

Chapter 4

4 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.”

After these messages to the Churches have been delivered, John is presented with a door in Heaven. John is clearly still in vision but it’s important for us to establish this on the timeframe of the book.

If you remember there is a distinct break between verses 11 and 12 of Chapter 1. This is where we theorised that the actual letters to the 7 Churches were revealed to John, and after this he turned to see who was speaking to him and identified Jesus. Chapter 4 follows Chapter 1 with Chapters 2 and 3 slotting into the space between verses 11 and 12.

Therefore, the Revelation timeline works something more like this:

1. Chapter 1:1-11 establish the authority of the 7 letters
2. Chapter 2 and 3 are the 7 Letters
3. Chapter 1:12 – 20 completes the penning of the letters and
4. Chapter 4 follows these events.

This may seem mildly confusing in terms of the penmanship but should not distract us from what is being presented. Chapters 1-3 are presented as a block and there are several such blocks that make up the Book of Revelation. It is after the letters are written to the 7 Churches and Christ is given the authority of them that John now hears another voice, like a trumpet, that invites him to see new things – things that have not happened. That is, things that have not happened in John’s time; not things that happen after the Church of Laodicea.

² Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and *One* sat on the throne.

John is straight away in vision again, this time seeing Heaven’s throne room. John is able to distinguish both a throne and a character sitting on it. This is not to say that John saw God the Father, but rather he could identify a presence sitting 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.

Jasper and a Sardius are both reddish-brown semi-precious stones that hold a strong and rich colour. Jasper can come in several other varieties of colour but is most common in red. The character seen sitting on the throne is identified as a deep reddish colour, similar to the Brass and Bronze we have identified with Jesus and Gabriel. Considering that Jesus was most likely olive-skinned and not the pale-white that we have always seen in art, this image of a reddish-brown man would have been highly relatable to the Mediterranean people that would read John’s letter.

The addition of the Rainbow makes the reader recognise immediately that John knows well Ezekiel's writings as this is an image that matches – but is different to – Ezekiel Chapter 1:26-28 “...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.” John the Revelator is relating his experience to that which Ezekiel had when he saw God's Throne, both in using that experience to stipulate that his was real and in giving Ezekiel the recognition that he was telling the truth. Ezekiel's words would have been well known to the people in the Churches that John was talking to so this is a realisation that John is truly seeing God's throne.

The important difference here is that while Ezekiel saw the rainbow shine on God like a Blue Sapphire, here God is revealed as a Green Emerald. This difference may seem cosmetic, but let's consider the nature of the colours. Blue is a rich and respectful, peaceful colour and was always associated with Passover and Hannukah while Green is the symbol of growth and resurrection. The God looking toward the Passover and sacrifice had now seen it and it was completed by the time the Green, resurrection colour shone from the throne.

Yet, the rainbow is still present – the promise of Noah that the world would never be again destroyed by Water, and would be protected and saved. The promise here is both one of protection from the world and protection from the God who sits on the throne. The bow is a law that demonstrates who wrote the law.

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.

These 'elders' are the first fruits of those redeemed from Earth – the first taken to Heaven. They probably include Elijah and Moses and others who were resurrected with Christ. They are the first-fruits of the saved where Jesus is the firstfruit of the resurrection. Who they are, specifically, is not revealed in this writing; only that they wear white robes of purity and have been crowned as princes and nobles. More importantly, they sit in the presence of the Almighty.

The privilege to attend the presence of a monarch is a great one reserved for a very few. To stand, regularly, in a monarch's court is a position of high regard and respect. But to sit in the presence of a monarch is a demonstration of trust and acceptance that is tremendously rare. These 24 are accepted as God's highest advisors and are given thrones of highest respect in his very presence. Yet, in Chapter 5, we have something interesting revealed;

Ch 5: 8 “...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:

“...For You were slain,
And have redeemed us to God by Your blood
Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,
10 And have made us kings and priests to our God;
And we shall reign on the earth.” “

These are saved from the earth – sinful creatures that are made kings and priests, with their own power and authority. These are the leaders of the saved.

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* ^[e]was a sea of glass, like crystal...

Noise, Lights, Fire, Power, demonstrations of God’s strength come from the Throne, and around it are the 7 representations of God, analogous with the 7 Churches as we discussed in Chapter 1. The fire that Burns in God is the fire for his people.

Infront of the throne then is a sea of glass, a representation that again mirrored Ezekiel but something John finds difficult to describe. A clear, stable yet transparent floor that amplifies and reflects everything around it. A transparency that still offers protection and separation.

...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!”

And then there were the 4 Living Creatures (‘Beasts’ is acceptable but has too many negative connotations along with it). These magnificent and almost indescribable creatures that exist both around and within the throne, full of eyes seeing all, each with 6 wings and have no need of rest. These – as we shall find – are the most powerful creatures ever created; more powerful than Lucifer himself, and are given the authority over the events that surround this world.

The number of these beasts – 4 – demonstrates a universality. When we consider the 4 sides of a building, 4 directions; North, South, East and West and 4 natural winds, these creatures have dominance over all the major aspects of nature. They also stand around the throne, surrounding it. If it were our world, we would consider them the body men or personal assistants of God; as if he needed them.

They are each given a different quality – which is most likely symbolic and not a literal view of what they look like.

The Calf was a symbol of wealth and management in the Jewish nation.

The Lion strong and brave, given to war and power. Jesus is called the Lion of Judah

The Man is intelligent and decisive, the highest of evolution and the only able to use more than rudimentary tools.

The Eagle is an emblem of swiftness and wisdom, flying high above the plain it sees all and is able to understand the full picture of whatever it is looking at.

These creatures have no rest, they spend all their time acknowledging the magnificence and glory of God. They manage and control tremendous power as we shall see.

The question that arises is 'Are they angels'? This has perplexed scholars as we're so removed from Heaven that nobody can remember the arrangement of the Angels. We know of 2 orders of Angels;

- Seraphim with 6 wings that exist 'above' the Throne and cry "Holy, Holy, Holy" (Isaiah 6) and
- Cherubim with 4 wings that are implied to be much more numerous and more active (Ezekiel 10).

These creatures do not fit either of those descriptions, and we must therefore consider them another type of creature, not Seraphim or Cherubim. What makes them so different is they stand in the very presence of God; between the Elders and the Throne.

⁹ Whenever the living creatures give glory and honour 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 honour and power;
For You created all things,
And by Your will they exist and were created."

The actions of these 4 Creatures inspire those around the throne to pay homage to God. They supplicate themselves before the Throne, discarding the honours they have been given and dismissing their own achievements as naught. Their casting down of their crowns – the symbols of their own authority – and their worshiping of the Father is a clear recognition of just how little they can and should do themselves, but more than that, the recognition of this God being the Creator God.

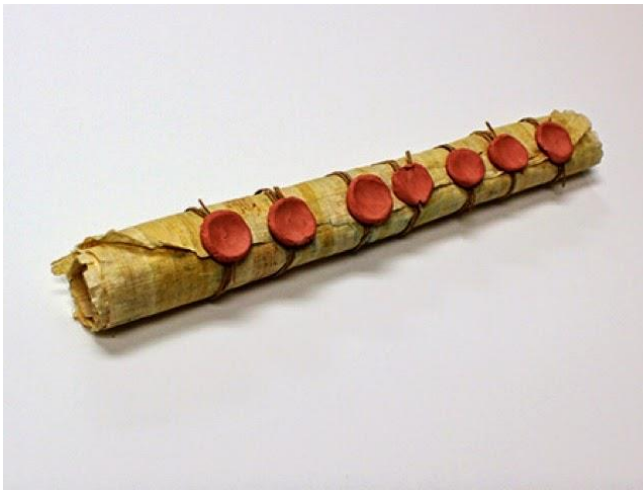
This reference to the Creator God is another common moniker and is, arguably, the most senior of God's titles. Without it, there can be no other titles for God. To acknowledge him as creator of all is to ascribe to him absolute and unquestioned authority and power. This is why these Elders and Creatures are so in awe.

Chapter 5

And I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a scroll written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals. ² Then I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?" ³ And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll, or to look at it. ⁴ So I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open and read the scroll, or to look at it.

This must be the most astonishing scene recorded in scripture. The personage on the throne holds a book in his right hand, sealed with 7 seals.

A book like this requires some investigation. Firstly, when we say 'book' we actually mean 'scroll'. Scrolls of this type were extremely common, and sealing was similarly very common when transmitting messages. Typically a letter was sealed with only one seal but wills were somewhat different. In Ancient Rome, wills were considered much more important and could only be opened



with a number of witnesses – specific people who's seals were explained at the bottom of the will itself. Sometimes, especially with tremendously important people, the witnesses would seal the will with their own seals, 7 being the more important number.

These would then be the witnesses when the document was opened as they were the only ones who could ascribe that the seals on the outside were theirs.

More important than the document being protected from inappropriate eyes was that the document itself could only be opened by

one of similar or higher class than the one who wrote it. In today's world, we would say that the will of a Prime Minister or King can only be opened by another Prime Minister or king – most usually their successor. In very extreme situations, the witnesses can open it but that would be an extremely unusual situation if for no other reason that they are usually heirs in some form.

This is where the problems arise in Heaven. God the Father holds this document in his hand. Who's will is it? It can't be the Father's, he has no need for a will; he's immortal. Any human who was a part of the 24 Elders would not make any difference as their wills would only relate to Earth and nobody else in heaven needs a will. The only person who's will this can be is Jesus Christ's.

But heaven is thrown into a turmoil by this. God the Father is obviously holding it, but what right does he have to open it? He does not own or manage Earth; Jesus Ransomed earth from Lucifer. No other Angel is anywhere near God's power and as we've just seen, Jesus is walking around the 7 Churches on earth. Indeed, no other member of Heaven has any comparison to Jesus' experience in both Heaven and Earth. Adam and Eve spent time in the Garden of Eden but not Heaven before the fall, and any Human saved from Earth has no association or authority of Heaven in any form, and from what we know there were no angels that sided with Satan that repented. The only person that has, or ever will, experience both the highest joys of heaven; the full power of God and the crushing depths of despair that humanity experiences is Jesus. He, alone, is worthy to open his will.

John sees that all of Heavens is thrown into a fit; a document that even God himself cannot open! Even John starts bawling his eyes out at the very thought!

If Jesus is on Earth, then what of those 7 Witnesses? Who are they? They can't be members of the disciples; most of those were only just dead when John was writing this book and, therefore, still in graves on Earth. They can't be members of Heaven or angels or even God. As we have seen, they do not come close to understanding Jesus' world and can't bear witness close to it.

The seals must be actors on the Earth, and I would argue they are the 7 Churches. The 7 phases or 7 demonstrations of God's love. The 7 time periods during which there are heirs to God's promises both inside and outside his message clearly are the best to demonstrate the Love and saving grace of Christ Jesus.

⁵ But one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals." ⁶ And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth. ⁷ Then He came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne.

John is told, clearly, who has the authority to open the seals – Jesus, the Lion of Judah born of David. This Jesus is the only one that has the power, authority and position to open the seals. John sees the sacrificed lamb with horns and eyes that cover and manage the entire earth.

Eyes to see all that is going on within his Church and beyond

Horns, like in Daniel, representing powers and authorities under his management and control. At all times, Jesus has had forces and organisations loyal to him and nobody else. Those may have been obscure and not mainstream; like the Waldenses or Sabbatarian Indian and Japanese Christians, but he has always had the influence to whisper in the ears of Kings and Emperors as we saw happen in Daniel Chapter 10.

This Jesus is the only actor in the universe with the power, authority and experience to open this sealed scroll and he demonstrates this by taking it from God the Father's right hand.

We should examine what the scroll is and how it works as that will be important in the next few chapters. Wills demonstrate inheritance and this one is no different. Each of the 7 seals needs to be examined by those who put it there – the 7 Churches – and then that seal can be broken. If we take from the last 2 chapters the idea that each church represents a time period, we can see that the opening of this document reflects over a period of time as each of the Churches experiences are lived through. We will need to map these up as we go.

The longed-for 2nd Coming can only happen after the will is opened; the inheritance is not known until the will is read. This gives us something of an end-time for the 7th Seal. What's more, this will add to the Millennium when we get to examine that as there is a period of time after the inheritance is decreed to when it is transferred. The millennium – the period between Jesus' 2nd and 3rd coming, is this difference, but we will discuss that later.

One question often asked is why God the Father couldn't open the document. God the Father can certainly break the seals and read the will, but Jesus is the one who ransomed the Earth and the Father has no right to give away the Son's property. God the Father has not experienced the same, powerful and dramatic experience that the Son did, and therefore he is the one that must accept the sacrifice as the author of the Law; he cannot act as High Priest in its completion.

This priestly imagery is another thing which we can relate to this Scroll. For readmittance to Heaven, the sanctuary Service must be carried out. Jesus' will relates to this return to Grace with the Father. However, there is a timeframe when the sanctuary ritual must take place too. Paul discusses this heavily in Hebrews, and Daniel alludes to this especially in chapter 8 ¹⁴ "And he said to me, 'For two thousand three hundred days; then the sanctuary shall be cleansed.'" This cleansing work must be completed before the end of the seals being broken or released in order for the inheritance work to be done.

This idea of Jesus as High-Priest is something we will again relate back to as we go forward but it is inherent in the will of Jesus being revealed here and now. In the same way that, when a particular family member inherits a house, other family members who inherit important pieces or furniture before the house itself is transferred, so the cleaning of the people must be completed before they are ready to take up residence in the New Jerusalem. Otherwise, they would muddy the carpets :)

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,
¹⁰ And have made us kings and priests to our God;
And we shall reign on the earth."

The elders owe everything to Jesus, that has been clearly established, but for the 4 Creatures to bow down and supplicate themselves in such a manner is incredible. They are humbling themselves before the Son as if he was the Father; which is not to the indignity of the Father. They powerfully stand and bow humbling themselves to God the Son who has experienced both Heaven and Earth, Heaven and Hell, Life and Death in all its forms and formats.

The Elders hold a harp and a bowl of incense that represents prayers. Incense burns leaving particles that are much smaller than most smoke which is why it rises so quickly and so clearly. A higher concentration blocks more light. The bowls here are not *actual* prayers, but simply a representation of the prayers and each of these Elders have gone through different experiences and can advocate before the Father – and, evidently, the Son – on behalf of those who have experienced similar things.

The harp they hold is where we get this idea of angels sitting on clouds strumming harps singing hymns from. Instead, these are experienced individuals who have been taken from the Earth and who have been through the world and its troubles. They acclaim Jesus as the only one worthy to open the scroll and use their own positions as an example of his delivering on his promises. By his

blood, they hold their positions. They are the first demonstration that Jesus is clearly able to keep and excel on his privileges and used his own blood to do so.

¹¹ Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, ¹² saying with a loud voice:

“Worthy is the Lamb who was slain
To receive power and riches and wisdom,
And strength and honor and glory and blessing!”

Now all the angels that were watching – those same angels that were moments ago weeping because the book could not be read – are all singing along, crying with a loud voice that the Lamb who was slain was able to open the will. This number, 10,000 times 10,000 and thousands of thousands represent the armies of Heaven – the armies that Michael led in Daniel 10 and will lead in Revelation 12. These are all the warriors of heaven, who fought against Lucifer, here acclaiming Jesus to have all strength, power and honour.

¹³ And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying:

“Blessing and honor and glory and power
Be to Him who sits on the throne,
And to the Lamb, forever and ever!”

At this time, all creatures on Heaven and Earth join in giving glory to Christ. Every creature in the Universe hails Jesus as the only one that could open the seals and save those on Earth. This is the acclamation that the sacrifice that Jesus made was and is secured. The sacrifice for those who died on Earth is fixed and secure and certified by all of Heaven and Earth.

¹⁴ Then the four living creatures said, “Amen!” And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever.

The only thing these 4 Creatures say here is this one word. “Amen”. Again, they put their power and assurance behind everything that has been said. “Amen”, remember, means “It is so” or “It has been decreed” or “This is how it is”. There is no flexibility or reticence implied here; these 4 Creatures are putting their own selves on the line to side with the surety of Jesus’ promises. The most powerful creatures created are backing Christ. They too have Certified that Jesus’ sacrifice accomplished everything necessary to save those whose names are written in this book – the true book of life.