

# CHAPTER 4

## INTRODUCTION TO REVELATION 4

This chapter contains an account of the second vision John saw, as preparatory to the sealed book, and the opening of it, as the first vision was to the epistles to the seven churches. The preface to this vision, or the introduction to it, and preparation of John for it, are in (~~Rev~~ Revelation 4:1,2), which declare the time of it, the position John was in, what he saw and heard, a call to him to come up, and the effect it had upon him; and then follows the vision itself, which is of a throne, described by the place where it was set, in heaven; and by him that sat upon it, (~~Rev~~ Revelation 4:2), who was like to a jasper and a sardine stone; and by what was about it, first a rainbow of an emerald colour, (~~Rev~~ Revelation 4:3), then four and twenty seats, with as many elders upon them, sitting clothed and crowned, (~~Rev~~ Revelation 4:4), and by what went out from it, lightnings, thunderings, and voices; and by what were before it, seven burning lamps, which are the seven spirits of God, (~~Rev~~ Revelation 4:5), and a sea of glass like crystal; and by what were between it all around, and the elders, four living creatures, described in general by their being full of eyes, before and behind, (~~Rev~~ Revelation 4:6), in particular, the first by its likeness to a lion, the second by its likeness to a calf, the third by its likeness to a man, and the fourth by its likeness to a flying eagle, (~~Rev~~ Revelation 4:7), and by what were common to them, first by their wings, of which they had each of them six; and by their eyes, they were full of within; and by their constant employment in celebrating the perfections of God, and in giving glory, honour, and thanks unto him, (~~Rev~~ Revelation 4:8,9), at which time also the four and twenty elders appear in a worshipping posture, and give adoration to God; partly by deeds, casting their crowns before his throne; and partly by words, ascribing glory, honour, and power to him; giving a reason for it, taken from his creating all things for his pleasure, (~~Rev~~ Revelation 4:10,11).

**Ver. 1.** *After this I looked*, etc.] After John had seen the vision of Christ, in the midst of the golden candlesticks, with seven stars in his right hand; after he was bid to write what he had seen, and what were, and should be hereafter; and after he had by order written the seven epistles to the seven

churches, he looked about him to see what else he could, having his desires and expectations raised of seeing more, and other things, for the eye is never satisfied with seeing; though this is to be understood, not of looking with the eyes of his body, but with the eyes of his mind; of his beholding things in a visionary way, as the prophets did, whence they are called “seers”, and their prophecies “visions”: how long this was after the first vision is not certain, it may be but a few minutes; and it is to be observed, that as the first chapter of this book, with the vision in it, is the preface or introduction to the church prophecy delivered out in the seven epistles; so this and the following chapter, with the vision therein, contain the preface or introduction to the book prophecy exhibited in the opening of the seven seals of the sealed book:

*and behold, a door [was] opened in heaven:* not in a literal sense, as the heavens were opened at Christ's baptism, and at Stephen's martyrdom, but in a figurative sense; and the phrase is to be understood of a discovery of things that were, or were to be in the church of God, which in this book is oftentimes signified by “heaven”: and it must be conceived as done in a visionary way, just as Ezekiel, in the visions of God, was brought to Jerusalem, and the temple there, and in at a door was shown all the abominations committed in the court and temple; so John, in a visionary way, through an opened door, had a scene of things in the church presented to him, as follows:

*and the first voice which I heard [was], as it were, of a trumpet talking with me;* this voice is not called the first voice with respect to any other voices that were to follow; but it designs the former voice, the voice that John heard behind him, when he saw the first vision; and this, as that, was clear, loud, and sonorous as a trumpet, so that he thoroughly heard, and rightly understood what was said; it was the same Person that made the following representation of things as did then, even he who is the Alpha and the Omega, the Lord Jesus Christ, the author of the whole revelation; the “first” is left out in the Arabic version: the allusion is to the blowing of trumpets at the opening of the door of the temple;

“every day there were one and twenty soundings of a trumpet in the temple, three  $\mu\upsilon\rho[\zeta\ \tau\jmath\ \upsilon\tau\pi\lambda]$ , “at the opening of the doors”, and nine at the daily morning sacrifice, and nine at the daily evening sacrifice<sup>f126</sup>.”

And one of them was called the great door of the temple; and he that slew the daily sacrifice, did not slay till he heard the sound of that door when it was opened <sup>f127</sup>; so here at the opening of the door in heaven, in the church, of which the temple was a type, the voice of the Son of God is heard as the sound of a trumpet, talking loudly and familiarly to John:

*which said, come up hither*; from the isle of Patmos, where he was, up to heaven; not into the third heaven, where Paul was caught up, but rather up into the Gospel church, the Jerusalem which is above; though this, as before, is to be understood in a visionary way, in like manner as Ezekiel was lifted up by the Spirit between the earth and the heavens; and so John, in a vision, was called up from Patmos into the air, where he had a representation of the church made unto him:

*and I will show thee things which must be hereafter*; in the world, in the Roman empire, and in the church of God, to the end of the world; not but that there were some things shown him, as before, in the church prophecy, which had been, and were, and which was done to give him a complete view of things from first to last: and these things were shown in the following visions of the seals, trumpets, and vials, and by the Lord Jesus Christ, who talked with him, and to whom this revelation was given to show unto his servants; and it was of things that “must” be, because determined and resolved upon in the unalterable purposes and decrees of God.

**Ver. 2.** *And immediately I was in the Spirit*, etc.] As he had been before, (~~and~~ Revelation 1:10); it seems he had been some little time out of his ecstasy, how long cannot be said, and now, upon this new scene of things, returned to it; upon the opening of the door in heaven, and hearing the former voice, and the things it said, the Spirit of God at once possessed and filled him, in an extraordinary manner; and his soul or spirit was immediately taken from the consideration of all sensible objects, and was fixed and intent upon the things presented to it in the vision, so that it was as if it was out of the body. The Arabic version reads, “then therefore I went in the Spirit”; in obedience to the voice that called him up, in which he was assisted by the Spirit of God, who lifted him up as he did Ezekiel, when he saw what follows:

*and behold, a throne was set in heaven*; not for the final judgment, on which the son of man will sit, when he comes to judge the quick and dead, for he is not the person that fills this but this is a symbol of the power,

authority, and dominion now exercised by God, not over the world in general, who has prepared his throne in the heavens, and governs among the nations, according to his sovereign will and pleasure, but which he exercises in his church, signified by “heaven”. The allusion is to the temple, and the throne of God in it, (<sup>2301B</sup>Isaiah 6:1 <sup>2472</sup>Jeremiah 17:12). The temple was an emblem of the Gospel church, Jerusalem, or the Gospel church state, and was to be called the throne of the Lord, (<sup>2487</sup>Jeremiah 3:17), and now his throne is set there. Here he exercises a jurisdiction and government; he is King and lawgiver in it; he has enacted laws, and he writes them on the hearts of his people, and puts his Spirit within them, and makes them both able and willing to obey them.

*And [one] sat on the throne*; not the trinity of persons in the Godhead, which some think are signified by the three precious stones in (<sup>604B</sup>Revelation 4:3), the jasper, sardine, and emerald; for, as distinct from him that sat upon the throne, the Lamb is said to be in the midst of it, and the seven spirits of God are said to be before it: nor is Jesus Christ intended, and his two natures; his divine nature by the jasper, and his human nature by the red and blood coloured sardine; since he, the Lamb, is represented as in the midst of the throne, and is often distinguished from him that sat upon it; (see <sup>618B</sup>Revelation 5:6,7,13 7:10); but God the Father is designed, who sits on the throne, though not to the exclusion of the Son and Spirit, yet in distinction from them. This clause is left out in the Ethiopic version.

**Ver. 3.** *And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper*, etc.] For the brightness, glory, and majesty of his countenance, and for his being light itself, clothed with it, and dwelling in it; (see <sup>621B</sup>Revelation 21:11,18,19); and for the various perfections of his nature, as eternity, infinity, immutability, omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence, wisdom, power, goodness, truth, love, grace, and mercy; for the jasper, at least one sort of them, is of various colours, and spotted with divers spots; that which is most valued is the green, spotted with red or purple <sup>f128</sup>: hence this stone, which is the twelfth in the high priest's breastplate, and on which the name of “Benjamin” was written, is called, by the Chaldee paraphrase of Onkelos on (<sup>623D</sup>Exodus 28:20), “Pantere”, and of ben Uzziel, on the same place, “Apanturin”, and on (<sup>2154</sup>Song of Solomon 5:14), “Apantor”, because some are variegated and spotted like panthers.

*And a sardine stone*; the same with the “Sardius”: and so read here the Alexandrian copy, the Syriac and Arabic versions, as in (<sup>6213</sup>Revelation 21:20), and in (<sup>12817</sup>Exodus 28:17) on which Reuben's name was written; this is of a red, or blood colour as its name *ṣuda*, in Hebrew, shows, and the same that is called a cornelian; and is expressive of the fiery indignation of God whose fury is poured out like fire, and who nakedly and absolutely considered, is a consuming fire to the wicked, his enemies, and the enemies of his church and people. Some jaspers being white and sky coloured and the white colour being most agreeable to deity, as Cicero says <sup>f129</sup>, and the sardine being red, and a gem of the ruby kind make up the description of the church's beloved; (<sup>2150</sup>Song of Solomon 5:10); and may denote in general his purity, glory, and excellency, and in particular good will to his people, and wrath to his enemies. And to the comfort of the former it is added,

*and [there was] a rainbow round about the throne*; which signifies the covenant of grace; (see <sup>0092</sup>Genesis 9:12,16 <sup>2549</sup>Isaiah 54:9,10 <sup>3028</sup>Ezekiel 1:28). The rainbow is a reverberation, or a reflection of the beams of the sun upon a thin watery cloud; and the covenant of grace is owing to Jesus Christ, the sun of righteousness; it is he that has formed it, and filled it with blessings and promises; he is the Mediator, surety, and messenger of it, and who in (<sup>6003</sup>Revelation 10:1) is represented as clothed with a cloud, and a rainbow on his head: the rainbow is of various colours and fitly expresses the various promises and blessings, in the covenant of grace, and the various providences, both prosperous and adverse, with respect to soul and body; and as the rainbow was an emblem of mercy, peace, and reconciliation in God to man, after he had destroyed the world by a flood, so the covenant is a covenant of grace and mercy; it springs from it, and is full of it, and provides for the peace and reconciliation of the people of God, by the blood of Christ; whence it is called a covenant of peace: and as the rainbow is a security to the world, and the inhabitants of it, from a destruction by a flood any more, so the covenant is a security to those who are interested in it, from eternal destruction, and wrath to come; herein lies all their salvation, and this is the security of it: to which may be added, that God calls it my bow, as he often calls the covenant of grace my covenant, in distinction from man's; (see <sup>0092</sup>Genesis 9:12 <sup>3928</sup>Psalms 89:28,34 <sup>3761</sup>Ezekiel 16:60-62); and this being round about the throne of God, shows that the covenant of grace does, as it were, include and enclose God in his persons, and in his perfections; all the three divine Persons have a concern

in it, and all the divine perfections are glorified by it; and it being around it, it is always in his view; he is ever mindful of it, and constantly remembers it for the good of his people, and faithfully keeps it; and it being in this form denotes, that in whatsoever way he comes forth unto his people, it is always in a covenant way, whether it be in things temporal or spiritual, in adversity or prosperity, with regard to the things of time and eternity; nor is there any coming to him with comfort, but as he is encompassed with the rainbow of the covenant; stripped of this, he is like the jasper and sardine stones, full of sparkling majesty, dread and terror, so that there is no coming nigh him; but being encircled with the rainbow, he may be approached as a covenant God, as the God of all grace, seated on a throne of grace, whither believers may come with boldness, freedom, and cheerfulness: and this rainbow was

*in sight like unto an emerald*; the stone on which Judah's name was written, in the high priest's breastplate; this is of a green colour, which colour is the prevailing one in the rainbow; it is of an exceeding fine green, very delightful to the eye, and gives pleasure to the mind to look upon it: and what a lovely and delightful sight is the covenant of grace to a believer! to see God as a covenant God, Christ as the Mediator of it, the exceeding great and precious promises and blessings, both of grace and glory, which are in it, yields an unspeakable pleasure to such persons; the covenant of grace, like the emerald, is ever green, it is always new; its promises and blessings are always fresh, and, like that, it is durable; it is sure, and cannot be broken, and is more immovable than rocks and mountains: the emerald is very bright, clear, and transparent; it is reported of Nero <sup>f130</sup>, that he could see in his emerald the combat of the gladiators in the theatre; in the covenant of grace, as in a glass, may be seen the glory of all the three Persons in the Godhead, for it is ordered in all things for the glory of each Person; as also all the perfections of the divine nature; here God appears abundant in goodness and truth; here mercy and truth meet together; and righteousness and peace kiss each other: to which may be added, that the emerald is said <sup>f131</sup> to help and refresh the memory; now though God stands in no need of any thing to bring things to his remembrance, yet such is his condescension to men, that he sets the rainbow in the cloud, to look at, that he might remember his everlasting covenant; and so he allows his people to put him in remembrance, by making mention of the covenant of grace, and pleading the promises of it.

The Alexandrian copy and the Ethiopic version, instead of ἵρις, “a rainbow”, read ἱερεῖς, “priests”.

**Ver. 4.** *And round about the throne [were] four and twenty seats,* etc.] In a semicircular form, as the rainbow also was; the thrones in the above form, came to both ends, or sides of it; just as when the sanhedrim, or great court of judicature among the Jews say <sup>f132</sup>, the “Nasi”, or prince, sat in the uppermost seat, at his right hand was “Ab beth din”, or the father or the sanhedrim, and at his left hand a doctor or wise man, and all the rest of the members sat in a semicircular form upon seats before them, so that they could see them all; and to this the allusion might be thought to be, did their numbers agree, but in the great sanhedrim there were seventy one, and the lesser twenty three, which last comes very near the number here;

*and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting;* by whom are not meant the twenty four books of the Old Testament, as some of the ancients thought, and also some of the modern writers, as Lord Napier and others; for the things said of them are such as cannot be applied to inanimate things, such as sitting on seats, being clothed with white raiment, having golden crowns on their heads, falling down before the throne, and worshipping him that sat on it; and besides, in (~~408~~ Revelation 5:8,9), they are said to be redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, out of very kindred, tongue, people, and nation; for which last reason, angels also cannot be designed, and who, moreover, in the place referred to, are manifestly distinguished from these elders; nor are they to be understood as to the representatives of the Jewish church, or of the Jewish and Christian church together, as triumphant in heaven; and so be signified by the twelve patriarchs and twelve apostles, which together make up twenty four; but rather the members of the Gospel church state, throughout the whole of it, in every succession and period of time, are here meant; and are expressed by the number “twenty four”, in allusion to the twenty four courses of the priests, into which they were divided by David, (~~130~~ 1 Chronicles 24:1,4,18), and to the twenty four stations of the Levites, who in turn attended the service of the temple daily, and represented the whole body of the people of Israel, in putting their hands upon the sacrifices, and praying for them; of which (see Gill on “~~408~~ Luke 1:5”); add to this, that in twenty four places the priests and Levites kept watch in the temple <sup>f133</sup>; so these twenty four elders before the throne of God, in his temple, represent the whole Israel of God, all the members of the Gospel church state, from the first to the last of it: and they are styled “elders”, not on account of office,

as pastors of the churches are called, but because of their senile gravity, prudence, and knowledge; they having a greater degree of spiritual knowledge of the manifold wisdom of God than the Jewish church, which was in a state of infancy, and under tutors and governors, had; but the Gospel church is in a state of manhood, and no longer under a schoolmaster, and so fitly expressed by “elders”; and these are represented as “sitting” on their seats, not only to hear the word of God, but as judging in cases that come before them, respecting the admission or exclusion of members, the laying on or taking off of censures, etc. and these, their seats being around and near unto the throne, denote their nearness to God, and their communion with him, in his house and ordinances, and his dwelling in the midst of them.

*Clothed in white raiment*; in the pure and spotless robe of Christ's righteousness, which is comparable to fine linen, clean and white; and is the righteousness of the saints in common, of every true member of Christ's body.

*And they had on their heads crowns of gold*; being made by Christ kings, as well as priests, unto God; for so these four and twenty elders are said to be, in (~~4450~~ Revelation 5:10); and they now reign as kings over sin, Satan, and the world, and have a kingdom of grace which shall never be removed; and they shall reign with Christ on earth a thousand years, and then reign with him to all eternity in heaven. It is a common saying with the Jews <sup>f134</sup>,

“that there is no eating and drinking in the world to come, but the righteous are “sitting”, *μῆχαρβ μῆτῶρj* [w, “and their crowns upon their heads”.”

**Ver. 5.** *And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings, and voices*, etc.] Which may be understood either of the doctrines of the Gospel which come out of Zion, and out of Jerusalem, the church of God, where he has his throne; and which are comparable to “lightning”, both for the light and knowledge they give, and for the swiftness with which they were spread over the world, by the apostles of Christ; and to “thunderings”, for the awfulness, authority, and majesty of them, especially as they were delivered out by the Boanergeses, or sons of thunder; and as the prophesies of the prophets are called “the voices” of the prophets, (~~4437~~ Acts 13:27); so may the doctrines of the Gospel be called “voices”, as they are the voice of God, and of Christ, and of his ministers; and are



voices of love, grace, mercy, peace, pardon, righteousness, and eternal life. The allusion is to the giving of the law on Mount Sinai, when such things were seen and heard, (<sup><1916></sup>Exodus 19:16) or else the judgments of God, and the punishments inflicted upon his enemies, and the enemies of his church and people, and his awful threatenings of them, may be designed; (see <sup><1913></sup>Psalms 18:13,14 <sup><2116></sup>Joel 3:16); with which compare (<sup><1615></sup>Revelation 8:5).

*And [there were] seven lamps of burning fire before the throne, which are the seven spirits of God;* in allusion to the seven lamps in the tabernacle and temple, which were trimmed by the priests, and always kept burning, and are expressive of the Spirit, and his gifts; and these being signified by the number “seven”, denote the fulness and perfection of them; and being said to be “before the throne”, show that there is always a sufficiency of them for the supply of the churches in all ages, to fit and qualify proper persons to minister the word, and administer ordinances; and these being called “lamps of burning fire”, point at the light the Spirit of God in his gifts communicates to the churches; and that warmth and heat, comfort and refreshment; conveyed to them, through the preaching of the Gospel, and the dispensation of the ordinances of it, under his illuminating and quickening influences.

**Ver. 6.** *And before the throne [there was] a sea of glass like unto crystal,* etc.] By which is meant, not heaven, nor the souls of the blessed there, nor the multitude of the holy angels, nor the first converts to Christianity at Jerusalem; for those that got the victory over the beast are said to stand upon this sea, (<sup><1612></sup>Revelation 15:2), which these senses, especially the three last, will by no means admit of. Some by it understand the world, which may be compared to a “sea”, for the multitude of people in it, as many waters in this book signify people and nations, (<sup><1615></sup>Revelation 17:15); and to a sea of glass, which is brittle, for the frailty and transitoriness of the world, of the fashion of it, and of men and things in it; and to the clear “crystal”, because all things in it are open and manifest to the omniscient eye of God; but the world, and men of it, used not to be compared to a still and quiet sea, as this is, but to one disturbed and troubled by winds and tempests, whose waters cast up mire and dirt, (<sup><2571></sup>Isaiah 57:20). Others think the ordinance of baptism is designed, of which the Red sea, through which the Israelites passed under the cloud, was an emblem; and which may be compared to a “sea of glass”, for its transparency, it clearly expressing the sufferings, burial, and resurrection of Christ; and to crystal, for its purity; and to all this for its cleansing nature,

as it leads unto the blood of Christ; and its being before the throne may denote its being the way of entrance into the Gospel church. Others think the blood of Christ is meant, in allusion to the brazen sea in the tabernacle, which was made of the looking glasses the women brought, and for the priests to wash in, before they entered on business, (<sup><1072></sup>Exodus 30:18 38:8), and to the molten sea in the temple, which was for the same purpose, (<sup><1073></sup>1 Kings 7:23). Christ's blood is the fountain opened to wash in for sin, and may be compared to a sea for its abundant efficacy in cleansing from all sin; and it is this which makes way to the throne, and to him that sits on it; and is a special privilege enjoyed by those who come to Mount Zion, or into a Gospel church state; there is always this laver to wash their garments in, and make them white: though this sea, being of glass, seems not so much designed to wash in; and therefore rather I think by it is meant the Gospel, compared to a "sea" for the deep things of God and mysteries of grace which are in it; to a sea of "glass", because in it is beheld, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, of his person, office, and righteousness, as well as many other wondrous things; and to one like "crystal", for the clearness, perspicuity, and evidence of the truths contained in it; and to a, fixed, still; and quiet sea, because it is the Gospel of peace, love, grace, and mercy, and brings peace, joy, and tranquillity to troubled minds, when the law works wrath: but here are no tossing, foaming, raging waves of wrath, and fury, but all smooth, stable, solid, tranquil, and quiet. And this is said to be before the throne, where the rainbow of the covenant is, of which the Gospel is a transcript; and where the four and twenty elders, or members of churches be, for their delight and comfort; and where the seven spirits of God are, to furnish men with gifts to preach it; and where the four living creatures, or ministers of the word, have their place, who officiate in it. Agreeably to this figurative way of speaking, the Jews call <sup>f135</sup> the law, *atywad amy*, "the sea of the law", and the "sea of wisdom"; and frequently give the characters of such and such a doctor, as being very expert and conversant *dwml th myb*, "in the sea of the Talmud", or "doctrine" <sup>f136</sup>. The Alexandrian copy, the Complutensian edition, the Vulgate Latin and Syriac versions, read, "there was as a sea of glass", somewhat that looked like one. The word "glass" is left out in the Ethiopic version, but very aptly is it so described, the colour of the sea being sometimes green like that of glass.

*And in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, [were] four beasts*; or "living creatures", as the word may be better rendered, agreeably

to (<sup><2005></sup>Ezekiel 1:5), to which reference is here had; and by whom are meant not the angels, though there are many things which agree with them; they are said to be the “four spirits” of the heavens, which go forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth, (<sup><3005></sup>Zechariah 6:5). They may be rightly called living creatures, since they live a most happy life in heaven; their situation is before the throne, and in the presence of God; and their being so sedulous, diligent, and watchful in doing the will of God, may be signified by their being “full of eyes behind, and before, and within”; their strength may be fitly expressed by “the lion”; their indefatigableness in the service of God, by “the ox”: their wisdom, prudence, and knowledge, by “the face of a man”; and their swiftness in obeying the divine commands by “the flying eagle”; their number of wings agrees with that of the seraphim in (<sup><2005></sup>Isaiah 6:2); to which the allusion seems to be; and their work, in continually ascribing glory to God, suits with them: to which may be added, that the Jews often speak of four angels, *waskl bybs*, “round about his throne”, that is, the throne of God; whose names are Michael, Gabriel, Uriel, and Raphael; the three first they place in this manner, Michael at his right hand, Uriel at his left, and Gabriel before him <sup>f137</sup>. Sometimes thus, Michael on his right hand, Gabriel on his left, Uriel before him, and Raphael behind him, and the holy blessed God in the middle; and they are expressly called <sup>f138</sup> by them the four living creatures, meaning in Ezekiel's vision; and they make mention of the intellectual living creatures which are *aysrkl ʿyrj s*, “round about the throne” <sup>f139</sup>. Notwithstanding all this, the angels cannot be intended, because these four living creatures are said to be redeemed by the blood of Christ, and are distinguished from angels in (<sup><4005></sup>Revelation 5:8-11); nor are the four Gospels, with the four evangelists, here meant; for whatever agreement may be fancied there is between these, and the likeness of the living creatures; as that Matthew may be signified by the creature that has the face of a man, because he begins his Gospel with the genealogy of Christ, as man; and Mark by the lion, because he begins his Gospel with the voice of one crying in the wilderness; and Luke by the ox, because he begins his Gospel with an account of Zacharias the priest, offering in the temple; and John by the eagle, because he begins his Gospel, the first face or leaf of it, in a very high style, and with the divinity of Christ: and with what truth soever it may be said of these that they are full of divine light and knowledge, and swiftly spread it in the world, and are continually giving glory to God; yet it cannot be said of them, with any propriety, as is said of these four living creatures, that they fall down before God, and worship him, and are

redeemed by the blood of the Lamb: besides, these four are represented as calling to John at the opening of the first four seals, to come and see what was to be seen; and one of them is said to give to the seven angels the vials of wrath to pour out, (<sup>668B</sup>Revelation 5:8,9 6:1,3,5,7 15:7), to which may be added, that this sense is attended with this inconvenience, that it makes John to be one of the four creatures which he saw: nor are four particular apostles, as Peter and John, Paul and Barnabas, pointed at, as others think; nor the pure apostolical church, for the church is represented by the four and twenty elders, and these four living creatures are distinguished from the hundred and forty four thousand on Mount Zion, in (<sup>640B</sup>Revelation 14:1,3). Dr. Goodwin has a very ingenious thought upon these words, could it be supported; he thinks that these four living creatures design the four officers in the Christian church, the ruling elder, the pastor, the deacon, and the teacher; the ruling elder by the “lion”, who needs courage to deal with men in case of sins; the pastor by the “ox”, for his laboriousness in treading out the corn; the deacon by that which has the “face of a man”, it being necessary that he should be merciful and pitiful to the poor, as is the heart of a man; and the teacher by the “flying eagle”, who is quick to espy errors, and soars aloft into high mysteries: but then it should be observed, that there is no such officer as ruling elder in the church, distinct from the pastor; and that the pastor and teacher are one; so that there are but two sorts of officers in the church, pastor, and deacon; (see <sup>300B</sup>Philippians 1:1); to which may be added, that the four living creatures are all in the same situation, and are alike full of eyes, and have the same number of wings, and are employed in the same work; all which cannot be said equally of church officers. By these four living creatures, I apprehend, we are to understand the ministers of the Gospel in general, in the successive ages of the church, to whom all the characters do well agree. And though they may not be all found in everyone, at least not in all alike, yet thou are in one or another of them, and in them as together considered. They are said to be “four”, being fewer in number than the members of the church, which are signified by the twenty four elders, and yet a sufficient number; and in allusion to the four standards of the camp of Israel in the wilderness, to which there seems to be some reference in the whole of this account; as the tabernacle there was placed in the midst, so the throne of God here; as the priests and Levites were round about that, so the four and twenty elders here; as there were seven lamps, over against the candlestick in the tabernacle, continually burning, so there are seven spirits here before the throne; and as there were four princes, who were

standard bearers, placed at the four corners of the camp, so here four living creatures, or ministers of the word, who are standard bearers: the standard of Judah, with Issachar and Zabulon under him, was at the east of the tabernacle; and Ephraim, with Manasseh and Benjamin, at the west; Reuben, with Simeon and Gad, at the south; and Dan, with Asher and Naphtali, at the north; and the Jewish writers say <sup>f140</sup>, that on Judah's standard was the figure of a lion, on Ephraim's the figure of an ox, on Reuben's the figure of a man, and on Dan's the figure of an eagle; and to which the four living creatures are likened here. And this number “four” may be the rather mentioned, with respect to the four parts of the world, and corners of the earth, whither the ministers of the Gospel are sent to preach, and whither their commission reaches; there being of the elect of God in all parts to be gathered in by their ministry: and very properly may they be called “living creatures”, because they are alive in themselves, being quickened by the Spirit of God; or otherwise they would not be fit for their work; and because their work requires liveliness in the exercise of grace, and fervency in the performance of duty: and because they are a means in the hand of God of quickening dead sinners, and of reviving drooping saints by the word of life, which they hold forth: the situation of these four living creatures agrees with them, who are said to be both in the midst of, and round about the throne, and so were nearer to it than the four and twenty elders, and were between that and them; as the ministers of the Gospel are set in the first place in the church; have nearness to God, and much of his presence, which is particularly promised them; and stand between God and the people, and receive from the one, and communicate to the other, and lead on the worship of God, as these four do; (see ~~Rev~~ Revelation 4:9,10). And these are said to be

*full of eyes*; of spiritual light, and evangelical knowledge; and they have need of all the eyes they have to look into the Scriptures of truth, to search and pry into them, and find out the sense and meaning of them; to overlook the flock committed to them, they have taken the oversight of; to look to themselves, their doctrine, and their conversation; to espy enemies and dangers, and give notice of them to the churches; to look to God upon the throne, and to the Lamb in the midst of it, for fresh supplies of gifts and grace; and to see to it, that all their ministrations tend to the glory of God, the honour of a Redeemer, and the good of souls. And they had eyes

*before and behind*; “before” them, to look to the word of God, and the deep things in it, which continually lies before them, and to the things that

are yet to come relating to the kingdom and church of Christ; and “behind” them, to observe how all sacrifices and types, predictions and promises, have had their accomplishment in Christ; they have eyes before them to watch over the church they are in the midst of, and which is the flock that is before them; and eyes behind, to guard against Satan and his emissaries, false teachers, who sometimes slyly and secretly come upon the back of them; they have eyes before them, to look to him that sits upon the throne, on whom their dependence, and from whom their expectations are; and they have eyes behind them, to look on the four and twenty elders, the members of the churches, to whom they minister.

**Ver. 7.** *And the first beast [was] like a lion*, etc.] And this figure expresses the strength of the ministers of the word, the lion being the strongest among beasts, (<sup>2<sup>ND</sup></sup>Proverbs 30:30), to do the work they are called to, to endure hardness, as good soldiers of Christ, and to bear the infirmities of the weak; and also it denotes their courage and boldness in preaching the Gospel of Christ, without fearing the faces of men, or of being afraid of their revilings:

*and the second beast like a calf*; or “ox”, for so the word here used signifies in the Hellenistic language, and with the Septuagint interpreters, and agrees with (<sup>2<sup>ND</sup></sup>Ezekiel 1:10), and designs the laboriousness of Christ's faithful ministers in treading out the corn of Gospel truth, who labour in the word and doctrine, and are labourers with God; as also their humility, meekness, and patience in bearing insults, reproaches, and sufferings for Christ, and instructing those that oppose themselves:

*and the third beast had a face as a man*; and points at the humanity and tender heartedness, the wisdom, prudence, knowledge, and understanding, and the use of the reasoning faculty, together with a manly spirit in abiding by the Gospel at any rate; all which are so necessary in the ministers of the word.

*And the fourth beast [was] like a flying eagle*; which sets forth the sagacity and penetration of Gospel ministers into the deep things of God, and mysteries of grace, and their readiness and swiftness to do the will of God, in publishing the everlasting Gospel; (see <sup>6<sup>TH</sup></sup>Revelation 14:6).

**Ver. 8.** *And the four beasts had each of them six wings about [him]*, etc.] As the seraphim in (<sup>2<sup>ND</sup></sup>Isaiah 6:2) with two of which they might cover their faces as they did, testifying thereby their reverence of God, when in

his presence; and with the other two cover their feet, signifying their sense of their sinfulness, weakness, and imperfection, in their conversation, even in their best works, and in the ministry of the word; and with the other two fly about, as denoting their readiness to minister the word and ordinances, to visit the members of the church, and do all good offices of love and service to them that lie in their power:

*[and they were] full of eyes within;* to look into the sin and corruption of their own hearts, which is a means of keeping them humble amidst all their attainments, gifts, and graces, and of qualifying them to speak aptly of the cases of others; and they have eyes within, to look into and consult their own experience; for besides the word of God, which lies before them, they have a testimony in themselves of the truth of the doctrines of the Gospel, which they do well to attend unto; and they have these inward eyes to look into that treasure which God has put into their earthen vessels, in order to bring out of it things new and old.

*And they rest not day and night;* they give up themselves to the ministry of the word, and prayer; are wholly in these things, meditate on the word continually, and preach the Gospel in season, and out of season:

*saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come;* living under a continual sense of the holiness of God, Father, Son, and Spirit; and how necessary holiness is in themselves, who bear the vessels of the Lord, and in the churches and house of God; taking care that all their doctrines are according to godliness, and serve to promote holiness of life and conversation; and also under a sense of the power of God, and of their need of it, to carry them through their work, and make their ministry successful; and of the eternity and immutability of God, which is a wonderful support unto them amidst all the difficulties and troubles that attend them. The word “holy” is three times used here, as by the seraphim in <sup>(206B)</sup>Isaiah 6:3; and in some copies it is repeated six times, and in others nine times, as in the Complutensian edition.

**Ver. 9.** *And when these beasts give glory,* etc.] When they give God the glory of all his perfections, covenant, and promises, and of all the gifts and grace bestowed on them, and of the success of their ministry; and in it glorify Father, Son, and Spirit, who bear their respective parts in the business of salvation; and ascribe to each their due glory in election, redemption, and sanctification:

*and honour*; in the several parts of religious worship performed by them; and not with their lips only, but with their hearts also:

*and thanks*; for all blessings, temporal and spiritual, bestowed on them, and on the saints: even

*to him that sat on the throne*; God the Father, (<sup>f141</sup>Revelation 4:3);

*who liveth for ever and ever*; he who is the living God, and will always continue so.

**Ver. 10.** *The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne*, etc.] The ministers of the Gospel begin the worship of God, and lead in it, who are the four living creatures; when the members of churches, who are the four and twenty elders, follow, and approach the divine Being in a most humble manner:

*and worship him that liveth for ever and ever*: in Spirit, and in truth, with faith and fervency, in every part of duty they are directed to:

*and cast their crowns before the throne*; signifying, that they received them, from him that sits upon it, being by the grace of God what they are; and that they are unworthy to wear them in his presence, being but unprofitable servants in all they do; and hereby also acknowledging their subjection to him as their King and lawgiver. Something like this the Jews relate of the family above; they say,

“when the holy blessed God ascends the glorious “throne of judgment”, the whole family above tremble; and when they see the holy blessed God “they take their crowns from off their heads” — and pray and seek mercy for Israel; and immediately he ascends the “throne of mercy”<sup>f141</sup>.”

And such like actions have been done by kings and princes to one another, in token of subjection. Thus Tigranes, king of Armenia, fell down at the feet of Pompey, and cast his crown from his head, which Pompey replaced; and having commanded him certain things, ordered him to enjoy his kingdoms<sup>f142</sup>: so Herod meeting Augustus Caesar at Rhode, when he entered the city took off his crown, and after a speech made to him, with which Caesar was pleased, he set it on him again<sup>f143</sup>.

*Saying*; as follows.



**Ver. 11.** *Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory honour, and power,* etc.] The Alexandrian copy, and some others, the Complutensian edition, the Vulgate Latin version, and all the Oriental ones, read, “thou art worthy, O Lord, and our God, to receive”; that is, to receive the acknowledgment and ascription of glory, honour, and power; for otherwise God cannot be said to receive these from his creatures, than by their confessing and declaring that they belong unto him: and that for the reasons following,

*for thou hast created all things;* the whole universe, the heavens, the earth, and sea, and all that in them are:

*and for thy pleasure they are and were created;* God is the first cause, and the last end of all things; by his power they are made, and according to his will, and for his own glory, and therefore is worthy of such a doxology; (see <sup>3164</sup>Proverbs 16:4 <sup>5113</sup>Romans 11:36). What is here said is contrary to a notion imbibed by the Jews <sup>f144</sup>, that the world was not created but for the sake of the Israelites: and elsewhere <sup>f145</sup> they say,

“the world was not created but for David; and one says for Moses; and Rabbi Jochanan says for the Messiah;”

which last is truest.