

Revelation 4a - The Throne Room

Introduction to the Seven Seals

Revelation 4:1-3 *“After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will show you things which must be hereafter. 2 And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne. 3 And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.”*

Parallels between Chapter 4 and Chapter 1

Revelation 4	Revelation 1
4:1 - The first voice as of a trumpet.	1:10 - Heard a great voice as of a trumpet.
4:2 - John was in the Spirit.	1:10 John was in the Spirit.
4:5 - Seven lamps of fire.	1:12 - Seven golden candlesticks.
4:5 - Before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.	1:4 - From the seven Spirits which are before His throne.
4:4; 5:9-10 - Hast made us to our God, kings and priests.	1:6 - Hath made us kings and priests unto God.
4:1 - I will show thee things which must be hereafter.	1:19 - Write the things which...shall be hereafter.
5:1-5 - An introduction to the seven seals.	1:20 - An introduction to the seven churches.

When looking at these parallels, it is easily seen that chapter four like chapter one is an introduction. With chapter one we have the introduction to the vision and prophecy of the seven churches. Chapter four we have the introduction to the vision and prophecy of the seven seals. So on this basis we must conclude that chapter four is an introduction to and a new vision dealing with the seven seals.

After this - This is not a continuation of the vision from previous chapters, as we will see when coming down through verse 2. After seeing the events of the previous chapters, John now has a new vision which he introduces.

Behold, a door was opened in heaven - The first thing that must be noticed, is that the door that is being opened is not the door to heaven, but a door was opened in heaven. In verse 2, after the door has been opened, John sees a throne in heaven. Thus we can conclude that the door was the door to the throne room of God in heaven. But where is this door and where is the throne?

Progression from Holy to Most Holy Place

The following outline depicts a progression from the Holy Place to the Most Holy Place in the Heavenly Sanctuary in the Book of Revelation, including the final judgment and end of sin:

- **Holy Place** - *The Seven Candlesticks* - Rev. 1:12, 13; 4:5
 - - **Holy Place** - *The Table of Showbread* - Rev. 4:2-5
 - - ---Pre-Advent Investigative Judgment begins - Rev. 4 - 6
 - - **Courtyard** - *Altar of Burnt Offering* - Rev. 6:9
 - - **Holy Place** - *Altar of Incense* - Rev. 8:3-5; 9:13
- **Most Holy Place** - *Ark of the Covenant* - Rev. 11:19
 - - **Most Holy Place** - *Testimony (or Tables of Stone)* - Rev. 15:5
 - - **Most Holy Place** - *Smoke fills Temple* - Rev. 15:8 (cf. 1 Kings 8:10, 11) -- Christ's ministration ceases, probation closes -- plagues poured out. Temple closed to all men, Pre-Adventi Investigative Judgment ended - Rev. 22:11
- **Second Coming** - Rev. 19:11-21; 22:12
 - - **The Millennium and wicked judged** - Rev. 20:1-4
 - - **Great White Throne Judgment** - Rev. 20:11-13
 - - **Wicked destroyed in Lake of Fire**- Rev. 20:9, 10, 14, 15
 - - **Earth Made New and Eternity** - Rev. 21-22

Moses anointed the most holy place of the earthly sanctuary, and the prophecy of Dan 9:24 announced likewise an anointing of the most holy place in the antitypical sanctuary of the new covenant. Taking this fact into account, on what basis could we deny that the most holy must be consecrated at the inauguration of Christ's ministry in the heavenly sanctuary? On the contrary, other later statements of E. G. White seem to confirm the dedication of that inner place of the sanctuary in affirming that the door of the most holy was opened when Jesus died at the cross of Calvary (SDABCV, 1109)

Voice...of a trumpet talking with me - This first voice must be a reference to the voice that John heard in Revelation 1:10. The same voice now introduces the second vision. As the voice was like a trumpet in chapter 1 so it is here also, obviously indicating the intensity of the voice.

Which said, come up hither - The voice was inviting John to enter into vision. For we see, when the voice had spoken, John immediately enters into vision.

Things which must be hereafter - John was going to be shown what was going to transpire from here to after or, from now onwards. The time frame is from when the door opens onwards.

2. Immediately I was in the Spirit - That is, in vision.

A throne was set in heaven - This shows that the throne was already in place when John beheld it.

One sat on the throne - The word sat, in the Greek *kathemai*, means “to sit down.” John saw one sit upon the throne without stating who was sitting. In Revelation 4:8-10 we find that it is the Father who sat on the throne. *The Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.* See notes on Revelation 1:4 for *From Him which is, was and is to come.* This can only refer to the Father. And it is to Him that the *beasts give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne.*

3. Jasper - Greek *iaspis* Not the modern jasper, but a stone described by Pliny as translucent (Natural History xxxvii). John has recourse repeatedly to precious stones for describing brilliant colors for sunlight shining on such stones produced some of the most brilliant colors known in his day. From Revelation 21:11, where it is called most precious, which the jasper was not, EBRARD infers it was a diamond. Ordinarily, the jasper is a stone of various wavy colors, somewhat transparent: in Revelation 21:11 it represents watery crystalline brightness. The sardine, our cornelian, or else a fiery red. As the watery brightness represents God's holiness, so the fiery red His justice executing fiery wrath. The same union of white or watery brightness and fiery redness appears in Revelation 1:14; 10:1; Ezekiel 1:4; 8:2; Daniel 7:9.

Sardine stone - The cornelian or some other stone of a reddish color. Pliny (ibid) notes that this stone was to be found at Sardis and accordingly took the name of that city.

Rainbow round about the throne - The rainbow is a symbol to remind us that God is a covenant keeping God, (Genesis 9:11-17) He is the one that we can trust. But it also shows us of the everlasting covenant, the plan of salvation. Justice in the fact that the sinner that has broken the law deserves death, but mercy in the fact that God sent His own Son to die for the sins of the world, and those that confess and forsake their sins shall obtain mercy. So the rainbow is also a symbol to remind us of God's justice but also His mercy that characterizes God.

The rainbow round about the throne forms a complete circle (type of God's perfection and eternity: not a half circle as the earthly rainbow) surrounding the throne vertically. Its various colors, which combined form one pure solar ray, symbolize the varied aspects of God's providential dealings uniting in one harmonious whole. Here, however, the predominating color among the prismatic colors is green, the most refreshing of colors to look upon, and so symbolizing God's consolatory promises in Christ to His people amidst judgments on His foes. Moreover, the rainbow was the appointed token of God's covenant with all flesh, and His people in particular. Hereby

God in type renewed to man the grant originally made to the first Adam. The antitype will be the "new heavens and the new earth" restored to redeemed man, just as the earth, after the destruction by the flood, was restored to Noah. As the rainbow was first reflected on the waters of the world's ruin, and continues to be seen only when a cloud is brought over the earth, so another deluge, namely, of fire, shall precede the new heavens and earth: the Lord, as here, on His throne, whence (Revelation 4:5) proceed "lightnings and thunderings," shall issue the commission to rid the earth of its oppressors: but then, amidst judgment, when other men's hearts fail them for fear, the believer shall be reassured by the rainbow, the covenant token, round the throne. The heavenly bow speaks of the shipwreck of the world through sin: it speaks also of calm and sunshine after the storm. The cloud is the regular token of God's and Christ's presence, for example, in the tabernacle's holiest place; on Mount Sinai at the giving of the law; at the ascension (Acts 1:9); at His coming again (Revelation 4:7).

Like unto an emerald - The rainbow John saw around the throne was like unto an emerald, or green in colour.

Jasper - Reddish, Yellowish, brownish, Greenish and rarely Blueish

Sardine - Reddish

Emerald - Bright Green

Sapphire - Saturated shade of Blue Exodus 24:10, Numbers 15:38, 39

Rainbow - Reflection and refraction of light of the stones mentioned Genesis 9:13

Revelation 4:4 "And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold."

I saw four and twenty elders sitting - These 24 elders were seated upon 24 seats, or as in the original 'thrones', around the throne. But who are they? Refer to Revelation 4b - The 24 Elders - A response to "SDA QUARTERLY LESSON MONDAY January 21, 2019"

Revelation 4:5 "And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God."

Out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings - In Ezekiel's vision of the throne of God, Ezekiel 1:14; 10:5, he describes the movements of the angelic beings, who are the messengers of God. These lightnings and thunderings are the movements of the angels around the throne.

Seven lamps of fire burning before the throne - This clearly shows that the throne is in the holy place before/opposite the candlesticks. For we find this type of furniture in the holy place of the sanctuary southward. (Exodus 40:24) We should then be able

to find that God's throne is on the north side. Lucifer wished to exalt his throne above God's which was in the sides of the north. (Isaiah 14:13). For more information on seven lamps refer to Revelation 4c - The Seven Spirits

This should not be unusual to us as God dwells in the heavenly sanctuary (Psalms 102:19, 2 Chronicles 30:27, Jeremiah 17:12) and this is not to say that it is a small room, for it is not. In Daniel 7:10 we gain a small glimpse of the magnitude of just the most holy place of the sanctuary in heaven, so the human mind could not comprehend the size of the holy place.

So quite clearly the door that was opened in heaven was the door to the holy place of the sanctuary. (Leviticus 1:3 the sanctuary is regarded as having doors) And remembering back to Zechariah 6:12-13 Christ is ruling their as our king and priest. Christ entered into the holy place in 31 A.D. to start His ministration as our High Priest until He moved to the most holy place in 1844.

So why do we have the 24 elders in the holy place of the heavenly sanctuary?

You will find in 1 Chronicles 24:7-19, an organization of a 24 course of priests. These were to minister in the sanctuary under Aaron the high priest. This was still the case when Christ was upon the earth. (Luke 1:5, 8-9) Thus these elders are ministering in the sanctuary in heaven under Jesus Christ our high priest. What their administration is exactly, we are not told. But it cannot be the office of mediating, for there is only one mediator between God and man which is Jesus Christ. (1 Timothy 2:5). But even more, when the High Priest entered the Most Holy Place, the priests gathered around the porch in the courtyard. We believe the earth is the courtyard because the altar of sacrifice represents Calvary. So While Christ is the High Priest and is in the Most Holy place, we must see the antitypical priest in the earth at a special place doing a special work. This is brought clear in 1Peter 2:9 and 2Corinthians 5:18-20 and Joel 2:12-17. As present truth church, we are in the category of “The duty of the congregation during the Day of Atonement” but “The Duty of the Priests During the Day of Atonement”. I can just say Seventh Day Adventism has suffered an Identity Crisis when it comes to the Sanctuary message

Seven Spirits of God - We have just seen that the seven lamps are the candlestick in the heavenly sanctuary. Here we find that they are referred to as the seven Spirits of God or the Holy Spirit.

Revelation 4:6-9 *“And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind. 7 And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying*

eagle. **8** And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come. **9** And when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever,”

Sea of glass - The word glass in the Greek means “transparent.” Coupled together with the word crystal, we gain the understanding that this substance that is before the throne is like transparent ice, glass, or rock. Remember to that this is in the holy place of the heavenly sanctuary. It is brought to view again in Revelation 15:2, as the place where the overcomers, in the ecstatic joy of final victory, will soon stand. Also Revelation 7:9 shows us that it is all the redeemed that will stand before the throne and give honour and glory to God whilst standing on this vast sea of glass. This description has much in common with Ezekiel's vision of the throne of God, which rested upon a “firmament.” (Ezekiel 1:26) In ancient times glass was much more valuable than it is today. Here, it represents the clear, crystalline appearance of the surface on which the throne stood.

Crystal - Greek *krustallos*, a word meaning either “crystal,” a colorless, transparent mineral, or “ice.” What John sees is a vast shimmering expanse, gloriously reflecting the red and green radiance about the throne. Compare the vision of Ezekiel.

Midst of the throne - Perhaps, like Ezekiel's cherubim, (Ezekiel 1:22, 26) these beasts were seen under the throne as well as around it. The symbolism here is in harmony with ancient Semitic thought. Thus a sarcophagus from Byblus, from the end of the 2d millennium B.C., portrays a Phoenician king seated on a throne supported by an animal cherub (see W. F. Albright, “What Were the Cherubim?” *The Biblical Archaeologist* 1:1 [Feb., 1938], pp. 1-3). See Psalms 80:1; 99:1 and Isaiah 37:16.

Beasts - Greek *zōa*, “living beings.” The word *zōa* does not indicate to what order of creatures these four belong. However, they closely resemble those of Ezekiel's vision (see Ezekiel 1:5-26), which Ezekiel calls cherubim. (Chapter 10:20-22) The question must be asked, what are these living creatures that are around the throne?

In Ezekiel 1:1, Ezekiel was taken off in vision by the river Chebar, and from the following verses of that chapter, more so verses 5-10, we see that it was strikingly similar to what John saw. From Ezekiel 10:20 we see that these living creature are none other than Cherubim that are about the throne. This is not unusual for God dwells between the Cherubim. (Psalms 99:1)

The work of these Cherubim: - In Ezekiel 10:1 he sees that the throne is above the Cherubim (also 1:22, 26), and in verse 9 there are wheels beside the Cherubim. This shows that the throne of God has wheels and is movable, Daniel 7:9 confirms to us that the throne has wheels. So one of the duties of these Cherubim is to move the

throne of God, for we are told that the form of transport that God uses is the angels. (Psalms 18:10; 68:17)

It is these Cherubim that cry out ceaselessly holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come. And it is in this way that we see that they give God glory, honour and thanks.

Full of eyes - See Ezekiel 1:18; 10:12. This may be understood as a symbol of the intelligence and ceaseless vigilance of heavenly beings. Inasmuch as the symbol of eyes is plainly drawn from Ezekiel, it is possible to understand it here also in terms of Hebrew thought. Nine times in the Old Testament the Hebrew word *'ayin*, “eye,” is used in the sense of “color,” or “brilliance.” (Proverbs 23:31; Ezekiel 1:4, 7, 16, 22, 27; 8:2; 10:9; Daniel 10:6) This suggests that in describing the four beasts as “full of eyes,” John may mean that their appearance was one of shining brilliance.

7. Lion - Here each of the four beings appears with one of the four faces that were characteristic of each of the cherubim in Ezekiel's vision. (see Ezekiel 1:10; 10:14)

8. Six wings - The cherubim of Ezekiel's vision each had four wings (Ezekiel 1:6; 10:21), whereas the seraphim of Isaiah had six. (Isaiah 6:2) Wings may be understood as indicating the speed with which God's heavenly creatures execute their errands. (cf. Hebrews 1:14)

Rest not - Men customarily work by day and rest by night, but “he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.” (Psalms 121:4) The divine power upholding the universe never relaxes.

Day and night - Night brings an intermission to most human activities, but it has no effect on the ceaseless stream of praise to God that issues forth from the beings of heaven.

Holy, holy, holy - This is also the cry of the seraphim in Isaiah's vision. (see Isaiah 6:3) There is no valid reason for taking this triple ascription of praise as implying the Trinity, for it is directed to the one present on the throne, the Father. Christ and the Holy Spirit are here represented by other symbols.

Thanks - Heavenly beings as well as men owe God thanks, for He has given them life. They exist by His pleasure. In the ultimate sense God owes His creatures nothing; they owe everything to Him.

Who liveth for ever - Compare the Old Testament expression “the living God.” (Joshua 3:10; Psalms 42:2; 84:2) God is the source of all life, and the fact that He “liveth for ever” is the basis of His unceasing sustenance of nature.

Revelation 4:10-11 *“The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever 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 have created all things, and for your pleasure they are and were created.”*

11. Worthy - God is “worthy” to receive praise from His creatures, because He has given them life and all else they possess. He has made them what they are.

For thy pleasure - Or, “by thy will.” It pleased God to bring the universe into existence and to give life to its creatures. He saw that it was good to do so. There was nothing desirable from His point of view in being alone in an empty universe. It pleased Him that the universe should be peopled with intelligent beings, capable of appreciating and reflecting His infinite love and perfect character. This was His purpose in creating them.

Are and were created - Textual evidence favors the reading, “they were, and they were created.” By the expression “they were” John doubtless refers to the existence of the universe after God had brought it into being. God created and now sustains all things. (see Colossians 1:17)

When this cry of worship goes out from the Cherubim, the 24 elders fall down and worship God, casting their crowns upon the ground before the throne acknowledging that all victories have been derived through the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. They proclaim to the Lord that He is worthy to receive this glory and honour and power, why? For He has created all things. This shows to us the full reason of why we should worship God and give our all to Him, for He has created all things.

The question may arise of why we were created in the first place? This, here, is answered too. We were created for God's pleasure. This should bring unbounding joy into the heart to think that you and I were created for the pleasure of God. Never think of yourself as having no reason to live, for there is a God, Who is our Creator, that has created you for His pleasure.

An Important Principle of Bible Interpretation that Helps to Avoid Confusion and Error

Heavenly Kingdom of Glory	Earthly Kingdom of Grace
1. The Father – a literal Person.	God is spiritual –
2. Christ in heaven is present literally.	Christ is present spiritually (Matthew 28:20)
3. A literal Holy City (Revelation 21)	A spiritual Holy City – the Christians church (Revelation 11:2 Papacy treading down the Christian church for 1260 years)
5. A literal throne (Hebrews 1:3; Revelation 22:1)	A spiritual throne – heart of the believer.
6. Literal stones (Revelation 21:19)	Spiritual stones – individual Christians (1 Peter 2:5)
7. Literal priesthood (Hebrews 2:16-18; Revelation 5:8-10)	Spiritual priesthood of believers (1 Peter 2:5, 9)
8. Literal intercessor “The man Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 2:5)	A spiritual intercessor – Holy Spirit (Romans 8:26)
9. Literal altar of incense (Revelation 8:3)	A spiritual altar – the heart.
10. Literal incense (Revelation 8:3-4)	Spiritual incense (Revelation 5:8 margin; Psalms 141:2)
11. Literal offerings of Christ's blood and righteousness in His person (Hebrews 8:3; 9:12-13)	Spiritual offerings – prayer, praise, thanksgiving (1 Peter 2:5; Hebrews 13:15-16)
12. Literal lampstands (Revelation 1:12)	Spiritual lampstands – the seven churches (Revelation 1:20)
13. Literal light in lampstands (Revelation 4:5)	Spiritual light in the church – Holy Spirit.
14. Literal shewbread.	Spiritual bread – Word of God (John 6:51, 63)
15. Literal River of Life (Revelation 22:1)	Spiritual River of Life – the Spirit (John 7:38-39)
16. Literal Tree of Life (Revelation 22:2)	Spiritual Tree of Life – Word of God.
17. Literal resurrection of believers (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17)	Spiritual resurrection of believers – born again (Ephesians 2:1; John 3:3; 2 Corinthians 5:17)
18. Eternal life for believer, literally (Revelation 21:4)	Eternal life for believer spiritually (John 5:24)
19. God's law on literal table in literal temple (Revelation 11:19; 15:5)	God's law on spiritual tables of spiritual temple of the believer (Hebrews 8:10)
20. Believers will sit literally with Christ (Revelation 3:21)	Believers sit with Christ in heavenly places, spiritually now (Ephesians 2:6)
21. A literal Kingdom of Glory.	A spiritual Kingdom of Grace.
22. Jesus will be King – literally.	Jesus is king – spiritually now.

Today we find that this principle has been reversed. Often when the heavenly temple is spoken of, it is spoken of as a spiritual temple. Things in heaven are described as being spiritual or wholly symbolic. The reverse is true. According to this law of interpretation, things in heaven have a literal application the dispensation of the Spirit, and on earth they have a spiritual application. In heaven we have God the Father, a literal God, but we also have God's presence on earth through His Holy Spirit. In heaven Jesus Christ is present literally, but on earth Jesus Christ is present spiritually. *“Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”*

Again, in heaven we have the Holy city – a literal city, but on earth now we also have a 'Holy City'. The Scriptures speak of it in Hebrews 12:22-23 and Revelation 11:2, where it says that the Holy City was trodden underfoot forty and two months, referring to the time of Papal supremacy. Is it a literal city, or a spiritual city? It is a spiritual city, the city of the Christian church. Again, in heaven there is a literal temple, on earth a spiritual temple – of believers. (Ephesians 2:20-22) In heaven there is a literal throne. On earth there is a spiritual throne, the throne of the heart. In heaven there are literal stones comprising the Holy City. On earth there are spiritual stones forming the Christian church. (1 Peter 2:5)

In heaven there is a literal priesthood of Christ and the 24 elders. On earth there is a spiritual priesthood – the priesthood of believers. In heaven there is a literal intercessor – Jesus Christ – *“the one mediator between God and man.”* On earth, however, there is a spiritual intercessor, the Holy Spirit, Who makes *“intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.”* Romans 8:26.

In heaven there is a literal altar of incense. On earth there is a spiritual altar of incense, the altar of the human heart. In heaven there is a literal incense, on earth there is spiritual incense. In heaven there are literal offerings of Christ's blood and righteousness. He pleads before His Father: *“My blood, My blood.”* His blood and character are literally in His person. His righteousness is literally in heaven – a living righteousness.

On earth, now, there are spiritual offerings – the offerings of prayer, of praise, of thanksgiving. (1 Peter 2:5 and Hebrews 13:15) The righteousness is a spiritual righteousness received through the Holy Spirit.

In heaven there are literal lampstands, or lamps. On earth there are spiritual lamps, or candlesticks. They are the seven churches, in other words, the Christian church. (Revelation 1:20)

In heaven there is literal light in the lampstands. On earth there is spiritual light in the lampstands – the light of the Holy Spirit – the light of truth.

In heaven there is literal shewbread. On earth, in the spiritual temple, there is spiritual bread – the Word of God by which man alone can live. In heaven there is a literal river of life. On earth there is the spiritual river of life. According to John 7:38-39, it is the Holy Spirit.

There is a literal tree of life in heaven. On earth now, there is a spiritual tree of life – the Word of the living God. In the Kingdom of Glory at the Second Coming there will be a literal resurrection of believers. On earth now, there is a spiritual resurrection of believers – the spiritual rebirth – being “born again”.

In heaven there is eternal life for the believer, literally. Now, on earth there is eternal life for the believer, but in a spiritual sense. In heaven, God's law is inscribed on literal tablets in the literal ark in the literal temple. On earth, God's law is inscribed on the spiritual tablets of the human heart, in the spiritual temple of the believer.

Again, believers in heaven, will sit literally with Christ (Revelation 3:21) “*To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne.*” But, according to Ephesians 2:6, believers now sit with Christ in heavenly places in a spiritual sense. There is a literal Kingdom of Glory in heaven and there is a spiritual kingdom of grace on earth. Jesus is a literal king in the Kingdom of Glory, but on earth He is a spiritual King.

Here we believe is a great principle which is very relevant today. When it is properly applied, it will help one to avoid error and confusion, particularly in the regard to the heavenly sanctuary and the priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ. In order to make the above principle more clear it is set out overleaf showing the comparisons between the two applications.