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Revelation 4

(2019)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



Learn the Bible at Home

Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

Revelation 4.

Topics.

- A voice said, "come up here, and I will show you what must take place."
 - John was in the Spirit and sees one seated on a throne in heaven.
 - Twenty-four elders, seated on thrones, with golden crowns on their heads.
 - Seven torches of fire, are before the throne which are seven Spirits of God.
 - The four living creatures.
 - Worthy is God, to receive glory for by His will he created all things.
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A personal note: though I have always loved reading and studying the Scriptures and have now walked with Christ and in God's grace for around fifty years the following studies should not be taken to be dogmatic, inflexible or the final word on the matter since I am fully aware that my mind is limited by mortality and that greater understanding of God's revelation is continually becoming clearer before our eyes as we move closer to the time of Christ's glorious return in glory.

The previous chapter: began with the letter to the church in Sardis and the promise that the name of those who conquer will never be blotted out of the book of life and the Lord will confess their name before his Father and before his angels. Then followed the church in Philadelphia and the promise that God will make those who conquer, a pillar in His temple and the Lord will write on them the name of his God, and the name of the New Jerusalem, and his own new name. The chapter ended with the letter to the church in Laodicea and the promise that the Lord will grant to those who conquer to sit with him on his throne, as he sat down with his Father on his throne.

REVELATION 4:1

Come up Here, and I will Show you what Must take Place.

- **Revelation 4:1:** After this I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven! And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this."

After this, means after what was said in the previous chapters, which record John's first vision of the glorified resurrected Son of God, and John's letters to the seven churches. Chapter three ended with the letter to the Laodicean church which was in the worst spiritual state of all seven churches and the Lord saying:

- Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me. (Rev. 3:20).

In John's first vision the door was a door to salvation, whereas now in this chapter the door in this second vision, that John is being invited to enter is a door to a heavenly vision of God's abode to be shown future things to come.

A door was opened in heaven: not in a literal sense, but as the heavens were opened at Christ's baptism, and at Stephen's martyrdom.

- When Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him. (Matt. 3:16).
- Behold, I (Stephen) see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God. (Acts 7:56).

This heavenly door was not literally opened, but opened in a visionary way, just as Ezekiel, in his visions of God, was brought to Jerusalem, and the temple there, and at a door was shown all the abominations committed in the court and the temple (Ezek. 8:14-18), likewise, John in the same visionary way was brought through an open door and shown things to come.

The first voice, speaking like a trumpet: (v1) the first voice refers the voice that John had heard in the opening vision which was the voice of the Lord Jesus Christ. (Rev. 1:10-16). Trumpets were used because they gave a loud and clear sound and for this reason were often used to call the people together to hear a message (especially of a prophet or king), so it is very apt that John should say that the voice sounded like a trumpet speaking, meaning the voice he heard was very clear and distinct, and even though this was a vision there was no difficulty in understanding the message. The expression, "speaking to me like a trumpet," may also be an allusion to the custom of the Jewish priests sounding trumpets to call the Levites and the ministering priests to attend to their duties when they opened the gates of the temple. How long this second vision of John's was after the first vision we are not told, it may have immediately followed it or been sometime later.

Come up here: (v1) not that John ascended from the isle of Patmos in his physical body, but that he was called up in the spirit or in a visionary way (v2). As he looked up he saw, not with the eyes of his body, but with the eyes of his mind as if beholding things in a visionary manner, as the prophets did, when they were called seers, and their prophecies called visions.

I will show you what must take place after this: (v1) in the world, in the Roman Empire, and in the church of God to the end of the world and Christ's return in glory.

REVELATION 4:2

John was in the Spirit and sees One Seated on a Throne in Heaven.

- **Revelation 4:2:** t once I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne.

I was in the Spirit: (v2) carries the idea that his mind and spirit was completely rapt, possessed and absorbed in the vision which took him spiritually into the heavenly world. His mind was so filled with the vision that the things that he saw with his mind's eye or that were made to pass before him appeared as real events. Naturally many of the things he did see were real, but these real things were only being used as symbolical representation of things seen in heaven and not actually real things in heaven. John's experience of being, in the Spirit, was the same experience as Paul had when he was caught up to heaven:

- I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows. (2 Cor. 12:2).

And as Peter had when he fell into a trance:

- He became hungry and wanted something to eat, but while they were preparing it, he fell into a trance. (Acts 10:10).

And as Ezekiel had when he was lifted-up in the Spirit:

- Then the Spirit lifted me up, and I heard behind me the voice of a great earthquake: "Blessed be the glory of the LORD from its place!" (Ezek. 3:12).

John first vision is spoken of as being in the Spirit and his second vision is spoken of as being carried away in the Spirit:

- I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet. (Revelation 1:10).
- He carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness, and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was full of blasphemous names, and it had seven heads and ten horns. (Revelation 17:3).
- He carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God. (Rev. 21:10).

The expressions, in the Spirit, caught up to heaven, fell into a trance, lifted-up in the Spirit, being in the Spirit and being carried away in the Spirit all carry the same idea, which is, to be some time (long or short) in a state of ecstasy or a trance that causes the mind and the spirit to be utterly engulfed and absorbed in the vision of things celestial in such an extraordinary manner that there is no other thought. All that once filled the mind is suspended and all emotions and senses of the body are non-existent, while the mind is fully fixed upon the vision. The vision presented to the mind absorbs the mind so completely and with such vivid clearness that it feels as if one is out of the body, or if the vision is made to pass before the eyes of the body (much like a hologram) and is also vividly clear it will appear to the mind as a real event. This, is why Paul when he had his vision said, "whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, only God knows," and why some visions are spoken of as real events and at other times as visions.

Being in the Spirit: means to be under a strong and supernatural impulse, caused by the miraculous working of the Spirit of God acting on the imagination, in such a manner as to open extraordinary scenes. A good example of such a vision is the heavenly view presented to Ezekiel, when he sat in his house among the elders of the people and a form of a man with the appearance of brightness, like gleaming metal took him by a lock of his head, and the Spirit lifted him up between earth and heaven and brought him into visions of God to the entrance of the gateway of the inner court of Jerusalem, (Ezek. 8:1-3).

This is all happening to Ezekiel while he was sitting in his house among the elders, who probably saw nothing except Ezekiel being in such strong trance or state of ecstasy, that his thoughts were completely insensible to his outward surroundings. Just as no one would image this heavenly metal being literally held Ezekiel up by his hair and kept him hanging in the air while the vision was shown to him. Likewise, we are not to imagine that the four living creatures, or the twenty-four elders, were real beings existing in nature, but to view them as representing, in a figurative manner, things that did really exist. Following are the two most likely ways biblical visions come to those God choses to share His revelations with.

1. By God's Spirit or angelic power, the heavenly scenes are formed to pass by the eyes of the body (much like a hologram).
2. By God's Spirit or angelic power, the heavenly scenes are formed to pass through the imagination of the mind (much like a movie played on the screen of the imagination) or a vivid dream in the night.

The reason visions can seem to be real events, is because the human nervous system does not have a brain of its own, so it automatically responds to an image played out on the mind, whether it is real image or not. The stronger and clearer the image the greater the power it will have on our emotions and the more real it will seem.

A throne stood in heaven: (v2) John saw a throne set in heaven, an emblem of the universal dominion of the invisible, immortal, Holy, Sovereign, Almighty God the creator of all things and source of all life, the, I AM of the Bible and God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Exodus 3:14-15).

One seated on the throne: (v2) it is interesting to notice that John, Isaiah and Ezekiel only describe Him who sat on the throne by His surpassing brightness and not by any human appearance or form, from which a picture could be painted or an image made. In this way, they have guarded against any temptation to idolatry. The Eternal Father, the Creator is in, essence invisible, but in Scripture at times is represented as assuming a visible form and is constantly described, in the prophetic visions, as sitting upon a throne, to denote His Kingly power, authority and sovereign dominion among the nations and the church according, to His will.

REVELATION 4:3

A Rainbow around the Throne with the Appearance of an Emerald.

- **Revelation 4:3:** And he who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian (sardine in KJV), and around the throne (round about the throne in KJV) was a rainbow that had the appearance of an emerald.

The Jasper stone: there are various kinds of jasper stones in Scripture, the type of jasper stone here is describe as being clear as crystal and most precious. This stone is famous for its transparency, and as such signifies the perfections of God's nature and the purity of His righteousness and holiness.

The sardian (sardius) stone: (also called a cornelian stone), is best described as a fiery or blood red colour which in the context of this vision most likely signifies God's justice, terror and fiery indignation especially since God is referred to in Scripture as a consuming fire and whose wrath is poured out upon His enemies like fire.

The emerald stone: (3) is green and pleasant to the eye, it most likely signifies God's goodness, favour, mercy and grace to His people and to the repentant sinner. It is also the prevailing colour in the rainbow around the throne of God.

The rainbow around the throne: (3) is an allusion to the earthly rainbow God set in the sky after the flood of Noah that destroyed the wicked. The rainbow is a covenant promise to the world that God would never again destroy the earth by a future flood (Gen. 9:12-16), so the heavenly rainbow signifies the covenant promise that God made with Christ and the faithful in his Kingdom that they would never suffer His wrath against the wicked or His judgment to eternal destruction. The prevailing colour of the heavenly rainbow is emerald, which is a pleasant green for the eyes to look at signifying God's goodness, favour, mercy and grace and peace and safety. The words, "around the throne," (round about the throne in KJV) suggest that this rainbow around God's throne was not half a circle as the earthly rainbow is, but formed a complete circle vertically around the throne. As such it would signify God is eternal and that after the acts of His wrath (symbolised by the lightning and thunder around the throne) that are revealed to John in the following visions have come to their final-end, His glory would encompass the world when He descends to earth and is All in All.

- When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all. (1 Cor. 15:28).

Overview of the throne and the rainbow: The Jasper and sardine stone and the rainbow around the throne of God is presented as a picture to impress upon the mind a sense of awe and the majesty of Him who

cannot be described, and of who no image should be made and to signify that God is the most glorious heavenly Father and by His glory He outshines all other things.

REVELATION 4:4

Twenty-Four Elders, Seated on Thrones, with Golden Crowns.

- **Revelation 4:4:** Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones were twenty-four elders, clothed in white garments, with golden crowns on their heads.

Seated on the thrones: the word throne comes from the Greek word (*thronos*), and means to sit, it refers to a stately seat such as a throne, and by implication power and potentate, monarch and sovereign ruler. The twenty-four elders sitting on thrones with crowns of gold on their heads signify they have a royal and kingly order.

Elders are called elders: because it was common for them to have great faithfulness, wisdom, knowledge, authority, responsibility and devotion to God and they formed the government of the community and the church. We know these twenty-four elders are not angels, for they are said to be clothed in white with golden crowns and seated on thrones (Rev.4:4), which is only spoken of the redeemed who have by faith been washed white in the blood of the Lamb and not of angels, neither are angels exalted to sit on thrones. In the book of Ephesians, it is written:

- The household of God is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, ²¹in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. (Ephes. 2:19-22).

These verses show us that the church of God is built upon the prophets and the apostles, which means the twenty-four elders most likely embraces the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve apostles and symbolise the whole global church made up of faithful Jews and Gentiles in Christ.

Clothed in white garments: (v4) (white raiment in KJV) signifies the faithful being clothed with the spotless robes of Christ's imputed righteousness. It carries the idea of holiness and purity which is often referred to as fine linen, clean and white which is emblematical of the righteousness the faithful have, because of their faith in Christ.

With golden crowns on their heads: (v4) signifies:

- The glory the faithful have with Christ.
- The state of dignity and glory to which God through Christ has granted the faithful.
- The faithful being made kings by Christ as well as priests unto God.
- The church being victorious and triumphant over the world, sin and the devil.
- The faithful dwelling in a kingdom of grace and reigning as kings over the world, sin and the devil.

The Lord Jesus Christ will make the faithful a Kingdom of priests to his God and Father, (Rev. 1:6) and they will reign with Christ the King on the earth a thousand years as kings and priests to God (Rev. 5:10) and then reign with him throughout all eternity in glory.

The twenty-four elders: Revelation chapter seven shows that in this vision of John God the Almighty is seated on the throne, the Lamb is standing around it and there are four different groups of creatures and beings around the throne:

- The twenty-four elders.
- The four living creatures (four beasts in KJV).
- The angles.
- A great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, tribe and languages, who had washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb. (Revelation 7:9-14).

Amongst theologians there are different ideas concerning who the twenty-four elders seated around the throne represent. Following are the four most common:

1. The two sets of twelve typify the heads of the twelve tribes and the twelve apostles. The heads of the twelve tribes are taken to represent the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve apostles are taken to symbolize the New Testament church and onward. Taken together they represent the whole global church made up of Jews and Gentiles from Adam to Christ's return in glory.
2. The twenty-four courses of Levite priests spoken of in the book of Chronicles. The LORD commanded David to organized twenty-four divisions of Levite priests to service in the temple of the LORD, according, to the duty God had commanded Aaron. These twenty-four divisions of priests were appointed to serve in the Old Testament temple of the LORD. (1 Chron. 24:3-19). It is supposed by some commentators that the twenty-four elders around the throne of God typify these twenty-four divisions of Levite priests who attended the service of the Old Testament temple daily and represent the whole Israel of God, being all the faithful members of the church, from the first faithful believer to the last faithful believer, typifying the entire global body of Christ under the Old and New Testament. Supporting this idea is the following vision of Ezekiel in which the LORD brought him into the inner court of the house of the LORD and he saw at the entrance of the porch and the altar of the temple of the LORD:

- About twenty-five men, with their backs to the temple of the LORD, and their faces toward the east, worshipping the sun toward the east. (Ezekiel 8:16).

This vision may be a representation of the twenty-four divisions that David divided the Levite priests into to serve in the temple of the LORD (1 Chron. 24:3-19), with the high priest among them, making up the number twenty-five and here in John's vision it is possible that he may be alluding to this symbolising the Old and New Testament church as a heavenly priesthood around the throne of God, which harmonizes with the following verse:

- You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. (1 Peter 2:9).
3. The twenty-four elders are symbolic of those of the Old Testament and New Testament who sing the new song in Revelation chapter five saying:
 - Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, (Rev. 5:9).

Here they are symbolic of the whole church of every age and nation and represent the overcoming church triumphant.

4. The twenty-four elders surrounding God's throne signifies the whole universe ascribing power and dominion to God.
 - I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!" (Rev. 5:13).

Perhaps the best way to discover who these twenty-four elders might be, is to start from the first mention of them and trace them through to the last mention of them. The first mention of the twenty-four elders is:

- Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones were twenty-four elders, clothed in white garments, with golden crowns on their heads. (Rev. 4:4)
- The twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever. They cast their crowns before the throne, saying, ¹¹"Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created." (Rev. 4:10-11).

In these two verses the twenty-four elders (with the four living creatures) are seated on thrones in heaven clothed in white wearing crowns worshipping the One seated on the throne and while humbling themselves they credit Him with all honor and kingly power by casting their crowns down before Him. The one seated on the throne is the Lord God Almighty, the God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob. We know this, because in (Rev. 5:5-7) the Lamb takes the scroll from His right hand. The next mention of the twenty-four elders is in the following verses though in these verses they are referred to as elders only:

- One of the elders said to me (John), "Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals." ⁶And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. (Rev. 5:5-6).

Here we see that the Lamb is amongst the twenty-four elders (with the four living creatures) around the throne of God. The next we read of the twenty-four elders is in the following:

- When he (the Lamb) had taken the scroll (from the One seated on the throne), the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. ⁹And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, ¹⁰and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth." (Rev. 5:8-10).

Here the twenty-four elders (with the four living creatures) are pictured holding the prayers of the faithful and singing a new song worshipping the Lamb, because he is worthy and because he has made the faithful a kingdom and priests to God, who shall reign on the earth. (Rev. 5:8-10). (Keep in mind this is a vision of future things to come). The next mention of the twenty-four elders is in the following verse though in this verse they are referred to as elders only:

- I (John) looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands. ¹²saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!" (Rev. 5:11-12).

After the second woe, had passed and the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and loud voices in heaven was heard, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become the Kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ," we then read of the twenty-four elders (with the four living creatures) worshipping God:

- The twenty-four elders who sit on their thrones before God fell on their faces and worshiped God. (Rev. 11:14-16).

Here we see that the twenty-four elders (with the four living creatures) around the throne see that the kingdoms of this world become the Kingdoms of God and that this event is still future as there is still the third woe to come. This perhaps could read, "The kingdom of the world

has almost become the Kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ. The next mention of the twenty-four elders is in the following verses though in these verses they are referred to as elders only:

- I (John) heard a voice from heaven like the roar of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder. The voice I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harps, ³and they were singing a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and before the elders. No one could learn that song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth. (Rev. 14:2-3).

Here the twenty-four elders (with the four living creatures) are surrounded by a great multitude singing a new song around the throne of God. We next see the twenty-four elders worshipping God after He, had judged the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her abominations and immorality:

- The twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who was seated on the throne, saying, "Amen. Hallelujah!" (Rev. 19:4).

After this a great multitude, cried out, saying, "Hallelujah! For the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready and the One who is called Faithful and True, sits on a white horse to judge and strike down the nations and will rule them as King of kings and Lord of lords. (Revelation chapter nineteen). This is the last we hear of the twenty-four elders. Note, whenever the twenty-four elders are mentioned the four living creatures are always seen with them.

Conclusion: the twenty-four elders are seated on thrones in heaven clothed in white signifying their righteousness and wearing crowns signifying their kingly status and, in every verse they are mentioned in they are either worshipping the Lord God Almighty, the God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob who is seated on His throne or worshipping the Lamb, the Lord Jesus Christ. Each of the twenty-four elders are pictured holding the prayers of the faithful and singing a new song worshipping the Lamb, because he is worthy and had made the faithful a Kingdom and priests to God, who shall reign on the earth. They are seen in John's vision (with the four living creatures) after the seven letters to the seven churches were completed and the angel said to John "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this." (Rev. 4:1) through to chapter nineteen when the kingdom of the world had almost become the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ and they were surrounded by a great multitude singing a new song around the throne of God. The great multitude were singing this new song for the following three reasons:

1. God had judged the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her immorality.
2. The marriage of the Lamb had come, and his Bride had made herself ready.
3. The Lord had come on a white horse to judge and strike down the nations and to rule over them as King of kings and Lord of lords. (Revelation chapter nineteen). This is the last we hear of the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures.

Who the twenty-four elders symbolize: the twenty-four elders are seen in John's vision of future things to come and are in heaven from the time John was called up to heaven to the time the Bride appears ready for the Lamb. During all this time the church is still on earth which means that the twenty-four elders most likely signify in vision form the twelve heads of the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve apostles. Together these two groups symbolise the entire church of God from Adam to Christ's return and show that no matter what terrors, dread and calamities come upon earth the redeemed will be resurrected to heaven and surround God's throne and worship the Lamb with the heavenly host surrounded by the angels. It would be a pointless exercise spending further time trying to pinpoint whether the twenty-four elders symbolise:

- The global church made up of Jews and Gentiles or the twenty-four courses of Levite priests.
- Those who sing the new song in Revelation or the whole universe ascribing power and dominion to God.
- The entire church of God from Adam to Christ's return.

For the following two reasons:

1. Whether they symbolise, the whole global church made up of Jews and Gentiles from Adam to Christ's return in glory; the twenty-four courses of Levite priests; those who sing the new song in Revelation; the whole universe ascribing power and dominion to God or the entire church of God from Adam to Christ's return they all carry the same idea, which is that 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 represent all faithful spiritual successors as priests to God which is the Great United Church.
2. No matter whether they symbolise the heads of the twelve tribes, the Levite priests, the twelve apostles or some other thing the message is the same, which is to reveal to John what God was to do in future times with His faithful church and to show those who have been washed by the blood of the Lamb the eternal glory of their everlasting inheritance. They are used to highlight to John the various stages that will take place on the earth, until the faithful are resurrected and Christ's government is established. They are first seen when John is called up to heaven in Revelation chapter four and last seen in Revelation chapter nineteen when John sees the Bride who has made herself ready for her Groom.

REVELATION 4:5

9

Seven Torches of Fire, Before the Throne are Seven Spirits of God.

- **Revelation 4:5:** From the throne came flashes of lightning, and rumblings and peals of thunder, and before the throne were burning seven torches of fire, (seven lamps of fire burning before the throne in KJV), which are the seven spirits of God.

Lightnings and voices coming from the throne signify God's sovereign fearful and terrifying judgments that are about to be poured out on the prostitute woman and the beast spoken of in the following verses:

- The woman full of abominations sitting on a scarlet beast that was full of blasphemous names, and that had seven heads and ten horns. (Rev. 17:3-4) and who had written on her forehead "Babylon the great, mother of prostitutes and of earth's abominations." (Rev. 17:5).

In chapter nineteen we read of a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, crying out:

- Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, ²for his judgments are true and just; for he has judged the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her immorality, and has avenged on her the blood of his servants. (Rev. 19:1-21).

Before the throne were burning seven torches of fire: (v5) (seven lamps of fire burning before the throne in KJV). We are told that these burning torches of fire before the throne are the seven spirits of God. In the context of this vision they refer to the seven judgments of God that are about to be poured out.

REVELATION 4:6-8

A Sea of Glass Like Crystal and Four Living Creatures.

- **Revelation 4:6-8:** and before the throne there was as it were a sea of glass, like crystal. And around the throne, on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind: ⁷the first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with the face of a man, and the fourth living creature like an eagle in flight. ⁸And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!"

The sea of glass like crystal: (v6) may signify the following two things:

1. A sea that is vast, wide and deep, pure and clear, peaceful and calm and far away from any storm appears to the eyes as a sea of glass like crystal. Symbolically such a sea signifies the purity, calmness, and majesty of God's rule in contrast to the many turbulent waters on which the great prostitute sits, spoken of in the following verses:

- One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the judgment of the great prostitute who is seated on many waters. (Revelation 17:1).
- The angel said to me, "The waters that you saw, where the prostitute is seated, are peoples and multitudes and nations and languages. (Rev. 17:15).

In Revelation chapter fifteen those standing upon this sea are those who had gotten the victory over the beast.

- I saw what appeared to be a sea of glass mingled with fire—and also those who had conquered the beast and its image and the number of its name, standing beside the sea of glass with harps of God in their hands. (Rev. 15:2).

The sea of glass contrasts the seas of the earth which are constantly tossing and foaming and turning and raging, whose waters stir up mire and dirt (Isaiah 57:20) as they are continually being disturbed and troubled by winds, tempests and storms, signifying God's wrath and fury. This raging sea is, in contrast to God's stillness and peace. The idea is that while God's judgment and wrath is bringing fear, dread and terror upon earth there is peace and calm around God's throne in heaven. Spiritually it signifies those who are redeemed rest in mental peace and calm knowing that their crown of salvation and eternal rewards are secure and awaiting them in heaven.

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2. In (1 Kings 7:23-26), we see that King Solomon hired Hiram a worker in bronze to make a sea of cast metal (a molten sea in KJV). This sea of cast metal was ten cubits (15 feet) round and five cubits high (7½ feet) and its circumference measured thirty cubits. (30 feet). It stood on twelve oxen facing outward (Exod. 30:25), three facing north, three facing west, three facing south and three facing east. This sea (i.e., enormously large basin of water) was made of cast bronze and was for the priests to wash in (2 Chron. 4:6). In Exodus chapter thirty the LORD told Moses to:

- Make a basin of bronze (laver in KJV), with its stand of bronze, for washing. You shall put it between the tent of meeting and the altar, and you shall put water in it, ¹⁹with which Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet. ²⁰When they go into the tent of meeting, or when they come near the altar to minister, to burn a food offering to the LORD, they shall wash with water, so that they may not die. ²¹They shall wash their hands and their feet, so that they may not die. It shall be a statute forever to them, even to him and to his offspring throughout their generations." (Exod. 30:17-21).

Moses sea was made of bronze metal (signifying judgment) whereas here in Revelation it is said to be made of glass (signifying purity). Perhaps the sea of glass here in Revelation signifies the resurrected priests and by extension the resurrected redeemed who had been made clean by the blood of Christ and no longer needed washing. All

sin has been washed away so that they now appear like translucent glass as clear as crystal before God signifying, they are without spot or blemish. There are of course many other ideas of what the sea of glass may signify, but these two seem to be most likely ones.

Overview of the four living creatures: one of the four living creatures gave seven-golden bowls (golden vials in KJV) to the seven angels (Rev. 15:7). These golden bowls were normally used for sweet smelling incense, but in the hands of this living creature are now filled with the wrath of God, which is about to be poured out upon the antichrist kingdoms in answer to the heartfelt prayer and cry of the faithful, "O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" (Revelation 6:10). The fact it was one of the four living creatures that gives the seven vials of wrath to the angels (Rev. 15:7) shows that the four living creatures cannot be human ministers of the church on earth (as some suppose). In John's visions of future things to come the four living creatures are seen in heaven from the time John was called up to heaven (Rev. 4:1-11) to the time the Bride appears ready for the Lamb. (Rev. 19:4-7). During all this time the church is still on earth which means that the four living creatures most likely symbolise:

- Four figures that have great authority, outstanding power and influence and stand in the presence of the LORD forever, ready to carry out His will, plans and purposes.
- God's mighty power and omnipresence over the entire universe and the earth and His will and judgment being worked out on the nations and all creation.

Their six wings (Rev. 4:8) most likely symbolise strength of something (natural or spiritual) that carries a thing (good or bad) to its destination. There is a living creature on the north, east, south and west side of God's throne which signifies that their power, influence and calamities will affect the entire earth and not just part of it in the latter days. Being awe-inspiring creatures of splendour and wonder in vision form that worship God and the Lord Jesus Christ they inspire and encourage the church by showing that all things are in God's control and no matter what terrors, dread and calamities come upon earth the redeemed will be resurrected to heaven and stand before God's throne and worship the Lamb with the angels surrounding them, prior to God's wrath being poured out. The King James Bible uses the word "beasts," while many modern Bibles use the word, "living creatures."

Since the creatures have characteristics and appearances that beasts cannot have such as being full of eyes in front and behind and having the face of a man (Rev. 4:6-8), the better translation is, "a living thing or living creature," especially since they are to be taken as symbols that represent various things and not literal animals. Whatever these four living creatures are that represent creation, it is interesting to notice that one of them gave the seven vials/bowls to the seven angels to pour out God's divine justice upon His enemies, and that it is through creation that the wrath of God comes upon the anti-Christian beast world. It could be said that God has given to all things an eternally righteous law that is averse to evil, and cannot be broken without consequences, which means that His wrath is the operation of His righteous law against sin.

The number four: since there is a living creature on each of the four sides of God's throne (i.e., the north, east, south and west), the number four most in this context most likely signifies that the power and influence they do have will affect all the earth and not just part of it. For further information concerning the four living creatures click or tap [Topics in Revelation](#) and select the title: Four Living Creatures.

Worthy is God, to Receive Glory for He Created all Things.

- **Revelation 4:11:** "Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for you created all things, and by your will (for thy pleasure in KJV) they existed and were created."

Some Bibles translate the verse, "by your will," while others translate it, "for thy pleasure," it is pointless debating which one is right and which is wrong, since both can apply, there is no doubt that God created all things according, to His will, and it is equally certain He like everyone who creates things also created them for His good pleasure. In Genesis, it is written:

- God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good (Gen. 1:31).

God is the eternal beginning of all things, all creation owes their existence to the will of God and His infinite power, this truth is the foundation of praise. This, is why it is right and proper to look up and through nature to God. He is the first cause, and the end of all things and by His power and for His glory not only brought into being all creation, but also purposed in His eternal mind, by His eternal foreknowledge that His Son the Lord Jesus Christ would be Saviour and Redeemer of all mankind and therefore it is proper that universal praise should be rendered to Him. All faithful believers ascribe their redemption and conversion, their present blessings and future hopes, to the Lord Jesus Christ and his heavenly Father the eternal and most Holy God, so it is only natural that the whole scene of the heavenly host ends this chapter with joyful songs of triumph and hymns of harmonious, adoration and thankful praises of worship.

FOOTNOTE: as the founder of Bible House of Grace I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.

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