

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Revelation 4: The Throne Room of God

5/14/17

Revelation 4

After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, 'Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this.'

² Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne. ³ And He who sat there was like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, in appearance like an emerald. ⁴ Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads. ⁵ And from the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices. Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.

⁶ Before the throne there was a sea of glass, like crystal. And in the midst of the throne, and around the throne, were four living creatures full of eyes in front and in back. ⁷ The first living creature was like a lion, the second living creature like a calf, the third living creature had a face like a man, and the fourth living creature was like a flying eagle.

⁸ The four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying:

*'Holy, holy, holy,
Lord God Almighty,
Who was and is and is to come!'*

⁹ Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever, ¹⁰ the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying: ¹¹ You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created.'

Rev. 1:19 – Jesus told John to write. . .

...the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this (Rev. 1:19)

John wrote of Jesus. John saw Jesus in all His majesty – in His glory. And, John wrote Jesus' messages to the seven churches – the things which were in John's day – the things which are. Now John is being given a view of the future so that he can write *the things which will take place after this*. Chapters 4 through 22 are prophetic.

Rev. 4:1 – *After these things. . . .* After Jesus' messages to the seven churches. John is called up to the throne room in heaven after what we see as the Church Age. In Revelation chapters 4 through 22 we are going to see the Tribulation, the Second Coming, and the Eternal State – all occurring AFTER the Church Age.

I'm suggesting an intentional sequence that's noted in Rev. 4 based on:

- We do not see the church on earth from Rev. 4 until Rev. 19.
- There is evidence in Rev. 4 that the church is in heaven, before God's wrath is poured out on the earth. The 7 years of God's wrath has been labeled in Scripture as "the hour of trial" (Rev. 3:10), "the time of Jacob's trouble" (Jer. 30:7), "Daniel's 70th week" (Dan. 9:24-27).
- Jesus promised that the church would be kept from the hour of trial that would come upon the whole earth (Rev. 3:10).

After these things, John wrote, I looked, and behold

John saw – he beheld – his eyes were fixed. In this chapter we read of John's second vision. God gave John the gift of beholding the realities of heaven!

John saw *a door standing open*. In the perfect tense it reads: *a door already having been opened*. In God's eternal plan this door has already been opened! Access has been provided.

And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me saying, 'Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this.'

the first voice. . . . is Jesus. The loud voice in John's first vision (Rev. 1:10) is the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last!

The first voice *was like a trumpet*. A voice like a trumpet could speak to a powerful voice, one commanding attention. We're listening to a voice with authority! This voice was speaking with John. This is a personal encounter!

This first voice speaks and says *Come up here....* We see John's "translation to heaven," so to speak, for the vision that follows. After the section in Revelation regarding the Church Age, we read of John being called to heaven that he might look down upon all that should follow from the point of view of heaven itself. John was called to view the future from God's perspective in heaven – the events that God is initiating. Many commentators do not see any possible connection between the experience of John recorded here and the Rapture of the church. What we're reading in Rev. 4 can't provide absolute support regarding the timing of the Rapture – before the Tribulation. The pretribulational timing of the Rapture – the pre-Trib view regarding the Rapture – rests upon other Biblical passages (John 14:1-3; I Cor. 15:51-52; I Thess. 4:15-18).

However, there are significant parallels between Rev. 4:1 in its setting and the Rapture:

- Like John, the NT saints will hear a verbal command at the Rapture (I Thess. 4:16 - *For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.*)
- Like John, the destination of those raptured is heaven (John 14:1-3; I Thess. 4:17; I Cor. 15:51-53).
- John hears a voice like a trumpet. The raptured saints hear a voice and a trumpet (I Cor. 15:52; I Thess. 4:16).

There seems to be an intentional sequence laid out in Rev. 2 through 4. Prior to being called up to heaven, John completed the address to the seven churches. The letters, as we've seen, are to churches only. The end of Rev. 3 is the last appearance, in Revelation, of the Church ON EARTH until Rev. 20. I'm emphasizing "on earth" because we are going to see the Church in Rev. 4 – but in heaven! I'm suggesting that the similarities between the call to *come up here* in Revelation 4 and the aspects of the Rapture are more than pure coincidence. This could be a foreshadowing of the future rapture of the church. I'm suggesting that NT believers, since Pentecost, will be caught up to heaven before the judgment is poured out on earth...before the Tribulation. Please know that, regarding the Rapture of the Church: Nothing else NEEDS to happen according to God's prophetic calendar before the Rapture. Things may occur; but nothing else NEEDS to happen before the Church is raptured.

Jesus says...*I will show you....*

The events are orchestrated and initiated by God Himself. Consider how crucial it is that the judgments yet to come must be understood from God's perspective. They will be horrific. When we see them, however, from God's perspective which includes the vindication of His holiness and justice, we bow our knee to Him Who is alone worthy!

things that must take place after this – they MUST. God's prophetic word cannot be broken (John 10:35).

Immediately I was in the Spirit

God's timing for this vision is instantaneous! Regarding being "in the Spirit," as during John's first vision, John, again, was under the control of the Holy Spirit. John is about to describe a supernatural revelation by means of a vision. He saw, he heard. STRONG'S – "ecstasy" – a throwing of the mind out of its normal state...a man who by some sudden emotion is transported as it were out of himself, so that in this rapt condition, although he is awake, his mind is drawn off from all surrounding objects and wholly fixed on things divine...he perceives with his bodily eyes and ears realities shown him by God.

The consensus of thought among Bible teachers is that the Holy Spirit took possession of John's senses. It has been said that John "...was caught up into heaven and could hear and see what was happening before God's throne, although he was physically on the earth."

and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne

One (God the Father) sat on the throne.

Throne - depicts power and authority. Here is the seat of Almighty God. Here is the seat of universal sovereignty! Psa. 103:19 – *the Lord has prepared His throne in heaven and His kingdom rules over all.* Isa. 66:1 – *Heaven is My throne.*

Central to everything happening in Rev. 4 and 5 is God's throne. What John saw concerning God's throne is organized around four prepositional phrases: "*on the throne*" – v. 2; "*around about the throne*" – vv. 3-4; "*from the throne*" – v. 5; "*before the throne*" – v. 6

We have been presented with a detailed description of God's throne and the activities surrounding it:

- John saw the sovereign God of the universe sitting "on the throne". This is God the Father as we see Jesus taking the scroll from God the Father (Rev. 5:7)...from the right hand (Rev. 5:1) of the One seated on the throne. John saw no form because no one has seen God at any time. John 1:18 - *No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.* Ex. 33:20 - *He said, 'You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live.'*

- *And He who sat there was like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance* (v.3) - a jasper stone is similar to a brilliant diamond. The jasper's crystal clear appearance may be said to represent holiness and purity. The sardius stone is similar to a blood-red ruby. Some have suggested that the blood color is the color of divine anger. God's wrath came upon Jesus on the cross and He bled and died.

Jasper and sardius stones were on the breastplate of the High Priest in the OT. The sardius stone was first; the jasper stone was last. On the breastplate were the 12 stones of the tribes – one stone for each tribe. Jasper and sardius, in their being the first and last stones on the breastplate, could be said to represent all 12 tribes. God was in appearance like a jasper and a sardius. Is this perhaps showing the connection between God and Israel? God is going to purge Israel during this time of testing that John is being shown – the Time of Jacob's trouble (Jer. 30:7). God is going to restore Israel at the end of the seven years of Tribulation. In the restoration we see the faithfulness of God. God had made promises to Israel. God has promised that He would restore Israel. God is faithful to His promises.

- *and there was a rainbow around the throne, in appearance like an emerald.* This rainbow looked like an emerald (v.3). The rainbow is a sign of God's covenant with Noah, his sons, and their descendants and with every living creature on earth.

Gen. 9:11-13 - *Thus I establish My covenant with you: Never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood; never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.* ¹² *And God said: 'This is the sign of the covenant which I make between Me and you, and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: ¹³ I set My rainbow in the cloud, and it shall be for the sign of the covenant between Me and the earth.'* The rainbow is a sign of God's faithfulness. God is faithful to His word, to His promise, to His covenants.

- *Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads.* God's throne is surrounded by other thrones. These 24 elders sitting around the throne of God are clothed in white raiment. They had on their heads crowns of gold (v. 4). In His messages to the churches, Jesus promised those who overcome, who were genuine believers (I John 5:5) would be clothed in white and would be given crowns (Rev. 2:10; Rev. 3:5, 11). That promise was made to the Church and here we see it fulfilled in the throne room of God. I do believe that the 24 elders represent the NT believers who have already been raptured, who have been caught up to meet the Lord in the air and taken to heaven and given rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ (depicted by

crowns [Rev. 4:10]), and then presented as the bride of Christ at the marriage of the Lamb!

If the elders represent the Church, why are there 24 elders? There were 24 divisions of priests in the OT (I Chron. 24:1-5). The fact that there are 24 elders could represent the priestly role of the NT believers. OT priests were chosen by God to serve by offering up sacrifices. The ark of the covenant with the mercy seat on top, which represented the presence of God, was in the Holy of Holies in the Temple. When the temple veil that separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies in the Temple was torn in two by God at Jesus' death (Matt. 27:51) – the message that God was proclaiming was that the way to Him was open. People could now come directly to God through the great High Priest, Jesus ([Hebrews 4:14-16](#)).

These elders, representing the NT Church, are sitting on thrones – ruling and reigning (II Tim. 2:12). [I Cor. 6:2-3](#) - *Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters?* ³ *Do you not know that we shall judge angels?* [Rev. 3:21](#) - *To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.*

- *And from the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices. Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God. We see the awesomeness and power of God's presence. [Ex. 19:16](#) - Then it came to pass on the third day, in the morning, that there were thunderings and lightnings, and a thick cloud on the mountain; and the sound of the trumpet was very loud, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled. Throughout Revelation, these sights and sounds signal the rising storm of God's wrathful judgment to be poured out on a sinful world:*

[Rev. 8:5](#) - *Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and threw it to the earth. And there were noises, thunderings, lightnings, and an earthquake.*

[Rev. 11:19](#) - *Then the temple of God was opened in heaven, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple. And there were lightnings, noises, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail.*

[Rev. 16:18](#) - *And there were noises and thunderings and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such a mighty and great earthquake as had not occurred since men were on the earth.*

- *Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God. These are not the lampstands already mentioned in Rev. 1:12, 20). These are torches blazing perpetually before the throne of God, representing the Holy Spirit in His fullness and perfection (the #7).*

- *Before the throne there was a sea of glass, like crystal. When we think of the sea, we think of agitation, waves, and storms. Here, in the throne room of God, the sea is subdued!*

And in the midst of the throne, and around the throne, were four living creatures full of eyes in front and in back. ⁷ *The first living creature was like a lion, the second living creature like a calf, the third living creature had a face like a man, and the fourth living creature was like a flying eagle.* ⁸ *The four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying:*

*'Holy, holy, holy,
Lord God Almighty,
Who was and is and is to come!'*

In the midst of the throne and around the throne were these beings that looked like a lion, a calf, a man, and a flying eagle. There is much speculation regarding these living creatures. Some see them as angels. Others believe they may represent some of the attributes of God: majesty, strength, intelligence, and divine vigilance. Others see them as reflecting four aspects of Jesus' ministry in the Gospels (Matthew speaks of Jesus as King [lion]; Mark speaks of Jesus as the Servant [calf]; Luke speaks of Jesus as the Son of Man [man]; John testifies that Jesus is God [eagle]:

Ex. 19:4 - You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself. Deut. 32:10-11 – He found him in a desert land and in the wasteland, a howling wilderness; He encircled him, He instructed him, He kept him as the apple of His eye.¹¹ As an eagle stirs up its nest, hovers over its young, spreading out its wings, taking them up, carrying them on its wings.

Some see these living creatures as four of the tribes of Israel. *Num. 2:2 - Everyone of the children of Israel shall camp by his own standard, beside the emblems of his father's house; they shall camp some distance from the tabernacle of meeting.*

The most reasonable view is that John saw some type of angelic beings. Angels vary greatly in appearance.

The four living creatures in Rev. 4...

were full of eyes around and within/before and behind - they are in a position of watchfulness. Being so full of eyes, they are able to move their wings without ever disrupting their vision.

They guard God's throne.

They are swift - *each having six wings,*

And they do not rest day or night, saying:

*'Holy, holy, holy,
Lord God Almighty,
Who was and is and is to come!'*

Isaiah's seraphim made a similar pronouncement (Isa. 6:3). Praises of God's holiness are said to enthrone Him (Psa. 22:3).

⁹ *Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever, ¹⁰ the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying: ¹¹ You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created.*

The 24 elders are engaged in repetitive and voluntary worship. They are casting their crowns (their rewards) before the throne...before Him Who alone is worthy. We will realize that no crown belongs to us rightfully and we shall cast them down before the presence of Him Who lives forever!

Crown of Rejoicing – I Thess. 2:19 – *For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?* We are reading of Paul's evangelistic heart. Some have suggested that this crown is given to those who are burdened for the lost and who share the Gospel. It has been called the "soul-winner's crown." However, we also need to take note of Phil. 4:4 – *to rejoice always in the Lord* for all the bountiful blessings our gracious God has showered upon us. Are we rejoicing?

Crown of Righteousness – II Tim. 4:7-8 – *I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.* ⁸ *Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.*

Crown of Life – Rev. 2:10 – *Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.* James 1:12 – *Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.*

Imperishable Crown – I Cor. 9:24-25 – *Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it.* ²⁵ *And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown.*

Crown of Glory – I Pet. 5:1-4 – *The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed:* ² *Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly;* ³ *nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock;* ⁴ *and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.* Peter is speaking to Pastors/Elders/Bishops. The crown of glory is given to those who have faithfully cared for the flock of God

You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power;
Present tense – God is worthy *to be continually receiving*...glory, and honor and power.

for You created all things,
God alone is the Creator. He alone is independent. All else is dependent upon Him.

and by Your will they exist and were created.
God's role as Creator underwrites worship of Him.

Rom. 11:36 – *For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.*

Please note that we have a chapter break at this point. We need to know that the chapter breaks were not in the original manuscripts of Scripture. The chapter divisions commonly used today were developed by Stephen Langton, an Archbishop of Canterbury. Langton put the modern chapter divisions into place in around A.D. 1227. The Wycliffe English Bible of 1382 was the first Bible to use this chapter pattern. Since the Wycliffe Bible, nearly all Bible translations have followed Langton's chapter divisions.

There is an intimate connection between the words of the angels and elders concerning creation and the events of the next chapter where the Lamb takes the seven-sealed scroll.

In Rev. 4, the subject is creation.

In Rev. 5, the subject is redemption – not just redemption of saved men, but of the entire created order (Rev. 5:13).

TO GOD BE THE GLORY!