

# **BITTER HONEY: THE REVELATION**

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## SECTION TWO - THE BOOK OF HISTORY

### CHAPTER 4: THE REIGNING CHRIST

Revelation 4:1Vs served as a transition between Christ's letters and the vision of the sealed book. Three things happen in this verse. First, John saw a door open in heaven. Then he heard the same voice that he had heard in chapter 1. This voice told him to come up into heaven. Finally, this voice offered to show John what must take place after these things. The voice John heard in Revelation 1 was Jesus Christ, walking among His churches. Now in Revelation 4, John will be taught by Christ on His throne. To do that, he must go to heaven where Jesus was now reigning. So Christ called John up to heaven to teach him what would happen after these things. Chapter 4 marked the transition from advice for contemporary churches to prophecy of the future.

#### Verses 2-8

John had already seen Christ as the Angel of the Lord. Now, John saw the reigning Christ. This vision of Jesus should not be reduced to symbolism. Interpreting the throne as power would miss the point of the vision. Just as Christ walked among men in the Old Testament, Christ had also reigned on His throne from creation. The Bible often referred to Christ's throne. In Ezekiel 1, the heavens were opened and Ezekiel saw the same vision recorded in Revelation 4. Daniel and Isaiah saw similar visions (Daniel 7:9; Isaiah 6:1). Moses saw the reigning Christ on Mount Sinai (Exodus 24:9). Several other Old Testament writers spoke of God's throne. David called God the One enthroned above the cherubim (II Samuel 6:2; Psalm 55:19). Psalm 80:1 used the same description, as did Isaiah 37:16. Christ's throne was also mentioned in Jeremiah 17:12 and Lamentations 5:19.

In Revelation 22, Christ's throne was described as the throne of God and of the Lamb. The throne belonged to both Christ and His Father. The Father and the Son shared one throne just as they ruled over one kingdom. Under the throne was a pavement of crystal. The beasts in verse 7 were cherubim. These carried the throne wherever the Spirit was about to go (cf. Ezekiel 1:12). Cherubim were angels who had four faces resembling a man, a lion, an eagle, and a bull. John may only have seen the one face of each angel. God may have created the cherubim to symbolize the roles that Christ played. He was the lion of Judah and its King. He was the Deliverer of His people, carrying them on eagle's wings. He was the great sin offering, and He summed up all of these as the God/man, Jesus Christ. The cherubim had six wings. According to Ezekiel 1, they should only have had four wings. John may have combined Ezekiel's cherubim with Isaiah's seraphim. In Isaiah 6:2-3, four seraphim stood above Christ's throne. The seraphim with six wings cried out, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory."

As the chapter ended, 24 elders worshipped before the throne. Revelation 4:4 noted that each elder had a throne of his own. This may have identified the final 12 as Christ's apostles (Matthew 19:28). Revelation 21:12-14 may shed light on the other 12. These verses described the New Jerusalem. The city had twelve gates named after the twelve tribes of Israel and twelve foundation stones named after the twelve apostles. The city of God was founded on the apostles and its doors were opened by the sons of Jacob. The twelve apostles and the twelve sons of Jacob bore a central role in the New Jerusalem, so they may have been the twenty four elders. One of the elders would have been John. While awkward, this was a dream vision. So it was not impossible. The twenty four elders were clothed in white garments with golden crowns on their heads. The white garments represented Christ's righteousness. The twenty four elders wore crowns because they sat as judges over Israel. The elders threw their crowns before Christ to show that He was given all authority. The elders then praised Christ because He was worthy to receive glory, honor, and power. These things were symbolized by the crowns. One Old Testament reference to

the twenty four elders might have been found in Isaiah 24:23. Isaiah said that the Lord of hosts would reign on Mount Zion in Jerusalem. Then His glory would be before His elders.