

After these things I looked, and behold, a door *standing* open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard *was* like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, "Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this." ² Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and *One* sat on the throne. ³ And He who sat there *was* like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance; and *there was* a rainbow around the throne, in appearance like an emerald. ⁴ Around the throne *were* twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads. ⁵ And from the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices. Seven lamps of fire *were* burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God. ⁶ Before the throne *there was* a sea of glass, like crystal. And in the midst of the throne, and around the throne, *were* four living creatures full of eyes in front and in back. ⁷ The first living creature *was* like a lion, the second living creature like a calf, the third living creature had a face like a man, and the fourth living creature *was* like a flying eagle. ⁸ *The* four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!" ⁹ Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever, ¹⁰ the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying: ¹¹ "You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created."

Introduction

Q. What is the most beautiful sight that you have ever seen in Japan?

Perhaps it is the Japanese Autumn (a picture of lovely Autumn leaves)

Perhaps you like the Cherry Blossom season? May be that is the most beautiful sight for you? (a picture of Cherry Blossoms in Japan)

Perhaps it was your visit to Mount Fuji in the winter (a picture of Mount Fuji with snow on top)

Whatever wonderful view or experience you may have had in Japan, it would melt away into nothing compared with the Throne room of Heaven.

If we could have the experience that John had in this chapter I am sure that it would eclipse our earthly experiences however beautiful and wonderful they may have been.

I am sorry that you can't have the same experience as John, but at least we can make the chapter come alive as we study what God wants to teach us today.

The key word in this chapter is the word "Throne".

In the N.K.J. Bible the word is mentioned 14 times.

The Throne of God is a common Old Testament Picture.

When Isaiah was called to be a prophet he saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up. (Is. 6:1)

The psalmist says "God sits on His Holy throne" (Ps.47:8)

In 1 Kings 22:19 the Prophet Micaiah says;

"I saw the Lord sitting on His throne and all the host of Heaven standing by, on his right hand and on his left."

When Handel was asked how he had come to write the "Messiah", his answer was "I saw the heavens opened and God upon his great white throne."

In 4: v. 1 we read the words "after these things" whenever this phrase is mentioned in Revelation it marks the beginning of a new vision.

It also marks a chronological step.

It is the next thing to happen in the plan and purposes of God.

(7:9, 15:5, 18:1, 19:1)

We have now left the letters to the 7 Churches and we are moving on.

It is important to note what Jesus said in v. 10 of chapter 3.

¹⁰ Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.

Some people believe that the Church will go through the trial of chapters 6-19.

However the people who believe this never give an explanation of Revelation 3:v. 10.

They centre most of their attacks on the "Rapture".

They don't deny that God could rapture the Church, after all God can do anything.

The Christians that don't believe in the rapture of the Church, usually pick out choice verses about Christians persevering through trials.

Whatever your views, don't let it spoil your blessing of this chapter.

The scene now centres on the Throne of God and forms an introduction to all the events that follow.

All the features of the chapter can be outlined based on how they relate to the throne.

John tells us six things related to the throne.

1. "Who is on the Throne?"

Someone like a Jasper and Sardius stone in appearance.

It doesn't actually say who was on the throne, John just gives us a description relating to two precious stones.

His vision is similar to that which Ezekiel describes in Ezekiel 1:26-28.

²⁶ And above the firmament over their heads *was* the likeness of a throne, in appearance like a sapphire stone; on the likeness of the throne *was* a likeness with the appearance of a man high above it. ²⁷ Also from the appearance of His waist and upward I saw, as it were, the color of amber with the appearance of fire all around within it; and from the appearance of His waist and downward I saw, as it were, the appearance of fire with brightness all around. ²⁸ Like the appearance of a rainbow in a cloud on a rainy day, so *was* the appearance of the brightness all around it. This *was* the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD.

"Jasper" is a clear stone, as clear as crystal. (Like a Diamond) (Rev. 21:11)

Sardius is a fiery blood red ruby.

The Picture I get is like a fire with a glass front and the fire is reflected through the glass.

It is like one of those modern wood burning stoves with a glass front so that you can see the fire burn and at the same time be protected by the glass.

(picture of a wood burning stove with glass front)

These two stones were also on the breastplate of the High Priest. (Ex. 28:17)

They were the first and last stones. Representing Reuben the firstborn and Benjamin the last born, of the twelve sons of Jacob.

The Stones were also among the foundation of the Holy City of God mentioned in Revelation 21:19.

¹⁹ The foundations of the wall of the city *were* adorned with all kinds of precious stones: the first foundation *was* jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald,

The Jasper may well stand for the unbearable brightness of the purity of God, and the Sardius may well stand for the avenging wrath of God.

So John was taken up to heaven to be shown things which must take place in the future. The first thing that he saw was a vision of the Holiness of God and of the wrath of God.

Most people have a concept of a "Holy God" Isaiah calls Him the Holy One of Israel.

We have a Holy bible, we connect everything pure and holy with the person of God.

Most people are happy with an understanding that the God of the Bible is Holy.

However, when we come to the "Wrath" of God we are not so comfortable.

The N/T teaches us that as believers in Jesus Christ we don't have to worry about the wrath of God.

Romans 5:9 says that because believers are justified by the blood of Jesus we will be saved from the wrath of God.

(Romans 5:v.9)

⁹ Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.

Those who refuse to respond to the gospel are pictured as the objects of God's wrath.

John 3:36 says "He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

It is so important that we notice in revelation that one day the wrath of God is going to be poured out on to this earth.

Only those who have believed in Jesus will be safe.

2. What is going on around the Throne? (v. 3-4)

There was a "Rainbow", like an emerald in appearance.

This means that Green was the dominant colour.

The Rainbow provides us with a balance to the fiery flashings of judgement.

According to Genesis 9: 13-17 a rainbow symbolizes God's covenant faithfulness, mercy and grace. On the one side we have the Holiness of God which punishes sin through His wrath and on the other side we have the Mercy and Grace of God through His New Covenant in Jesus Christ.

Around the throne were 24 Elders sitting on thrones, clothed in white robes and they had crowns of gold on their heads.

Who were these Elders and what were they doing there?

We find these Elders frequently appearing in revelation and so we do have some facts about them.

We are told the following about them

1. They are clothed in white robes and wear crowns. (4:4,14:3)
2. They continually worship and Praise. (5:11,14, 7:11, 11:16, 14:3, 19:4)
3. They bring to God the prayers of the saints. (5:8)
4. One of them acts as an encourager (5:5)
5. One of them acts as an interpreter of one of the visions. (7:13)
6. They cast their crowns before the throne. (4:10)

From the list we know what the Elders do in the Throne Room, but who are they?

I feel that the key is found in Revelation Chapter 5:v. 8-9,

⁸ Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. ⁹ And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,

The people who need "Redemption" are us, sinners needing His grace.

Therefore, if we take the meaning of the word Elder here which in Gr. is "Presbiteros" which means leader in a church council, or somebody who leads a Church.

These 24 Elders represent the Redeemed Church of God.

The white garments are the dress of believers and that is particularly true in the immediate context of Revelation.

Jesus promised the believers at Sardis that they would "be clothed in white garments" (3:5)

White garments symbolize Jesus Christ's righteousness imputed to believers at salvation.

(2 Corinthians 5: v. 21)

²¹ For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Notice that believers are given the righteousness of God, through the death of Jesus.

3. Q. What was coming from the Throne? (v.5)

There were lightnings, thunderings and voices.

In Exodus 19:16 we have the same lightnings and thunderings.

You will remember that when the children of Israel were at the foot of Mount Sinai they experienced the same things.(Exodus 20: v. 18)

Ezekiel also experienced lightnings when he had a vision of God.

(Ezekiel 1:13)

All this imagery is connected with the presence of God.

Coming from the Throne was going to be God's judgement.

4. What was before the Throne? (v. 5b-6)

7 lamps of fire burning and a sea of glass, like crystal.

In verse 5 it tells us that the 7 lamps of fire are the 7 Spirits of God.

We met the 7 Spirits of God in chapter 1 v. 4. and then we discovered that it was the Holy Spirit in all its fullness.

However, there is a difference in the function of the Holy Spirit.

In Chapter 1 they were lamp stands. This was a gentle light of an indoor lamp.

Here we see a different picture. It is a picture of a blazing fiery torch.

In the book of Judges & the book Nahum Torches are associated with war.

So we see the two facets of the Holy Spirit.

He is the Comforter and He is also the Spirit of Burning, coming in judgement.

John's vision pictures God as ready to make war on sinful mankind.

John MacArthur, an American commentator and preacher of many years comments on this verse as follows:

" The Holy Spirit is the comforter of those who love Christ but the Holy Spirit will be the consumer of those who reject Him."

This is a challenging thought!!!

Also before the Throne was a sea of glass, like crystal.

This was a similar picture that Moses had in Exodus 24: v. 10, and Ezekiel had in Ezekiel Chapter 1: v.22. &26.

It is difficult to relate heavenly pictures to earthly situations.

The nearest John gets, is to describe it as a sea of glass.

5. Q. What was in and around the throne?

The answer is four Living creatures.

The first was like a lion, the second was like a calf, the third like the face of a man and the fourth like a flying eagle.

They each had 6 wings and had eyes around and within.

They appear from this passage to be praising God 24 hrs a day. (24/7)

This vision was also similar to that which Ezekiel had. (Ezekiel 1: 4-25)

Ezekiel specifically identifies these creatures in Ezekiel chapter 10:v.15.

He calls them "Cherubim".

They are a high order of God's Angels that are frequently associated with God's Holy Power.

1 Sam. 4:4

⁴ So the people sent to Shiloh, that they might bring from there the ark of the covenant of the LORD of hosts, who dwells *between* the cherubim. And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, *were* there with the ark of the covenant of God.

Psalms, 99:1

The LORD reigns; Let the peoples tremble! He dwells *between* the cherubim; Let the earth be moved!

After Adam and Eve sinned God drove them out of Eden and stationed Cherubim at the entrance to keep them from returning. (Gen 3:24)

You could say that these "Living Creatures" are God's special Angels, His right hand men.

They were ready to do whatever God wanted them to do.

6. What was directed towards the Throne?

Appropriately the scene in Heaven finishes with worship directed towards God on His Throne.

It begins with the "Four Living Creatures" focusing on God's Holiness.

"Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come."

Is. 6:3 also cries out a three - fold Holy. God's Holiness is unique, there is no one like Him. He is absolutely separate. There is no sin or evil around this throne.

Unlike Angels, some of whom sinned, and humans, all of whom sinned, there is no one Holy like the Lord, because He alone is majestic in Holiness.

The Prophet Habakkuk praised God because His eyes are too pure to approve evil and He can not look upon wickedness with favour. (Hab. 1:13)

The Psalmist cries, Holy and Awesome is His name. (Ps. 111:9)

Peter said " God Himself declared, You shall be Holy , for I am Holy"

(1 Peter. 1:16.)

On this occasion it is Praising God for His Holiness which directs judgement against sin.

Because God is Holy, He hates sin and He pours out His wrath against it.

Job asked his counsellors, " Would not God's Majesty terrify you?"

(Job. 13:11)

Isaiah was overwhelmed by his vision of God's Holiness and cried out

"Woe is mine for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips and dwell amongst a people of unclean lips" (Is. 6:5)

Such is the love of God that He withholds His hand until the time of judgement.

That time is drawing near.

I pray that you may know His grace now, rather than His judgement in the future.

Application - Q. What is the application of Chapter 4 to our lives today?

1. John and everybody else in the Bible who had a vision of God's holiness were aware of their own sinful nature. Isaiah realized that he needed forgiveness and cleansing. One day we are all going to come before the Judgement seat of Jesus Christ.
I don't know if that is going to be in the throne room of Heaven or not.
But what I do know is that unless your sin is judged by Jesus Christ now, then you will not escape God's judgement for your sin.
If you do not know Jesus Christ as your own personal saviour I suggest that you seriously consider asking for His forgiveness NOW.
It will be too late when you get to the "Judgement seat of Christ."
(Romans 14: v. 10)
2. If we are a Christian today, then our vision of God needs to be one that is focused upon the Bible and filtered through the experiences of the Prophets in the Old Testament.
If God was to visit OIC in a powerful way today, we would all be broken before Him and crying from our souls. Our God is an AWESOME God.
In all the true Revivals that have happened in the world there has been a hallmark that authenticates them all.
This is a deep conviction of the Holiness of God and the awfulness of sin in our lives.

John 16: v. 5-11.

⁵ "But now I go away to Him who sent Me, and none of you asks Me, 'Where are You going?' ⁶ But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. ⁷ Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. ⁸ And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: ⁹ of sin, because they do not believe in Me; ¹⁰ of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; ¹¹ of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.

The last time I heard someone preach on v. 8 was on the 30th August 2009.

The person speaking became a Christian in the last true Revival in the U.K.

It was on the Island of Lewis in Scotland.

Her stories are amazing and worth reading.

[You can find her testimony on revivals .org.](http://revivals.org)

May God help us to get a greater vision of Himself and be willing to serve Him.