

# The Synopsis

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## 1 THE REVELATION

### 1.1 Chapter 4

But we have to consider where the fourth chapter commences God's ways. It does not follow necessarily that the assembly has been spued out of Christ's mouth. It had been threatened; but the judgment on Sardis, or even on Thyatira, was not yet come. But it is after Christ has ceased to deal with the professing assembly as such, looking to it as His light-bearer before the world. What it may call itself still is not stated; He is not dealing with it. An open apostasy will come. Its date is not revealed; nor is it revealed as to the rapture. But I gather from 2 Thessalonians 2, that the rapture will be before the apostasy. What we have stated then is, that it is after all dealing with the assemblies by Christ is closed, that the subsequent dealings with the world in the Revelation begin. The assemblies are "the things that are"; what follows, "the things after these." Christ is not now seen walking in their midst; He is the Lamb in the midst of the throne. John is not occupied with seeing Him there, or sending messages to the assemblies, but is called up to heaven where all the ways of God are now carried on, and that towards the world, not the assembly. We have the throne too, not the long-robed priest. The kings and priests we read of in chapter I are now on high. Others may follow them; but they are in heavenly places, seated on thrones, or worshipping, or presenting their censers full of incense. On the other hand the Lord is not come to judge the world, but about to receive the inheritance. The saints then, who will be caught up to meet Christ, are seen only on high here; they belong to heaven, and are no longer dealt with on earth, but have their own place in heaven.

The connection between the two parts of the Apocalypse is this :-Christ, who was judging in the midst of the professing church, is now seen on high, opening the book of this world's judgment, of which He is about to take the inheritance publicly. From this scene of judgment the saints are far. The apostle's occupation with the assembly now ceases-an important point, for the Holy Spirit must be occupied with it as long as the saints are in it on earth ;-and he is taken up to heaven, and there he sees God in covenant with creation, on a throne of government, with a rainbow round about it. The living creatures celebrate Him as the Creator, the One for whom all things were created. The throne was

not a throne of grace, but the signs of power and judgment broke forth from it; but around it those who represent the saints received at Christ's coming, the kings and priests, are sitting on thrones in a circle round the throne. No altar of sacrifice is in view, as if it were a time of approach ; the brazen laver has glass instead of water. It is a fixed accomplished holiness, not cleansing of feet. The elders are crowned, the number twenty-four recalling the courses of the priests. The seven Spirits of God are there in the temple, not Christ's to wield for the assembly, or sent out into the world, but the perfections in attributes which characterise the actions of God in the world. This it is bears light now into the world.

Besides these, four living creatures are there in the circle of the throne itself and around the throne. They may be viewed as forming the throne, or apart from it, though connected with it as a centre. They have some of the characters of the cherubim, some of the seraphim, but somewhat different from both. They were full of eyes, before and behind, to see all things according to God, and within; having also six wings; perfect in inward perception, but given perception, and in the celerity of their motions. They embraced also the four species of creation in the ordered earth: man, cattle, beast of the field, fowl of the air: these symbolising the powers or attributes of God, themselves worshipped by the heathen, here only the instruments of the throne. Him who sat on it the heathen knew not. The intelligence, firmness, power, rapidity of execution which belong to God were typified as elsewhere by them. They are symbols. Divers agents may be the instruments of their activity. But though there was the general analogy of the cherubim, judicial and governmental power, these had a peculiar character.

The cherubim in the temple had two wings, which formed the throne; they looked on the covenant, and at the same time, as of pure gold, were characterised by the divine righteousness of the throne to be approached. In Ezekiel they were the support of the firmament above which the God of Israel was: it was a throne of executive judgment. They were like burnished brass, and like fire-a symbol we have considered already. They had four wings: two to fly with, two to cover themselves. From Ezekiel 10 it appears they were full of eyes (" it is not said within ") it was to govern what was outside according to God, not divine intelligence within. In Isaiah 6 the seraphim (or burners) have six wings as here; they are above the throne, and cry as here, Holy, holy, holy! They, with a burning coal, cleansed the prophet's lips; they were above the throne.

The symbols used here become clearer through these cases. The living creatures are in and around the throne; for it is a throne of executory judgment, with the attributes of cherubim united to it. But it is not, as in Israel, mere earthly providential judgment, a whirlwind out of the north. There is before us the government of all the earth, and executory judgment according to the holiness of God's nature. <sup>1</sup> There is not only full perception of all, but intrinsic perception morally. It is no seat of gold to be approached, as in the tabernacle.

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<sup>1</sup>For the judgment at the end, though governmental, closing earth's history, was not merely so (cherubic), but according to God's holiness and nature (seraphic), particularly as in Isaiah 6, a known God in Israel.

The intrinsic holiness of God is applied to judgment. He is making good His nature and character in all creation. Providence would be no longer a riddle. It was not complex attributes unsolved, so to speak, though applied in special circumstances; each act would have its character.

Here too remark, it is not, as in the first chapter, the God who is, though embracing past and future, God in Himself; but the God of ages, " who was, and is, and is to come." Still He has all Old Testament names: Jehovah, Elohim, Shaddai. His attributes now celebrate His full name, as the Holy One who lives for ever and ever-has no passing power or being, like man at his best estate, vanity. And the saints here fall down before the throne, bow themselves before His place in glory, and worship Him in His endless being, and lay down their given glory before His supreme and proper glory, ascribing all glory to Him alone, as alone worthy of it; but here, according to the nature of the celebration of it, the Creator for whom all things are. In all changes these remained true.

It will be remarked here, that the living creatures only celebrate and declare; the elders worship with understanding. All through the Revelation the elders give their reason for worshipping. There is spiritual intelligence in them.

Further, remark, that when thunderings and lightnings and voices, the signs of terror in judgment, go forth from the throne, the throned elders remain unmoved; they are on thrones around when the throne of judgment is introduced. This is their place before God in respect of judgment. Whenever He takes judgment in hand this is their position. They are part of the glory-assessors of the throne from which its terror goes forth. When He that sits on it is celebrated, they are all activity, own all glory to be His, are prostrate on their faces, and cast their crowns before Him, more blessed in owning His glory, than in possessing their own.

We do not find the Father here; it is Jehovah. And indeed should we ask in whom He is personally displayed, it would be, as always, in the Son; but it is in itself simply the Jehovah of the Old Testament here.