quantum Mechanics and the understanding of time lies at the heart of it. [Access here](#).

⁴ Rainbows can be full circles. However, the observer normally sees only an arc formed by illuminated droplets above the ground

⁵ The rainbow consists of the seven spectral colours of light, in order: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and violet.

⁶ Our 360 degree subdivision of the circle comes from the Sumerians and Babylonians and is therefore very ancient but the ancients could not possibly have known that the critical viewing angle was 42 degrees.

⁷ The number 42 has unusual characteristics in mathematics (magic cube etc) and is used throughout Scripture. There were 42 campsites in the wilderness, 42 generations between Abraham and Christ, the ministries of Elijah and Christ was 42 months (3.5 years) and the beast reigns for 42 months.

⁸ **Psalm 52:8** But I *am* like a green olive tree in the house of God: I trust in the mercy of God forever and ever.

⁹ Adapted from G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 314-15.

¹⁰ The Menorah (Lampstand) of the seven churches

¹¹ Sinaiticus, Vaticanus, Vulgate and Syriac have ‘made them a kingdom.’ Codices Sinaiticus, Vaticanus and Alexandrinus have ‘they shall reign’, again supported by the Vulgate

¹² I believe that Randall Price does so in his book, *In Search of Temple Treasures: The Lost Ark and the Last Days*, (Harvest House Pub , 1994)

¹³ See [The Tribal Blessings](#)

¹⁴ The Latin term zōdiacus was derived from the Greek, and the Greek term comes from the word ζῳδιον (zōdion), which is the diminutive of ζῳον (zōon), or animal, living creature. See the digression on the Zodiac Constellations [The Zodiac and the tribes](#)

¹⁵ “Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person” (Heb.1.3); “For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor.4.6).

¹⁶ The nation was meant to reflect the glory of God by keeping his Law, but Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked (Deut 32.15). The ox knew its owner and its master crib (the oxen looking at the manger are like the cherubim looking at the mercy seat. Isa.1.3; Lk.2.12) but the nation of Israel did not.

¹⁷ The lion is the symbol for royalty and is used to represent the tribe of Judah but in scripture the “king of beasts” is ‘made to eat grass as oxen’ (Dan.4.25). The destiny of the lion is to, ‘eat straw like the ox’ (Isa.11.7). The lion will be domesticated like the ox. The lion represents the untamed natural creation. The power of the lion is death – but God will tame even this natural force, for ‘He delivereth and rescueth, and he worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth, who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions’ (Dan.6.27, Ps.35.17; 57.4).

¹⁸ “Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things” (fruit of the tree of life Rev.2.7) --; “So that thy youth is renewed like the eagles” (Ps.103.5)--; “They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint” (Isa.40.31).