**Revelation 4**

Chapters 4:1-8:1 form a full vision and should be viewed and studied together. The throne room part of the vision of chapter 4 is really the overwhelming and most detailed part of the vision. Chapter 5 is the vision of the lamb and the scroll. Chapters 6-8 are the opening of the scroll.

**4:1 –** The throne vision puts the events of the book in perspective. God is reigning far and above the earth that is about to go through the worst seven years of history. He will be controlling the events and his throne remains stable and unmoved.

**“after this”** is “meta tauta” which means “next” as in “after the time of the historical churches in Asia”

John is seeing the beginning of the vision so that he will understand what takes place in the rest of the book.

**4:2 –** John is in the Spirit and is seeing the source of the events that will transpire in this book. The events of Revelation show that nothinghappens or has ever existed aprt from the purposeof God.

**4:3**

**4:4** - There are 13 different views of who the elders are:

1. the heavenly fulfillment of the 24 priestly divisions of the temple (1 Chron. 3:6; 24:7-18)
2. 24 ruling stars or judges in the heavens
3. 24 represents fullness
4. They are symbolic
5. They are a class of angels – some say the mentioned angels, the four living creatures and the 24 elders are all angelic beings.

The 24 elders do these things:

1. Wear white robes and gold crowns
2. Prostrate themselves before God in worship. They offer their crowns and say ‘Hallelujah’ and ‘amen’
3. They sing hymns of praise to God
4. They have harps and censers. The censers represent the prayers of the saints.
5. Individual elders speak with John and act as an interpreter for the vision
6. They are judges, ‘Then I saw thrones and seated on them were those to whom judgment were committed.’ (20:4)
7. They are mentioned seven times in Revelation – 4:9-11; 5:5-14; 7:11-17; 11:16-18; 12:10-12; 14:3; 19:4

The number 12 (and, 12 doubled, 24) does seem to represent a full number: 12 months, 12 tribes of Israel, 12 apostles, 12 gates in the New Jerusalem, 12 angels at the gates, 12 foundations, 12,000 sealed from each tribe, New Jerusalem is 12,000 stadia.

The 24 elders are:

1. Human
2. Representatives of a larger group sent (selected ) to worship
3. From the church age and after the rapture

Reasons for believing the 24 elders are a group of humans representing the worshippers from the raptured church:

1. Angels never are seated on thrones. Angels are never pictured as ruling or reigning. Angels are “ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation.” (Heb. 1:14)
2. Thrones indicate authority and rulership. Since these 24 thrones encircle the Lord’s throne they should be seen as authorities/rulers established by the Lord, for the Lord and under the Lord. But, they are still rulers. The church is promised as a reward for faithfulness the right to rule with Christ in the future.
   1. Rev. 2:226-27
   2. Rev. 3:21
   3. Rev. 5:10
   4. Rev. 20:4
   5. Matt. 19:28
   6. Luke 22:30
   7. 1 Corinthians 6:2-3
   8. 2 Tim. 2:12
3. The Greek word for “elders” is “presbuteroi.” This word is never used to refer to angels. It means “an old man, an elder.” It is used in scripture to refer to an older person, a senior, forefathers of Israel, heads of tribes and families, members of the Sanhedrin, managers of public affairs, those who the Holy Spirit raised up to lead local churches. To describe these “elders” as angels here would be inconsistent with the meaning of the word and the previous use of the word in scripture.
4. White garments are seen on angels and onteh righteous men. In Revelation white garments symbolize Christ’s imputed righteousness, good deeds of the saints and a faithful life.
   1. Rev. 3:5
   2. Revl3:18
   3. Rev. 19:8
5. The crowns on the heads of the elders finalizes the evidence that these elders are men that have been taken from the earth and have under gone the Judgment Seat of Christ (or, the Bema Seat evaluation) of 1 Corinthians 2:10-15 and 2 Corinthians 5:10. They have already been judged and rewarded which indicates the church age is over.
6. Throughout the NT crowns (“stephanos” are promised to believers. The ‘stephanos’ is the victors crown. The ‘diadem’ is the kingly or imperial crown. The ‘stephanos’ is earned, the ‘diadem’ goes to the rightful heir. Here the word used is ‘stephanos’. Since angels are not struggling against sin they cannot be winners or losers. It is out of line to see an angel with a ‘stephanos’ or the crown of the victor. “Stephanos” is also used in these verses:
   1. Rev. 2:10
   2. 1 Cor. 9:25
   3. 2 Tim. 4:8
   4. James 1:12
   5. 1 Peter 5:4

It is clear these 24 elders are victoriouis humans. These questions still remain:

1. Who are they?
2. Why 24 of them?

The number 24 appear to make these men representatives of a larger group:

1. God has always been worshipped by representatives for a group: the father of the family, the priests and Levites, the High Priest, the entire temple worship system, Jesus as mankind’s high priest.
2. 24 is used in scripture to indicate completion and as a number of a group of representatives representing a larger group
3. 24 officers that represent the 24 divisions of the Levitical priests (1 Chron. 24:4-5, 7-18)

These 24 men represent the church:

1. It cannot be Israel since the whole nation has not yet had the veil removed and gone through the time of judgment seen in the book of Revelation. When these 24 elders are arouind the throne, Israel is still on the earth.
2. It cannot be the tribulation sainsts. These are yet to be martyred. Rev. 20:4 speaks of the tribulation saints’ resurrection, rewarding and judging on thrones in the millennium.
3. It cannot be angels due to the thrones, the crowns and the term ‘elders’
4. It must be the church that has been raptured before the tribulaitonh begins and has passed through the judgment seat of Chrsit already since thay have their rewards.

These 24 elders are also seen in:

1. Rev. 11:15-18 when the kingdoms of the word become the kingdom of Christ
2. Rev. 14:1-3 when the 144,000 meet on Mount Zion
3. Rev. 19:1-4 when God destroys Babylon and her religion and economics

Isaiah 24:23 speaks of the Lord setting up his kingdom on the earth when it says:

“For the Lord of hosts will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and His glory will be before His elders.” NAS

Clothing is clearly used in the vision to communicate the character of a new figure introduce into the vision:

1. 1:13 Christ
2. 7:9 The 144,000
3. 10:1 the mighty angel
4. 11:3 the two witnesses
5. 12:1 the woman in the heavens
6. 15:6 seven angels with bowls
7. 17:4 the great prostitute
8. 18:16 the great city
9. 19:8 the bride of the Lamb
10. 19:14 armies of heaven

**4:5 -** Lightning and thunder are associated with God’s presence in the Bible. They are seen when God’s throne is in view

1. Exodus 19:16
2. Ezekiel 1:13

Thunder and lightning seem to come from God’s holiness and thus his judgment.

In Hebrew poetry the thunderstorm is a symbol of the divine power and glory.

Before the throne were two things: 1) Seven Torches of Fire, 2) Sea of Glass:

1. Seven Lamps of Fire – in 1:12-13 it was a ‘luxnia’ **** or a ‘lampstand’ for the tabernacle with seven branches with wick and oil that produced a soft light inside a tent. Here in 4:5 the word is ‘lumpades’ ****  or ‘torch.’ It was used outside as a fierce, blazing torch. This torch was the seven Spirits of God which is a description of the Holy Spirit in all His fullness. Isaiah 11:2 and Zechariah 4:1-10.
   1. The seven aspects of the Holy Spirit fare from Isaiah 11:2: Wisdom, Understanding, Counsel, Strength, Knowledge, Reverence and Deity
   2. In Zechariah 4:1-10 it is power
   3. In Revelation 1:4 it is grace and peace
   4. Here in Rev. 4:5 it is judgment.

A fiery torch is used in war as in Judges 7:16, 20 (Gideon) and Nahum 2:3-4 where it says:

“The chariots storm through the streets, rushing back and forth through the squares. They look like flaming torches; they dart about like lightning.”

**4:6 –**

1. Sea of glass – The still, perfectly calm sea could represent the contrast of the ragin seao on the earth (the turmoil of the nations mentioned in Daniel and Matthew)
   1. It is clear it may indicate God being able to see into every event and heart below his throne as Hebrews 4:13 says, “Everything is uncovered and laid bare b efore the eyes of him to whom we must give account.”
   2. Exodus 24:10 describes this same sea: “Under his feet was something like a pavement made of sapphire, clear as the sky itself.”
   3. Ezekiel 1 also mentions this sea.

**4:7 –** The Holy Spirit is represented by seven torches here the attributes of God are represented by the four living creatures:

1. Full of eyes represent the omniscience and omnipresence of God
2. Lion, the king of the beast, represents the majesty and omnipotence
3. Ox, the domestic animal of service, represents the patience and labor
4. Man, God’s greatest creature, represent intelligence and rational power
5. Eagle, greatest bird, symbolizes the sovereignty and supremacy of God
6. Note: all of these character traits also point to the Man Jesus Christ

Ezekiel 1 and 10:15 calls the four living creatures CHERUBIM

**4:8 –** “Holy, holy holy” – In Hebrew the double use of a word adds emphasis. Usingit three times means it is referring to theinfinite, here the infinite holiness of God.

There are five hymns sung in chapters 4 and 5. Hymns are sung throughout the vision in Revelation:

1. 4:8
2. 4:11
3. 5:9-10, 12, 13
4. 7:12, 15-17
5. 11:15, 17-18
6. 12:10
7. 15:3-4
8. 16:5-7
9. 18:2-8
10. 19:2-6

The hymns help with the interpretation of the vision

In chapter 4 and 5 the choirs get larger each time a song is sung until the final song is sung in 5:13 by “every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them.”