

Intro:

1. Review the four views of Revelation
- 2.
- 3.

I. The Concept of Time

1. Some people view time as strictly being linear. There is a past, there is a present, and there is a future. So with that understanding, the book of Revelation is understood to be in chronological order. This is held by the Futurist, and also for the most part by
2. Another viewpoint is that there can be two separate realities that can take place at the same time. (Compare out reality to a reality of third world country: same world, but two separate realities.) There is said to be a “bifurcation” of time. They understand that there is the reality of this world that we live in, and another reality that is taking place in a spiritual reality. So they look at the book of Revelation as showing us the two realities. The realities of this world that we live in, and the reality of what is happening in Heaven. This is the viewpoint held by the Preterist and the spiritual interpretations. So the book of Revelation is not necessarily in Chronological order, but it goes from one reality to the next. That we see the reality of Heaven impacted the reality of this world.

II. Revelation 4:1-3, “After this I looked,(Phrased used throughout to indicate the beginning of a new vision) and there before me was a door standing open in heaven. And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this." ² At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it. ³ And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian. A rainbow, resembling an emerald, encircled the throne.”

1. Many Futurist see “Come Up Here” as a type of rapture and they will point out that the church that was so prominent is not to be seen on earth in the rest of the book is seen only in Heaven. Also, the language of the voice of being like a trumpet is similar to that of 1 Thessalonians chapter 4.
 - a. Yet, there is no mention of Rapture of the church here just of John being taken to Heaven and they would state that the word church used in the first few chapters referred to individual congregations and not to the church as a whole.
2. The historicist see this as a seen that is call attention to the sovereignty of God over history and the unique privilege of Christ to unfold history.
3. Some historicist, and the Preterist and futurist viewpoints see this as a picture of the throne room of God. The throne room of God is mentioned in every chapter of Revelation except for chapters 2,8, and 9. The courtroom is set for the plaintiffs in chapter 5 who are going to ask God to enact judgment upon those who are doing the wrongs. Interesting that the word throne is mentioned 62 times in New Testament and $\frac{3}{4}$ of those are in Revelation.
4. In John’s vision, the world is not a chaotic place, there is one on the throne in control of all things. In a way, you get the idea that the book of Revelation is not so much about what is going to happen in the future but more importantly who is in charge of that future.

III. Revelation 4:4-5, “Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders. They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads. ⁵ From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder. Before the throne, seven lamps were blazing. These are the seven spirits of God.”

1. Now the question is who are these 24 elders. Now remember that the numbers in Revelation are symbolic, and the number 24 is used as a means of saying completion and also and all inclusiveness of God’s people.
2. In 1 Chronicles 24:7 we learn that the priest were separated into 24 groups with each one having its elder. So some see these folks as representing those priest and they offer up the prayers of the saints in Chapter 5 which is a priestly work.
3. Another explanation is that this is a view of what is known as a Diving Council that takes place throughout the Old Testament.

- a. **1 Kings 22:19-21** (NIV), "Micaiah continued, "Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne with all the host of heaven standing around him on his right and on his left. ²⁰ And the LORD said, 'Who will entice Ahab into attacking Ramoth Gilead and going to his death there?' "One suggested this, and another that. ²¹ Finally, a spirit came forward, stood before the LORD and said, 'I will entice him.'
- b. **Job 1:6** (NIV), "One day the angels came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came with them.
- c. **Gen 3:22** (NIV), "And the LORD God said, "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever."
- d. So some see these elders as the divine council around God in His courtroom as He is about ready to lay down the law.
- e. *Nelson's new illustrated Bible commentary* says this: **Twenty-four elders** occupy other **thrones**. The identity of the elders is not certain. Some think that they represent the church or believers in heaven, but it seems preferable to view the elders as angels who comprise a heavenly ruling council (Jer. 23:18, 22). Authority is invested in those who by reason of age or experience are best qualified to rule. While it may refer to elders who represent the church, it must be noted that the seventieth week of Daniel is about to begin and God is once again dealing with Israel while the church in heaven is for a time out of view. It is also unlikely (logically and sequentially) that the church as the bride would be enthroned before their Lord and husband is recognized as being worthy to rule (5:8, 9). In fact, the church is to share His throne which has yet to be established (3:21). These elders function as ruling priests in the present age. Michael, an angel, is identified as one of these chief princes (Dan. 10:13; Col. 1:16). In contrast, the church is not prepared to rule until 19:7, 8. The **white robes** and **crowns of gold** point to those who are confirmed in righteousness and who possess ruling authority. The wearing of the crowns indicates that the elders had already been judged and rewarded.

4. The most common interpretation is that these 24 elders represent the redeemed saints of God, comprised both of the Old Testament saints and the New Testament Saints. Some indications for this:
 - a. They reign with Christ as the saints are said to do.
 - b. They are wearing white garments which was promised to the people in Sardis (3:5). He advised the Laodiceans to buy from Me white garments so that you may clothe yourself (3:18). The bride of Christ is said to be clothed in linen bright and clean.
 - c. Also, they are wearing crowns, and nowhere in scripture are angels wearing crowns.
5. The thunder and lightening is reminiscent of Mt. Sinai and it always seems to represent the power and authority of God. It's a sign that judgment is about to take place.
6. The lamps represent the 7 spirits of God, which we saw in Chapter 1. It is the Holy Spirit.

IV. **Revelation 4:6-9**, "Also before the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal. In the center, around the throne, were four living creatures, and they were covered with eyes, in front and in back. ⁷ The first living creature was like a lion, the second was like an ox, the third had a face like a man, the fourth was like a flying eagle. ⁸ Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under his wings. Day and night they never stop saying: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come." ⁹ Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives for ever and ever."

1. Different interpretations of the 4 living creatures:
 - a. The Spiritual interpretation tends to view these creatures as a combination of both the cherubim (Ezek. 1) and the Seraphim (Isa. 6). However, the description recalls the four cherubim in Ezek. 1:4–10, and thus the four figures probably represent four different angels (Ezek. 10). These living creatures or angels seem to be associated with creation and its ultimate redemption.

- b. The symbolic number of the number 4 of being that of the world. The 4 corners of the world, the seasons, four elements, four winds, four corners, etc. Some see these Creatures as representing God's creation.
- c. It's interesting that in the Talmud, which was the teachings of the rabbi in biblical times said that there were four who were primary among all created life; man, second among all domestic life, the ox, third among all the wild untamed life, the lion, and fourth, among the birds of heaven, the flying eagle. Some see them as representing all of God's creation worshiping God.
 - i. So if you put the two pictures together of the 24 elders representing redeemed Christians, and the 4 living creatures representing the creation all worshiping God.

2. Early Church representation of the four living creatures

- a. Made by Irenaeus about 170 AD. He said that they represented the four aspects of the works of Christ, which in turn represent the four gospels.
- b. The lion symbolizes the powerful and effective working of the Son of God, His leadership and His royal power. The ox signifies the priestly side of His work, for it is the animal of sacrifice. The man symbolizes His incarnation. The eagle represents the gift of the Holy Spirit. So John, speaks mostly about the power and deity of Christ and represents the Lion. Luke begins with the picture of Zacharias the priest, and tells the story of the fatted calf, symbolized by the Ox; Matthew begins with the human descent of Jesus and is symbolized by the man, and Mark starts with the prophesy and symbolized by the eagle. Now Augustine put these in a different order that has Mark as the Lion, Luke as the Ox, Mark as the Man, and John as the Eagle.

V. **Rev 4:10-11**, "the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne, and worship him who lives for ever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and say: ¹¹ "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being."

- 1. The imagery of them throwing the crowns is similar to what Rome would do to the vanquished enemies. It was a sign of total submission where you lay your power and your glory at the feet of another. For Rome it was an act of humiliation, for Christ it is an act of honor.
- 2. Now think about those two realities: This world-Caesar is the power, on his throne, the world is subjugated to him. But the real reality is that God is on His throne, and the world is His!