



JOHN SEES A THRONE IN HEAVEN REVELATION CHAPTER 4 VERSE BY VERSE COMMENTARY

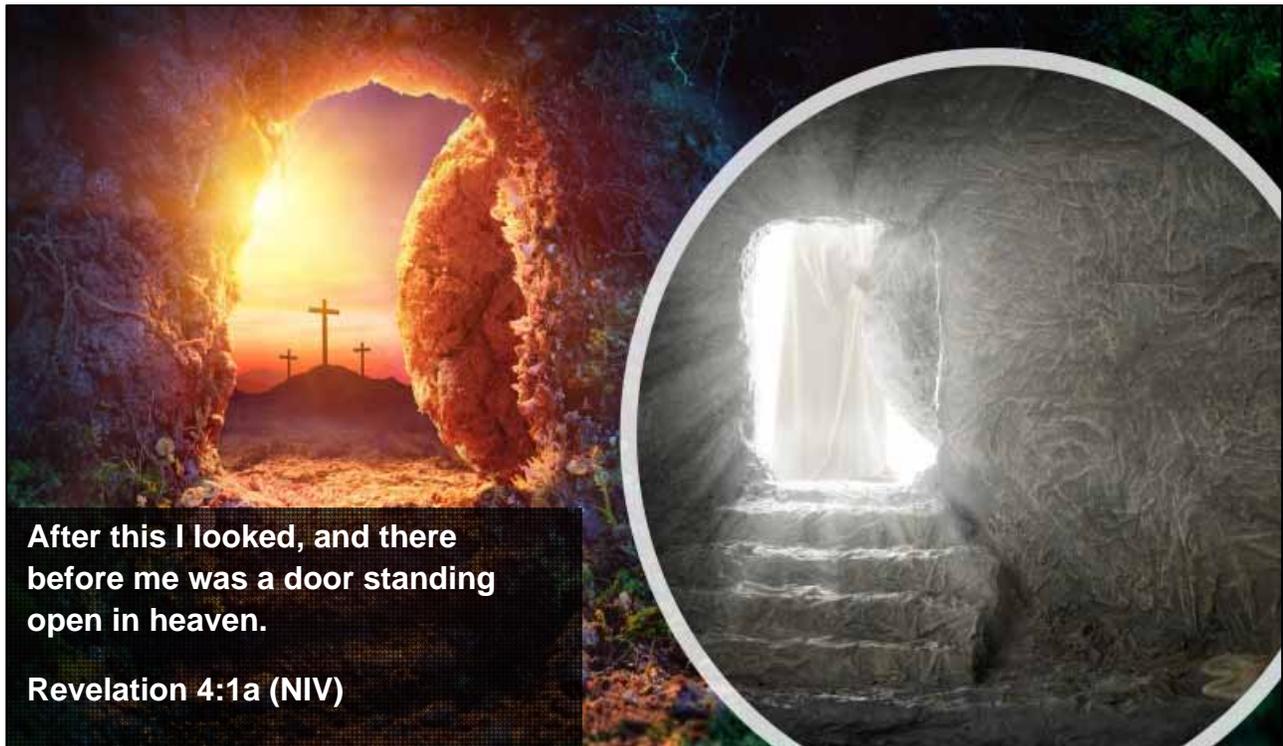
SUMMARY OF REVELATION CHAPTER 4

In Revelation chapter 4 John looked, and before him was a door standing open in heaven. A voice that sounded like a trumpet said, “Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this.” John was in the Spirit, and before him was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it.

In front of the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal.

In the center, around the throne, John saw four living creatures, and they were covered with eyes, in front and in back. The first living creature was like a lion, the second was like an ox, the third had a face like a man, the fourth was like a flying eagle. Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under its wings. Day and night they never stop saying:

“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, 'who was, and is, and is to come.”



Rev 4:1 After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven. And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, “Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this.”

Rev 4:2 At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it.

After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven. And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, “Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this.” All of John’s visions beginning with Revelation 4:1 through Revelation 22:21 are in heaven. The images of the temple he sees all throughout Revelation are in heaven. After Jesus had instructed John (chapters 1-3) to write to the churches the things that are, there was another vision. Now John saw a throne set in heaven, an emblem of the universal dominion of Jehovah. (“*after this*”) How long after these things this occurred, John does not say - whether on the same day, or at some subsequent time; and we do not know.

In chapter 4 the Revelation of John really begins in earnest! Events from chapter 4 onward would unfold over time in the future, long after John wrote Revelation in 95 AD. They are not confined, as some would believe, to the last couple of years of life on earth. Most have now been fulfilled, but not understood or recognized by most—even those in the church. Beginning in 610 AD (some 515 years after Revelation was written) they start to unfold. In 610 AD the false prophet Mohammad receives his first vision, continuing over a span of 22 years until his death in 632 AD, from the demonic spirit that gives Mohammad the Qur’an, a false Gospel about Jesus.

The Four Horsemen; Mohammad, Abu Bakr, Umar and Uthman (Revelation 6:1 to 6:8) are fulfilled from 610 AD through 656 AD. Much of Revelation chapter 13 about the beast from the sea released from the Abyss (Baal), and the image (the Kaaba), and the mark (the Shahada) are fulfilled during these years as well. Other revelations take even more time. The 1,260 days/years of prophecy (Revelation 11:3) and 1,260 days/years in the wilderness (Revelation 12:6) were fulfilled in 1948, some 1,853 years after Revelation was written. The 42 months (1278.4 years) trampling of the Holy City of Jerusalem (Revelation 11:2) ended in 1967, some 1,872 years after John wrote Revelation. The great city of Mecca with its immense wealth and wicked Kaaba was fulfilled since the year 2000. Events dealing with the destruction of the great city of Mecca (Revelation 17-18), the return of Christ (Revelation 19-20), the seven bowl judgments on the Day of the Lord (Revelation 16) and the new heaven and new earth (Revelation 21-22) are still in the future.

“At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it.” Similar to Revelation 1:10 (“*On the Lord’s Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet*”), John does not state specifically that he was caught up into heaven, nor does he tell us what thoughts were on his own mind, if any, as to the place where he was. John was absorbed in the phenomenal visions before him. Most likely, John was still in Patmos, and these things were made to pass into his mind by God as a reality; that is, they appeared as real to him as if he traveled to heaven physically and saw them. Thus, they were in fact an accurate representation of things occurring in heaven, and in the “sea”, the spiritual world.

Rev 4:3 And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and ruby. A rainbow that shone like an emerald encircled the throne.

Rev 4:4 Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders. They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads.

Rev 4:5 From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder. In front of the throne, seven lamps were blazing. These are the seven spirits of God.

“And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and ruby. A rainbow that shone like an emerald encircled the throne.” John saw the glorious one upon the throne; almost impossible to describe in human terms of understanding. Much like how difficult it was for John to describe the New Jerusalem in Revelation 21:11 (*“It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.”*)

“Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders. They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads.” Various thoughts have been given about the twenty-four in number. They are the twelve tribes doubled, to signify the union of the Gentile with the Jewish Church; they are the two sets of twelve, to represent the two Testaments; they are the twelve Patriarchs and the twelve Apostles. In summary, the twenty-four elders represent the complete Church of God in the past and in the future, in the Jewish and Gentile worlds; and as such the true spiritual church of God. It is all those that accepted Christ.

“From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder. In front of the throne, seven lamps were blazing. These are the seven spirits of God.” The lightning and thunder represent the majesty and power of God. John mentioned the seven spirits previously in Revelation 1:4 and 3:1 (Revelation 1:4; *“John, To the seven churches in the province of Asia: Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne,”*) Jesus Christ is described in Revelation 3:1 (*“To the angel of the church in Sardis write: These are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars., as having the seven Spirits of God.”*)

Here in Revelation 4:5, John tells us that the seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, are the seven Spirits of God. John tells us that the Lamb's seven eyes were the seven Spirits of God in Revelation 5:6 (*“Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing at the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. The Lamb had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.”*) The seven spirits are before the throne and are also sent out into the world. This is all the information we have from Scripture. We can say this about the seven spirits of God:

- ✓ Revelation 1:4; the seven spirits are before His throne
- ✓ Revelation 3:1; Jesus holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars, as having the seven Spirits of God
- ✓ Revelation 4:5; the seven lamps of fire burning before the throne are the seven Spirits of God
- ✓ Revelation 5:6; the Lamb had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth

Rev 4:6 Also in front of the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal. In the center, around the throne, were four living creatures, and they were covered with eyes, in front and in back.

Rev 4:7 The first living creature was like a lion, the second was like an ox, the third had a face like a man, the fourth was like a flying eagle.

Rev 4:8 Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under its wings. Day and night they never stop saying: “‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty,’ who was, and is, and is to come.”

“Also in front of the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal.” In Revelation, the sea is the spiritual world. Since John observes that the “sea” was as smooth as glass and clear as crystal, there was complete harmony in the spiritual world in front of God at that time. The spirits are in complete harmony with God. John has not yet seen the spiritual war in heaven (Revelation 12). In Revelation 15:2, John observes there that the sea is again smooth and glowing with the glory of God. In Revelation 15, the war in heaven (Revelation 12) is over and the sea is smooth again. Jesus won. In front of God there is no rebellion, and His will is done in heaven.

Revelation 15:2a (NIV)

And I saw what looked like a sea of glass glowing with fire and, standing beside the sea, those who had been victorious over the beast and its image and over the number of its name.

“The first living creature was like a lion, the second was like an ox, the third had a face like a man, the fourth was like a flying eagle.” These are living spiritual beings that attend to God, not “beasts,” as in some translations. They should not be confused with “beast of Revelation”) in chapters 13,17 which is Baal released from the Abyss. Baal opposes God.

**The first living creature
was like a lion, the
second was like an ox,
the third had a face like a
man, the fourth was like a
flying eagle.**

Revelation 4:7 (NIV)



THE FOUR LIVING CREATURES WORSHIP JESUS

John sees the four living creatures several times. The four living creatures are described in Revelation 4:6-9; 5:6-14; 6:1-8; 14:3; 15:7 and 19:4. The “living creatures” are not human. These living creatures do not represent the evil element in the world. They serve the living God. One of the most interesting aspects of the four living creatures is that they demonstrate that Jesus, the Lamb of God, is equal to God Himself. The four living creatures fall down and worship the Lamb of God, Jesus, in Revelation 5:6-14.

Revelation 5:8-9 (NIV)

And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of God’s people. And they sang a new song, saying: “You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation.”

Revelation 5:13-14 (NIV)

Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, saying: “To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!” The four living creatures said, “Amen,” and the elders fell down and worshiped.

JOHN SEES THE SAME FOUR LIVING CREATURES AS EZEKIEL

Ezekiel also had a vision of the four living creatures that John saw. The entire Ezekiel chapter 1 is devoted to describing the magnificent images of the four living creatures surrounding God.

Ezekiel 1:10 (NIV)

Their faces looked like this: Each of the four had the face of a human being, and on the right side each had the face of a lion, and on the left the face of an ox; each also had the face of an eagle.

In Ezekiel the four creatures are a part of the throne of God, something like the “wheels” of the throne of God. There are some differences between description by John and Ezekiel. The four creatures are described as having similar other-worldly features. They are “full of eyes,” or “eyes all around.” This is similar to Ezekiel 1; the cherubim are “wheels within wheels, full of eyes.” But the description is also slightly different; the faces are not quite the same in Revelation. One difference between these four creatures and Ezekiel 1 is that each creature has a different face, while Ezekiel 1 describes four creatures with four faces each. This could simply be how God presented them each time.

We can know for certain these creatures lead worship in heaven (Revelation 4:6-9; 5:6-14, 14:3, and 19:4) and they are associated with the throne of God. In Revelation 6:1-7 they announce the coming of the Four Horsemen (Mohammad, Abu Bakr, Umar and Uthman) after each seal is opened, and in 15:7 one of these creatures gives the seven bowls of God’s wrath to the angels who pour them out on the earth on the day of the Lord.

Rev 4:9 Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives for ever and ever,

Rev 4:10 the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne and worship him who lives for ever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and say:

Rev 4:11 “You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.”

“Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives for ever and ever.” The four living creatures are often associated with praise and worship for God and the Lamb.

“The twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne and worship him who lives for ever and ever.” As soon as the living creatures begin their song of adoration and praise, the elders immediately fall down. The picture John gives us implies that they did so at the same instant, and that they both do this frequently.

ARE THE FOUR LIVING CREATURES ALSO ISAIAH’S “SERAPHIM”?

Isaiah chapter 6:1-4 talks about a type of heavenly creature that Isaiah called a “seraphim.” These verses show us that Isaiah was seeing seraphim and describes their features as beings with 6 wings. They use two wings to cover their faces, two to cover their feet, and the last two are used to fly. This mirrors what John sees in Revelation 4:8 but with more details.

Isaiah 6:1-4 (NIV)

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphim, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.” At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.

These heavenly creatures seen by Isaiah praise God (*“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.”*), just as John’s living creatures praise God (*“You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.”*) Isaiah here doesn’t mention the fact that they have eyes all over their bodies, but they most likely are the same beings.

Some commentators have tried to equate the four living creatures with the four Gospels. But John does not give us enough information in Revelation to make this conclusion. It is better to see the four living creatures as wonderful and special heavenly creatures that attend to God and continually praise Him, until God reveals more to us.