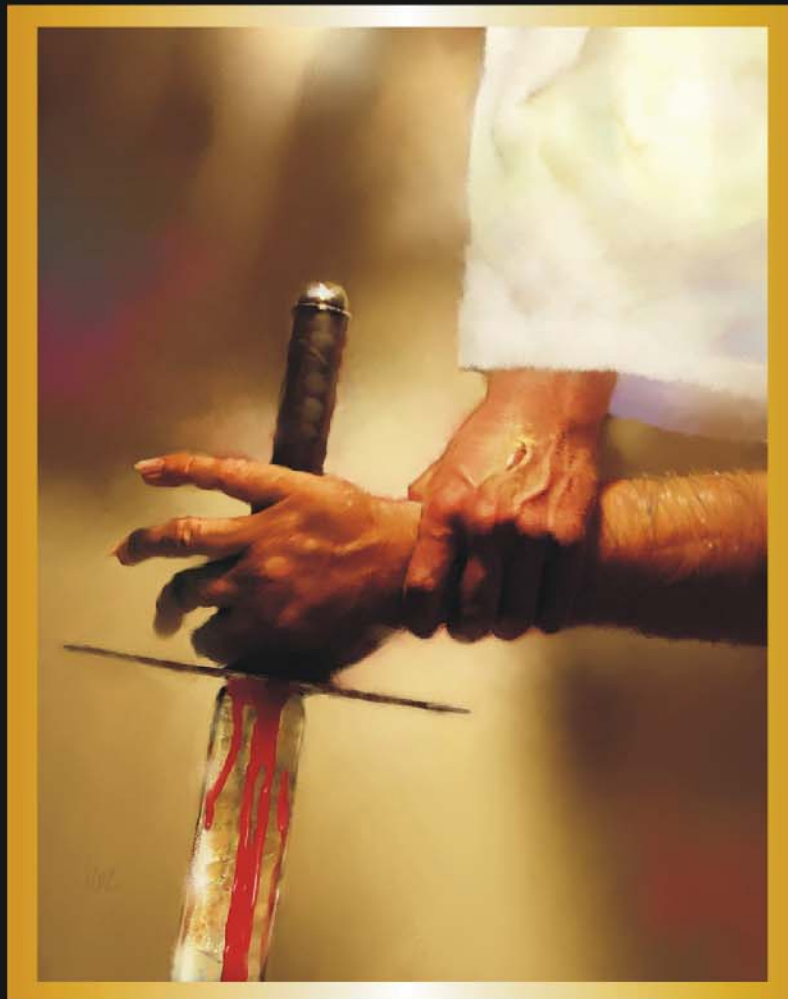


The Revelation



Chapter 4



REVELATION 4

There are many blessings which flow out of the division of the New Testament into chapters and verses by Steven Lantston, Robert Estienne, Robert Stephens and William Whittington in the 1400s and 1500s. Those divisions allow us to turn quickly to specific passages, to note their location, and to refer to them when writing papers and books, delivering sermons, corresponding with other Bible students or just studying the Bible for ourselves. There is also a downside.

The chapter and verse divisions of each New Testament book are sometimes made at places that can distort the original intent of the author of the whole book. Both traditionalists and modern scholars agree that the division of the Bible into chapters and verses is often incoherent and often occurs at inappropriate rhetorical or exegetical points. This often results in progressions of thought, dialogue or events that make perfect sense when considered as a whole becoming muddled when taken out of their context. Further, it encourages proof texting and the citation of passages out of context - in effect “turning the Bible into a kind of textual quarry for citations.”

No better example exists of this than The Revelation in our Bibles.

Revelation 4-11 form a discrete whole part of God’s message to humanity through John. They tie together, flow from and into each other, and are on a common theme. We will only understand them if we read and study them as they were designed to be read.

We also need to remember that so much is happening, so fast and so dramatically that we must constantly remind ourselves that this book, and these chapters are about Jesus. In this section, they vividly picture the travel and arrival of the One larger and more powerful than any force in the universe on his final trip to earth to

reclaim it as his own.

The Revelation is a book concerned with the end times; the time of the end; the time when God wraps up all of human history; where the final trajectory of Satan's Kingdom of Darkness is revealed and the ultimate triumph of the Kingdom of Light is seen in the climax of the cosmic war between good and evil.

To truly understand and appreciate the events symbolized by the Seals and the Trumpets of Revelation 4-11, you have to realize that they are a dramatic, high definition, surround-sound, live action, real time, full color picture of the events immediately surrounding Jesus' return to earth as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

These verses picture what will occur when God finally removes his restraint of Satan and his angels and earth experiences what it would have been like if he had not protected, even rebels, from the full force of the presence of ultimate evil.

In Revelation 4-11 we see the cataclysmic, chaotic physical, spiritual and environmental impact of Satan's rule of planet earth. Humans are finally faced with the real and visible consequences of their choices. Jesus in The Revelation lays out the final progression of what happens in human history under Satan's rule. He gives John a startlingly vivid picture of how it all will end. It is the live-action word picture of the triumph of God over evil!

The second one loses sight of that big picture, you lose sight of Jesus and The Revelation becomes nothing more than a collection of esoteric symbols and bogs down in a morass of speculation about details that have no clear meaning apart from their context.

Revelation 4 begins the second section of the Revelation. The emphasis now shifts from specific messages having to do with the spiritual condition of each of the seven churches to a general recounting of the sweep of universal and human history. From here to the end of the Revelation we get a clearer description of the major players in the final battles of the war between the Kingdom of Darkness and the Kingdom of Light. In this section of the revelation we receive a report, in advance, of the crucial and defining junctures in that war.

Revelation 4 through 22 can be seen as a living diorama of human history in advance. Because we cannot see all of the action at once, God takes us around and around the picture pointing out new details or different perspectives every time we pass around the circle; stopping now and then to describe what is happening, who is involved and what the outcome is.

The Revelation is an exciting and challenging book. In the Revelation we are forced to confront how we are and where we fit into the picture. We get to see in advance the outcome of the conflict and the major battles that lead up to it. We watch as the course of the controversy ebb and flows with one side or the other seizing the upper hand at any given moment. The veil that covers the unseen forces involved in the battle long before we ever war ever came to planet earth is drawn aside and we begin to discern their involvement in all that is happening around us. And, we are forced to choose, once and for all, which side we are on in that war between good and evil.

In the Revelation we discover the Creator of everything loving his created ones so much that he chooses to pay the penalty for their parent's rebellion, and each of their own, so that the power to choose which side they are on is restored to them. And, we hear him begging them to take advantage of that gift so that they do not have to be destroyed at the end.

Is it any wonder that this section begins with the citizens of the Kingdom of Light worshiping their Creator and celebrating his goodness and love!

Imagine for a moment that you are a 1st century fisherman - albeit an educated one for the day - and that you have never seen any of what we take for granted in the 21st century. You have never seen a car or an airplane or a computer or a television or a microwave or an atomic bomb. Then someone shows you the latest Stephen Spielberg Star Wars release and asks you to write down and describe what you have just seen. Suddenly, you begin to comprehend the challenge John faced trying to describe everything he was called upon to describe - only his task was a million times more difficult because anything Stephen Spielberg has imagined is like comparing Tinkertoys with the Space Shuttle. It is a miracle of inspiration that he was able to do as well as he did.

Revelation Chapter 4 is the preface to the rest of The Revelation. In this chapter we get to take a brief peek into the throne room of the universe. The remainder of the chapter describes the atmosphere of worship which prevades what occurs there.

Worship is all about honoring what is most important in my life. We all worship someone or something. It may be God; it may be myself; it may be someone else; it may be a job or a car or a house, a position or a degree. It can be anyone or anything. We reveal who or what our god is by what we focus our lives on and make most important in our lives - what or who we worship.

In Revelation 4 we discover all created beings in God's presence worshiping him - not because he demands it, but because he is so awesome! He created and sustains everything that is.

This is in contrast to the villain in The Revelation - one who quit worshiping God and began to worship himself. And, we see the consequences that grow out of that choice - for God, for the individuals involved, and for life in the cosmos itself.

Finally, we discover God's response and what it cost him.

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

"The next thing I saw was an open door leading into heaven."

Two verses before Jesus pictured himself standing at a door closed tight waiting for an invitation into the hearts of the Laodicean Church. Now, in contrast, John is shown a door standing open wide in welcome into Jesus' home. Then Jesus, his voice clear and penetrating as a trumpets blast, speaks again - this time from within the city. "John, come here, there are some things I want to show you. I want you to see what is going to happen in the future."

Revelation 4:2-3 - At once I was in the Spirit, and lo, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne! And he who sat there appeared like jasper and carnelian, and round the throne was a rainbow that looked like an emerald.

Instantly, John was “in the Spirit” and was transported into the throne room of heaven. Paul in describing this experience, or a similar one, says that he had no idea whether John was transported bodily into heaven or whether it was in some other manner.¹⁶⁴

The term “in the spirit” is a very common one in the New Testament. In virtually every instance it is a term for a time when the Holy Spirit is in control of a person’s life.¹⁶⁵

There are at least three distinct options for evaluating the meaning of this phrase:

1. That the Holy Spirit literally and bodily moved John up to a side-door into heaven.
2. That the Holy Spirit showed John what is described in panoramic, four-color, high-definition, Imax quality visuals with Dolby Sound, max quality visuals that were so real it was truly like being there.
3. That the Holy Spirit took a part of John, his “spirit,” to heaven and that his spirit is what was shown all which John was shown.

Of the three, the third is the least likely. While the Bible describes every person as having three separate and distinct parts known as the “body,” the “soul,” and the “spirit.” it also describes them as being inseparable and indivisible. An analogy might be a door. We can talk about and describe the front side of the door, the back side of the door and the edge but you cannot separate the parts or you no longer have a door. In the same way, we can talk about aspects of a human being as created by God - the body, the soul, and the spirit - but they cannot be separated. The whole notion of their separability was an invention of pagan Greek philosophy and finds no evidence in the Bible.

The body is the flesh and blood part of who we are. While it has nerves and a brain,

164 2 Corinthians 2:12-14

165 Romans 8:9; Luke 1:17; Acts 19:21,22; 1 st Corinthians 14:2; 2nd Corinthians 3:6; Ephesians 2:22,23; Ephesians 6:18; Colossians 1:8; 1 st Timothy 3:16; Revelation 17:3; 21:10).

that is not alone what makes a person. In fact, the body, according to the Bible, without the spirit is dead.¹⁶⁶

The “spirit” is the life force itself that separates us from a collection of muscle and bone and nerve.¹⁶⁷ That life is a gift from God and it is what returns to him when we die.¹⁶⁸ The words for “spirit” in the Old and New Testaments always are associated with air or breathing. (Hebrew - “ruah” 442 times as breath or breathing; Greek - 385 times as “breath.”) All living animals, according to the Bible have a ‘spirit.’¹⁶⁹ The Bible also makes it abundantly clear that the human spirit of and by itself cannot communicate, cannot think,¹⁷⁰ cannot be aware of events anywhere, cannot have emotion, cannot act, cannot worship God.¹⁷¹ In other words, it is life itself, not a separate entity.

The soul of a person is those aspects which makes us a human being such as emotion, reason, memory and conscience. It also has no life of its own but needs both body and spirit to exist. So, unless John violated everything the Bible says about the Spirit, the third option is not really an option. Which leaves the first two. Either one is a possibility and a person is finally forced to ask, “does it really matter?” It would be interesting to know, but the point in this passage is not how he saw what he saw, but what he saw - and, what John saw was spectacular!

“The first thing I observed,’ John says, was a throne standing in heaven. Ezekiel’s description of this throne is that it has the appearance of sapphire,¹⁷² in that case most probably any one of several blue opaque stones varying in color from ultramarine to rich deep blue to dark violet blue. Exodus 24:10-11 describes a sapphire blue pavement under the feet of God who sat on his throne which was apparently on a dias that was “high and lifted up.”¹⁷³ Daniel 7:9,10 pictures the throne as fiery flames and its wheels burning fire with streams of fire coming out from the throne

166 James 2:26

167 Job 33:4; 34:14,15; Psalms 104:29; 1st Peter 3:18

168 Psalms 146:3,4; Ecclesiastes 12:7

169 Genesis 7:15,21-22

170 Ecclesiastes 9:5,6

171 Psalms 115:17

172 Ezekiel 1:26

173 Isaiah 6:1

and flowing out (onto a sea like glass).

This picture begins to make sense when you think about the effect of metal in the hottest part of the flames of a torch - it glows blue. We have here a picture of a throne and the dias upon which it is situated glowing blue hot in the very presence of God.

There was someone seated on this throne. His physical appearance was like jasper and carnelian. Around the throne was a rainbow that looked like an emerald.

Carnelian, generally rendered as Sardius in most versions, was a stone which varied in layers from a tannish cream for the non-preferred variety through deep red to brown red which was the preferred and valued color and which gave it the name at later times of "blood stone." It was a favored stone for engraving seals and cameos because the various layers showed in different colors in the engravings and carvings.

It is interesting to note that the skin colors described here are not that different from those found in the description of Jesus in Chapter 1 where the skin of his feet is described as the color of burnished bronze which is a reddish-gold.

In Ezekiel's prophecy we see a much more detailed description of the Father. It says that he has a human form.¹⁷⁴ His skin tones are described there as being like gleaming bronze, like the appearance of fire in a brazier;¹⁷⁵ there was a brilliant brightness all around him.¹⁷⁶ Isaiah tells us that his voice shook the whole building when he spoke. (Isaiah 1:4)

Jasper, the appearance of the other precious stone John uses to describe God the Father's complexion, most experts agree, in New Testament times was not the richly colored opaque stones with coloration similar to Carnelian/Sardius that we now associate with the term. Rather, it referred to quartz crystals in delicate shades of blue, green and rose. The idea, if one looks to John's words in Revelation 21:11,18 for guidance, is of a dazzlingly crystal clear stone undulating in shades of rich sky-blue, green and rose which refracts and reflects the light from its facets.

174 Ezekiel 1:26

175 Ezekiel 1:27 Today, we might say like glowing coals in a barbecue or a campfire

176 Ezekiel 1:27

Emerald , the color of the rainbow which circles God's throne is a precious transparent stone occurring in varying shades of green.

Putting these three together you begin to see a picture of God's complexion. It is a translucent rosy to reddish brown that reflects the green of the rainbow which surrounds his throne and the blue of the throne itself.

Daniel 7:9 and Revelation 1:14 tell us that God's hair is white like pure wool as is his clothing.

Green, the color of a rainbow which surrounds God's throne gives us a pretty clear indication of the atmosphere and the prevailing light in heaven - as rainbows are nothing more than refracted light. In other words, in the physical world as we understand it only the light which exists can be refracted.

When you stop to consider it, the predominate colors on earth in its natural state are green in a plethora of hues followed by various shades of reddish brown to brown. They are relaxing, peaceful colors. We would be comfortable there.

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

John finds himself in what appears to be the throne room of the universe. God, himself is present and is sitting on a throne. Arranged in a circle extending from that throne are twenty-four other thrones. On these thrones sat twenty four elders dressed in white clothes with golden crowns on their heads.

Elders: The Greek word is "presbuteros" (pres-boo'-ter-os) which can either mean a person of age or a person of rank who serves in the role of advisor or administrator. In this case, it is apparent that these twenty-four serve on the universe's cabinet or counsel. In one sense they function in the same manner as King Arthur's Round Table of trusted Knight Advisors. They are representatives of the created beings from the whole universe who advise God and administrate the Kingdom of Light at the

highest level. They appear a number of times in the Revelation¹⁷⁷ always in the context of the throne room of the universe.

Revelation 4:5-6 - From the throne issues flashes of lightning, and voices and peals of thunder; and before the throne burn seven torches of fire, which are the seven spirits of God; and before the throne there is as it were a sea of glass, like crystal.

Often our exposure to science fiction makes this picture spookier and more terrifying than it is intended to be. It is awe inspiring instead of fear inducing for those who know and are comfortable with God. Seated on the throne is one who is the source of the creation and the cohesion of the whole universe. With his mind and words he controls atomic energy and can assemble and disassemble it at will into anything he desires. He not only understands the identity and interaction of weak and strong forces, the particles associated with them, and light and dark matter, he transcends and is master of it. Is it any wonder that from his presence on the throne are flashes of atomic energy and the booming thunderous explosions which accompany those flashes. This thunder is not just the random noise of nuclear fission and fusion occurring in God's presence. These thunders speak, they are thunderous voices,¹⁷⁸

Ezekiel 1:4-28 contains a more detailed description of this whole throne area. The voices emanate from the direction of the throne or the one on the throne rather than from the throne itself. God's throne is not some heavenly music box playing recordings of voices over and over; neither is it some type of animate object which talks to its occupant and those in the room. The pope in Rome speaks from his throne "ex cathedra" or from the cathedral. It is not the cathedral which speaks but the pope himself. King Richard of England spoke from his throne and it was said that "the word from the throne is . . ." In the same way, the voices speaking were God himself not an inanimate object upon which he sits.

As noted in Chapter 1, the seven spirits of God are not something for which we have an adequate answer - it is something which we will have to wait and ask God himself to explain when we get the chance.

There are those who would translate the term "the seven-fold" Spirit of God" -

177 Revelation 4:4,10; 5:5,6,8,11,14; 7:11,13; 11:16; 14:13; 19:4

178 Revelation 10:5; Revelation 8:5; 11:19; 16:18

signifying completeness. Then there are those who would make these creatures something unexplained and different from the Holy Spirit. Finally, there are those who say that this is another insight into the nature of the Holy Spirit - that the Holy Spirit is really made up of seven in much the same way that God is in reality made up of three. The latter does no more damage to monotheism than the concept of the Trinity. Of the three possibilities, the last option is most in line with the plain meaning of the text. These seven spirits appear in Revelation 1:4; 3:1; 4:5; 5:6. In Revelation 4:5 they are described as seven torches of fire (we would probably have written lasers, given the intensity of the rest of the light in the room) which harmonizes well with the picture of the Holy Spirit in Acts.¹⁷⁹ It is one of the ways the Holy Spirit chooses to reveal itself, just as Jesus is often pictured as a lamb.

Before the throne is a sea of glass like crystal. John sees a floor so massive it reminds him of the Mediterranean Sea. It is of material so finely polished it is like crystal clear glass. It is so magnificent it makes Catherine the Great's throne room or Versailles look puny and plain in comparison. In Revelation 15:2 this floor is described as looking like it is paved with fire as it reflects and refracts the glory of God to the viewer. It is interesting that Revelation 21:18,21 describe the city and its streets as being built of gold that is transparent as glass.

So, John sees a throne room so immense its floor reminds him of the ocean. That floor reflects and refracts the nuclear flashing light of God's presence like a golden diamond. In a central position is God's throne and God himself is seated on the throne. Seven lights, the "seven spirits of God," stand before the throne along with the 24 advisor/administrators of the universe. who are seated in a semi-circle around the throne.

Revelation 4:6-8 - and before the throne there is as it were a sea of glass, like crystal. And round the throne, on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind: the 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 a flying eagle. And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all round and within, and day and night they never cease to sing, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!"

179 Acts 2:3

Gathered round the throne on each side are four living creatures, each with eyes both in front and behind - i.e. able to see a panoramic 360 degree view all at once and able to process it mentally into an image. These four creatures are also found in Ezekiel 1:4-28. The first face looks like a lion, the second like an ox, the third face is the face of a man, and the fourth looks like a flying eagle. Each of these four living creatures, they are not statues in other words, has six wings.²

Ezekiel adds much to the description of these creatures. Each of them has the basic form of human beings.¹⁸⁰ Each of them has four faces and four wings.¹⁸¹ Their legs are straight like human legs, as opposed to the crooked hind legs of a horse or a centaur, and they have cloven feet like a calf.¹⁸² They sparkle like polished bronze¹⁸³ and under each wing was a human hand¹⁸⁴ - most probably a hand attached to an arm (which the word in the original language allows), else they would have been useless.

The wings and faces of the creatures are arranged like this: two of the wings fanned out, stretched and straight¹⁸⁵ so that they touched each other¹⁸⁶ whenever they moved. This would be easier to accomplish if we use John's figure of six wings with four of them were raised and flared so that they spread out until they touched each other; it also makes it easier to have a useful hand under each.. When they were not moving, these wings were not raised and spread out but were furled.¹⁸⁷ The other two wings were kept constantly furled to cover their bodies - apparently in place of clothing.¹⁸⁸

Ezekiel struggled to try to describe the sound these wings made when the creatures moved about. He tries four different allusions: the sound of their wings, he said,

-
- 180 Ezekiel 1:5
 - 181 Ezekiel 1:6
 - 182 Ezekiel 1:7
 - 183 Ezekiel 1:7
 - 184 Ezekiel 1:8
 - 185 Ezekiel 1:23
 - 186 Ezekiel 1:8,11
 - 187 Ezekiel 1:24
 - 188 Ezekiel 1:11,23

was like a huge waterfall, like the thunder of the almighty, like the sound of a huge crowd or the sound of a huge earthquake.¹⁸⁹ We might have described the sound as similar to the noise of a huge military helicopter close and directly overhead.

As mentioned above, each of these creatures has four faces - the face of a man in the front, a lion on the right side, an ox on the left side and an eagle at the back.¹⁹⁰ John focused on the face each creature had facing him - he saw the trees as it were, while Ezekiel focuses on the totality of the picture and sees the forest - each creature having four faces. When they moved, there was no need to turn around to see what was going on around them.¹⁹¹

The skin of the creatures is apparently transparent, or at least translucent, because Ezekiel could see what looked like brightly burning coals of fire moving around inside of them like lamps which flashed out bright fiery sparks and branches of electrical charge like lightning - much as a Van de Graff generator would.¹⁹² Not only that, the four living creatures themselves darted around like flashes of lightning.¹⁹³ Over each of their heads was what appeared to be a patch of clear blue sky¹⁹⁴ which shone like an awesome crystal. The sound of their voices appeared to come from that sky-crystal.

Ezekiel also introduces another element not mentioned in Revelation 4: a series of burning wheels resting on the ground or floor of the throne room - one for each of the four creatures.¹⁹⁵ These were apparently large enough that a full grown man could walk between them, apparently dwarfed by them.¹⁹⁶ The construction of each was identical.¹⁹⁷

The wheels were like Chrys'olite ("gold stone") - our topaz and other gems of simi-

-
- | | |
|-----|--------------------|
| 189 | Ezekiel 1:24; 2:13 |
| 190 | Ezekiel 1:10 |
| 191 | Ezekiel 1:9,12 |
| 192 | Ezekiel 1:13 |
| 193 | Ezekiel 1:14 |
| 194 | Ezekiel 1:22 |
| 195 | Ezekiel 1:16 |
| 196 | Ezekiel 10:1 |
| 197 | Ezekial 1:16 |

lar tint and transparent clarity, such as the occasional yellow or “golden” beryls, some zircons, etc. It appeared that they were in reality a wheel within a wheel.¹⁹⁸ The wording allows for wheels within wheels like a small wheel that ran around and around the larger one, a large wheel with another large wheel inside turning like a gear, or a large wheel with another inside at an angle, say 90 degrees to the first. One way or another, they could move in any direction and moved without turning - i.e. they floated as opposed to spinning to provide locomotion.¹⁹⁹ In other words, the purpose of these spinning wheels was not to provide movement from place to place but for another purpose.

These wheels had rims and spokes and the rims had eyes arranged around the rim on both sides.²⁰⁰ These four wheels accompanied the four living creatures wherever they went²⁰¹ - in fact it appears that they were a part of the four creatures;²⁰² they were connected in some fashion that made them one with each creature.

These four creatures have the ability to sing, and when they do their song is one of praise to God who is holy, who was and who is to come.²⁰³ The picture is not one of a narcissistic and hedonistic God so consumed with himself that he has created beings to stand in his presence to sing the praises of how great he is. The joy doesn't occur because a group of automatons are programmed to periodically break out in praise to God like animatronic people at Disneyland. Rather, it is a picture of beings who are constantly amazed and impressed with what they are discovering about him - especially as it relates to the Plan of Saving.

In Luke 15:7,10 we read that there is great joy and spontaneous celebration in the presence of all of heaven's messengers over one sinner who decides to make a change in his loyalties and become a part of the Kingdom of Light. The praise erupts and the focus is on God because he is the one who successfully has saved another. Every step in the process - the paying of the penalty for our rebellion, the transformation of our lives into citizens of the Kingdom of Light, and our future

198 Ibid

199 Ezekiel 1:17

200 Ezekiel 1:18; Revelation 4:8

201 Ezekiel 1:19

202 Ezekiel 1:20, 21

203 Revelation 4:8

literal and physical welcome into presence of the King are the result of his amazing grace and power - power so great it can win and transform the most degraded of rebels who chooses to respond and grace so amazing it will amaze us for in infinity of time!

Revelation 4:9-11 - And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him who is seated on the throne, who lives for ever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives for ever and ever; they cast their crowns before the throne, singing, "Worthy art thou, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things - and by your choice they came into being and continue to exist."

It appears that the four living creatures are not the only ones continually impressed by God. Whenever the four break out in songs of praise the twenty-four elders throw their crowns in the air and bow before the throne, antiphonally singing their own paean of praise: "God, our King, you are worthy to receive praise and honor; you deserve your power because you created everything and it is by your choice and power that they continue to exist!"

"You deserve your power," these heavenly worshipers sing, "because you created all things and they continue to exist because of your active involvement." At least two things stand out in this short passage.

First, this heavenly worship is a very intense experience. Both the 24 Elders and the Four Living Creatures give God glory and honor and thanks by singing songs of praise while they throw their crowns at the foot of God's throne.

Often in today's world, people doff their hats to show respect and honor. That is what we see here.

Cast: Literally from the Greek "ballo," to throw - the context determining the intensity of the toss.

It is fairly safe to assume that they do not throw their crowns at the feet of God or else several angelic jewelers would be kept very busy repairing dented, bent, and

damaged crowns. The idea is amazed wonder that leads to the most intense worship that creted beings can offer.

The 24 Elders and the Four Living Creatures are so awed by the One on the throne that they take off their crowns, the symbol of their position as under-rulers and advisors to the King of Light and to drop or lay them at his feet.

Nothing in the original language demands that this be taking place constantly - as if these 28 beings had nothing else to do but take their hats on and off and sing songs of praise to God. Rather, the picture is one of something that happens on a regular basis as these beings discover new insights about God. The idea is of a progression that never stops - it could only happen once a year but it keeps happening. In other words, in contrast to the Laodiceans in Chapter 3 of The Revelation, they are enthusiastic and hot, not lukewarm, in their praise.

This is something which still astounds and amazes today.

God , in the Bible, contends that he created everything that exists from nothing - ex nihilo. He spoke and it became.²⁰⁴ In short, the Bible claims that God is so powerful that he controls the elemental forces of the universe and can create, arrange and manipulate them at will to make anything he desires. It is a super-natural explanation for the origin of everything - as opposed to a natural one..

Then he continues and claims that he sustains all that he created on an ongoing basis.

Modern cosmology without intending to supports this view. As we currently understand the origins of the universe, all matter that exists was at one point squeezed into a space smaller than an office desk. Then, in a blinding microsecond, the energy that made up that matter exploded out in all directions in an expansion that continues to this day and which eventually coalesced into the galaxies we see in the night sky.

If you were to ask most credible astrophysicists who deny the existence of the God portrayed in the Bible where the original matter came from that formed the basis of

204 Genesis 1

the Big Bang, they would invariably answer that since there is no way to know, it is not discussable.

Those who take the Bible literally do not face that dilemma. Scripture is unequivocal in stating that God took raw energy and flung it out into space and it eventually became the inorganic nuclear material of the suns and planets and all of the comets and inter-planetary dust and gases in-between them.

What science has taken to calling the “Big Bang” is in reality the thumb-print of God on the universe.

God’s power to control that kind of energy is what amazes and awes the 24 Elders and the Four Living Creatures and which motivates their respect and worship.

The Bible goes on to assert that a number of millions of years later, God came to a small planet in a galaxy we know today as the Milky Way that was uniquely suited to support and sustain life and in six days created the originals of all of the organic material, the plant and animal life we see today.

Not only did he create it, God in The Revelation claims to continue to sustain it.

While modern science has done much to explain the known universe, there are still mysteries forces tying it all together that we cannot yet explain and for which we know source. The Bible claims that God is the source of that power. Biologists also tell us of a “life force” that exists in all animal life and which quickly disappears when what we call “death” occurs. That life force, what source of basis of life, the Bible tells us, God constantly renews in each creature on earth until the moment when we cease to exist.

It is the fact that he is both creator and sustainer and redeemer that gives God the authority to do what he does in the rest of The Revelation. His work to Redeem humanity is the subject of the next Chapter of The Revelation.