

# Revelation 4 Commentary

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## **Revelation 4:1**

Having completed the letters to the [Seven Churches of Asia](#), John is called up to the throne room in heaven where he is given a vision of God the Father on His throne.

After these things

The phrase is [μετ τα τα](#) [meta tauta] and indicates a transition from “the things which are” (Rev. 1:19<sup>±</sup>), the letters written to the [Seven Churches of Asia](#) in chapters 2 and 3. John enters upon the second of the two major time periods into which this revelation is divided: “the things which will take place after this”. See [Structural Outline](#).

a door *standing* open

*Standing open* is [ve γμενη](#) [ēneōgmenē], perfect tense: “a door already having been opened.” The door was opened prior to John seeing it and now stood ajar. In Revelation 3:8<sup>±</sup> Jesus set an open door before the Philadelphian church. This door is not for evangelism, but provides passage for John to heaven to be shown the events recorded hereafter. There are numerous parallels between this passage and the vision recorded by Ezekiel. Ezekiel did not mention a *door*, but said “the heavens were opened and I saw visions of God” (Eze. 1:1). The “heavens were opened” at Jesus’ baptism (Mat. 3:16; Luke 3:21), the stoning of Steven (Acts 7:56), Peter’s vision of the unclean animals (Acts 10:11), and at the Second Coming of Christ (Rev. 19:11<sup>±</sup>).

the first voice which I heard *was* like a trumpet speaking with me saying

This is probably better translated as: “The first voice I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet said.”<sup>1</sup> This is the voice John heard at the first, on the Lord’s day, which sounded like a trumpet (Rev. 1:10<sup>±</sup>).<sup>2</sup> See commentary on [Revelation 1:10](#).

Come up here

Having written the letters to the churches, John is called “to Heaven that he might look down upon all that should follow from the point of view of Heaven itself. . . . Any true understanding of the course of world events must be based on Heaven’s perspective of those events. Further it may be said that here is a typical teaching in the very act of John’s translation to Heaven for the vision that is to follow. . . . all believers will be caught up to Heaven before the judgment is actually poured out upon the earth.”<sup>3</sup> Yet many commentators are averse to seeing any possible connection between the experience of John recorded here and the [Rapture](#) of the church:

There is no convincing reason why the seer's being "in the Spirit" and being called into heaven typifies the rapture of the church any more than his being taken into the wilderness to view Babylon indicates that the church is there in exile. The phrase relates to the experience of the seer, and not necessarily to that of the church.<sup>4</sup>

This phrase is taken by many to prove the pretribulation Rapture of the church. This text, however, cannot prove anything about the Rapture, for to apply this to the Rapture one must take John to be a type of the church, the call to "come up hither" a type of the shout-command at the Rapture, and the third heaven as the destination of believers at the Rapture, all of which are tenuous connections at best. One cannot base a doctrine on a type, and proof of the timing of the Rapture must rest upon the direct statements of Scripture elsewhere. There is no need to search the Apocalypse for a direct mention of the pretribulation Rapture of the church, when the doctrine is clearly stated elsewhere.<sup>5</sup>

Many Premillennialists see the Rapture of the Church in this verse, but this requires somewhat of an allegorical interpretation. Following *The Golden Rule of Interpretation*, this verse merely contains an invitation for John to come to Heaven in vision (Rev. 4:2+) in order that God can show him *the things which must come to pass hereafter*.<sup>6</sup>

We concur with Smith that this text cannot *prove* anything about the Rapture and that the [pretribulational](#) timing of the Rapture rests upon other passages and biblical teaching, but we cannot agree with Tenney that this passage has not even a *typological* relationship to the Rapture. Nor do we agree with Fruchtenbaum that recognizing typology here is akin to allegory. Are we "allegorizing" when we understand the serpent on the pole in Numbers 21 as a type pointing to the cross? By this measure, Jesus would have to be said to be an allegorical interpreter (John 3:14-16). As Smith even recognizes, there are significant parallels between this verse *in its setting* and the Rapture:

1. Like John, the saints will hear a verbal command at the Rapture (1Th. 4:16).
2. Like John, the destination of those raptured is heaven (John 14:1-3; 1Th. 4:17).
3. Like John, those raptured are *in Christ*—members of the Church which was created on the Day of Pentecost (1Cor. 12:13).
4. John hears a voice as a trumpet. The raptured saints hear a voice *and* a trumpet (1Cor. 15:52; 1Th. 4:16).
5. The command John hears, "Come up here!", also attends the *resurrection* of the two witnesses (Rev. 11:12+).

The context also emphasizes the transition between "the things which are" and the "things which will take place after these [things]" (Rev. 1:19+). John has just finished writing the seven letters to [seven churches](#) dictated by Jesus. These letters are *full* of the church. Yet the word church ([ἐκκλησία](#) [ekklēsia]) in the last verse of chapter three is the *final* appearance of the word until Revelation 22:16+—long after "the things which must take place" introduced here. Surely the similarities between this passage and aspects of the Rapture coupled with the dramatic transition which attends the introduction of this chapter are more than pure coincidence! We find it puzzling why believers are content to recognize subtle typology concerning Christ found in Abraham's offering of Isaac (Gen. 22) or the serpent on the pole in the wilderness (Num. 21), yet are unwilling to allow for seeing typological hints concerning the Rapture in other passages such as this? If Boaz, Ruth, and Naomi are understood to represent Jesus, the Church, and Israel in the book of Ruth, why is it considered out-of-bounds to notice similar parallels between this verse and what is taught elsewhere concerning the Rapture of the Church, *especially given its context*? We believe this bias against understanding typology of the Rapture in this verse wrong-headed and believe that the Holy Spirit *intended* to *support* here what is explicitly taught elsewhere. See [Rapture](#).

I will show you

This is the primary purpose of the Revelation being given John (Rev. 1:1+, Rev 1:19+; Rev 22:6+). The scenes in the book of Revelation often follow a pattern where a heavenly setting is described followed by an earthly setting:

Each Vision "in heaven" is preparatory to the Vision afterwards seen "on earth"; and what is seen "on earth" is the carrying out of the Vision previously seen "in heaven." The one is mutually explanatory of the other. The heavenly Vision explains what is going to take place upon the earth; and the utterances in each heavenly Vision set forth the special object of the earthly events which are to follow. The former Vision of each pair, is therefore, the key to the latter.<sup>7</sup>

As with all of history, it is critical that the interpreter of events transpiring upon the earth has access to the perspective of God. For without His perspective, all is chaos and disarray. All the more so at the end of history when events upon the earth become extremely chaotic and destructive—seemingly without purpose or plan. Yet as is shown John and conveyed to us, the events are carefully orchestrated and *initiated* by God Himself as He finally moves His hand to take back that which was lost in the Garden and legally regained at the cross. It is from this heavenly perspective that the great events of judgment in the pages to come must be understood. To those saints living during the time of the end, John's revelation—wherever a copy might be procured—will be of inestimable value!

things which must take place after this

The things to come are *sure* for they *must* take place. God's prophetic word cannot be broken (John 10:35). This is why the sword extends from the *mouth* of Jesus—the will of God, once having been spoken forth, is unstoppable (Rev. 1:16<sup>±</sup>; 19:15<sup>±</sup>). *After this* is perhaps better translated *after these [things]*. It is the same phrase which begins the verse: [μὲτ' τοῦτο](#) [meta tauta]. This verse follows “the things which are” and Jesus is now introducing the next major topic—the things which are yet future to John's time.

## Revelation 4:2

I was in the Spirit

Once again, John was “in the Spirit,” as he was at the beginning of his vision (Rev. 1:10<sup>±</sup>). Ezekiel described his similar experience as the hand of the Lord being upon him (Eze. 1:3; 3:14). Later, he records: “the Spirit lifted me up between earth and heaven, and brought me in visions of God to Jerusalem” (Eze. 8:3). In subsequent visions, the Spirit took Ezekiel to Chaldea (Eze. 11:24) and to the valley of dry bones (Eze. 37:1). Paul was caught up to the third heaven in a similar experience, although he does not mention the Spirit's involvement (2Cor. 12:1-2). Being “in the Spirit” refers not only to spiritual or physical transport to a new location or vantage point, but to a unique empowerment by the Spirit to receive special revelatory communication from God (Eze. 2:2; 3:12-14; Gal. 1:16; 2:2; Eph. 3:3). Although the text does not explicitly say so, John was probably *transported* to heaven. The command was for him to “come up here.” The Spirit transports John to the wilderness (Rev. 17:2<sup>±</sup>) and a great and high mountain (Rev. 21:10<sup>±</sup>) later in the book.

One sat on the throne

Prior to being given great revelation, prophets are often exposed to the glory of God. Earlier, John saw the glorified Jesus. Now he will be shown the throne room in heaven. Isaiah had a similar vision of God on His throne (Isa. 6:1). This is where Jesus is presented to the “Ancient of Days” to receive His kingdom (Dan. 7:9-14). In Ezekiel's vision, “on the likeness of a throne was a likeness with the appearance of a man” (Eze. 1:26). Isaiah also saw Him: “I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple” (Isa. 6:1b). See commentary on [Revelation 1:12](#). The One sitting is God the Father, not Christ, for Christ comes to the One on the throne to receive the scroll with the seven seals (Rev. 5:1-7<sup>±</sup>). This is the One whose wrath, along with that of the Lamb, is poured out upon the [earth dwellers](#) (Rev. 6:16-17<sup>±</sup>) and to Whom, along with the Lamb, salvation belongs (Rev. 7:10<sup>±</sup>). He is sitting *on the throne* which emphasizes His ultimate rule and control of all that transpires in the book (Rev. 4:5<sup>±</sup>, Rev 4:9-10<sup>±</sup>; Rev 5:1<sup>±</sup>, Rev 5:6<sup>±</sup>, Rev 5:7<sup>±</sup>, Rev 5:13<sup>±</sup>; Rev 6:16<sup>±</sup>, Rev 7:10<sup>±</sup>, 15<sup>±</sup>; Rev 16:17<sup>±</sup>; Rev 19:4<sup>±</sup>; Rev 20:11-15<sup>±</sup>; Rev 21:5<sup>±</sup>). Even the final manifestation of evil is dependent upon permission being granted from the Father (Rev. 3:21<sup>±</sup>; Rev 6:4<sup>±</sup>; Rev 7:2<sup>±</sup>; Rev 13:7<sup>±</sup>, Rev 13:14<sup>±</sup>, Rev 13:15<sup>±</sup>). God is completely sovereign over the affairs of history, yet those who participate in sin are fully responsible moral agents (Acts 2:22-23). God's *throne* is prominent throughout the book and indicates His ultimate role as *judge* (Rev. 20:11<sup>±</sup>).<sup>8</sup> Hundreds of years before John, Ezekiel saw the same One seated on His *chariot throne*:

And above the firmament over their heads was the likeness of a throne, in appearance like a sapphirestone; on the likeness of the throne was a likeness with the appearance of a man high above it. Also from the appearance of His waist and upward I saw, as it were, the color of amber with the appearance of fire all around within it; and from the appearance of His waist and downward I saw, as it were, the appearance of fire with brightness all around. Like the appearance of a rainbow in a cloud on a rainy day, so was the appearance of the brightness all around it. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. So when I saw it, I fell on my face, and I heard a voice of One speaking. (Eze. 1:26-28)

Ezekiel was overcome by what he saw. Here, no mention is made of John collapsing under the vision of God's glory as occurs so frequently elsewhere (Isa. 6:5; Eze. 1:28; 3:23; Dan. 10:8; Mat. 17:6; Mark 9:6; Acts 9:4; Rev. 1:17<sup>±</sup>). Perhaps this is because John had already been strengthened by Christ following his collapse at the earlier revelation of the risen Christ (Rev. 1:17<sup>±</sup>). What John sees is not some immaterial spiritual revelation, but a *real material place*:

Heaven is a material place. John saw a throne. If the objection is that he was in the Spirit and that it might be a spiritual throne, we would answer that the body of Jesus Christ was raised from the dead and that our Lord said, “Handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have” (Luke 24:39); and it was that body which ascended into Heaven. There must be a material Heaven or there was no ascension, and if there was no ascension, there was no resurrection, and if there was no resurrection, there is no salvation.<sup>9</sup>

## Revelation 4:3

like a jasper

Jasper describes the light of, foundation, and walls of the holy Jerusalem (Rev. 21:11<sup>±</sup>, Rev 21:18-20<sup>±</sup>). It was the last of the twelve stones representing the twelve tribes of Israel which were mounted in the breastplate of the high priest (Ex. 28:20; 39:13). When Satan was in the Garden of God, his covering included precious stones like jasper (Eze. 28:13-14). "Modern ignorance of ancient terminology makes precise identification of the stones quite tentative (Morris). Probably the equation of iaspidi ('jasper stone') to the modern jasper which is dull and opaque (Alford) is wrong because the modern stone is hardly considered costly as the text implies."<sup>10</sup> "From Rev. 21:11<sup>±</sup>, where it is called most precious, which the jasper was not, Ebrard infers it was a diamond."<sup>11</sup>

like a sardius stone

"The sardius, better known in our day as the carnelian, is red. Hengstenberg quotes ancient authorities who call it blood-colored' and takes it to describe the righteous wrath of God, the color of the fire of divine anger."<sup>12</sup> This stone is also mentioned as part of Satan's covering in the Garden of God (Eze. 28:13). It is the sixth foundation stone of the holy Jerusalem (Rev. 21:19<sup>±</sup>) and the first of the twelve stones representing the twelve tribes of Israel in the breastplate of the high priest (Ex. 28:17; 39:10). The inclusion of both the first stone, *sardius*, and last stone, *jasper* from the breastplate denote the idea of *all Israel, first and last, beginning and end, or alpha and omega* (Rev. 1:8<sup>±</sup>, Rev 1:17<sup>±</sup>; Rev 2:8<sup>±</sup>).

The jasper and the sardine stone are the first and last of these twelve stones [representing the tribes of Israel]. The jasper represented Reuben, the first of the tribes, since Reuben was the firstborn of Jacob. The sardine stone represented Benjamin, the youngest of the twelve sons of Jacob. In other words, the two stones represented the first and the last and therefore may be regarded as including all the other stones in between, that is, the whole of the covenanted people.<sup>13</sup>

Most see the references to precious stones here (and in Eze. 28) as a description of brilliant colored lights which radiate from God and His throne (Eze. 1:26-28): "We need not find symbolism in each element of the vision; it is enough to allow the archetypical imagery to create the impression of transcendent glory."<sup>14</sup>

a rainbow around the throne

The brilliant light emanating from the throne resembled a rainbow of *emerald* hues. The *rainbow* was given as a sign following Noah's flood to *remind God* of His covenant never again to destroy all flesh with a flood (Gen. 9:13-16; Isa. 54:9-10). Ezekiel saw this same rainbow as the brightness around the throne (Eze. 1:28). The world that was previously perished in the flood. In the chapters to follow, the judgment will be by *fire* (2Pe. 3:5-7).

As the rainbow was first reflected on the waters of the world's ruin, and continues to be seen only when a cloud is brought over the earth, so another deluge, namely, of fire, shall precede the new heavens and earth: the Lord, as here, on His throne, whence (Rev. 4:5<sup>±</sup>) proceed "lightnings and thunderings," shall issue the commission to rid the earth of its oppressors.<sup>15</sup>

The rainbow is *around* the throne implying a full circle like a halo.<sup>16</sup> A rainbow adorns the head of the mighty angel whose cry precedes the seven thunders (Rev. 10:1-3<sup>±</sup>).

like an emerald

The color of the third stone of the high priest's breastplate (Ex. 28:17; 39:10) and also associated with Satan's covering in the Garden of God (Eze. 28:13). The stone of the fourth foundation of the holy Jerusalem (Rev. 21:19<sup>±</sup>).<sup>17</sup>

## Revelation 4:4

around about

Multitudes surround God's throne (1K. 22:19; Rev. 5:11<sup>±</sup>; Rev 7:11<sup>±</sup>), but in concentric positions. Those closest to God appear to occupy positions of special service, blessing, and favor. The elders occupy a position of prominence near the throne along with the four living creatures (Rev. 4:6-9<sup>±</sup>). The Lamb is also in their midst (Rev. 5:6<sup>±</sup>).

on the thrones

These elders appear to co-reign with the Father in some lesser capacity. This brings to mind the promises made to the apostles wherein they will rule over the twelve tribes in the regeneration (Mat. 19:28) and the promises made in the previous chapters to the overcomer (Rev. 2:26-27<sup>±</sup>; Rev 3:21<sup>±</sup> cf. Rev. 20:4<sup>±</sup>, Rev 20:6<sup>±</sup>). Nowhere in Scripture do we see mention of elect *angels* occupying thrones.<sup>18</sup> Later, during the *Millennial Kingdom*, we find *humans* which sit upon thrones (Rev. 20:4<sup>±</sup>). Daniel's vision of the Ancient of Days mentions "thrones" which "were put in place" prior to a court being seated (Dan. 7:9-19). The court's judgment results in the destruction of the beast and the removal of the dominion of the other beasts (Dan. 7:12). This is the "judgment . . . made *in favor* of

the saints of the Most High” when “the time came for the saints to possess the kingdom” (Dan. 7:22). The saints will be given into the hands of the beast for “a time and times and half a time” (Dan. 7:25; 9:27; 12:7; 11:2; 11:3, 13:5)<sup>19</sup> but the court shall be seated and “take away his dominion, to consume and destroy it forever” (Dan. 7:26). The only other mention of *thrones* (plural) in this book are those occupied by saints who take part in the first resurrection and rule and reign during the Millennium (Rev. 20:4<sup>+</sup>). These elders comprise the court which will be seated and rule against the beast bringing about his eventual overthrow and ushering in the [Millennial Kingdom](#) (Rev. 19<sup>+</sup>, 20<sup>+</sup>). Paul revealed that saints would be entrusted with the judgment of such weighty matters. “Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? . . . Do you not know that we shall judge angels?” (1 Cor. 6:2-3).

St. John with the Twenty-Four Elders



[20](#)

twenty-four elders

The twenty-four elders repeatedly worship the Father (see commentary on [Revelation 4:10](#)). One of the elders comforts John explaining that Jesus has prevailed to loose the seven-sealed scroll (Rev. 5:5<sup>+</sup>). Later, an elder explains to John the identity of those coming out of the Great Tribulation (Rev. 7:13-14<sup>+</sup>). The 144,000 with the Father’s name on their foreheads sing a new song before these elders and the living creatures (Rev. 14:3<sup>+</sup>). A wide range of opinions attends the identification of these elders. “There are at least thirteen different views of their identity, ranging from the twenty-four ruling stars (or judges) in the heavens to the simple figure of wholeness and fullness.”<sup>21</sup>

Attempts to identify the elders have fallen into two broad categories, one saying that they are men and the other that they are angels. Each category has three variations, the former one saying that the men are either representatives of Israel, representatives of the church, or representatives of both. The latter category sees the angels as representatives either of the OT priestly order or of the faithful of all ages, or as a special class or college of angels.<sup>22</sup>

Whether to understand the elders as *human* or *angelic* beings turns on several factors:

1. Can the term “elder” describe an angel?<sup>23</sup>
2. Do angels wear crowns, symbols of reward not found in association with angels elsewhere?
3. Do elect angels sit on thrones, although never mentioned elsewhere?
4. Is the textual variant at Revelation 5:9<sup>+</sup>, which explicitly includes the elders among the redeemed, the preferred reading?

The *elders* are [πρεσβυτέρους](#) [presbyterous], presbyters. Frequently translated ‘elders’ (67 times in the KJV). The term is never used of angelic beings:

Nowhere else in Scripture is the term [elder] used to describe celestial or angelic beings. This term is used of humans in positions of authority either in the synagogue or church.<sup>24</sup>

Presbuteroi (elders) is never used in Scripture to refer to angels, but always to men. It is used to speak of older men in general, and the rulers of both Israel and the church. There is no indisputable use of presbuteroi outside of Revelation to refer to angels. (Some believe that “elders” in Isaiah 24:23 refers to angels, but it could as well refer to humans.) Further, “elder” would be an inappropriate term to describe angels, who do not age.<sup>25</sup>

The number of the elders, *twenty four* is seen by some as symbolizing the twelve tribes of Israel (written on the gates of the New Jerusalem, Rev. 21:12<sup>+</sup>) and the twelve apostles of the Lamb (written on the twelve foundations of the city, Rev. 21:14<sup>+</sup>). Thus, they suggest twelve of the elders represent [OT](#) saints and the other twelve [NT](#) saints.

That these twenty-four represent the heads of the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve apostles is abundantly confirmed in Scripture. When we come to the description of the new Jerusalem, we find twelve messengers at the gates and on the gates the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel, while the names of the twelve apostles are on the foundations of the city (Rev. 21:12-14<sup>+</sup>). Our Lord promised the disciples that they should sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Mat. 19:28; Luke 22:30). So it is that believers of all ages are seen here.<sup>26</sup>

Yet the Lord said the apostles would judge the twelve tribes “in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory” (Mat. 19:28). This does not take place until His Second Coming when the Millennial Kingdom is established (Mat. 25:31; Rev. 20:4<sup>+</sup>). This scene in heaven precedes that time by at least seven years for the Lamb has not yet taken the scroll from the Father to loose the first of its seven seals (Rev. 5:1ff<sup>+</sup>). So it is not clear that OT saints are pictured here. The time at which this vision occurs

within the sequence of events shown John implies that the elders are *already* in heaven prior to the events of [The 70th Week of Daniel](#). We believe that passages such as Daniel 12:1-2 imply that OT saints are not resurrected until *after* this [time of Jacob's Trouble](#)—prior to the Millennial Kingdom (Rev. 20:4+). To be sure, the souls of OT saints are in paradise (heaven at this time), but it seems unlikely that they would have received rewards (i.e., crowns) or rule on thrones prior to the resurrection attending the Millennial Kingdom.<sup>27</sup> Others note the parallel with the twenty four divisions which David and Zadok made of the sons of Aaron for their priestly service (1Chr. 24:1-5). Rather than twelve OT saints and twelve NT saints, the number *twenty four* could merely represent the *priestly* role of the NT saints:

The figure 24 is probably taken from 1 Chronicles 24, where David divided the Tribe of Levi into 24 courses to represent the whole. Since the Church is a kingdom of priests, these 24 elders represent the Church as a whole. This actually provides [another] clue to the fact that the 24 elders represent the Church and not angels.<sup>28</sup>

The events of the Tribulation period which follows argue against their identification with Israel:

Some believe the elders represent Israel. But while individual Jews have been and will continue to be redeemed throughout history, at the time of this vision the nation as a whole had not yet been redeemed. Their national judgment and salvation (Rom. 11:26) comes during the Tribulation (chaps. 6-19), largely as a result of the evangelistic efforts of the 144,000 (introduced in chap. 7). When the twenty-four elders are first introduced, those events are yet to take place.<sup>29</sup>

Various lines of evidence suggest they represent the redeemed of the present church age.<sup>30</sup>

The biblical description seems to point to believers of this present church age. They are already in heaven (Rev. 4-5+) before the opening of the seal judgments (Rev. 6+). They are sitting on thrones before God (Rev. 4:4+). Angels never sit in the presence of God. However, Christ promised church-age believers that they would sit with Him on His throne (Rev. 3:21+). God positionally has made all believers today sit together in the heavenly places in Christ (Eph. 2:6). The elders are clothed in white robes (Rev. 4:4+). Church-age believers are promised such pure clothing (Rev. 3:5+, Rev 3:18+; Rev 19:7-8+). The elders have crowns of gold on their heads (Rev. 4:4+). . . . Believers in the churches are promised such crowns (Rev. 2:10+; Rev 3:11+). In the Epistles, believers are also promised crowns for spiritual accomplishments (1Cor. 9:25; 1Th. 2:19; 2Ti. 4:8; Jas. 1:12; 1Pe. 5:4). Holy angels do not wear crowns, but believers can and will wear them. . . . The elders are set in contrast to angels (Rev. 5:11+). The term presbuteros (elder) is never used of angels in the Bible. The word denotes maturity and growth. Holy angels could not be designated with this term because they were all created at the same time. . . . The more plausible explanation of the twenty-four elders is that they represent the redeemed of this present church age.<sup>31</sup>

Among the well-known commentators who regard these elders as representative of the Church are Alford, Barnes, Benson, Binney, Carpenter, Clarke, Clemance, Book, Crafer, Crosby, Dusterdieck, Fausset, Girdlestone, Godet, Gray, Henry, [Hengstenberg], Holden, Kiyper, Milligan, Plummer, Roberson, Scott, Sheppard, Simcox, Slight, Smith, Swete, Weidner.<sup>32</sup>

If these represent saints of the church age,<sup>33</sup> then we have another piece of evidence in favor of a [pretribulational rapture](#): “Here then is yet another proof that the Church shall not pass through the Tribulation, for we find these singers in Heaven before the beginning of the judgments.”<sup>34</sup>

As John beholds certain subjects of redemption, robed, and crowned, and enthroned, as priests and kings in heaven, we here have (let it be noted) positive demonstration, that, at the time to which this vision relates, a resurrection and a translation *have already taken place*. . . . They occupy these thrones, while yet the closed book, which brings forth the seals and trumpets, lies untouched in the hand of Him that sits upon the throne. They see it there, and they vote the Lamb worthy to open it. They behold Him taking it up, and fall down and worship as He holds it. They are in their places when heaven receives the accession of the multitude which come “out of the great tribulation” (Rev. 7:11-14+). They have their own distinct positions when the still later company of the hundred and forty-four thousand gather round the Lamb on Mount Zion. And they are spectators of the judgment of great Babylon, and sing Alleluia in glory as they see her fall (Rev. 19:4+).<sup>35</sup>

Elders will also rule with Christ from Jerusalem in the Millennial Kingdom (Isa. 24:23).

clothed in white robes

The elders are *clothed* in *white* which speaks of a covering for sin provided by Christ's atonement on behalf of the saints. See commentary on [Revelation 3:4](#) and [Revelation 3:5](#). There is some question as to whether the elders include themselves among the redeemed mentioned in Revelation 5:9+ as textual variants attend the text. The [TR](#) and [MT](#) texts indicate the elders are redeemed whereas the [NU](#) text does not. See commentary on [Revelation 5:9](#).

crowns of gold



*Crowns* is [στεφάνους](#) [stephanous]. The crowns may indicate that the elders are among those who have been made “kings and priests” (or “a kingdom of priests”, NU text) as is promised the overcomers (Rev. 2:10<sup>+</sup>; Rev 3:11<sup>+</sup>). See commentary on [Revelation 1:6](#). They were awarded these crowns, yet they repeatedly cast them before the Father’s throne in recognition of the superiority and source of their blessing (Rev. 4:10<sup>+</sup>).<sup>36</sup> “When all earthly crowns and thrones have perished, the redeemed ones of Christ will be at the beginning of their reign. How small then will appear the great majesties of earth, and how insignificant the power they have to bestow!”<sup>37</sup> In Scripture, angelic beings are never promised nor found wearing crowns. Yet some suggest the elders to be angels. Crowns (other than those worn by God) are typically associated with rewards attending judgment. The judgment of angels would likely take place after this scene in heaven because: (1) the saints participate in their judgment—presumably after having been glorified (1Cor. 6:3); and 2) significant events attending the angelic realm have yet to transpire before they can be judged. “If this passage is regarded as chronologically before the time of the tribulation which succeeding chapters unfold, it would seem to eliminate the angels, as at this point they have not been judged and rewarded since their judgment seems to come later.”<sup>38</sup> This assumes the angelic judgment by the saints is for both *reward* and *punishment*. If these crowns are not associated with reward, or the angelic judgment is only for punishment from which the elect angels are exempt, then the plausibility of the elders being angels encounters fewer difficulties. See [Crowns](#).

## Revelation 4:5

lightnings, thunderings, and voices

These portend the magnificence and glory of the Father and bring reverent fear to those who experience them, as when God revealed Himself to the children of Israel at Mount Sinai (Ex. 19:16-18; Heb. 12:18-21) and to Ezekiel (Eze. 1:13). In this book, thunder attends moments of great significance and impending *judgment* (Rev. 8:5<sup>+</sup>; Rev 10:3<sup>+</sup>; Rev 11:19<sup>+</sup>; Rev 16:17-18<sup>+</sup>; Rev 19:6<sup>+</sup> cf. Ex. 9:23-34; 1Sa. 2:10; 7:10; 1Sa. 12:17-18; 2Sa. 22:14; Ps. 18:13; 104:7). “This is the faint rumbling of the judgment that shall come forth against mankind out of Christ, against the empire of Satan, and the farthest worlds of the universe. Now there is a premonition of judgment, but soon worlds shall perish.”<sup>39</sup> “These demonstrate that the throne is one of judgment, and that wrath is about to proceed from it.”<sup>40</sup> The *voices* may be those of the “seven thunders” whose utterance John is told not to record (Rev. 10:3-4<sup>+</sup>). “The thunderings express God’s threats against the ungodly: there are voices in the thunders (Rev. 10:3<sup>+</sup>), that is, not only does He threaten generally, but also predicts special judgments’ [Grotius].”<sup>41</sup>

seven lamps

These *lamps* are said to be the *seven Spirits of God* which are *burning before the throne*. See commentary on [Revelation 1:4](#). These are not the “seven lampstands” which are the churches (Rev. 1:12<sup>+</sup>, Rev 1:20<sup>+</sup>), but represent the Holy Spirit Who is the source of light (illumination) and Who empowers the seven lampstands. Their continual *burning* is an indication of judgment (Mat. 3:11) and zeal (Acts 2:3), for nothing escapes the penetrating witness of the Holy Spirit (Gen. 15:17; Rev. 3:1<sup>+</sup>; Rev 5:6<sup>+</sup>). The lamps are associated with *lightnings* and *thunderings* and are *burning* as an indication of the time of judgment which follows.

“For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, and all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble. And the day which is coming shall burn them up,” says the LORD of hosts, “That will leave them neither root nor branch.” (Mal. 4:1)

See [Trouble Ahead](#).

## Revelation 4:6

sea of glass, like crystal

Those who achieve victory over the beast (by not loving their lives to the death, Rev. 12:11<sup>+</sup>) are seen standing on this *sea of glass* before the throne. There, it is said to be “mingled with fire” possibly indicating the brilliance of light radiating from the *crystal*-like structure (Rev. 15:2<sup>+</sup>). Moses, the sons of Aaron, and the elders of Israel saw something similar when they met with God on Mount Sinai:

Then Moses went up, also Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and they saw the God of Israel. And there was under His feet as it were a paved work of sapphire stone, and it was like the very heavens in its clarity. (Ex. 24:9-10)

This sea may also symbolize the “river of life” which flows from the temple during the Millennium (Eze. 47:1-9) and proceeds from the throne in the eternal state (Rev. 22:1<sup>+</sup>), where there is no more sea (Rev. 21:1<sup>+</sup>). Both are said to be like *crystal*.<sup>42</sup> Corresponding to the bronze laver in the [tabernacle](#) and Solomon’s [Temple](#) (Ex. 38:8; 1Ki 7:23), the sea pictures the washing away of uncleanness by Christ’s atonement. This *sea of glass* is under the throne, but was seen above from Ezekiel’s perspective below the chariot throne (Eze. 1:22-26).<sup>43</sup>

Thank God the laver [in heaven] will be turned to crystal. The day will come when one of the saints will ever need confession. . . . I shall never have to go to the Heavenly Father again to tell Him I have sinned. . . The laver is of crystal only because I and all the saints of all the ages will have been made like into the Lord Jesus Christ. There will be no more sin. This is one of the reasons why it will be Heaven.<sup>44</sup>

See commentary on [Revelation 15:2](#).

around the throne

These creatures are around the throne, whereas in Ezekiel's vision the similar creatures are *in the midst* of the cloud of fire (Eze. 1:5).

four living creatures

There are *four* creatures indicating the universal character of their representation (see the [symbolic meaning of four](#)). They are *Living creatures*, ζῶα [zōa]: "to denote beings that are not human and yet not really animals of the usual kind . . . Of the four peculiar beings at God's throne, whose description Rev. 4:6-9<sup>+</sup> reminds us of the ζῶα [zōa] in Eze. 1:5ff, the cherubim. See also Rev. 5:6<sup>+</sup>, Rev 5:8<sup>+</sup>, Rev 5:11<sup>+</sup>, Rev 5:14<sup>+</sup>; Rev 6:1<sup>+</sup>, Rev 6:3<sup>+</sup>, Rev 6:5-7<sup>+</sup>; Rev 7:11<sup>+</sup>; Rev 14:3<sup>+</sup>; Rev 15:7<sup>+</sup>; Rev 19:4<sup>+</sup>."<sup>45</sup> Ezekiel also sees *four living creatures*, τεσσαρόρων ζῴων [tessarōn zōiōn] (Eze. 1:5-22; 3:13; 10:1-20). Ezekiel's creatures have close similarity to these:

1. They attend the throne.
2. They are winged.
3. Aspects of their character represent alion, an ox (or calf), a man, and an eagle.

But there are also significant differences:

1. Ezekiel's creatures had four wings whereas these have six.
2. Ezekiel's creatures *each* had all four faces of a man, a lion, an ox, and an eagle whereas these each have *one* of the characteristics.<sup>46</sup>
3. No mention is made of Ezekiel's creatures themselves having eyes—although the wheels they attend are full of eyes. These creatures *themselves* are full of eyes.

Similarity does not make identity and we must conclude that these living creatures, while probably cherubim, are different in identity to Ezekiel's cherubim (Eze. 10:20). Since Isaiah's seraphs had six wings, perhaps these creatures are of that order (Isa. 6:2, 6). It appears that these creatures attend God's stationary throne whereas Ezekiel's cherubim attend God's *chariot throne* which transports the manifestation of His glory (Ps. 18:10; Eze. 10:19-20; 11:22). We first meet with cherubim in their service of God guarding the way to the tree of life after the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden (Gen. 3:24).<sup>47</sup> Satan was created as one of these cherubim serving at God's throne until he fell (Eze. 28:14). "Here are the living ones, in every way his equals, yes, infinitely his superiors, since they have access to all of the power of God. These are not with him in his rebellion. They are ready to carry into effect the orders of divine judgment."<sup>48</sup> These living creatures call John's attention to the effects of the Lamb's loosening of the first four seals whereupon the four horsemen of the Apocalypse ride forth (Rev. 6:1-7<sup>+</sup>). One of the four living creatures gives the final seven bowls of God's wrath to the seven angels who will pour forth the seven plagues.

After the Flood, the Teraphim (probably a corruption of the Cherubim) were made in imitation of them and became objects of worship [Gen. 31:19, 34-35; Jdg. 17:5; 18:14, 17-18, 20; 1Sa. 15:23; 19:13, 16; 2Ki. 23:24; Eze. 21:21; Hos. 3:4; Zec. 10:2]. The remembrance of them was carried away by the scattered nations (Gen. 10), and probably the Assyrian sculptures are traditional corruptions of the Cherubim, for they consisted of a *man* with an *eagle's* head; a *lion* or a *winged bull* with a *human* head.<sup>49</sup>

The cherubim attend God's throne. The writer of Hebrews informs us that the things in the earthly sanctuary were a model of the ultimate reality in heaven above (Heb. 9:24). In the earthly Tabernacle and Temple, we find these *living creatures* portrayed at each end of the Ark of the Covenant and on the veil separating the holy place (Ex. 26:31; 36:35). Their images attended God's glory which was said to "dwell between the cherubim" above the mercy seat (Ex. 25:22; Num. 7:89; 1Sa. 4:4; 2Sa. 6:2; 1Ki. 7:29; 2Ki. 19:15; 1Chr. 13:6; 2Chr. 5:7; 6:41; Ps. 80:1; 99:1; Isa. 37:16; Eze. 41:18). See [The Abiding Presence of God, A Heavenly Pattern](#).

lion . . . calf . . . man . . . eagle

The symbolism conveyed by these faces is the subject of much discussion.



The interpretations of the symbols of the four living creatures are, of course, numerous and varied. Some of them are: the four Evangelists or Gospels; the four elements; the four cardinal virtues; the four faculties or powers of the human soul; the Lord in the fourfold great events of redemption; the four patriarchal churches; the four great apostles, the doctors of the Church; the four principal angels, etc.<sup>50</sup>

As we discuss elsewhere, the [interpretation of symbols](#) can often lead in unbiblical directions, especially to the degree that non-biblical sources provide the source for their interpretation. When other passages within Scripture are taken into consideration, it seems the likeness of these four creatures reflect the four primary roles of Messiah Jesus revealed in the four gospels:

1. King (Matthew)
2. Servant (Mark)
3. Man (Luke)
4. God (John)

Evidence in support of this view is presented in our discussion of the [Four Gospels](#).

## Revelation 4:7

The simile of the first two and the last are like animals (lion, calf, flying eagle). The description of the third centers on its *face* being like that of a man. Nothing is said concerning the likeness of the remainder of its body.

## Revelation 4:8

having six wings

The cherubim Ezekiel saw had four wings (Eze. 1:11-12) whereas these creatures have six wings like the seraphim which Isaiah saw attending the throne (Isa. 6:2, 6). "In Isa. 6:2 we read, 'Each had six wings: with twain he covered his face (in reverence, as not presuming to lift up his face to God), with twain he covered his feet (in humility, as not worthy to stand in God's holy presence), and with twain he did fly [in obedient readiness to do instantly God's command].'<sup>51</sup>

full of eyes

Eyes indicate great intelligence (Eze. 1:18; 10:12; Dan. 7:8, 20; Rev. 1:14<sup>+</sup>; Rev 2:18<sup>+</sup>; Rev 5:6<sup>+</sup>; Rev 19:12<sup>+</sup>). These creatures are near the apex of God's created order (Eze. 28:12-15).<sup>52</sup>

around and within

"John's object is to show that the six wings in each did not interfere with that which he had before declared, namely, that they were 'full of eyes before and behind.' The eyes were *round* the outside of each wing, and up the *inside* of each when half expanded, and of the part of body in that inward recess."<sup>53</sup> "Being so full of eyes positioned in this manner, they are able to move their wings without ever disrupting their vision."<sup>54</sup>

Holy, holy, holy

Isaiah's seraphim made a similar pronouncement concerning God's uniqueness (Isa. 6:3). Praises of God's holiness are said to "enthroned" Him (Ps. 22:3). "Who *is* like You, O LORD, among the gods? Who *is* like You, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?" (Ex. 15:11). Worship of God is a major theme of this book as He brings about the redemption of creation in the culmination of history. See [Worship of God](#). Three denotes completeness or may reflect the Trinity. See [Three: Life, Resurrection, Completeness, the Trinity](#).

Almighty

[παντοκράτωρ](#) [pantokratōr], see commentary on [Revelation 1:8](#).

Who was and is and is to come

[ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ὄν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος](#) [ho ēn kai ho ōn kai ho erchomenos], the same phrase as is found in Revelation 1:4<sup>+</sup>, 8<sup>+</sup>, but with the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> titles reversed. Comprised of a verb and two participles: "The *he was* and the *who is* and the *coming one*". This unusual grammatical construction is discussed in the commentary on [Revelation 1:4](#).

## Revelation 4:9

Whenever the living creatures give glory

This is a repetitive event as evidenced by the future tense: [δώσουσιν](#) [dōsousin], *they shall give*.

who lives forever and ever

See commentary on [Revelation 1:4](#).

### 3.4.10 - Revelation 4:10

the twenty-four elders fall down

Their action is tied to the doxology given by the living creatures. Whenever the creatures *shall* give glory, the elders *shall themselves* fall down: [πρὸς ὑποῦ](#) [pesountai], future tense middle voice. This is repetitive and voluntary worship (Rev. 4:10<sup>±</sup>; Rev 5:8-10<sup>±</sup>, Rev 5:14<sup>±</sup>; Rev 11:16<sup>±</sup>; Rev 19:4<sup>±</sup>). They “worship at His footstool” for “He *is* holy” (Ps. 99:5).

Him who lives forever

*The one living into the ages of the ages*. This is God the Father seated on His throne. How similar His identity is with that of Jesus: *the Living One, and dead I became and behold living I am into the ages of the ages* (Rev. 1:18<sup>±</sup>). See commentary on [Revelation 1:18](#). His eternal existence is coupled with His role as Creator (see [next verse](#)) because He alone is without previous cause. He is the unique “uncaused cause” which has always existed and from which all else was brought forth. If God were not eternal, then all eternity would have been nothingness because no agent would have preexisted creation to bring it forth. “This is the strongest possible expression for an unending eternity. We make special mention of it because later we shall see that the same phrase is used of the duration of the punishment of Satan, his captains and those of earth who have followed him.”<sup>55</sup>

cast their crowns

They recognized the supreme worthiness of the One on the throne. Their own crowns are entirely dependent upon His grace and bestowal. “What are these crowns? . . . they are the symbols of reward. They are the prizes, which have come from God’s heart of grace, given unto those who, at the best, were unprofitable servants. When we shall see the worship of the mighty cherubim, we shall realize therefore, that no crown belongs to us rightfully and we shall cast them down before the presence of Him who lives forever.”<sup>56</sup> See [Crowns](#).

## Revelation 4:11

worthy to receive glory and honor and power

[λαβεῖν](#) [labein], present tense: *to be continually receiving*. Both the Father and the Son are *worthy to receive glory and honor and power* (Rev. 5:12<sup>±</sup>). See [Worship of God](#).

You created all things

If there could have been any doubt about Who is seated on the throne, here it is removed. He alone is *creator*, all else is *creature*. He alone is *independent*, all else is *dependent* upon Him. Recognition of this distinction is the foundation of all right worship, for worship of any other is directing to that which is *dependent* what is only for the *Originator* (Rev. 22:8-9<sup>±</sup>). All worship directed elsewhere is idolatry. Scripture reveals that all three persons of the Trinity participated in creation:

1. The Father (Gen. 1:1-31; Isa. 40:21-28; Isa. 43:1, 7; Isa. 45:12, 18; 48:13; 51:13; Acts 14:15; 17:24).
2. The Spirit (Gen. 1:2; Job 26:13; 33:4; Ps. 104:30; Isa. 42:5).
3. The Son (John 1:3; Eph. 3:9; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:3; Rev. 3:14<sup>±</sup>).

by Your will they exist and were created

His role as Creator underwrites all worship of Him, for He *alone* is Creator and all else is creature and therefore, *entirely dependent* upon His will for continued existence (Heb. 1:3). “In Him all things consist” (Col. 1:17) “For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen” (Rom. 11:36). **TR** and **MT** have [εἶσι](#) [eisi], *exist*. **NU** has [ἔσαν](#) [ēsan], *existed*. The past tense emphasizes the creative act. The present tense emphasizes their ongoing existence by His will. *Were created*, [κτισαί](#) [ektisas], the aorist tense typically denotes past time. God *finished* creation and then rested (Gen. 2:2-3; Ex. 20:11; 31:17). “When the NT refers to creation... it always refers to a past, completed event—an immediate work of God, not a still-occurring process of

evolution.<sup>57</sup> Even if it were somehow possible for complex life forms to arise by chance,<sup>58</sup> the notion is precluded by Scripture. Creation is not an ongoing process.<sup>59</sup> Here we need to alert the reader of the danger of allowing the chapter break between chapters 4 and 5 to destroy the flow of the text. There is an intimate connection between the words of the cherubim and elders concerning *creation* and the events of the next chapter where the Lamb takes the seven-sealed scroll. For here the subject is *creation* and there it will be *redemption*. Not redemption *positionally* which was accomplished at the cross, but *experientially*. Not just redemption of saved men, but of the *entire created order* (Rom. 8:18-22) which has been subject to Satan since the fall (Mat. 4:8; Luke 4:6; John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; 2Cor. 4:4; 1Jn. 5:19; Rev. 13:1<sup>±</sup>; Rev 13:7<sup>±</sup>).

Thus, *creation* is the subject of the first great utterance of the Zōa and the Elders. Their words announce the blessed fact that the judgments which are about to take place, have for their great object the removal of the curse [Gen. 3:14-19], and of all unholiness from the earth; and the ending of creation's groaning and travail.<sup>60</sup>

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> [New Electronic Translation : NET Bible](#), electronic edition (Dallas, TX: Biblical Studies Press, 1998), Rev. 4:1.

<sup>2</sup> Many red-letter Bibles seem unwilling to identify the voice as being that of Jesus for they render the words of this voice in black but the words of the voice speaking in Revelation 1:10-11<sup>±</sup> in red. An exception is the KJ2000 Bible, <http://life-equals-jesus.org/Couric/KJ2Khome.html>, available from <http://www.spiritandtruth.org/download/tools/index.htm>.

<sup>3</sup> Donald Grey Barnhouse, [Revelation](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1971), 88.

<sup>4</sup> Merrill C. Tenney, [Interpreting Revelation](#) (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1957), 141.

<sup>5</sup> Jerome Smith, [The New Treasury of Scripture Knowledge](#) (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1992), Rev. 4:1.

<sup>6</sup> Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, [The Footsteps of Messiah](#), rev ed (Tustin, CA: Ariel Ministries, 2003), 165.

<sup>7</sup> E. W. Bullinger, [Commentary On Revelation](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1984, 1935), 211.

<sup>8</sup> God's throne appears in Rev. 1:4<sup>±</sup>; 3:21<sup>±</sup>; 4:2-6<sup>±</sup>, 9-10<sup>±</sup>; 5:1<sup>±</sup>, 6-7<sup>±</sup>, 11<sup>±</sup>, 13<sup>±</sup>; 6:16<sup>±</sup>; 7:9-11<sup>±</sup>, 15<sup>±</sup>, 17<sup>±</sup>; 8:3<sup>±</sup>; 12:5<sup>±</sup>; 13:2<sup>±</sup>; 14:3<sup>±</sup>, 5<sup>±</sup>; 16:10<sup>±</sup>, 17<sup>±</sup>; 19:4-5<sup>±</sup>; 20:11<sup>±</sup>; 21:5<sup>±</sup>; 22:1<sup>±</sup>, 3<sup>±</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> Barnhouse, [Revelation](#), 89.

<sup>10</sup> Robert L. Thomas, [Revelation 1-7](#) (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1992), 342.

<sup>11</sup> A. R. Fausset, "The Revelation of St. John the Divine," in Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, [A Commentary, Critical and Explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments](#) (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997, 1877), Rev. 4:2.

<sup>12</sup> Barnhouse, [Revelation](#), 90.

<sup>13</sup> John F. Walvoord, [The Revelation of Jesus Christ](#) (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1966), 104.

<sup>14</sup> Alan F. Johnson, [Revelation: The Expositor's Bible Commentary](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1966), Rev. 4:3.

<sup>15</sup> Fausset, [The Revelation of St. John the Divine](#), Rev. 4:3.

<sup>16</sup> Thomas, [Revelation 1-7](#), 343.

<sup>17</sup> Mounce observes: "Ex. 28:17-21 lists the twelve stones, each inscribed and representing a tribe in Israel. Note that the jasper and the carnelian (sardius) are the last and the first (Benjamin and Reuben; cf. Gen. 49:3-27). On this basis the emerald (no. 4) would stand for the tribe of Judah."—Robert H. Mounce, [The Book of Revelation](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1977), 134. But in the list of stones given by Exodus 28:17, the emerald is listed as the *third* stone—the last in the first row of three—and would represent the tribe of *Levi*, not Judah.

<sup>18</sup> "Nowhere in Scripture do angels sit on thrones, nor are they pictured ruling or reigning. Their role is to serve as 'ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation' (Heb. 1:14; cf. Mat. 18:10)."—John MacArthur, [Revelation 1-11 : The MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#) (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1999), Rev. 4:4.

<sup>19</sup> Daniel 11:3 probably denotes the first half of the 7-year period. The remaining 3.5 years are the time of the beast's dominion.

<sup>20</sup>Albrecht Durer (1471 - 1528). Image courtesy of the [Connecticut College Wetmore Print Collection](#).

<sup>21</sup>Johnson, [Revelation: The Expositor's Bible Commentary](#), Rev. 4:4.

<sup>22</sup>Thomas, [Revelation 1-7](#), 344.

<sup>23</sup>In support of identifying the elders with angels, [Ibid., 345] notes the Septuagint rendering of 'elders' in Isa. 24:23 refers to a heavenly assembly. But the context of the passage is the Messianic Kingdom in which resurrected *humans* are known to function in leadership roles.

<sup>24</sup>Fruchtenbaum, [The Footsteps of Messiah](#), 167.

<sup>25</sup>MacArthur, [Revelation 1-11 : The MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#), Rev. 4:5.

<sup>26</sup>Barnhouse, [Revelation](#), 91.

<sup>27</sup>"The entire scriptural doctrine concerning the state of the dead, forbids the idea that disembodied souls are already crowned and enthroned, although at rest in the bosom of God. . . . The coronation time, is the resurrection time; and no one can be crowned until he is either resurrected if dead, or translated if living."—J. A. Seiss, [The Apocalypse: Lectures on the Book of Revelation](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1966), 104. The OT saints are not *in Christ* in the sense of having been baptized into His body (1Cor. 12:13) and are not part of the Church which was formed on the Day of Pentecost. "Even though Israel is redeemed by the blood of Christ, Israel never experienced the baptism of the Holy Spirit which placed them 'in Christ,' so this phrase can only describe those saints of the present age who are thus related to Christ."—J. Dwight Pentecost, [Things to Come: A Study in Biblical Eschatology](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1958), 407. Therefore the OT saints are not raised at the Rapture of the church when the *dead in Christ* arise (1Th. 4:16), but at a later time—prior to the Millennial Kingdom in which Israel will play a key role (Mat. 19:28). "Resurrection is viewed as a terminating event and Israel's resurrection could not come until her program were terminated."—Ibid., 410.

<sup>28</sup>Fruchtenbaum, [The Footsteps of Messiah](#), 167.

<sup>29</sup>MacArthur, [Revelation 1-11 : The MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#), Rev. 4:5.

<sup>30</sup>For the view that they are heavenly beings, see [Bullinger, [Commentary On Revelation](#), 217-220] and [Thomas, [Revelation 1-7](#), 344-348]. For an extended discussion of the identity of the elders, see [Pentecost, [Things to Come: A Study in Biblical Eschatology](#), 207-208, 253-258].

<sup>31</sup>Robert G. Gromacki, "Twenty Four Elders of Revelation," in Mal Couch, ed., [Dictionary of Premillennial Theology](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1996), 377-378.

<sup>32</sup>Alva J. McClain, [The Greatness Of The Kingdom](#) (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 1959), 469.

<sup>33</sup>"Identification of the twenty-four elders should not be dogmatically held, but such evidence as there is seems to point to the conclusion that they may represent the church as the Body of Christ."—Walvoord, [The Revelation of Jesus Christ](#), 107.

<sup>34</sup>Barnhouse, [Revelation](#), 91.

<sup>35</sup>Seiss, [The Apocalypse: Lectures on the Book of Revelation](#), 104.

<sup>36</sup>Fruchtenbaum sees their wearing crowns as an indication that the events of these two chapters follow the bema seat judgment of believers' works. "The fact that these 24 elders are wearing these *stephanos* crowns also shows that the events described in chapters four and five occur *after* the Judgment Seat of Messiah but *before* the Marriage of the Lamb."—Fruchtenbaum, [The Footsteps of Messiah](#), 167.

<sup>37</sup>Barnhouse, [Revelation](#), 92.

<sup>38</sup>Walvoord, [The Revelation of Jesus Christ](#), 106.

<sup>39</sup>Barnhouse, [Revelation](#), 92.

<sup>40</sup>Seiss, [The Apocalypse: Lectures on the Book of Revelation](#), 102.

<sup>41</sup>Fausset, [The Revelation of St. John the Divine](#), Rev. 4:5.

<sup>42</sup>Passages related to the *river of life*: Ex. 17:6; Ps. 36:8-9; 46:4; Sos. 4:15; Isa. 12:2; 44:3; 55:1; Jer. 2:13; 17:13; Eze. 47:1, 8-9; Joel 3:18; Zec. 13:1; 14:8; John 4:10; 7:37-38; 19:28; 1Cor. 10:4; Rev. 7:17<sup>±</sup>; Rev 21:6<sup>±</sup>; Rev 22:1-2<sup>±</sup>, Rev 22:6<sup>±</sup>; Rev 22:17<sup>±</sup>.

<sup>43</sup>“Contrast the turbid ‘many waters’ on which the harlot ‘sitteth’ (Rev. 17:1<sup>±</sup>, 15<sup>±</sup>).”—Ibid., Rev. 4:6.

<sup>44</sup>Barnhouse, [Revelation](#), 94.

<sup>45</sup>Frederick William Danker and Walter Bauer, [A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature](#) (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 341.

<sup>46</sup>Only one of the creatures is said to have a *face* like a man. The other creatures are simply said to have a likeness to a lion, ox, and eagle, respectively. We should not be dogmatic about whether it was their *faces* which bore the likenesses in all four creatures.

<sup>47</sup>Cherubim are mentioned in Gen. 3:24; Ex. 25:18-20, 22; 26:1, 31; 36:8, 35; 37:7-9; Num. 7:89; 1S. 4:4; 2S. 6:2; 22:11; 1K. 6:23-29, 32, 35; 7:29, 36; 8:6-7; 2K. 19:15; 1Chr. 13:6; 28:18; 2Chr. 3:7, 10-14; 5:7-8; Ezra 2:59; Ne. 7:61; Ps. 18:10; 80:1; 99:1; Isa. 37:16; Eze. 9:3; 10:1-9, 14-20; 11:22; 28:14, 16; 41:18, 20, 25; Heb. 9:5.

<sup>48</sup>Barnhouse, [Revelation](#), 97.

<sup>49</sup>Bullinger, [Commentary On Revelation](#), 225.

<sup>50</sup>M. R. Vincent, [Vincent's Word Studies](#) (Escondido, CA: Ephesians Four Group, 2002), Rev. 4:8.

<sup>51</sup>Fausset, [The Revelation of St. John the Divine](#), Rev. 4:8.

<sup>52</sup>Johnson, [Revelation: The Expositor's Bible Commentary](#), Rev. 4:8.

<sup>53</sup>Fausset, [The Revelation of St. John the Divine](#), Rev. 4:8.

<sup>54</sup>Thomas, [Revelation 1-7](#), 361.

<sup>55</sup>Barnhouse, [Revelation](#), 98.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid.

<sup>57</sup>John MacArthur, “[Creation: Believe it or Not.](#)” in Richard L. Mayhue, ed., [The Master's Seminary Journal](#), vol. 13 no. 1 (Sun Valley, CA: The Master's Seminary, Spring 2002), 15.

<sup>58</sup>All objective science shows that the generation of complexity requires *intelligence*. Design requires a *designer*.

<sup>59</sup>“*were created*—by Thy definite act of creation at a definite time.”—Fausset, [The Revelation of St. John the Divine](#), Rev. 4:11.

<sup>60</sup>Bullinger, [Commentary On Revelation](#), 231.

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## ADDITIONAL COMMENTS ON REVELATION 2 - Bruce Hurt MD

PREVIOUS

NEXT

**Apostle John on Isle of Patmos**

HISTORICAL SETTING OF REVELATION

Click charts to enlarge  
Charts from [Jensen's Survey of the NT](#) - used by permission  
[Another Chart](#) from Charles Swindoll

**NOTE** - These comments on **Revelation 1 and Revelation 2** are separate and distinct from the Revelation Commentary above by Tony Garland.

**Revelation 4:1** After these things I looked, and **behold**, a door standing open in heaven, and the first voice which I had heard, like the sound of a trumpet speaking with me, said, "**Come up** here, and I will show you what must take place after these things."

BGT Revelation 4:1 Μετὰ ταῦτα εἶδον, καὶ ἴδον θύραν νεγμνήν τε ὁραν, καὶ φωνὴν πρῆτην κούσας σλιγγος λαλοῦσης μετὰ μοῦλων· ἔβη δὲ, καὶ ἔειπεν μοι· ἔρχου ἕκει, καὶ ἔσομαι μετὰ σου.

KJV Revelation 4:1 After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter.

NET Revelation 4:1 After these things I looked, and there was a door standing open in heaven! And the first voice I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet said: "Come up here so that I can show you what must happen after these things."

CSB Revelation 4:1 After this I looked, and there in heaven was an open door. The first voice that I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this."

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

NIV Revelation 4:1 After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven. And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this."

NLT Revelation 4:1 Then as I looked, I saw a door standing open in heaven, and the same voice I had heard before spoke to me like a trumpet blast. The voice said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must happen after this."

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

NJB Revelation 4:1 Then, in my vision, I saw a door open in heaven and heard the same voice speaking to me, the voice like a trumpet, saying, 'Come up here: I will show you what is to take place in the future.'

NAB Revelation 4:1 After this I had a vision of an open door to heaven, and I heard the trumpetlike voice that had spoken to me before, saying, "Come up here and I will show you what must happen afterwards."

YLT Revelation 4:1 After these things I saw, and lo, a door opened in the heaven, and the first voice that I heard is as of a trumpet speaking with me, saying, 'Come up hither, and I will shew thee what it behoveth to come to pass after these things;'

MIT Revelation 4:1 Here is what I saw after these visions: Look! A door opened in heaven, and the former voice I had heard resonating like a trumpet was speaking with me: "Come up here, and I will point out to you the events that must happen later."

- **After:** Rev 1:1-3:22
- **a door:** Ex 1:1 Mt 3:16 Mk 1:10 Lu 3:21 Ac 7:56 10:11
- **the first:** Rev 1:10 16:17
- **Come:** Rev 11:12 Ex 19:24 24:12 34:2,3



- **and I:** Rev 1:19 22:6 Joh 16:13
- [Revelation 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### Related Passages:

Revelation 1:1+ The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to **show** ([deiknuo](#)) to His bond-servants, the things which **must** ([dei](#)) soon take place; and He sent and communicated it by His angel to His bond-servant John,

Revelation 1:19+ "Therefore write the things which you have seen (REVELATION 1), and the things which are (REVELATION 2-3), and the things which will take place (REVELATION 4-22) **after these things**."

## AFTER THESE THINGS! AN ABRUPT SCENE SHIFT!

Revelation 4 focuses first on the One seated on the Throne (Rev 4:1-6a) and then the worship of the One seated on the throne (Rev 4:6b-11). We shift perspectives from a view below to a view from above. It is interesting that in Revelation 3:21+ we see both the Father and the Son on God's throne. Here we are told John saw only one sitting on the throne.

I like the wise exhortation of **Warren Wiersbe** - True spiritual worship is perhaps one of the greatest needs in our individual lives and in our churches. There is a constant emphasis today on witnessing for Christ and working for Christ, but not enough is said about worshipping Him. To *worship* means "to ascribe worth" (see Rev. 4:11; 5:12). It means to use all that we are and have to praise God for all that He is and does. Heaven is a place of worship, and God's people shall worship Him throughout all eternity. Perhaps it would be good for us to get in practice now! A study of Revelation 4-5 will certainly help us better understand how to worship God and give Him the glory that He deserves. (BORROW [Be Victorious](#))

**James Hamilton** writes "All that is taking place on earth is under the sovereign control of the one who sits on the throne in heaven. Corrie ten Boom, who hid Jews from the Nazis and went to prison for her efforts, says it well: "There is no panic in Heaven! God has no problems, only plans." She is right. This is the first thing John draws our attention to." (See [Revelation: The Spirit Speaks to the Churches](#))

**John Walvoord** - The concept that the book of Revelation beginning with 4:1 is future, from the standpoint of the twentieth century, is a broad conclusion growing out of the lack of correspondence of these prophecies to anything that has been fulfilled. A normal interpretation of this section which understands these prophecies as literal events would require that they be viewed as future. The futuristic concept is supported by the similarity of the expression in 1:19, "the things which shall be hereafter" (Gr., ha mellei genesthai meta tauta) to the clause in 4:1, "things which must be hereafter" (Gr., ha dei genesthai meta tauta). Chapters 4 and 5 are the introduction and background of the tremendous sweep of prophetic events predicted in the rest of the book. If chapter 4 and succeeding chapters relate to the future, they provide an important clue concerning the interpretation of the vision and the prophetic events which unfold in those chapters. One of the principal reasons for confusion in the study of the book of Revelation has been the failure to grasp this point. If Revelation has no chronological structure and is merely a symbolic presentation of moral truth, its prophetic significance is reduced to a minimum. If, as others hold, the predictions of this section of Revelation are already fulfilled in the early persecution of the church, it also robs the book of any prophecy of the future.<sup>2</sup> (For discussion of the various systems of interpretation of the book of Revelation, see the Introduction.) A literal interpretation of the prophecies beginning in chapter 4 is not fulfilled in any historic event and must therefore be regarded from the futuristic viewpoint if it is indeed valid prophecy. The events anticipated in the angel's promise to "shew thee things which must be hereafter" (4:1), should be regarded as a prediction of events which shall occur at the end of the age. ([Revelation 4: The Church In Heaven](#))

**Osborne** - In chapter 4 the sovereignty and majesty of God is central, and worship predominates.

*We need the words of this passage to reach out of the page and grip our hearts with the very glory of God.*

-- James Hamilton

**James Hamilton** introduces Revelation 4 with a challenging exhortation. I pray we all accept the challenge and not just read Revelation 4 (and 5) as if we were dutifully reading through the Bible in a year! - Perhaps our spiritual state matches one of these situations: the things of God have begun to lose their luster, or maybe you're struggling with the sacrifices facing you. Or perhaps you find yourself more interested in and engaged by sinful pleasures. We need to see God as John describes him in his throne room in Revelation 4:1-11. We need the words of this passage to reach out of the page and grip our hearts with the very glory of God. **It throbs with God's majesty and power to transform your life, to give you a reason to live, to purify you from every defilement, to take you all the way home.** (See [Revelation: The Spirit Speaks to the Churches](#))

**After these things** - When you see a phrase like "these things," pause and ponder the phrase asking "what things?" which usually forces you to re-read the preceding context. You won't be disappointed by taking this short "detour!" John will now be shown what comes **after these things**, the things he has seen and heard in Revelation 1-3. Remember that everything from 4:1 on is prophecy (if you interpret the Scriptures literally).

**THOUGHT-** I would like to throw a "challenge question" out there at this point to give you a thought to ponder. The word for **church** ([ekklesia/ecclesia](#)) has occurred 19x in 18 verses in Revelation 1-3, the last mention in Rev 3:22+, immediately preceding the phrase "**after these things**" in Revelation 4:1 ("*tais ekklesiais meta tauta*"). Then there is no additional mention of [ekklesia/ecclesia](#) until we come to the description of Heaven in Revelation 22:16+. Just throwing this simple observation out there as "food for thought" to chew on. No mention of the church in the greatest outpouring of God's wrath in world history in Revelation 6-22. There is one mention of the "bride" in Rev 19:7 which is a synonym for the church, but this also follows the outpouring of God's wrath on the earth.

**After these things** - 8 times in the Revelation - Rev. 1:19; Rev. 4:1; Rev. 7:9; Rev. 9:12; Rev. 15:5; Rev. 18:1; Rev. 19:1; Rev. 20:3

It is fascinating that even a respected Greek scholar like [A T Robertson](#) says "**after these things**" describes a "change in the panorama not chronology." What? That's a very dogmatic statement, but is it really what "after these things" normally means? I think not. Even a review of the definition of the word "**after**" in English gives us the following - As a preposition **after** = in the time following (an event or another period of time); As a conjunction **after** = during the period of time following an event. As an adverb **after** = at a later or future time; afterwards; and finally as an adjective **after** = later. Here is the point -- the discerning Acts 17:11+ reader needs to be very careful reading the commentaries on Revelation (yes, even this one!), because many writers have a built in bias that causes them to depart from a simple, normal, literal reading of the text.

**Henry Morris on after these things** - "After this" means after all that was revealed concerning the church age as represented by the seven church epistles. John is now carried forward, in the Spirit, to see the events that will take place next. God, who created time as well as space, transcends both time and space. Thus, He could easily translate John in both space and time--in space to heaven, and in time to the future. John, therefore, was able to see and hear these amazing events of the future as an actual eye-witness, **just as we shall eventually see and hear them when we**, like John, are caught up into heaven to be with the Lord (1 Thessalonians 4:16,17). In Revelation 4-22, the Lord shows us, through John's eyes, the "things which must be hereafter"--that is, after the church age ). (BORROW [The Defender's Study Bible](#))

**Robert Mounce** emphasizes the time sensitive or chronological aspect of the phrase after these things - John is about to see "what must take place after this." This definitely assigns the content of the following chapters to a period of time yet future (although embedded in the material are sections that refer to times already past, e.g., 12:1-6). In 1:19 Christ had commanded John to write "what will take place later"; now he will show him those things. Since events on earth have their origin in heaven, the heavenly ascent is not unexpected. A true insight into history is gained only when we view all things from the vantage point of the heavenly throne. (BORROW [The Book of Revelation](#) - New International Commentary New Testament)

**Danny Akin** - That these events were future to John there is no question. That they are future to our day is virtually certain given: (1) the catastrophic descriptions of the chapters; (2) the close parallels to Daniel 7 and 9, Matthew 24 and 2 Thessalonians 2, all of which address the end of history; and (3) it is virtually impossible to reasonably identify any of the events of chapters 6 - 22 with past history. The seals (chapter 6), trumpets (chapters 8 & 9) and bowls (chapter 16) have not come. The beast, Antichrist (chapter 13), has not appeared. No, the scene shifts both to heaven (mentioned 50 times in Revelation) and the future as God lays out for us His purpose, His plan, for the consummation of history. Things will not unfold willy-nilly. There is purpose in God's plan. History is not aimlessly moving forward out of control. There is purpose in God's plan.

**Henry Morris** - This is a critically important verse in Revelation. It begins and ends with the same words in the original, "**after these things**," which ties it back rigidly to the third component in the prophetic outline set out by the Lord in Revelation 1:19. "Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter" (i.e., "after these things"). At this point, the Lord proceeds to show John the things which shall be **after these things**, that is, after the things associated with the churches, as described in Chapters 2 and 3—"the things which are." It would seem obvious that the events beginning at this point must occur after Christ's dealings with His churches on earth have been completed, and He is now turning His attention to other urgent matters as far as the earth is concerned. Correspondingly, there is no mention at all made of churches in all the great happenings outlined in the next eighteen chapters. (BORROW [The Revelation Record](#))

*While Earth was closing its doors, Heaven was opening new ones.*

-- Skip Heitzig

I looked, and behold ([idou](#)), a door ([thura](#)) standing open ([anoigo](#) - perfect tense) in heaven (ouranos) - Note that **behold** is actually a command and calls attention to "a special divine intervention." (Thomas). John seeks to arrest the attention of the reader to the special importance of what follows. We all do well to pay very careful attention! Given the nature of the incredible visions John will be seeing over the next 19 chapters, it is surprising that **behold** does not appear 100's of times in the Revelation, instead of only 25 times! Notice it is a **door** ([thura](#)) and NOT a gate (Rev 21:21). Notice also that this is not St Peter standing at the gate with a set of keys (cf Mt 16:18-19) to allow you into Heaven! Only one Person determines who enters and it is Jesus Who declared "I am the Door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture." (Jn 10:9+)

**Open** is perfect tense indicating opened at some point in the past and standing open and passive voice is likely the divine passive (see [Keathley's comment below](#)). The location is in heaven and as you read the Revelation you need to identify where the action described by John is taking place, on earth or in heaven (see chart depicting heavenly events in blue, earthly events in brown). In Rev 19:11+ John again says "I saw heaven opened ([anoigo](#) again in perfect tense)," but this time he (and all saints) would be coming down following the conquering Christ (Rev 19:14+, Rev 17:14+)!

**THOUGHT** - It is easy to read through the Revelation of Jesus Christ and be caught up in the wonder of Heaven and the triumph of our King and forget that while John saw the "preview", every genuine believer will see the revelation turn into reality as the events of incredible book begin to unfold before our very eyes! Hallelujah! Glory! Amen! As we read the Revelation and look at the things not seen which are eternal (2Co 4:18+), this incredible truth should motivate us to "deny ungodliness and worldly desire and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking (eagerly anticipating) for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus." (Titus 2:12-13+) Listen to Steven Curtis Chapman's "[Not Home Yet](#)" as you look with eyes of faith to that great day when you shall see our Lord face to face, a truth that should motivate us to purify ourselves just as He is pure. (1Jn 3:2-3+). Then take a moment and imagine what it will be like when our faith and hope become glorious sight as you ponder the words of [I Can Only Imagine](#).

Did you notice that one door was closed to Jesus (Laodicea Rev 3:20) but the door in Rev 4:1 was flung wide open for John.

[Keathley](#) makes an excellent point on the significance of **a door open** - "This is an essential prerequisite if one is to comprehend the nature of the events and the purpose of God behind them. "*Standing open*." The voice of this verb is passive. God opened the door for John which serves to remind us this is divine revelation. It reveals that which we could never see or know apart from this special revelation from God." (ED: cf Lk 24:45+)

It is also interesting John sees only one **door**, not several, which reminds us of Jesus' words in Jn 10:9+ "I am the (ONLY) door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture." In Ro 5:2+ we read that through Jesus "we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God." The word introduction means admission into the presence of a person in high position. Jesus gives us access to His Father and here we see John experiencing that access. In Ephesians 2:6+ Paul says God has raised us up with Jesus "and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Paul uses "seated" in what is referred to as the aorist tense, which normally expresses past tense action. In this case it is what is known as the prophetic aorist which expresses something as if it is already passed because it is absolutely certain to transpire in the future (cf Rev 5:10+, Rev 20:4-6+).

[Keathley](#) has an interesting, albeit somewhat technical note on the phrase **door standing** - The verb here is the Greek verb *ekeitō*, a passive imperfect of *keimai* which may be used as the passive of *tithēmi*, "to be laid, to lie, be laid or set, stand."<sup>70</sup> So it may mean "to lay, place, or set something." It could be translated as, "a throne was being placed in heaven," or "a throne had been placed in heaven." John is telling us this throne was purposefully set in heaven for the coming events or judgments. Perhaps John saw the throne being set and then he saw the One sitting on the throne. The suggestion is that this was not the eternal throne, but one especially set for the Tribulation judgments (cf. Psalm 9:7, "He has established His throne for judgment" and Dan. 7:9, "I kept looking until thrones were set up, And the Ancient of Days took His seat..." See also Dan. 7:13-14). It appears this is a special throne prepared for the Tribulation and from this point on the Book becomes predominantly the Book of the throne. The word throne is mentioned 45 times versus only 15 times in all the rest of the New Testament. (ED: THEN HE ADDS A COMMENT THAT IS SOMEWHAT SPECULATIVE) Perhaps this throne is somewhere in the second heaven, outer space (see Rev. 6:16). God leaves His eternal throne, the throne of the third heaven (2 Cor. 12:2) to establish this one to defeat His enemies and to establish His rule on earth (cf. again Dan. 7:9-14).

**John Walvoord** - The reference to heaven is not to the atmospheric heavens nor to the starry heavens but to that which is beyond the natural eye which the best of telescopes cannot reveal. This is the third heaven, the immediate presence of God. ([Revelation 4: The Church In Heaven](#))

**And the first voice** ([phone](#)) which I had heard ([akouo](#)), like the *sound of a trumpet* ([salpigx](#)) speaking with me, said - First voice

does not mean first in a series of voice, but refers back to the one he had heard in Revelation Rev 1:10+. Notice the word "like" which is a term of comparison, specifically a simile which occurs 65x in 45 verses in the NASB95 edition. This fact emphasizes that the Revelation will be packed with [figurative language](#), which can mislead one to attempt fanciful explanations. Here the sound was not a trumpet, but like a trumpet and therefore clearly audible and clearly understandable. And what was the **first voice** John had heard on the island of Patmos? This is undoubtedly the voice of the Lord Jesus. The first voice he heard was in Rev 1:10+ in which the glorified Lord Jesus is described - "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like the sound of a trumpet." The mention of **trumpet** here should not be confused with 1Th 4:16 and 1Co 15:52 which are associated with the Rapture.

**Like the sound of a trumpet** indicates a sound as loud and clear as a trumpet's blast, which in context signals the necessity to submit to whatever is commanded. While the trumpet is a shofar, [here is a link to listen](#) to the clear, loud tone of a shofar that might give us some idea of what John heard.

## COME ON UP!

**Come up** ([anabaino](#)) **here, and I will show** ([deiknuo](#)) **you what must** ([dei](#)) **take place after these things** - **Come up** is in the [aorist imperative](#) and there is no way humanly possible John could have obeyed this command without the supernatural transport [in the Holy Spirit](#) which correlates with his being "in the Spirit"! John was commanded to **come up** but God's *commandments* always come "pre-packaged" with His *enablements*! In this case it John had little choice but to obey.

**THOUGHT** - Mark it down that when the Lord gives us a command (such as "husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church...." Eph 5:25+), He gives us the power to carry out the command!

While the text does not say that John was taken to heaven, clearly what he sees in Rev 4:2 indicates that Heaven was his destination. As an aside, this was the same command given to the two witnesses in Rev 11:12+ that set in motion (so to speak) a series of events (Rev 11:12-14+) including the sounding of the strategic seventh trumpet (Rev 11:15+). Why was John called to come up to Heaven? He was to receive the privilege to see future events, events that **must** ([dei](#)) **take place**. The verb **show** is used in Rev 1:1+ and means to make known the character or significance of something by visual, auditory, or linguistic means, all of which will come into play as John is shown the events in Revelation 4-22.

Note the previous use of **must** ([dei](#)) occurred in the opening verse (Rev 1:1+). Why **must** ([dei](#)) - means it is binding) these things take place? There are probably a number of reasons that could be given, but the one that oversees them all is God's Sovereignty and the consummation of His grand plan of redemption. The redemption price had been paid by His Son in the past, and now He **must** finish the great drama so that **"IT IS DONE."** (Rev 21:6+, cf Rev 16:17+). As will be discussed in Revelation 5 when the Lamb takes the scroll (book), this act appears to be His receipt from the Father of the "title deed of the earth" for the earth had been usurped by the devil, a reign which **must** ([dei](#)) come to an end! Praise the LORD! Amen! [Keathley](#) adds that **MUST** "refers to a moral necessity which arises from God's holy purposes or appointment.

**THOUGHT**- Another thought is that man is not in control of the destiny, destination or destruction of planet earth. God is, which is why John writes "MUST TAKE PLACE." As believers we need not fear a nuclear holocaust because God is on His throne in heaven and in His right hand, He holds the scroll that will set His plan in motion (Rev 5:1+). So sleep easy, even when you hear of wars (like Putin attacking Ukraine) and rumors of wars. If others are fearful, seize the opportunity to explain to them that God is in total control of time and eternity and they need to settle their eternal destiny by hearing and receiving the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Amen!

**POSB** on the word **must** ([dei](#)) - The word **must** is a most important word. The events of world history are not by chance. They do not simply happen. They are of God, of His will—things that must happen. God works them out. They are according to His divine will. God is sovereign. He rules over the world. History is in His hands and under His ultimate control. (BORROW [Preacher's Outline Study Bible](#) page 1094)

Note the repetition of critical time phrase **after these things** which signifies the Spirit clearly wants the reader to grasp this truth!

**THOUGHT** - Similar to John's situation, beloved, there is no way we can obey the majority of the over 1600 NT commands (there are some exceptions depending on the context) given specifically to believers! We too **must** depend on [the Holy Spirit to obey these commands](#). We can try in our natural strength, but ultimately we will fail because we need the Spirit's supernatural empowerment. Like I teach my disciples, it is not so much a matter of "trying" but of "dying!" That is, dying to self, especially dying to reliance on our natural self to obey a supernatural command!

A number of writers see this verse as symbolizing the rapture, but I do not agree. Yes, first glance might suggest John is being

"raptured" but this is by no means clear. For example, we cannot state with certainty he was bodily raptured as will be the case in the true rapture. Therefore to state that this is "*one of the clearest statements on the rapture of the Church*" (Lehman Strauss) is saying more than is allowed by a literal reading of the text and it is not in agreement with 1Th 4:16-17+. As an aside, there is no specific Scripture in the Revelation which describes the Rapture. And as mentioned elsewhere, the fact that the word church or [ekklesia](#) occurs 15 times in Revelation 2-3 and then not again until Revelation 22:16+ is certainly supportive of a pre-tribulation rapture. It would seem very strange that a loving God would not want to encourage the Bride of Christ if she were experiencing His wrath poured out on the earth! This is not even logical, much less theological!

**THOUGHT-** To reiterate an important point in interpretation, if the plain sense of the text in context makes good sense, then seek to make no other sense out of it or it might be nonsense. There is a lot of "nonsense" in the commentaries on the Revelation.

**R L Thomas** on the interpretation that John's call into heaven in Revelation 4:1 relates to the rapture of the church - In fact, the two events are quite dissimilar in that John's body remained on Patmos throughout his experience (**ED: WHILE THIS IS PROBABLY TRUE, ONE CANNOT BE AS DOGMATIC AT THOMAS!**), whereas at the rapture of the church the bodies of the saints will be transferred to heaven. Another basic difference is that John's summons is a command to receive revelation, but that of the church is one that accomplishes final salvation for the redeemed ones of the Body of Christ. (See [Revelation Exegetical Commentary](#))

On the other hand **Lehman Strauss** has some good advice writing "The things that are to transpire on earth have their hidden source in the secret chambers of Heaven. From John's viewpoint on Patmos the picture is dark for the Church and bright for the world which hates her and her Lord. But when John is able to see things from God's point of view, the picture is changed radically." (BORROW [The Book of the Revelation: Outlined Studies](#))

**John Walvoord** comments that "The invitation to John to "come up hither" is so similar to that which the church anticipates at the rapture that many have connected the two expressions. It is clear from the context (**ED: THANK YOU, DR WALVOORD! CONTEXT IS KING FOR ACCURATE INTERPRETATION!**) that this is not an explicit reference to the rapture of the church, as John was not actually translated; in fact he was still in his natural body on the island of Patmos. He was translated into scenes of heaven only temporarily." ([Revelation 4: The Church In Heaven](#) - ED: ACTUALLY THE TEXT EMPHASIZES JOHN IN HEAVEN)

**THOUGHT** - Strauss alludes to the heavenly viewpoint that surely must have radically change John's viewpoint considering he was imprisoned on Patmos and the world was ruled by a tyrannical Roman government that was attempting to put out the flickering fires of Christianity throughout the empire (cf [Caesar or Emperor Worship](#), Nero burning [\[pix\]](#) and [killing Christians](#), etc). **The take home point is simple** - what you are looking for will (should) determine what you are living for. If you study the Revelation, not only will you see the door of heaven open in Revelation 4:1, but the Spirit will open your mind to understand the truth the God's consummation of world history, aka *HIS-story!* I like to call this view of the final chapter of planet earth and beginning of a new heaven and new earth a "short course" in **Vertical Vision**. Why? Because Spirit energized (via the Word of Truth) **vertical vision** will empower **horizontal living**. *Apathetic* living will be transformed into *agape* living which is motivated by a love of God (2Ti 4:8b+) and longing for the future He has planned for all of His children. Little wonder that Satan has done all he can to confuse and confound this great book. He does not want saints living with **Vertical Vision**, redeeming the time, bringing glory to the Lord God Almighty!

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**Behold** (2400) **idou** is the second person singular aorist middle imperative of eidon which means to see, perceive, look at. In the NT **idou** is used as a demonstrative particle that draws attention to what follows. **idou** in the **middle voice** means "you yourself look, see, perceive!" The **aorist imperative** is a command emphasizing "Do it now! Don't delay!" **Spurgeon** reminds us that "**Behold** is a word of wonder; it is intended to excite admiration. Wherever you see it hung out in Scripture, it is like an ancient sign-board, signifying that there are rich wares within, or like the hands which solid readers have observed in the margin of the older Puritanic books, drawing attention to something particularly worthy of observation." I would add, **behold** is like a divine highlighter, a divine underlining of an especially striking or important text. It says in effect "Listen up, all ye who would be wise in the ways of Jehovah!" **Idou** is used by the Biblical writers to (1) prompt or arouse the reader's attention (introducing something new or unusual), (2) to mark a strong emphasis ("Indeed!" Lk 13:16) and (3) to call the reader to pay close attention (very similar to #1) so that one will listen, remember or consider

**Idou (behold) - used 25x in the Revelation** - Rev. 1:7; Rev. 1:18; Rev. 2:10; Rev. 2:22; Rev. 3:8; Rev. 3:9; Rev. 3:20; Rev. 4:1; Rev. 4:2; Rev. 5:5; Rev. 6:2; Rev. 6:5; Rev. 6:8; Rev. 7:9; Rev. 9:12; Rev. 11:14; Rev. 12:3; Rev. 14:1; Rev. 14:14; Rev. 16:15; Rev. 19:11; Rev. 21:3; Rev. 21:5; Rev. 22:7; Rev. 22:12

**Open** (455) **anoigo** from **ana** = again + **oigo** = to open) means to open, to open up, to open again, to give access to. To open one's eyes causing them to see (Acts 26:18). To open one's mouth that they might begin to speak (Mt 5:2). Figuratively, to open a "door" meaning to make possible (Col 4:3). Luke records the parallel passages (Lk 11:9, 10). Of heavens open = have the heavens opened



or divided so that celestial things become manifest - Mt 3:16; Lu 3:21; Jn 1:51; Acts 7:56; 10:11; Rev 19:11; (Lxx of the following passages) Isa 64:1; Ezek 1:1; Ps 78:23. In 2 Cor 6:11 the idea is to pour out one's mind, open one's heart, to speak fully and frankly. Anoigo is used in NT and Lxx of Jesus not opening His mouth - Not to open one's mouth = not to utter complaints (Acts 8:32; Isa 53:7 cp Ps 38:14; 39:9)

**Anoigo uses in the Revelation - 25 verses out of a total of 76 NT uses** - Rev. 3:7; Rev. 3:8; Rev. 3:20; Rev. 4:1; Rev. 5:2; Rev. 5:3; Rev. 5:4; Rev. 5:5; Rev. 5:9; Rev. 6:1; Rev. 6:3; Rev. 6:5; Rev. 6:7; Rev. 6:9; Rev. 6:12; Rev. 8:1; Rev. 9:2; Rev. 10:2; Rev. 10:8; Rev. 11:19; Rev. 12:16; Rev. 13:6; Rev. 15:5; Rev. 19:11; Rev. 20:12

**Door** (2374) **thura** referred to a literal door as allowing one to enter and exit some place (Mk 1:33), a courtyard or outer door (Acts 12:13), a reference to the Temple gate (Acts 3:2), the door of a tomb (Mk 15:46), or the door of heaven (Rev 4:1 - this last use being in a sense metaphorical). Figuratively **thura** referred to Jesus Himself as the metaphorical door through which one could enter into salvation (John 10:7, 9). And so in John we read that **Jesus** taught "I am **the door** (NOTE CAREFULLY - NOT "a door" BUT "THE door!" = the unique, only "DOOR!"); if anyone enters through Me, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture." (John 10:9) and added "I am **THE** (specific, exclusive) way, and **THE** (specific, exclusive) truth, and **THE** (specific, exclusive) life; (absolutely) no one comes to the Father, but through Me." (John 14:6) In Greek the definite article "**THE**" is important as it speaks of specificity...in other words, had Jesus been one of many ways, He would not have used the definite article "**THE**" but would have identified Himself as "**a**" way, "**a**" truth, "**a**" life, one of many gates/ways. Jesus did not teach that there are many roads that lead to the Kingdom of Heaven but clearly taught "I am the only **Way**."

**Thura in the Revelation** - Rev. 3:8; Rev. 3:20; Rev. 4:1

**Trumpet** (4536) **salpigx/salpinx** from **salos** = vibration, billow or **salpizo** = to sound a trumpet) is a wind instrument like a bugle that was often used for signaling, especially in connection with war. **TDNT** notes that **salpigx** (or **salpinx**) "denotes a wind instrument, made of bronze or iron with a mouthpiece of horn, and broadening out to a megaphone, i.e., a "trumpet." The word may also denote the sound made by the instrument, its signal or playing. Other uses are for thunder as a heavenly trumpet sound or for a human speaker as a trumpet. (BORROW [Kittel's Theological Dictionary of the New Testament](#))

**Salpigx in the Revelation** - 11x/11v - Matt. 24:31; 1 Co. 14:8; 1 Co. 15:52; 1 Thess. 4:16; Heb. 12:19; Rev. 1:10; Rev. 4:1; Rev. 8:2; Rev. 8:6; Rev. 8:13; Rev. 9:14

**Come up** (305) **anabaino** from **ana** = upwards, up, as a pref. denotes up, again, back + **basis** = a foot) means to go up, to ascend, cause to ascend from a lower to a higher place. **Friberg** on **anabaino** - (1) literally, of upward movement go or come up, ascend, especially of the road to Jerusalem, located on mountainous terrain (Mt 20:17); with the translation suited to the context: of a ship embark, climb aboard (Mt 14:32); of plants grow, spring up (Mt 13:7); of a mountain climb, ascend (Mt 5:1); of smoke rise, mount upward (Rev 8:4); (2) figuratively, of thoughts arise, enter the mind (Lk 24:38); of information reach, come to (Acts 21:31); idiomatically  $\nu\alpha\beta\alpha\acute{\iota}\nu\epsilon\upsilon\iota\ \pi\ \kappa\alpha\rho\delta\acute{\iota}\alpha\upsilon$  literally *arise in the heart*, i.e. begin to think (1 Co 2:9) (Analytical Lexicon of the Greek NT)

**Show** (1166) **deiknuo** means to show and has the sense of (1) to draw attention to, to point out, to show, to make known, to exhibit something (by visual, auditory, gestural, or linguistic means) so that it can be apprehended by the senses, to cause to see (Mt 4:8, Lk 4:5, Mt 8:4) or (2) to show so as to prove something is true or to make clear by evidence or reasoning. Show in the sense of demonstrate or prove as in Jas 3:13). To exhibit or present to the view of others. To explain the meaning or significance of something by demonstration. Note the concentration of **deiknuo** in the most "graphic" NT book, the Revelation, or the revealing. How interesting that in the "revealing" we repeatedly encounter the verb to show, and specifically to show what God's plan is for the rest of the ages. Note that it is the bondservants whom will be shown these heretofore previously revealed mysteries! Little wonder that many do not understand (and/or are frightened by the book of the Revelation, for they are not His bondservants, but in fact are "earth dwellers"! ). Note especially that 5 of the 33 "showings" are related to heaven! God wants us to see this preview of coming attractions, that we might be motivated to live accordingly.

**Deiknuo in the Revelation** - Rev. 1:1; Rev. 4:1; Rev. 17:1; Rev. 21:9; Rev. 21:10; Rev. 22:1; Rev. 22:6; Rev. 22:8

**Must** (1163) **dei** from **deo** = to bind or tie objects together, put in prison and also root of **doulos**, bond-servant) refers to what is not optional but needful (binding) out of intrinsic necessity or inevitability. **Dei** refers to inward constraint which is why it is often translated "**must**". **Dei** describes that which is under the necessity of happening or which must necessarily take place, and as stated above, conveys a sense of inevitability. To express the sense of necessity **dei** is translated "one ought", "one should", "one has to" or "one must". In English dictionaries **must** means to be obliged and expresses both physical and moral necessity or insistence. **Must** speaks of something that should not be overlooked or missed. **Must** is used to indicate requirement by immediate or future need or purpose. The **TDNT** comments **that dei** "expresses the character of necessity or compulsion in an event."

In the Scriptures prophecies are often described as that which must happen indicating they are guaranteed to transpire. For



example Jesus declares "You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not frightened, for those things **must** take place, but that is not yet the end." (Mt 24:6<sup>+</sup>, cf Mt 16:21, Acts 1:16 - "had to be fulfilled"; 2 Cor 5:10<sup>+</sup>; 2 Pe 3:11<sup>+</sup>).

**Uses of dei in the Revelation** - EVERY USE IS TRANSLATED "**MUST**" IN THE NASB - Rev. 1:1; Rev. 4:1; Rev. 10:11; Rev. 11:5; Rev. 13:10; Rev. 17:10; Rev. 20:3; Rev. 22:6

**Heaven** (3772) (**ouranos** - etiology is not certain - possibilities include oros = a relatively high elevation or horos = boundary + ano = above thus "the boundary above") It is interesting that one English word derived from ouranos is "uranium." In light of the fact that Revelation has 50 uses of "heaven" if you wanted to have a better sense of the meaning of ouranos, observing each of these uses for associations would be a profitable study. Strong's summary - (1) the vaulted expanse of the sky with all things visible in it 1a) the universe, the world 1b) the aerial heavens or sky, the region where the clouds and the tempests gather, and where thunder and lightning are produced 1c) the sidereal or starry heavens (2) the region above the sidereal heavens, the seat of order of things eternal and consummately perfect where God dwells and other heavenly beings.

▪ **See another discussion on heaven (ouranos) for additional information**

**Friberg** has a good summary of a very big topic - heaven, as a part of the universe (Mt 5:18), opposite ge (earth); **(1)** as the atmosphere directly above the earth sky, air, firmament (Mt 6:26; Lk 17:24); **(2)** as the starry heaven firmament, sky (Mt 24:29a); **(3)** as the dwelling place of God (Mt 5:16), the angels (Mt 22:30), and the righteous dead (2Co 5:1, 2) heaven; **(4)** by metonymy, as synonymous with God or the inhabitants of heaven (Lk 15:18; Rev 12:12 [possibly personification]); **(5)** plural ο ορανοι heaven, the heavens, a Jewish concept, originally found in the Septuagint, that heaven is comprised of several spheres, with God dwelling in the highest heaven (2Co 12:2; Eph 1:10) (BORROW [Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament](#), PAGE 288)

**Gilbrant - Classic Greek** - Throughout classical Greek literature the term ouranos carries a dual sense. Simply put, it occurs in a literal, cosmological sense to describe **what can be seen**, the realm visible to mankind. It also occurs in a figurative, mythological sense to describe **what cannot be seen**, the realm pertaining to the gods. In the former sense **ouranos** may refer to the starry vault of heaven, the outermost regions of the earth, or to the entire order of creation. In the latter sense **ouranos** may occur as an appellation for the pre-Homeric god Uranus, the abode of the gods, or as a mantle for the world. The term never occurs in the plural in classical Greek (cf. *Liddell-Scott*).

**In the Septuagint** ouranos, occurring more than 400 times for the Hebrew shāmayim, is used to denote heaven in at least three various senses. First, ouranos may refer to the firmament in which are foundations (2 Samuel 22:8 [LXX 2 Kings 22:8]), windows (cf. Genesis 7:11), and pillars (Job 26:11). In this sense it corresponds closely to the classical Greek concept of heaven as a vault stretched out over the earth. Second, it may refer to the area in which the birds fly, the atmosphere between the firmament and the earth (cf. Genesis 1:26,28,30). And third, ouranos may refer to a region without boundaries, a region in which God resides and from which God descends, possibly the region beyond the firmament (cf. Genesis 19:24; Exodus 19:18). In the Septuagint the term occurs for the first time in the plural, possibly in order to correspond with its Hebrew counterpart shāmayim which is also in the plural, thereby denoting completeness, fullness, or its various aspects.

**New Testament Usage - In the New Testament three concepts may be expressed by ouranos.**

**The first is the atmosphere that surrounds the earth** It is the place where the birds move (Matthew 6:26) and men observe the weather patterns (Matthew 16:2,3). Secondly, it denotes the cosmos and is mentioned with the earth to express God's creation (Matthew 5:18; Acts 4:24; Revelation 14:7). The third use of ouranos expresses the spiritual habitations. It is the place of God's throne (Matthew 5:34) and temple (Revelation 11:19). From heaven God the Father speaks (Matthew 3:17), sends forth good gifts (Luke 11:13), and reveals His wrath against all ungodliness (Romans 1:18).

**After His resurrection, Jesus ascended into heaven** (Acts 1:11). He sits at the right hand of the Father and appears before Him on our behalf (Hebrews 9:24). A place is being prepared there for His followers (John 14:2,3). All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Jesus (Matthew 28:18), and He will one day be revealed from heaven (2 Thessalonians 1:7).

**The Third Person of the Trinity also has His habitation in heaven.** He descended from there upon Jesus as He came up out of the waters of baptism (Matthew 3:16). After His ascension, Jesus poured out the Holy Spirit upon His waiting disciples (Acts 2:4,33). Thus, as the One sent from heaven (1 Peter 1:12), He is called

the “heavenly gift” (Hebrews 6:4).

**The angels also reside in heaven.** Those that appeared to the shepherds in the field are described as a “heavenly host” who returned after making their announcement (Luke 2:13-15). They surround the throne of God singing His praises (Revelation 5:11). Those that rebelled with Satan against God were expelled from heaven (Luke 10:18; Revelation 12:4).

**The believer’s hope is “laid up...in heaven” (Colossians 1:5), an imperishable inheritance being reserved (1 Peter 1:4).** Even now, the believer is seated in heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:6)! Treasures and great rewards are laid up in heaven (Matthew 6:20; Luke 6:23) as well as a resurrected body that will one day clothe the believer (2 Corinthians 5:1,2).

**The great goal of Biblical prophecy is the establishment of a new heaven and a new earth**(Revelation 21:1). This earth, groaning from the corruption of sin (Romans 8:21ff.), will one day be destroyed (2 Peter 3:10; Revelation 20:11). It will be replaced by a new heaven and earth, characterized by righteousness (2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:1). ([Complete Biblical Library](#))

[SEE ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION OF HEAVEN WITH MULTIPLE RELATED RESOURCES AT BOTTOM OF THIS PAGE...](#)

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**POSB - There are three doors mentioned in Revelation.**

(1) **There is the open door for evangelism and missions**, the door which God opens to the churches for bearing witness to the glorious gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the opportunity that God opens for them to carry the gospel to their neighbors, communities, cities, states, and countries and world—even to the uttermost part of the earth.

“I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name” (Re. 3:8).

“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Ac. 1:8).

(**EDITORIAL THOUGHT** - Beloved this open door of opportunity will swing closed forever, the moment we breathe our last breath! Today is the day it stands open in each of our lives! Sadly, I fear to many believers do not avail themselves of the opportunities God presents in their lives. Col 4:5-6+ says "**Conduct** ([present imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, **making the most of the opportunity**. Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person." Eph 5:15-16+ "Therefore **be careful** ([present imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time (redeeming the time), because the days are evil." Live your life "**Coram Deo**" before the face of God. "**Tempus fugit**" time flies. So "**Carpe Diem**" seize the day. See more discussion of Redeem the Time (the time of your life) so that you may hear these words from Jesus "Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master." (Mt 25:23)

(2) **There is the door of the human heart.** When believers carry the message of the gospel to their neighbors, it is then up to the individual person to open the door of his heart and receive the gospel. The decision is the neighbor’s. Every person has a door that has to be opened before Christ will enter—the door of his heart.

“Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me” (Re. 3:20).

(3) **There is the door of revelation.** Once a person has opened the door of his heart to Christ, Christ reveals the glorious things of Himself, of God, of heaven, and of this world. In addition, Christ reveals some of the events that are to take place as history unfolds itself—some of the events that surround the return of the Lord Jesus Christ and the end time. (BORROW [Preacher’s Outline Study Bible - page 1094](#))

One might consider Rev 19:11 a fourth door, one that is out from heaven. "And **I saw heaven opened**, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war."

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[William Barclay](#) - More than once, the New Testament speaks of the **heavens being opened**; and it is of the greatest significance to see the object of that opening.

(1) **There is the opening of the heavens for vision** 'The heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God'

(Ezekiel 1:1). God sends to those who seek him the vision of himself and of his truth.

**(2) There is the opening for the descent of the Spirit.** When Jesus was baptized by John, he saw the heavens opened and the Spirit descending upon himself (Mark 1:10). When our minds and souls seek upwards, the Spirit of God descends to meet them.

**(3) There is the opening for the revelation of the glory of Christ.** It was the promise of Jesus to Nathanael that he would see the heaven open and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man (John 1:51). Some day, the heavens will open to disclose the glory of Christ; and inevitably that day will bring joy to those who have loved him and amazement and fear to those who have despised him.

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**Mark Hitchcock** addresses a question that surely every believer has asked at one time or another - **Will believers see God in heaven?** (See [101 Answers to Questions About the Book of Revelation](#))

(**AS AN ASIDE** - Mark Hitchcock has a book that is totally accessible [no time limit] on archive.org. [The book is entitled Global Reset Do Current Events Point To The Antichrist And His Worldwide Empire](#) (SEE [CONTENTS BELOW](#)) - it was released in 2022 and addresses the role of such events as the COVID Pandemic.)

When I was a young boy, I remember asking a noted guest speaker at our church if he thought we would see God in heaven. He told me that we would see Jesus, who, of course, is God, but that we would not see God the Father because He is spirit. The answer seemed okay, but for some reason I was never really sure that he was correct. Something inside me said that I would someday see my heavenly Father, but I didn't have any idea if the Bible supported my impression.

What I didn't realize at that time was that all the Lord's people long to see Him. As the psalmist said, "As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God?" (Psalm 42:1-2). The psalmist wanted to see God. And in the New Testament, speaking for all the disciples, Philip said to Jesus, "Show us the Father" (John 14:8).

**As I grew older I discovered some key passages that confirm we will see the manifestation of God (the Father) in heaven as well as God the Son.** One of these passages is in Revelation 4.

Matthew 5:8 "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

Revelation 4:2-3 "Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne was standing in heaven, and One sitting on the throne. And He who was sitting was like a jasper stone and a sardius in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, like an emerald in appearance."

The One who sits on the throne in Revelation 4-5 is not Jesus, but God the Father. In Revelation 5:13, the One who sits on the throne (God the Father) is clearly distinguished from the Lamb (God the Son).

Revelation 22:4 "They will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads."

However, there are three key verses people often cite to argue that even believers in Christ will never see God in heaven:

Exodus 33:20 "He said, 'You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!'"

John 1:18 "No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him."

1 Timothy 6:15-16 "He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see. To Him be honor and eternal dominion! Amen."

**So how do we reconcile these seemingly contradictory biblical statements?** We will see God, yet no man can see God and live. I believe the three verses that say that man cannot see God and live refer to man in his unperfected, unglorified condition in an earthly body. In our present state, we cannot behold the manifestation of God and survive the experience. However, in our immortal, imperishable bodies in heaven we will be granted the inestimable privilege of seeing the localized manifestation of our heavenly Father. We will see the Father in heaven!

**John MacArthur** supports this view:

**"I believe that in heaven we will see God Himself with our physical eyes.. God will reveal the light of His glory, and through perfect eyes we will see the very face of God.** God is spirit (John 4:24+), and spirit is invisible; therefore, whenever God manifests Himself He does so in the form of light... Seeing Christ and the

Father will eternally awe us." (BORROW [Heaven](#); You can also BORROW his related book entitled [The glory of heaven : the truth about heaven, angels, and eternal life](#))

The fact that we will see the Father and the Son in heaven does not mean that there is more than one God. The true God is one (Deuteronomy 6:4). He is one in essence or nature, yet three in person. Another way to put it is that God is one "what" (one essence) and three "whos" (three persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). We will see the manifestation of the Father in heaven as well as the face of our blessed Savior. "They will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads" (Revelation 22:4; see also 1 Corinthians 13:12).

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CONTENTS OF [Global Reset Do Current Events Point To The Antichrist And His Worldwide Empire](#) - AVAILABLE FREE AT ARCHIVE.ORG (AS OF 9/5/23)

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### Spiritual Vision Through Personal Character By [Oswald Chambers](#)

Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place... —Revelation 4:1

A higher state of mind and spiritual vision can only be achieved through the higher practice of personal character. If you live up to the highest and best that you know in the outer level of your life, God will continually say to you, "Friend, come up even higher." There is also a continuing rule in temptation which calls you to go higher; but when you do, you only encounter other temptations and character traits. Both God and Satan use the strategy of elevation, but Satan uses it in temptation, and the effect is quite different. When the devil elevates you to a certain place, he causes you to fasten your idea of what holiness is far beyond what flesh and blood could ever bear or achieve. Your life becomes a spiritual acrobatic performance high atop a steeple. You cling to it, trying to maintain your balance and daring not to move. But when God elevates you by His grace into heavenly places, you find a vast plateau where you can move about with ease.

Compare this week in your spiritual life with the same week last year to see how God has called you to a higher level. We have all been brought to see from a higher viewpoint. Never allow God to show you a truth which you do not instantly begin to live up to, applying it to your life. Always work through it, staying in its light.

Your growth in grace is not measured by the fact that you haven't turned back, but that you have an insight and understanding into where you are spiritually. Have you heard God say, "Come up higher," not audibly on the outer level, but to the innermost part of your character?

"Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing...?" (Genesis 18:17). God has to hide from us what He does, until, due to the growth of our personal character, we get to the level where He is then able to reveal it.

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### In Living Color

Read: Revelation 4:1–6 (NIV)

The one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and ruby. Revelation 4:3

When Xavier McCoury put on the glasses Aunt Celena sent for his tenth birthday, he burst into tears. Born colorblind, Xavier had only ever seen the world in shades of gray, white, and black. With his new EnChroma glasses, however, Xavier saw color for the first time. His euphoria at witnessing the beauty around him made his family feel like they'd beheld a miracle.

Witnessing God's colorfully radiant brilliance also evoked a powerful reaction in the apostle John (Revelation 1:17). After encountering the full glory of the resurrected Christ, John glimpsed "a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it. And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and ruby. A rainbow that shone like an emerald encircled the throne. . . . From the throne

came flashes of lightning” (Revelation 4:2–5).

In a different time, Ezekiel had a similar vision, seeing “what looked like a throne of lapis lazuli,” with a figure above the throne who “looked like glowing metal, as if full of fire” (Ezekiel 1:26–27). This magnificent figure was surrounded with rainbow-like radiance (v. 28).

One day we will meet Christ face-to-face. These visions give us just a hint of the magnificence that awaits us. As we celebrate the beauty of God’s creation here and now, may we live in anticipation of the glory yet to be revealed.

What response does the color and beauty of creation evoke in you? How can you express your gratitude to God for His wonderful gift?

Father, words fail us when we try to imagine what we will experience when we meet You face-to-face. Thank You for the small hints of Your beauty You have placed in our world.

**INSIGHT** Revelation 4:1–6 is a picturesque read with its vivid description of Christ and the throne room of heaven. Ruby, jasper, a brilliant rainbow, white robes, gold crowns, and a crystal sea all paint a colorful picture. In addition, the author adds the auditory element of rumblings and peals of thunder that come from the throne, along with flashes of lightning. While this imagery enthralls the imagination, we shouldn’t miss the incongruous nature of the picture being presented. On the one side there’s the regal beauty of Christ on the throne, a rainbow, and a glass-like sea. On the other, there’s the power and destruction represented by lightning and thunder. Taken together, the picture of God is one of power and beauty combined. J. R. Hudberg

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**C H Spurgeon** from his sermon "[A Door Opened in Heaven](#)" - I think I may say that a door has often been opened in heaven to us at the communion-table. Astronomers select the best spots for observatories; they like elevated places which are free from traffic, so that their instruments may not quiver with the rumbling of wheels; they prefer also to be away from the smoke of manufacturing towns, that they may discern the orbs of heaven more clearly. Surely, if any one place is fitter to be an observatory for a heaven-mind than another, it is the table of communion.

‘I have been there, and still will go,  
‘Tis like a little heaven below.’

Christ may hide himself from his people in preaching, as he did from his disciples on the road to Emmaus, but he made himself known unto them in breaking of bread. Prize much the solemn breaking of bread. That ordinance has been perverted, travestied and profaned; and hence some tender Christians scarcely value it at its right account. To those who will use it rightly, examining themselves and so coming to that table, it is indeed a divine observatory, a place of calm retirement from the world. The elements of bread and wine become the lenses of a far-seeing telescope, through which we behold the Saviour; and I say again, if there be one spot of earth clear from the smoke of care, it is the table where saints have fellowship with their Lord. A door is often opened in heaven at this banquet, when his banner over us is love; but if it be so sweet to enjoy the emblem, what must it be to live with Christ himself and drink the wine new with him in the kingdom of our Father!

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**F B Meyer on Revelation 4:1** - You must remember that John was in the isle of Patmos, a lone, rocky, inhospitable prison, for the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus. And yet to him, under such circumstances — separated from all the loved ones of Ephesus; debarred from the worship of the Church; condemned to the companionship of uncongenial fellow-captives — were vouchsafed these visions. For him, also, a door was opened.

We are reminded of Jacob, exiled from his father’s house, who laid himself down in a desert place to sleep, and in whose dreams beheld a ladder which united earth with heaven, and at the top stood God.

Not to these only, but to many more, doors have been opened into heaven; when, so far as this world was concerned, it seemed as though their circumstances were altogether unlikely for such revelations. To prisoners and captives; to constant sufferers, bound by iron chains of pain to sick couches; to lonely pilgrims and wanderers; to women detained from the Lord’s house by the demands of home; to domestic servants, missing the blessed opportunities of the sanctuary — how often has the door been opened in heaven. And what has not Nature been to some of us! How often in a country glade, the first flower of spring, a bird’s warble, a gleam of light chequering the path, has been as a door opened in heaven!

There are conditions. You must know what it is to be in the Spirit; you must be pure in heart, and obedient in life; you must be willing to count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Then, when God is all in all to us, when we live, move, and have our being in his favor, to us also will the door be opened.

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## Skip Heitzig - Our Worst Time on Earth May Be Our Best Encounter with Jesus

It was while John was experiencing his loneliest episode of life that this revelation came to him. While Earth was closing its doors, Heaven was opening new ones. While this world had nothing more to say to John, the next world was beckoning him onward and upward. John once walked with Jesus in the flesh and witnessed His person, power, and glory, but this was by far the best encounter. John's period of painful separation from human contact brought him into contact with life on the next level.

I have seen this paradox in the lives of other suffering saints. Some of the most encouraging, cheerful, and optimistic believers I have met are those who have gone through intense suffering. Often those who have been confined to hospital beds or convalescent homes or even prison cells have told of God's special presence that sustained them in such places. I'll never forget going into the hospital room of a woman who was diagnosed with terminal cancer and was given only weeks to live. My visit was a surprise—to me! I turned the corner from the hallway into her room and found her sitting up in bed, beaming! She was encouraging a small group of friends who had come to mourn for her. Far from being in shock or remorse, she was helping all of us make sense out of this tragedy. She was so young and had been so full of life. Now her life was slipping away from her, and everyone was sensing the loss. As we were fumbling to make sense of it, she lucidly explained why she was looking forward to Heaven. She affirmed that Jesus had been more real to her during those final days of her illness than ever before. It was as if God was letting her peek beyond Heaven's threshold to see where she was going.

*Learn to look for the richest experiences with Christ  
to come out of what might appear to be the worst experiences of life.*

Learn to look for the richest experiences with Christ to come out of what might appear to be the worst experiences of life. Sometimes God can show His strength only while we are admittedly weak. Just as God spoke to Job "out of the storm" (Job 38:1NIV **ED**: SEE Job 42:5-6), He will often reserve His best revelations for our most turbulent times.

**THOUGHT** (EDITORIAL ADDITION) - Heitzig's words of Job remind of Job's enhanced vision ("20/20" so to speak) after his incredible affliction and adversity finally "coming to his senses" and declaring "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear; But now my eye sees You; Therefore I retract, And I repent in dust and ashes." (Job 42:5-6) What did trials bring for Job, a greater vision of the Greatest One!

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Streams in the Desert - "A door opened in heaven." (Rev. 4:1.)

YOU must remember that John was in the Isle of Patmos, a lone, rocky, inhospitable prison, for the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus. And yet to him, under such circumstances, separated from all the loved ones of Ephesus; debarred from the worship of the Church; condemned to the companionship of uncongenial fellow-captives, were vouchsafed these visions. For him, also a door was opened.

We are reminded of Jacob, exiled from his father's house, who laid himself down in a desert place to sleep, and in his dreams beheld a ladder which united Heaven with earth, and at the top stood God.

Not to these only, but to many more, doors have been opened into Heaven, when, so far as the world was concerned, it seemed as though their circumstances were altogether unlikely for such revelations.

To prisoners and captives; to constant sufferers, bound by iron chains of pain to sick couches; to lonely pilgrims and wanderers; to women detained from the Lord's house by the demands of home, how often has the door been opened to Heaven.

But there are conditions. You must know what it is to be in the Spirit; you must be pure in heart and obedient in faith; you must be willing to count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ; then when God is all in all to us, when we live, move and have our being in His favor, to us also will the door be opened. —Daily Devotional Commentary.

"God hath His mountains bleak and bare,  
Where He doth bid us rest awhile;  
Craggs where we breathe a purer air,  
Lone peaks that catch the day's first smile.

"God hath His deserts broad and brown—  
A solitude—a sea of sand,  
Where He doth let heaven's curtain down,  
Unknit by His Almighty hand."

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**Robert Hawker** - A door opened in heaven!—Revelation 4:1.

Lord! give me, as thou didst to thy servant John, a call to “come up hither;” and by faith behold the glories which shall be revealed; and immediately I shall be in the spirit as he was, and so substantiate and realize, in present enjoyments, those felicities in Jesus, that this evening my soul will be, by happy faith, in the very suburbs of that blessed city, which hath foundations whose builder and maker is God! Is it not true, Lord, that all my possessions are thine? And shall I not take the map of them from Scripture, and look over them with holy rapture and delight? Do men of the earth take pride in their lands and manors; the very holding of which is precarious, even in the moment of possession, and which slide from under their feet as soon as they enter upon them; and shall not an heir of God, a joint-heir with Christ, rejoice in having a kingdom which cannot be moved? Come, my soul, look within the veil, whither thy Forerunner is for thee entered; and now that God the Holy Ghost hath opened a door in heaven, behold what felicities are presenting themselves to thy view! Behold, amidst all the glories of the place, how eminently Jesus, even thy Jesus, appears as a Lamb in the midst of the throne: and still as a Lamb that hath been slain, as if to testify the eternal, unceasing efficacy of his blood and righteousness. But what an innumerable host are these, which stand around the throne, and encircle the Redeemer! “These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb!” Mark that, my soul! They were once in the tribulated path that thou art now in; they were once sinners here below, as thou art now; and they owe all their advancement, not to their merit, but to divine bounty; not to works of righteousness which they have done, but to the same source as thou art now seeking acceptance from—the blood of the Lamb. Oh! precious, soul-satisfying testimony, on a point of such infinite importance! Blessed, for ever blessed, be God the Holy Ghost, for first opening to the beloved apostle this door in heaven, and for all the after-revelations of Jesus, made by this condescending discovery to the Church in all ages. Often, my soul, look up, and behold the door still open; and often by faith look in, and behold thy Redeemer, and his redeemed, in “the spirits of just men made perfect.” Realize these blessed things, and seek from thy Jesus a strength of faith (for such a faith hath been given to some, and why not to thee?) as shall absolutely bring down the present enjoyment of heaven into thy soul, before the Lord shall finally and fully call thee up to the everlasting enjoyment of him in glory. Blessed be God, (my soul, do thou cry out with the apostle,) who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings, and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together, in heavenly places, in Christ Jesus!

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**D A Carson - REVELATION 4 IS TO REVELATION 5** what a setting is to a drama. Revelation 4 is a description, in apocalyptic symbolism, of the throne room of Almighty God; Revelation 5 plays out a drama in that setting.

John identifies the voice he hears as the voice he first heard speaking to him like a trumpet (4:1)—the voice of the exalted Lord Jesus (1:10–16). John is called up through an open door into heaven to see the elements of the spectacular vision that unfolds in the ensuing verses. Immediately he is “in the Spirit” (4:2)—perhaps some Spirit-imparted trance or vision, or perhaps, like Paul (2 Cor. 12:1–10), John does not really know the nature of his movement. But what he sees is clear enough:

(a) John sees the centrality and ineffable majesty of the Almighty (4:2b–3). He does not let his readers forget that above all temporal thrones, some of them responsible for appalling persecution, stands the ultimate throne, the throne of God. He describes the blazing glory of light refracting over precious gems, like the crown jewels in the Tower of London. One cannot come away from this vision and draw God. This dazzling, fiery beauty commands awe but permits no replicas (cf. Ezek. 1:28).

(b) John sees the divine throne enhanced by spectacular heavenly beings (4:4). Although it is possible to take the “elders” as representing believers from both old and new covenants, it is better to take them as a high order of angels. They offer the prayers of God’s saints to God (5:8), an angelic function (8:3). Believers sing a new song that the elders cannot sing (14:3). In the visions of 7:9–11 and 19:1–4 the elders are found in concentric circles between angels and the four living creatures (the highest order of angelic beings). An elder frequently interprets what is going on (e.g., 5:5)—a common angelic function in apocalyptic literature. Here they enhance the throne and participate in worship.

(c) John sees the holy separateness of the Almighty. That is the point of the three vignettes in 4:5–6a. The massive storm reminds the reader of Sinai (Ex. 19:16). The sea serves as a symbol for the entire fallen order; that is why in the new heaven and the new earth there is no more sea (21:1). John is distanced from the Almighty by these and related phenomena.

(d) John sees the four living creatures, described in terms drawn from Isaiah 6 and Ezekiel 1 and 10. They are the highest angelic beings, orchestrating the praise of the Almighty and reflecting his transcendent administration (4:6b–11). God alone is to be worshiped, for he alone is the Creator (4:11), and all other authority derives from his (4:10). (For the Love of God, Volume 2 - June 2 Devotional)

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**Skip Heitzig** - A few years ago during a long flight I began paging through an airline magazine. Soon I saw an advertisement for a new hotel in Seattle: “**Great views, great location, great rates**” trumpeted the ad, seeking to attract the attention of wealthy executives. That’s really what people want in a home, isn’t it? I thought. They want a lovely view, a convenient location, and great

rates. I believe we will enjoy those features in our eternal home. We'll be blessed with a great location: the new heaven and the new earth. We'll have a great view: the throne of God, the tree of life, and a river that flows from the Lord's throne, as pure as crystal. And we'll enjoy great rates: it's free! God will give all of this, without cost, to everyone who gladly follows His Son. Can you imagine the happiness overflowing from a place like that? I'm reminded of some parents who took their little boy to the pet shop for his birthday. They allowed him to pick any dog he wanted. The shop owner showed the boy every type of dog imaginable, but the boy picked the one who wagged its tail nonstop. "Why'd you pick that dog?" everyone asked. "Because," replied the boy, "I want the one with the happy ending." That's a wise little boy! When God lays out all of the possible paths for us into eternity, we need to make sure we choose the one with the happy ending. And that's what the fourth chapter of Revelation is about. (BORROW [You can understand the book of Revelation](#))

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**ILLUSTRATION** - When many savings and loan institutions failed in 1989, the federal government had to dispose of numerous properties. One was most interesting was the six acre McCune mansion in Paradise Valley, Arizona. It was built in the 1960's by Walker McCune for his young bride. The house contains 53,000 square feet and includes an ice skating rink, an Olympic swimming pool, a fourteen car garage, its own beauty salon, guest house, and a ballroom with an \$80,000 chandelier. Oddly enough, Mrs. McCune didn't like it and refused to move in. She never lived in it. Perhaps there are others who don't like Paradise Valley, AZ, and wouldn't be satisfied with the McCune Mansion but no one will be dissatisfied with the mansion Christ has prepared for us in heaven.

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## **James Smith in Handfuls of Purpose - THE HEAVENLY COURT OF THE KING OF KINGS REVELATION 4**

### **Introduction**

1. THE FACT OF CHRIST'S SOVEREIGNTY AND POWER a great comfort. This is revealed here.

- a. Dr. Dale mentions in one of his works that, in a time of great bodily weakness and depression, when suffering from a serious illness, he sought to stay his soul on Scripture promises that reminded him of our Lord's love and tenderness, but they failed to comfort him.
- b. Then, trying to dwell on the fact of Christ's Power and Sovereignty, he found a strange support on which he could rest.
- c. When the Boxer Riots broke out in China, and the leaders of the China Inland Mission came to their office one morning, dreading at any moment to receive tidings of disaster, some one discovered that the day text on the wall was a promise based on the fact that the Lord is King. The words brought the needed sense of reassurance and strength, and they were able to turn to their usual work, sure that all would be overruled for good.
- d. The fact of the Divine Sovereignty steadies.
- e. That is the view Revelation gives of the Lord.
- f. This is the thought we need for dark days.
- g. Also the assurance of the ultimate victory of good over evil.

2. Also in this section of Revelation (4 to end) we have the assurance of the ultimate victory of good—God.

3. This chapter begins the third great section of Revelation.

4. The scene shifts from earth to Heaven.

5. We are introduced to the glorious Audience Chamber of the Great King.

6. Everything speaks of Royalty.

I. The Opened Heaven (Rev 4:1).

1. THERE ARE FIVE OPENINGS mentioned in Bible: An opened Heaven:

- a. In Judgment (Gen. 7:11).
- b. In Blessing (Mal. 3:10).
- c. For the Holy Spirit (Luke 3:21).
- d. For a sight of Jesus (Acts 7:56).
- e. Lord as Conqueror (Rev. 4:1; 19:11).

2. "COME UP." We cannot apprehend the highest truth if we live on a low plane of thought and conduct.

II. The One on the Throne (Rev 4:2, 3). "He saw the Almighty high and lifted up, throned above all worlds,

veiled in light unapproachable, yet known, His presence scintillating with the brilliance of the diamond, glowing like a cornelian, with the concentrated redness of a furnace, and yet over-arched with fresh and living green, as of an emerald. Blinding brilliancy; the glow of a consuming fire; the soft radiance of rainbow promise; these were the contrasted elements in the impression made upon the seer by the vision of Him who sat upon the throne.”

NOTE.

1. “Rapt in the Spirit” (Rev 4:2).
2. The two opposites in Him.
  - a. He who was Sardine under the Law has ended as Jasper by the Revelation of His Son.
  - b. Holiness and wrath.
  - c. Sardine as well as Jasper. Never know all of Him.

3. Rainbow:

- a. Complete circle. Covenant sign.
- b. Green.

III. The Ones Before the Throne (Rev 4:4–8).

1. THE ELDERS (Rev 4:4, 5), heads of angelic ranks.
2. THE LIVING ONES (Rev 4:6–8).
  - a. A sea of crystal, not water. No cleansing in Heaven.
  - b. A combination of Seraphim and Cherubim, combining:
    - i. Royalty and boldness of lion.
    - ii. Usefulness of calf.
    - iii. Intelligence of man.
    - iv. Spirituality and soaring quality of eagle.

IV. The Song of Creation (Rev 4:8–11).

1. The Holiness of God.
2. The Sovereignty of God.
3. The Almightyness of God.
4. The Timelessness of God.

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**Croft Pentz - THE OPEN DOOR**

Revelation 4:1–11 God does reveal certain things to His people. Jesus gave the promise of heaven in John 14:1–3. Later Paul spoke of the indescribable beauty of heaven (1 Cor. 2:9). Now God opens the door to heaven and explains to John the beauty of heaven. Heaven is a real place. It is for all those who meet God’s requirements for salvation.

I. THE PLACE—Rev 4:1–3

- A. Person—Rev 4:1. God showed John the glories of the future that are for God’s people.
- B. Place—Rev 4:2. Vision of heaven. John saw the throne of God.
- C. Personality—Rev 4:3. “Great bursts of light flashed forth from him as from a glittering diamond, or from a shining ruby, and a rainbow glowing like an emerald encircles his throne” (LB).

II. THE PEOPLE—Rev 4:4–5

- A. People—Rev 4:4. This is no doubt the rapture of the church. The twenty-four elders perhaps mean the twelve tribes of Israel, representing the Old Testament and the twelve disciples, representing the New Testament (cf. Rev. 21:12–14).
- B. Picture—Rev 4:5–6
  1. Throne of judgment. The lightning and thunder was seen as in Exodus 20:18 (cf. Heb. 12:18–21).
  2. The lamps represent the Holy Spirit (Isa. 11:2).
  3. The sea of glass was transparent, meaning it had no blemish.

III. THE PRAISE—Rev 4:7–8

- A. Appearance—Rev 4:7. The first beast was like a lion, the second beast was like a calf, the third beast had a man’s face,

and the fourth beast was like an eagle.

B. Attitude—Rev 4:8. The seraphim's job was to praise God at all times (cf. Isa. 6:1–8). They praised the One “which was, and is, and is to come.”

#### IV. THE PLEASURE—Rev 4:9–11

A. Persons—Rev 4:9–10a. “And when the Living Beings gave glory and honor and thanks to the one sitting on the throne, who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four Elders fell down before him and worshiped him, the Eternal Living One” (LB).

B. Praise—Rev 4:10. The elders bowed down and cast their crowns before Him in their praise to Him.

C. Pleasure—Rev 4:11. “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power.” God made man to praise Him. “For thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.”

God longs to have men's worship. If men don't know how to worship the Lord here, they will feel out of place in heaven. The Bible has much to say about praise and thanks. Prayer is stressed in today's churches, but praise is given little emphasis. One of the best ways to pray is to praise. Praise opens a person to God and heavenly things.

### Revelation 4:2 Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne was standing in heaven, and One sitting on the throne.

BGT Revelation 4:2 Εθως γενμην ν πνεματι, κα δοθρονος κειτο ν τ οραν, κα π τ ν θρονον καθμενος,

KJV Revelation 4:2 And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne.

NET Revelation 4:2 Immediately I was in the Spirit, and a throne was standing in heaven with someone seated on it!

CSB Revelation 4:2 Immediately I was in the Spirit, and a throne was set there in heaven. One was seated on the throne,

ESV Revelation 4:2 At once I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne.

NIV Revelation 4:2 At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it.

NLT Revelation 4:2 And instantly I was in the Spirit, and I saw a throne in heaven and someone sitting on it.

NRS Revelation 4:2 At once I was in the spirit, and there in heaven stood a throne, with one seated on the throne!

NJB Revelation 4:2 With that, I fell into ecstasy and I saw a throne standing in heaven, and the One who was sitting on the throne,

NAB Revelation 4:2 At once I was caught up in spirit. A throne was there in heaven, and on the throne sat

YLT Revelation 4:2 and immediately I was in the Spirit, and lo, a throne was set in the heaven, and upon the throne is one sitting,

MIT Revelation 4:2 Immediately I was in the spiritual realm, and I saw a throne situated in heaven, replete with its occupant.

- **I was in the Spirit** Rev 1:10 Rev 17:3 Rev 21:10 Eze 3:12-14
- **a throne was standing in heaven:** Rev 4:5 Rev 20:11 Isa 6:1 Jer 17:12 Eze 1:26,28 10:1
- **One sitting on the throne:** Rev 4:9 Rev 3:21 Rev 5:1,6,7,13 Rev 6:16 7:9-17 Rev 12:5 Rev 19:4 Rev 21:5 Rev 22:1-3 Isa 6:1 Da 7:9 Heb 8:1
- [Revelation 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Ezekiel 1:3 the word of the LORD came expressly to Ezekiel the priest, son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar; and there the hand of the LORD came upon him.

Ezekiel 3:14 So **the Spirit lifted me up and took me away**; and I went embittered in the rage of my spirit, and

the hand of the LORD was strong on me.

Ezekiel 8:2 Then I looked, and behold, a likeness as the appearance of a man; from His loins and downward there was the appearance of fire, and from His loins and upward the appearance of brightness, like the appearance of glowing metal. 3 **He stretched out the form of a hand and caught me by a lock of my head; and the Spirit lifted me up between earth and heaven and brought me in the visions of God to Jerusalem**, to the entrance of the north gate of the inner court, where the seat of the idol of jealousy, which provokes to jealousy, was located.

Ezekiel 11:24 And **the Spirit lifted me up and brought me in a vision by the Spirit of God to the exiles in Chaldea**. So the vision that I had seen left me.

Ezekiel 37:1 The hand of the LORD was upon me, and **He brought me out by the Spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of the valley**; and it was full of bones.

Acts 8:39 When they came up out of the water, **the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away**; and the eunuch no longer saw him, but went on his way rejoicing.

2 Corinthians 12:1-2 Boasting is necessary, though it is not profitable; but I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord. 2I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a man was caught up to the third heaven.

1 Timothy 6:15-16+ He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, Who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see. To Him be honor and eternal dominion! Amen.

Isaiah 6:1+ In the year of King Uzziah's death **I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple**. 2 Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. 3 And one called out to another and said, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory." 4 And the foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of him who called out, while the temple was filling with smoke. 5 Then I said, "Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I live among a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts."

Daniel 7:9-14+ "I kept looking Until thrones were set up, And **the Ancient of Days took His seat**; His vesture was like white snow And the hair of His head like pure wool. His throne was ablaze with flames, Its wheels were a burning fire. 10 "A river of fire was flowing And coming out from before Him; Thousands upon thousands were attending Him, And myriads upon myriads were standing before Him; The court sat, And the books were opened. 11 "Then I kept looking because of the sound of the boastful words which the horn was speaking; I kept looking until the beast was slain, and its body was destroyed and given to the burning fire. 12 "As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away, but an extension of life was granted to them for an appointed period of time. 13 "I kept looking in the night visions, And behold, **with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, And He came up to the Ancient of Days And was presented before Him**. 14 "**And to Him was given dominion, Glory and a kingdom, That all the peoples, nations and men of every language Might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion Which will not pass away; And His kingdom is one Which will not be destroyed**.

Ezekiel 1:26-28+ Now above the expanse that was over their heads there was something resembling a throne, like lapis lazuli in appearance; and on that which resembled a throne, high up, was **a figure with the appearance of a man**. 27 Then I noticed from the appearance of His loins and upward something like glowing metal that looked like fire all around within it, and from the appearance of His loins and downward I saw something like fire; and there was a radiance around Him. 28 As the appearance of the rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so was the appearance of the surrounding radiance. Such was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. And when I saw it, I fell on my face and heard a voice speaking.

Revelation 7:10+ and they cry out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation to our **God who sits on the throne**, and to the Lamb."

Psalms 47:8 God reigns over the nations, **God sits on His holy throne**.

**JOHN TRANSPORTED TO SEE**

## GOD ON HIS THRONE IN HEAVEN

Remember the clear division of the Revelation from Rev 1:19 - The Key to the Understanding of Revelation

- (1) The things which you have seen - Chapter 1
- (2) The things which are - Chapter 2-3
- (3) The things which will take place after these things - Chapter 4-22

**Immediately (eutheos) I was in the Spirit- Immediately (eutheos)** speaks of instantaneously. **In the Spirit** is found 4x in the Revelation - Rev 1:10, Rev 4:2, Rev 17:3, Rev 21:10 ([See table below](#)). Think of John's description as a preview of coming attractions for Revelation 4-5 is likely a scene we will witness forever in the future. And it will not be boring! As an aside, how good is our great God to visit this dear apostle exiled and alone on an island and show Him the great unfolding of God's plan for the ages. Forsaken by men, but not forsaken by God (see Hebrews 13:5b+). God certainly knows how to comfort His children!

While commentators assume that **in the Spirit** implies John's body remained on Patmos. That is certainly possible, but it behooves us to at least compare Paul's experience in 2 Corinthians 12:3-4+ "And I know how such a man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, God knows—was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak." While this was clearly a different event, the destination certainly sounds like it was the same as with John's experience. The point is that Paul did not know whether he was in his body or apart from his body in paradise. I won't be dogmatic but present that passage as one to ponder in considering what **in the Spirit** meant for John. **Henry Morris** adds that "Paul had been translated far out in space, but now John was translated in both **space and time**, to the throne of God and the end of the age, and what he saw he was commanded to utter."

**R L Thomas** comments that "This miraculous ecstatic state wrought by the Spirit of God was, to all intents and purposes, a complete translation from Patmos to heaven. All of the prophet's senses were operative: his ears heard, his eyes saw, and his emotions were as real as though his body was literally in heaven instead of remaining on Patmos." (See [Revelation Exegetical Commentary](#))

**And behold (idou)** - John wants to grab our attention, just as his attention was surely stimulated by this sight! The Father is the first personage that attracted John's gaze.

**THOUGHT** - John's words beg the question, do we (I) focus on the Father with this same sense of awe that is conveyed by the word **behold**? When was the last time you (I) focused your (my) full attention on God the Father? John's "out of this world" experience is a foreshadowing of what every believer will one day encounter as their eternal reality! Am I living for that eternal world or this temporal world (1Jn 2:17+)? And remember John is only able to give us a preview and even that is from his human perspective!

**Skip Heitzig** writes that "Describing Heaven in earthly terms has some obvious limitations. John had the task of describing infinite realities in terms that finite beings would understand. It was like trying to explain to four-year-olds that they will really enjoy their honeymoon! Children lack the capacity to grasp the significance and fullness of such an event."

**A throne (thronos) was standing in heaven, and One sitting on the throne(thronos)** - This is a picture of God the Father reigning as the sovereign ruler Who exercises complete dominion over His creation (Rev 4:11). Revelation 4 is the GREAT THRONE CHAPTER because **Throne** is a key word in Revelation 4 occurring 11x in 7v (Rev 4:2 Rev 4:3 Rev 4:4 Rev 4:5 Rev 4:6 Rev 4:9 Rev 4:10 and in fact it is the key word of the entire book occurring 42x in 35 verses.) The Spirit wants the saints to be secure in powerful truth that no matter what transpires on earth, God is stable and secure on His **throne** and in complete control, even when the world looks like it is out of control! (As an aside, in light of a world beginning to look out of control in 2023, this truth should be a comforting to all God's children!) If Romans is the "Courtroom" of the Bible, the Revelation is the "Throne Room" of the Bible! **One sitting on the throne** is God the Father as deduced from Revelation 5:6-7 where Jesus, the Lamb, is described as the One Who came and "took the book out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne." As an aside, this is the only place in the NT is the throne of God described. Rev 6:16 ("from the presence of Him **Who sits on the throne**, and from the wrath of the Lamb" - although this verse gives the opinion of fallen men on earth!) and Rev 7:10 ("Salvation to our God **Who sits on the throne**, and to the Lamb."), which would also support the interpretation that the One sitting on the throne is the Father.

As [Warren Wiersbe](#) aptly says "There is no possible way for human words to describe what God is like in His essence. John can only use comparisons." But one has the impression at even these impressions will pale in comparison to the sight our eyes will one day behold in heaven!

**Alan Johnson** points out that "John does not attempt to describe the 'Someone sitting on' the throne (cf. 1Ki 22:19; 2Ch 18:18; Ps 47:8; Isa 6:1-5; Eze 1:26-28; Sir 1:8)" (See [Revelation Commentary in Expositor's Bible Commentary](#)) John will go on to only tell us



what this One is **LIKE**.

**A T Robertson** - As the vision opens John sees the throne already in place as the first thing in heaven. This bold imagery comes chiefly from 1 Kings 22:19; Isaiah 6:1ff+; Ezekiel 1:26-28; Daniel 7:9-10+....use of *kathēmenos* (sitting) for the name of God is like the Hebrew avoidance of the name Yahweh and is distinguished from the Son in Rev. 6:16+ ("Him Who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb"); Rev. 7:10+ ("our God Who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.").

**POSB** - The picture being dramatized is this: the throne in heaven, God's throne, is the throne above all thrones. It is the supreme seat of honor and majesty, of sovereignty and power. God is the supreme Majesty of the universe, the One who controls and holds all the events of history in His hands. He is the Supreme Authority over all the world and the coming events of the end time. No person can cause the events to take place but Him. The Lord Jesus Christ is returning to earth and the events of the end time are going to happen. But they are going to happen because of Him and because of Him alone. And note: the throne is "set in heaven." That is, the events are set forever. God rules and reigns forever. There will never be an end to His rule. (BORROW [Preacher's Outline Sermon Bible page 1096](#))

*(Throne) denotes monarchy, majesty, authority, royalty, and sovereignty....*

*In heaven, no one doubts who is in control. His authority is sovereign.*

-- Danny Akin

**Danny Akin** on the **throne** - His authority is sovereign. Revelation 4:2 A throne set in heaven. Revelation is a throne book and Revelation 4 is a throne chapter. The word **throne** occurs at least 45 times in Revelation as a whole and 14 times in chapter 4. It denotes monarchy, majesty, authority, royalty, and sovereignty. The one on the throne is King and He sits (present tense) continually as sovereign Lord. Earthly monarchs, rulers and presidents come and go, but this One remains forever. As Isaiah 6:1 says, "I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne high and lifted up." Psalm 47:8 adds, "God reigns over the nations; God sits on His holy throne." In heaven, no one doubts who is in control. His authority is sovereign.

*The LORD has established **His throne in the heavens,***

*And His sovereignty rules over all.*

-- Psalm 103:19+

**David Guzik** writes "The throne is a powerful declaration of not merely God's presence, but of His sovereign, rightful reign, and His prerogative to judge.. We can't think rightly about much of anything until we settle in our mind that there is an occupied throne in heaven, and the God of the Bible rules from the throne. "While there may be many differing interpretations, the fundamental truths are self-evident. At the center of everything is an occupied throne." (Morgan)

**THOUGHT** - James Hamilton make a great application point regarding Revelation 4-5 - "The cure to **idolatry** is seeing God as He is. The cure to **immorality** is seeing God as He is. The cure to a **godless worldview** is seeing God as He is. Revelation 4, 5 shows us God as He is. (See [Revelation: The Spirit Speaks to the Churches](#)) Hamilton's "pattern" for purity reminds me of Paul's "pattern" in Romans 13:14+ "Put on the Lord Jesus Christ (FIRST ORDER OF BUSINESS) and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts." This is the powerful dynamic we see in the Expulsive Power of a New Affection. In 1Th 4:5+ we read that believers (see context - 1Th 4:1-2, 3-4+) are to be walking "not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God." Notice why the Gentiles walk in lustful passion -- because they do not **know God**. It follows that the **knowing God** is a powerful preventative against walking in lustful passion. Father, for Your glory and honor and by Your Spirit and Word, may You enable each of us to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen." (2 Peter 3:18+)

**Hamilton** adds one other excellent thought - Seeing God will change your life. When you see God as he is revealed in chapters 4, 5, you know that God is worthy of praise because of who he is. God is worthy of praise because he is holy and eternal. God is worthy of praise because he made everything according to his will. When you see God as he is, you will know that everything is accountable to God. Seeing God as he is also means seeing Jesus, the one who was slain and rose from the dead to ransom people for God. If you see God as he is, you will worship him. He is worthy.

**Immortal, invisible God only wise,**

In light inaccessible hid from our eyes,

Most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,

Almighty, victorious, Your great name we praise

**William Newell** - Consider that the Throne of God, which was not in sight in the first three chapters of The Revelation, now comes into view; and so prominently, and in such character, from chapter 4 onward, as to make The Revelation become, "the Book of The

Throne.” The Throne was not seen when God walked with His first man Adam, in the garden. But later we read, “Jehovah sat as king at the Flood” (Psalm 29:10). Here it was for judgment, not worship. The Throne is not seen in the history of Abraham or the patriarchs, for they were walking by simple faith, and were the depositaries of promises. They were not connected with a manifested Throne, but built altars for worship. When God brought Israel out of Egypt, He had a nation for His name, and dwelt among them in glory (although Himself in thick darkness), sitting above the cherubim of the ark of the covenant, which was a type of the Throne on high. Isaiah saw Him thus in the temple,—the seraphim above Him, crying, “Holy, holy, holy,” and Ezekiel saw “the appearance of the likeness of the glory of Jehovah” enthroned upon the cherubim. It is quite astonishing in view of such holiness and glory to find written in 1 Chronicles 29:23, “Then Solomon sat on the throne of Jehovah as king, instead of David his father.” It will not be until our Lord returns to take that throne of David (as He will—Luke 1:32, 33) that it will again become “the throne of Jehovah.” Christ will inherit it, as Son of David, but it was to David that it was promised (2 Samuel 7:11–16). Our Lord will then reign as “a Priest upon his throne”—the full Melchizedek figure. This is “the tabernacle of David,” a phrase quoted in Acts 15:16, 17, from Amos 9:11, 12. It is the millennial time.

**John MacArthur** - That already open door admitted John into the third heaven (cf. 2Co 12:2SEE DISCUSSION OF THIRD HEAVEN; the first being the earth’s atmosphere and the second interplanetary and interstellar space)—to the very throne room of God. It was heaven to which Christ ascended after His resurrection and where He has since been seated at the right hand of God (John 14:2–3; Acts 1:9–11; Acts 3:20–21; Acts 7:55–56; Ro 10:6; Col. 3:1; 1Th 4:16). Heaven became John’s vantage point for most of the remainder of the book of Revelation. (See [Revelation Commentary](#))

**Charles Swindoll on heaven** - What is this biblical view of the cosmos? The Bible understands three basic “levels” of the universe—the heavens, the earth, and below the earth.[64] The term “heavens” may be further divided into three levels. The “first heaven” includes the sphere surrounding the earth. Today we call this the “atmosphere” or “sky,” in which birds fly and clouds drift. The “second heaven” includes everything in the cosmos above the earth’s atmosphere—the moon, sun, planets, stars, and galaxies. From a modern worldview perspective, both the first and second “heavens” are technically still part of the physical universe. Not so with the “third heaven.” In the biblical sense, the “third heaven” was the term used to describe the dwelling place of God, the angels, and any other spirit beings. Paul says he was “caught up to the third heaven.... into Paradise” (2 Cor. 12:2, 4). Today we might call this the “spiritual realm,” a plane of reality accessible only by heavenly invitation, like the one John received in Rev 4:1. The realm of existence “below the earth” also has both a physical and a spiritual dimension. Physically, it may refer simply to the grave or to underground spaces from which water may flow or lava may spew. Or it may refer to the place of spirits who have departed from the earthly plane but have not been admitted into the presence of God. In both cases the same terms are often used—sheol in the Old Testament and hades in the New. Context helps determine whether the text is referring to the physical or the spiritual realm. So when John was taken up into heaven, he was not transported to another planet or even another galaxy. Rather, he was caught up to the “third heaven,” to the presence of the living God. (See [Insights on Revelation](#))

**Thomas on heaven** - “heaven” sometimes refers to the “sky,” but as the Revelation to John continues, it will be seen as a place of conflict (cf. Rev 12:7) and one that will eventually see destruction (cf. Rev 21:1).... John spends most of his time in **heaven** through the remainder of the Apocalypse. The site of his vision does seem to return to earth at Rev 10:1, but is back in heaven for Rev 11:15–19. (**ED**: NOTE THE DESCRIPTION OF ACTUAL EVENTS SHIFT BACK AND FORTH BETWEEN EARTH AND HEAVEN SO BE SURE YOU KNOW WHERE YOU ARE WHEN READING ABOUT AN EVENT - see chart depicting heavenly events in blue, earthly events in brown) (See [Revelation Exegetical Commentary](#))

**Lehman Strauss** - Revelation is the “throne book” of the Bible. Thrones often speak of judgment, and in the chapters we are about to study, there are divinely inspired prophecies of coming judgments upon the wicked living and the wicked dead. At no time has God vacated His throne. He has never relinquished His sovereignty and majesty, thus we are reminded of God’s power and authority of which the throne is a symbol. “The LORD hath prepared His throne in the heavens; and His kingdom ruleth over all” (Psalm 103:19). Presently, during this Age of Grace, God’s throne is one of grace and mercy where sinners and saints may come boldly to “obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:16+). (BORROW [The Book of the Revelation: Outlined Studies](#))

Note in the chart that each occurrence of in the Spirit is associated with a major turning point in this book.

FOUR OCCURRENCES OF IN THE SPIRIT			
Rev 1:10	Earth (Patmos)	Heard	Glorified, exalted Christ-His instruction and outline of what to write
Rev 4:2	Heaven	Saw	Throne of God, Lamb worthy to break the seals unleashing wrath of God
Rev 17:3	Wilderness	Saw	Judgment of Babylon the great
Rev 21:10	High Mountain	Saw	Holy city, New Jerusalem

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**Immediately** (2112) **eutheos** from **euthus** = straight, immediate) is an adverb which generally means at once, right away, forthwith, straightaway, without an interval of time or a point of time subsequent to a previous point of time. Note that the actual interval of time depends on the nature of the events and the manner in which the sequence is interpreted by the writer. **Eutheos** is a "time sensitive" word (see [expression of time](#)) and should prompt questions like "To what time does it refer?" or "What happens in this time?"

**Spirit** (breath, wind)(4151) **pneuma** from **pneo** = to breath). - Note this is only a summary of the vast amount of material available on Pneuma.

1. a movement of air (a gentle blast 1a) of the wind, hence the wind itself 1b) breath of nostrils or mouth
2. the spirit, i.e. the vital principal by which the body is animated 2a) the rational spirit, the power by which the human being feels, thinks, decides 2b) the soul
3. a spirit, i.e. a simple essence, devoid of all or at least all grosser matter, and possessed of the power of knowing, desiring, deciding, and acting 3a) a life giving spirit 3b) a human soul that has left the body 3c) a spirit higher than man but lower than God, i.e. an angel 3c1) used of demons, or evil spirits, who were conceived as inhabiting the bodies of men 3c2) the spiritual nature of Christ, higher than the highest angels and equal to God, the divine nature of Christ
4. of God 4a) God's power and agency distinguishable in thought from his essence in itself considered 4a1) manifest in the course of affairs 4a2) by its influence upon the souls productive in the theocratic body (the church) of all the higher spiritual gifts and blessings 4a3) the third person of the trinity, the God the Holy Spirit
5. the disposition or influence which fills and governs the soul of any one 5a) the efficient source of any power, affection, emotion, desire, etc.

**Pneuma** in NT - 380x in 345 verses and **in the NAS** is translated breath(3), Spirit(239), spirit(103), spirits(32), spiritual(1), wind(1), winds(1)

**Pneuma - 23x in 23v in the Revelation and 17 refer to the Holy Spirit - the other 6 uses are noted after the respective passage** = Rev. 1:4; Rev. 1:10; Rev. 2:7; Rev. 2:11; Rev. 2:17; Rev. 2:29; Rev. 3:1; Rev. 3:6; Rev. 3:13; Rev. 3:22; Rev. 4:2; Rev. 4:5; Rev. 5:6; Rev. 11:11=BREATH; Rev. 13:15=BREATH; Rev. 14:13; Rev. 16:13=UNCLEAN SPIRITS; Rev. 16:14=SPIRITS OF DEMONS; Rev. 17:3; Rev. 18:2=EVERY UNCLEAN SPIRIT; Rev. 19:10=SPIRIT OF PROPHECY; Rev. 21:10; Rev. 22:6=SPIRITS OF THE PROPHETS; Rev. 22:17

**Throne** (2362) **thronos** describes a seat of authority as with the throne of God (Heb. 4:16, "the throne of grace," Heb 8:1; Heb 12:2; Rev 1:4; Rev 3:21; Rev. 4:2; Rev. 5:1 Rev. 20:12; Lxx - Ps 47:8, Ps 103:19), the throne of Jesus Christ (Heb. 1:8; Rev. 3:21; Rev. 22:3; in the Millennium = Mt 19:28), by metonymy (or figuratively) used for angelic powers (Col. 1:16), of the apostles (Mt 19:28, Lk 22:30), elders in heaven (Rev 4:4), of the throne of David (Lk 1:32, Acts 2:30), of the throne of Satan (Rev 2:13), of the throne of the beast, the antichrist (Rev 13:2, Rev 16:10).

**Thronos - 61x/51v** -Mt. 5:34; Mt. 19:28; Mt. 23:22; Mt. 25:31; Lk. 1:32; Lk. 1:52; Lk. 22:30; Acts 2:30; Acts 7:49; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:8; Heb. 4:16; Heb. 8:1; Heb. 12:2;

**NOTE: BY FAR MOST USES ON IN THE REVELATION = 46 times in 37 verses** - Rev. 1:4; Rev. 2:13; Rev. 3:21; Rev. 4:2; Rev. 4:3; Rev. 4:4; Rev. 4:5; Rev. 4:6; Rev. 4:9; Rev. 4:10; Rev. 5:1; Rev. 5:6; Rev. 5:7; Rev. 5:11; Rev. 5:13; Rev. 6:16; Rev. 7:9; Rev. 7:10; Rev. 7:11; Rev. 7:15; Rev. 7:17; Rev. 8:3; Rev. 11:16; Rev. 12:5; Rev. 13:2 = THE COUNTERFEIT; Rev. 14:3; Rev. 16:10 = THE COUNTERFEIT; Rev. 16:17; Rev. 19:4; Rev. 19:5; Rev. 20:4; Rev. 20:11; Rev. 20:12; Rev. 21:3; Rev. 21:5; Rev. 22:1; Rev. 22:3

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#### **QUESTION - [What is the throne of God? Does God literally have a throne?](#)**

**ANSWER** - There are several references to the throne of God in the Bible. Jesus calls heaven "God's throne" in Matthew 5:34, recalling God's statement in Isaiah 66:1, "Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool." Other references to God's throne are found in 2 Chronicles 18:18; Psalm 11:4; Hebrews 8:1; 12:2; Revelation 1:4; 3:21; 4:2; and many other verses.

A throne is a special seat reserved for a monarch. When the Bible speaks of God's "throne," the emphasis is on God's [transcendence](#), dignity, and sovereign rule. The fact that His throne is in heaven further underscores the transcendent nature of God's existence.

The throne of God need not be thought of as a literal throne. God the Father is incorporeal ([John 4:24](#)). Not having a physical body, God does not literally "sit." References to a divine throne are akin to biblical allusions to God's "hand" or "mouth" or "eyes"—they

are anthropomorphisms, descriptions of God couched in human terms out of deference to our limited knowledge. God has to describe Himself in ways we can understand.

Isaiah sees the Lord “high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple” ([Isaiah 6:1](#)). At that time, the prophet was having an inspired vision. God’s throne (and His robe) are not to be taken as literal, physical objects. Rather, God was communicating to Isaiah the magnificence, splendor, and exaltation of His Being. Other descriptions of the throne of God are found in other prophetic visions, e.g., in those of Ezekiel and John.

**God’s throne is a place of power and authority.** In 2 Chronicles 18:18, the prophet Micaiah relates his vision of God’s throne room, in which spirit beings stand in attendance. Compare this to Job 1:6, where God demands answers from the angelic beings summoned there.

**God’s throne is a place of majesty and honor.** The Bible says that, when Jesus ascended to heaven, He “sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:2). There is no higher place than heaven. God is the King of heaven, and Jesus holds the place of honor at [God’s right hand](#).

**God’s throne is a place of perfect justice.** “He has prepared His throne for judgment” (Psalm 9:7; cf. 89:14). The final judgment, described in Revelation 20, is held before “a [great white throne](#)” (verse 11).

**God’s throne is a place of sovereignty and holiness.** “God reigns over the nations; God is seated on his holy throne” (Psalm 47:8; cf. 103:19). He does whatever He pleases, and all He does is good.

**God’s throne is a place of praise.** John’s vision of heaven includes a scene in which a “new song” is sung in praise to the One who occupies the throne (Revelation 14:3). Around the throne, the praise of God is surely “glorious” (Psalm 66:2).

**God’s throne is a place of purity.** Only the redeemed, those who have been granted the righteousness of Christ, will have the right to stand before His throne (Revelation 14:5).

**God’s throne is a place of eternal life.** God is the Source of life. In heaven, John sees “the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb” (Revelation 22:1).

**God’s throne is a place of grace.** Not only does the throne of God represent judgment for the unbeliever, but it also represents mercy and grace for His children. “Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need” (Hebrews 4:16). Inside the Jewish temple was the [Ark of the Covenant](#), which was a “copy of the true” (Hebrews 9:24), and it had a “mercy seat” where God’s presence would appear (Leviticus 16:2ESV).

One day, all creation will bow to the majesty of God’s throne (Philippians 2:9–11). The regal beings surrounding the throne of God will “lay their crowns before the throne and say: ‘You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power’” (Revelation 4:10–11). [GotQuestions.org](#)

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**THRONE** from [Dictionary of Biblical Imagery](#) - The image of a throne is one of the most glorious and evocative in the entire Bible. It denotes authority, power, majesty and splendor. In the vast majority of cases, the Bible’s references to thrones are positive, referring to the benevolent power and splendor attendant upon the human throne or—to an infinitely greater degree—the divine throne. The throne imagery conveys one of the most fundamental biblical motifs, that of God’s reign as King (see KING, KINGSHIP). Many scholars have seen the kingdom of God as the one central, unifying motif in the Bible, and the imagery of the throne is fundamental to that motif. The term occurs about 135 times in the OT and about 61 times in the NT.

**Physical Thrones.** In a small number of cases, references to thrones are to the actual physical seat on which a king sat. Several of these have to do with Solomon’s throne (1 Kings 2:19; 10:18, 18; 2 Chron 9:17, 18); one reference is to a throne that Solomon had brought out for his mother, placed next to his own (1 Kings 2:19). Solomon’s throne was very impressive, inlaid with ivory and overlaid with fine gold; six steps led up to it, and its back had a rounded top. A lion—a universal symbol in the ancient Near East of royal power and authority—stood beside each armrest.

Numerous ancient reliefs show kings seated on their thrones (see ANEP), sometimes flanked by lions, as Solomon was (e.g., ANEP, nos. 332, 458). Solomon’s throne was housed in the great Hall of Justice, which was paneled with cedar from floor to ceiling. Other scriptural references to physical thrones include Joash’s (2 Chron 23:20), Ahasuerus’s (Esther 5:1), the Ninevite king’s (Jon 3:6) and Herod’s (Acts 12:21).

**Symbols of Authority and Majesty.** More commonly, biblical imagery of a throne is evocative of authority, power, majesty or splendor.

**Human thrones.** Biblical references to human thrones most commonly refer to the kingly authority and power inherent in them. Thus reference to a king's throne or to his sitting on the throne signifies power and authority to rule. Such references include the thrones of the Egyptian pharaoh (Gen 41:40; Ex 11:5; 12:29); Israelite or Judahite kings such as Elah (1 Kings 16:11), Ahab (2 Kings 10:3), Jehu (10:30), Joash (11:19) or Jeroboam (11:19); the Babylonian kings Nebuchadnezzar (Jer 43:10) and Belshazzar (Dan 5:20); and the Persian Ahasuerus (Esther 1:2). Human thrones are to be places of righteousness and justice (e.g., Prov 16:12; 20:8; 25:5; 29:14).

**The Davidic throne.** The most common reference to human thrones, however, is to the throne of David (about 30 percent of all references to thrones). This has its basis in the great promise of what has come to be known as the Davidic covenant, in which God promised David that his descendants would rule in perpetuity on the throne in Israel. This promise was first given to David by Nathan the prophet (2 Sam 7) and is referred to many times after that: in 1-2 Kings and 1-2 Chronicles, the book of Psalms (see especially Ps 89; 132), Isaiah and Jeremiah (see Is 9:7; 16:5; Jer 13; 13; 17:5; 22:4, 30; 29:16; 33:17; 21; 36:30) and the NT (Lk 1:32; Acts 2:30). This promise came to its ultimate fulfillment in Jesus, the son of David par excellence (Mt 1:1; Lk 1:32).

**God's throne.** By far the most common biblical reference to a throne, however, is to God's throne (close to 60 percent). God's kingship is affirmed many times in Scripture, and his throne is a visible proof of his sovereign rule. The Lord presides from his throne, surrounded variously by all the host of heaven (1 Kings 22:19; 2 Chron 18:18), a rainbow like emeralds (Rev 4:3), twenty-four other thrones (Rev 4:4), a crystal-clear sea of glass (Rev 4:6) and countless numbers of angels (Rev 5:11). His is a holy throne (Ps 47:8), glorious in its appearance (Is 63:15; Jer 14:21; 17:12; Mt 19:28; 25:31) and eternal in its duration (Ps 9:7; 45:6; 93:2; Lam 5:19; Ezek 43:7; Heb 1:8; Rev 1:8; 5:13).

It is a spectacular throne, variously described as flaming with fire (Dan 7:9), glittering with sapphires (Ezek 1:26; 10:1), flashing and crashing with lightning and thunder (Rev 4:5), dazzlingly white (Rev 20:11), from which flows a river of living water (Rev 22:1).

Some thrones in Scripture are set up in opposition to God, such as the corrupt throne in Psalm 94:20, the royal thrones of Babylon (Is 14:13; cf. Is 47:1) and Tyre (Ezek 28:2), and even Satan's throne (Rev 2:13; 16:10). Yet these thrones represent no power or appeal when compared to the power and splendor of God's throne.

References to God's throne are found most often in the book of Revelation, appropriately enough, since this book describes God's final victory over Satan and the forces of evil. The royal motifs found throughout Scripture find their climax at the end of history in this image—laden book in the Bible.

See also AUTHORITY, DIVINE AND ANGELIC; KING, KINGSHIP; ROYAL COURT; SEAT

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## **QUESTION - Will we be able to see all three members of the Trinity in Heaven?**

**ANSWER** - Before considering if we will actually be able to see God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, we need to establish that they are three Persons. Without delving too deeply into the doctrine of the [Trinity](#), we need to understand that the Father is not the same Person as the Son, the Son is not the same Person as the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit is not the same Person as the Father. They are not three Gods. They are three distinct Persons, yet they are all the one God. Each has a will, can speak, can love, etc., and these are demonstrations of personhood. They are in absolute perfect harmony consisting of one substance. They are coeternal, coequal and co-powerful. If any one of the three were removed, there would be no God.

## **So in heaven, there are three Persons. But will we be able to actually see them?**

Revelation 4:3-6 gives us a description of heaven and the throne that is occupied by God and by the Lamb: "the one sitting there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian... a rainbow resembling an emerald encircled the throne. Before the throne... a sea of glass, clear as crystal." Since God dwells in "unapproachable light" and is one "whom no one has seen or can see" (1 Timothy 6:16), God is described in terms of the reflected brilliance of precious stones. 1 Corinthians 2:9 says, "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him." Because of God's holiness, it may be that we will never be able to look upon His face, but again, this is speculation.

**(ED COMMENT: BUT CLEARLY JOHN WAS ABLE TO SEE SOME MANIFESTATION OF THE FATHER IN REVELATION 4. AND NOTICE WHAT HE SAW IN REVELATION 5:1 - "I saw in the right hand of Him Who set on the throne...." NOTE THE GREEK WORD IS "DEXIOS" WHICH STRICTLY SPEAKING MEANS "RIGHT" VERSUS LEFT AND "HAND" IS OFTEN ADDED IN THE TRANSLATIONS [32/54x rendered "right hand"]. IN ANY EVENT, JOHN CLEARLY SAW SOME MANIFESTATION OF THE FATHER'S RIGHT SIDE. AND ASSUMING THAT THIS EVENT HAPPENS WHEN BELIEVERS ARE IN HEAVEN, IT SEEMS REASONABLE TO SUGGEST THAT WE TOO WILL WITNESS WHAT JOHN WITNESSED. IT ALSO SEEMS UNLIKELY THAT THE 24 ELDERS WILL CAST THEIR CROWN BEFORE THE THRONE IF THEY COULD**



NOT SEE THE THRONE. SO IN SOME WAY IT SEEMS CLEAR TO ME THAT BELIEVERS WILL SEE GOD'S THRONE AND SOME VISIBLE ASPECT OF THE FATHER BUT EXACTLY WHAT HE WILL LOOK LIKE OTHER THAN WHAT JOHN STATES IS FUTILE AND FRUITLESS SPECULATION. [See additional comment](#) by Mark Hitchcock)

Revelation 5:6 tells us that in heaven, the Lamb stands in the center of the throne and there are descriptions of Him clothed in brilliant white. Since the Lamb represents Christ Jesus, and we know that human eyes have beheld Him after His resurrection and glorification, it seems reasonable to conclude that in heaven, we will be able to look upon our Lord and Savior. (**ED**: AND SEE 1 John 3:2+).

The Holy Spirit, by the very nature of His being, is able to move at will and take various forms. When Jesus was baptized, the Holy Spirit descended on Him in the form of a dove (Matthew 3:13-17). At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was accompanied by a loud rushing noise and was seen as tongues of fire (Acts 2:1-4). It may not be possible to see the Holy Spirit unless He chooses to manifest Himself in some form, but that is speculation.

Mere mortals do not have the ability to grasp the wonders of heaven—it is entirely beyond our comprehension. Whatever heaven is like, it will far exceed our wildest imaginings! All we know is that we will be worshiping our great God and full of wonder that He died to save sinners. [GOTQUESTIONS.ORG](http://GOTQUESTIONS.ORG)

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## The Wonderful One

There before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it. Revelation 4:2

Today's Scripture & Insight: Revelation 4:4–11

In The Wonderful Wizard of Oz, Dorothy, the Scarecrow, the Tin Man, and the Cowardly Lion return to Oz with the broomstick that empowered the Wicked Witch of the West. The Wizard had promised, in return for the broomstick, that he would give the four their deepest desires: a ride home for Dorothy, a brain for the Scarecrow, a heart for the Tin Man, and courage for the Cowardly Lion. But the Wizard stalls and tells them to come back the next day.

While they plead with the Wizard, Dorothy's dog Toto pulls back the curtain, behind which the Wizard spoke, to reveal that the Wizard isn't a wizard at all, he's just a fearful, fidgety man from Nebraska.

It's said that the author, L. Frank Baum, had a serious problem with God, so he wanted to send the message that only we have the power to solve our problems.

In contrast, the apostle John pulls back the veil to reveal the truly Wonderful One behind the "curtain." Words fail John (note the repeated use of the preposition like in the passage), but the point is well made: God is seated on His throne, surrounded by a sea of glass (Revelation 4:2, 6). Despite the troubles that plague us here on earth (chs. 2–3), God isn't pacing the floor and biting His nails. He's actively at work for our good, so we can experience His peace. By: David H. Roper

What do you fear today? How does it help you to know that God controls the troubles that surround you? How can you better trust and surrender to Him?

I'm grateful, God, that I can count on You to walk with me through everything. Thank You for Your peace.

([Click to go to the full devotional](#) including a related picture and a link at the bottom of the page to one of their excellent devotional booklets. Reprinted by permission from Our Daily Bread Ministries. Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

**Revelation 4:3 And He who was sitting was like a jasper stone and a sardius in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, like an emerald in appearance.**

- **like a jasper stone and a sardius:** Rev 21:11,19,20 Ex 24:10 Eze 1:26 Ezek 28:13
- **a rainbow:** Rev 10:1 Ge 9:13-16 Isa 54:9-10 Eze 1:28
- **like an emerald in appearance:** Rev 21:19 Ex 28:18 Ex 39:11 Eze 28:13
- [Revelation 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## Related Passages:

Genesis 9:13-17 I set My bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a sign of a covenant between Me and the earth.



14 "It shall come about, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow will be seen in the cloud, 15 and I will remember My covenant, which is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and **never again shall the water become a flood to destroy all flesh.** 16 "When the bow is in the cloud, then I will look upon it, to remember **the everlasting covenant** between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth." 17 And God said to Noah, "**This is the sign of the covenant which I have established between Me and all flesh that is on the earth.**"

Psalm 104:2+ Covering Yourself with light as with a cloak, Stretching out heaven like a tent curtain.

1 Timothy 6:16+ Who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, Whom no man has seen or can see. To Him be honor and eternal dominion! Amen.

1 John 1:5+ This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.

Revelation 10:1 I saw another strong angel coming down out of heaven, clothed with a cloud; **and the rainbow was upon his head**, and his face was like the sun, and his feet like pillars of fire;

Ezekiel 1:26-28+ Now above the expanse that was over their heads there was something resembling a throne, like lapis lazuli in appearance; and on that which resembled a throne, high up, was a figure with the appearance of a man. 27 Then I noticed from the appearance of His loins and upward something like glowing metal that looked like fire all around within it, and from the appearance of His loins and downward I saw something like fire; and there was a radiance around Him. **As the appearance of the rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day**, so was the appearance of the surrounding radiance. Such was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. And when I saw it, I fell on my face and heard a voice speaking.

Revelation 21:11+ (New Jerusalem) having the glory of God. Her brilliance was **like** a very costly stone, **as a stone of crystal-clear jasper.**

Revelation 21:18+ The material of the wall was **jasper**; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass.

Revelation 21:19+ **The foundation stones of the city wall** were adorned with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation stone was **jasper**; the second, sapphire; the third, chalcedony; the fourth, emerald;

Revelation 21:20+ the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, **sardius**; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, topaz; the tenth, chrysoprase; the eleventh, jacinth; the twelfth, amethyst.

## **DESCRIPTION OF THE INDESCRIBABLE FATHER**

**And He who was sitting was like a jasper ([iaspis](#)) stone and a sardius in appearance** - Note again the term of comparison, the simile **like**. It is as if John could not adequately describe God's indescribable appearance. He tries using figures of speech, but what speech can truly describe the indescribable One? No human shape or form can describe Him. God is described in terms of light (and color), the dazzling light of the most precious gems and jewels of John's day. Ezekiel 1:26-28 provides the Old Testament background to this glorious vision. Revelation 21:11+ describes the New Jerusalem "having the glory of God. Her **brilliance** was like a very costly stone, as a stone of crystal-clear jasper." **Jasper** is described as clear as crystal which makes one think of a diamond like quality which in the context is associated with **brilliance**. The Lord's beauty and **brilliance** shines before John's eyes **like a jasper stone!** The **sardius** was a blood red stone known to us as [carnelian](#). A number of commentators associate spiritual meanings with the jasper stone and sardius, but their comments show considerable variation as to what these stones could possibly symbolize. Once again the reader is cautioned to be careful interpreting the specific texts in Revelation too "imaginatively" (aka "sanctified imagination") unless it can be supported by **context** or **parallel passages** (as with Rev 21:11 in the case of jasper).

**Francis Chan** on John's description of the throne room scene - This sort of poetic, artistic imagery can be difficult for those of us who don't think that way. So imagine the most stunning sunset you've ever seen. Remember the radiant colors splashed across the sky? The way you stopped to gaze at it in awe? And how the words wow and beautiful seemed so lacking? That's a small bit of what John is talking about in Revelation 4 as he attempts to articulate his vision of heaven's throne room. (BORROW [Crazy love : overwhelmed by a relentless God](#))

**R L Thomas** however raises a slight objection to my comment above (cf "*imaginatively*") writing "This attitude in approaching the text encounters the danger of overlooking important lessons. Details of Scripture are always significant. There must be a reason for the use of these symbols instead of others. **Granted that the precise symbolic import of some of the stones in the vision may be difficult to comprehend**, other parts of the vision are relatively clear in their symbolic import...**Modern ignorance of ancient**

**terminology makes precise identification of the stones quite tentative** (Morris)....The key to **probable** identification of this stone is Rev. 21:11 where it represents a watery crystalline brightness (Alford; Morris). The modern jasper is opaque, but the ancient stone must have been translucent rock crystal, possibly a diamond." I would add Thomas fails to see the main association of the jasper in Rev 21:11 which is **brilliance**. It is interesting that while Thomas states no detail of Scripture is without significance (to which I heartily agree), but then he goes on to vacillate somewhat on the identification of the **jasper stone** and even is forced to say "the key to probable identification of this stone is Rev 21:11...." So in the end, he uses Scripture to suggest an interpretation of the jasper stone, an approach that along with context is always the safest hermeneutical approach!

**Adam Clarke** points out that "There is here no description of the Divine Being, so as to point out any similitude, shape, or dimensions. The description rather aims to point out the surrounding glory and effulgence than the person of the Almighty King."

The jasper stone and the sardius stone were the first and the last stone on the breastplate of the high priest. The high priest wore a breastplate with twelve stones on them—one stone for each tribe of Israel. It reminded the children of Israel that His people were always close to the heart of God!

**ESV Study Bible note** - Imitating Isaiah's and Ezekiel's reserve in describing visions of God's glory (cf. Isa. 6:1-6; Ezek. 1:26-28), John suggests luminous colors—jasper, carnelian, rainbow, emerald—but avoids precise description of the Almighty's visible features, perhaps because he knew no language to describe what he saw. The jewels of this book (cf. Rev. 21:19-20) are not meant to be interpreted individually but together signify the splendor and majesty of God. (BORROW [ESV Study Bible](#))

**William Barclay** - There is something very interesting here. John makes no attempt to describe God in any human shape. As H. B. Swete says, 'He rigorously shuns anthropomorphic details.' He describes God in 'the flashing of gem-like colours', but he never mentions any kind of form. It is a familiar theme in the Bible to see God in terms of light. The Pastoral Epistles describe God as dwelling in 'unapproachable light' (1 Timothy 6:16). And, long before that, the psalmist had spoken of God who wraps himself with light as with a garment (Psalm 104:2). John sees his vision in terms of the lights which flash from precious stones. We do not know what exactly these stones were. The three names here are jasper, sardian and emerald. One thing is certain: these were typical of the most precious stones. Plato mentions the three of them together as representative of precious stones (Phaedo, 111 E). They were part of the rich array of the King of Tyre (Ezekiel 28:13); they were among the precious stones on the breastplate of the high priest (Exodus 28:17); and they were among the stones which were the foundation of the holy city (Revelation 21:19).

**Henry Morris** -The beautiful rainbow is mentioned only four times in Scripture (Genesis 9:13-16; Ezekiel 1:28; Revelation 4:3; 10:1). Each time it is associated with God in a time of judgment on the earth, but also associated with His mercy and grace during such times of judgment. (BORROW [The Defender's Study Bible](#))

**THOUGHT** - As you read the outpouring of wrath in Revelation 6-19 keep alert to God's offerings of mercy and grace to rebellious mankind as you will see them throughout these verses (e.g., Rev 14:6+ just before the final and greatest outpouring of God's wrath).

Messianic Jewish writer **David Levy** said, "John saw a sparkling light like that of a blue-white diamond mingled with the bright light from a blood-red stone like a ruby, producing a flashing blaze of glorious color."

### **Indescribable**

From the highest of heights to the depths of the sea  
Creations revealing Your majesty  
From the colors of fall to the fragrance of spring  
Every creature unique in the song that it sings  
All exclaiming

Indescribable, uncontainable  
You placed the stars in the sky  
And You know them by name  
You are amazing, God

All powerful, untameable  
Awestruck, we fall to our knees  
As we humbly proclaim  
You are amazing, God

Who has told every lightning bolt where it should go?  
Or seen heavenly storehouses laden with snow  
Who imagined the sun and gives source to its light?

Yet, conceals it to bring us the coolness of night  
None can fathom

**Akin** sums up John's description of the One seated on the throne - Put them all together and you have a vision of God's majesty, splendor, glory, and faithfulness. He is beyond description in appearance and utterly reliable in His promises. He is awesome, magnificent, transcendent, and spectacular. There is no God like our God! (See [Exalting Jesus in Revelation](#))

**Leon Morris** says "The exact nature of the jasper stone is uncertain, but it was renowned in the ancient world. Its name has been essentially transliterated from both the Hebrew (yashpeh) and Greek (jaspis), as well as other languages, but it still is unidentified today. It was one of the stones in the breastplate of the high priest (Ex 28:20+; Ex 39:13+) and in the heavenly Eden (Ezekiel 28:13). Its association with the sardius stone (Revelation 4:3) and with the clear crystal (Revelation 21:11+), together with extra-biblical references, suggests that it was a fine translucent stone, capable of different colors, primarily radiant white but also with flashing fiery red and purple tints.

**POSB** - The countenance of God shone like a jasper stone. The stone referred to was different from the jasper stone of today. The idea is that the stone was some sort of translucent crystal through which light was shining. It was shining so brightly that it was apparently like the concentrated light of a laser. This represents the penetrating perfection and purity of God. The sardine (SARDIUS) stone was a fiery red stone and it represents the justice of God. (**ED: WHILE THAT INTERPRETATION IS POSSIBLE, IT IS SPECULATION. ATTACHING SIGNIFICANCE TO EVERY ASPECT OF THE REVELATION IS A TEMPTATION FOR ALL OF US, BUT BE AWARE IT MAY NOT ALWAYS BE ACCURATE.** ) (BORROW [Preacher's Outline Sermon Bible page 1096](#))

**Lenski** - Let us think of the flashing, white light of the diamond and of the brilliant, burning of the glowing carnelian, of majesty joined to judgment. This seems to be the best we are able to do.

## A CIRCULAR RAINBOW LIKE AN EMERALD

**And there was a rainbow around the throne** ([thronos](#)), **like an emerald in appearance** - What did the rainbow symbolize? It is not too imaginative" to interpret the rainbow as a symbol God's faithfulness to His covenants with man, not just the Noachic covenant, but **all of His covenants**, the pinnacle of course being the New Covenant in Jesus' blood (Lk 22:20+). In Genesis 9 (see [above](#)) the **rainbow** was the sign of God's promise to never destroy the earth by water. The **rainbow** (Greek = iris only 2x in NT - Rev 4:3, 10:1) that John saw in heaven was not a half bow we see on earth, but it was a complete circle because it went all the way **around the throne**. A circle has no beginning and no end, just like God's faithfulness to His covenant promises, which are **ALL** "yea and amen" in Christ Jesus (2Co 1:20KJV+). The Greek word for **emerald** (smaragdinus) is found only here in the NT (no uses in Septuagint) and describes the rainbow with the term of comparison like **an emerald in appearance**. In light of the fact that John could only see it and did not touch it or feel it, the sense affected was sight which almost certainly describes the rainbow as a brilliant green. Liddell Scott cite a use of the Greek word smaragdeios which meant "green." What does it symbolize? Honestly, I am not sure and anything I say would be speculation. Green is certainly a pleasant color to gaze at and thus would be apropos for the Most High God.

**David Guzik** makes an excellent point - A throne says, "I can do whatever I want, because I rule." A promise says, "I will fulfill this word to you, and I cannot do otherwise." A rainbow around the throne is a remarkable thing, showing that God will always limit Himself by His own promises.

**Warren Wiersbe** on **rainbow** - Around the throne was an emerald-colored **rainbow**. This takes us back to Ge 9:11-17, when God made His covenant with mankind and nature not to destroy the world again with water. The rainbow speaks of God's promise and His covenant of mercy. Even though the throne of God is about to send forth awful judgment on mankind, in His wrath God will still remember mercy (see Hab. 3:2+). (BORROW [Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the New Testament](#))

**Spurgeon** - Oh! Child of God! Thy heavenly Father in his sovereignty, has a right to do with you, his child, as he pleases, but he will never let that sovereignty get out of the limit of the covenant. As a sovereign, he might cast you away, but he has promised that he never will, and never will he. As a sovereign, he might leave you to perish, but he has said, 'I will not leave thee nor forsake thee.' As a sovereign, he might suffer you to be tempted beyond your strength, but he has promised that no temptation shall happen to you, but such as is common to man, and he will with the temptation make a way of escape."

**John Trapp** on the **rainbow** - "Which is signum gratiae et foederis, (TRANSLATES AS) "a sign of grace and the covenant of mercy," which is always fresh and green about Christ's throne of grace."

**R L Thomas** on possible significance of the **rainbow** - It is much more satisfactory to acknowledge that it is a reminder that God's mercy is as great as His majesty, i.e., that there will be no triumph of God's sovereignty at the expense of His mercy. (See

[Revelation Exegetical Commentary](#))

**William MacDonald** on **rainbow** - The rainbow, apparently a ring of green light like an emerald, is a pledge that God will keep His covenants, in spite of the coming judgments. (BORROW [Believer's Bible Commentary](#))

**Lehman Strauss** on the **rainbow** - The rainbow from Heaven's viewpoint is a complete circle, not broken by the line of the horizon as it is when seen from the earth. The gorgeous green, the blend of the colors of the spectrum, is suggestive of promise and hope. However, the hope is not for the earth, because the day of judgment has come. God has another covenant with His Son, and He is about to fulfill it. He promised that one day the earth would be Christ's "footstool," a word denoting that which is under one's feet, or that which is in subjection to someone (Psalm 110:1 cf. Acts 2:34-35; Hebrews 1:13; 10:13). For God's children, the storm is over, since Christ bore the judgment for all their sins. The sun hid in darkness when Christ, the mighty Maker, died for man the creature's sin. But the throne in Heaven is encircled as the pledge of God's faithfulness. He is about to begin judgment against all who have rejected His Son, thereby preparing the earth for Christ's reign. (BORROW [The Book of the Revelation: Outlined Studies](#))

**Warren Wiersbe** - Judgment is about to fall, but the rainbow reminds us that God is merciful, even when He judges (Hab. 3:2). Usually, a rainbow appears after the storm; but here, we see it before the storm. The rainbow was around the throne vertically, while these heavenly beings were around the throne horizontally. They are, as it were, the king's court. (BORROW [Be Victorious](#))

**John Walvoord** on the **rainbow** - In Scripture the rainbow is a sign of God's faithfulness to His word and covenants. It is also a sign of God's mercy, grace and long-suffering. The fact the rainbow completely encircles the throne emphatically stresses this.

**R C H Lenski** - The idea that, of the seven colors of the rainbow, the green only predominated is unwarranted; this bow has only the one color, emerald green which symbolizes grace....Green is also the color of hope, and the rainbow the symbol of peace ("grace to you and peace" in the epistles). (ED: I AGREE WITH THE FIRST COMMENT ABOUT 7 COLORS, BUT NOT SURE HOW HE ARRIVED AT FOLLOWING INTERPRETATIONS. THERE IS NOTHING IN THE CONTEXT THAT SAYS THIS SYMBOLIZES GRACE, HOPE OR PEACE. AGAIN, WE MUST BE CAUTIOUS WHEN INTERPRETING SYMBOLS.)

**R L Thomas** suggests "The symbolism of the stone seems to lie in its green color, which represents the grace and mercy of God." Given that this is the only use of the Greek word for **emerald** in Scripture, this statement seem to be somewhat of a "stretch." I think it is okay regarding some of the symbolism like this in the Revelation to say that we simply don't know the significance and to avoid speculation.

**Adrian Rogers** has some interesting thoughts regarding the possible meaning for the circular **rainbow** -- "So when we see this complete rainbow around the throne, a never-ending circle of green, it speaks of the eternal life that belongs to the children of God. It represents the perfection of His grace and speaks of the God who will never break His covenant. Another thing the rainbow means is that the storm is over for the saints of God. But the storm is not over for those on earth, because God is about to judge this world ... So a storm is brewing on earth, but round about the throne it is peaceful indeed."

**THOUGHT** - Does not John's attempt to describe the indescribable give you as a finite creature, a sense of awe and wonder at the infinite, thrice holy One Who sits upon the throne? If not, you might read and re-read Revelation 4 prayerfully and even on your knees as an act of worship. I think you will be amazed at how the Spirit will illuminate these passages and stir your heart to greater love for Him Who sits on the throne then you have ever experienced. And greater love will energize a greater obedience (Jn 14:15) and a greater desire to be holy as He is holy (1Pe 1:15-16+). Take a moment and sing the following song from your heart to Him Who sits upon the throne (note especially the line "*majesty enthroned above*")...

**[You are beautiful beyond description, too marvelous for words;](#)**

Too wonderful for comprehension, like nothing ever seen or heard.

Who can grasp Your infinite wisdom? Who can fathom the depth of Your love?

**You are beautiful beyond description, majesty enthroned above.**

And I stand, I stand in awe of You,

I stand, I stand in awe of You; holy God,

To Whom all praise is due,

I stand in awe of You."

[\(Read the story of how Mark Altrogge came to write the words to this song\)](#)

*"Once we personally come to grips with John's vision of God,  
our response can be nothing less than utter awe,  
unwavering commitment,  
and deep reverence for the eternal King."*

-- Charles Swindoll

**Jasper** (2393)(iaspis) translates the Hebrew word yashpeh. It was a gem of various colours, and was one of the twelve stones in the high priest's breastplate (Ex 28:18, Ex 39:13). In Heaven **jasper** is a component of the building of the New Jerusalem (Rev 21:18, 19+). The New Jerusalem's "brilliance was like a very costly stone, as a stone of crystal-clear jasper." (Rev 21:11). Jasper was a symbol of the glory of God in Rev 4:3. [Jasper](#) in Wikipedia.

**Iaspis is used 4x all in the Revelation** - Rev. 4:3; Rev. 21:11; Rev. 21:18; Rev. 21:19. Here are the uses in the Septuagint - Ex 28:18; Ex 39:11; Isa. 54:12; Ezek. 28:13 speaks of Satan before his fall = ""You were in Eden, the garden of God; Every precious stone was your covering: The ruby, the topaz and the diamond; The beryl, the onyx and the **jasper**; The lapis lazuli, the turquoise and the emerald; And the gold, the workmanship of your settings and sockets, Was in you. On the day that you were created They were prepared. "

**Charles Swindoll** says "To help us understand the astonishing imagery in Revelation 4, we need to look back to similar visions in the Old Testament, particularly in the prophetic writings of Isaiah and Ezekiel. I find it easiest to see these connections in the form of a chart." The chart below is from his book [Insights on Revelation](#)

REVELATION 4	ISAIAH 6; EZEKIEL 1 & 10
Heavenly throne (Rev 4:2-6)	I saw the LORD sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. (Isa. 6:1)
Rainbow (Rev 4:3)	As the appearance of the rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so was the appearance of the surrounding radiance. (Ezek. 1:28)
Thunder and lightning (Rev 4:5)	As I looked, behold, a storm wind was coming from the north, a great cloud with fire flashing forth continually and a bright light around it, and in its midst something like glowing metal in the midst of the fire. (Ezek. 1:4) In the midst of the living beings there was something that looked like burning coals of fire, like torches darting back and forth among the living beings. The fire was bright, and lightning was flashing from the fire. And the living beings ran to and fro like bolts of lightning. (Ezek. 1:13-14)
Spirit of God (Rev 4:5)	Wherever the spirit was about to go, they [the living beings] would go. (Ezek. 1:12)
Glassy crystal sea (Rev 4:6)	Now over the heads of the living beings there was something like an expanse, like the awesome gleam of crystal, spread out over their heads. (Ezek. 1:22)
Four living creatures (Rev 4:6-8)	Within it [the storm] there were figures resembling four living beings. (Ezek. 1:5)
Full of eyes (Rev 4:6)	As for their rims they were lofty and awesome, and the rims of all four of them were full of eyes round about. (Ezek. 1:18) Their whole body, their backs, their hands, their wings and the wheels were full of eyes all around, the wheels belonging to all four of them. (Ezek. 10:12)
Lion, calf, man, and eagle (Rev 4:7)	As for the form of their faces, each had the face of a man; all four had the face of a lion on the right and the face of a bull on the left, and all four had the face of an eagle. (Ezek. 1:10) And each one had four faces. The first face was the face of a cherub, the second face was the face of a man, the third the face of a lion, and the fourth the face of an eagle. Then the cherubim rose up. They are the living beings that I saw by the river Chebar. (Ezek. 10:14-15)
Six wings (Rev 4:8)	Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. (Isa. 6:2)



Singing "Holy, Holy, Holy is the LORD" (Rev 4:8)	And one [of the Seraphim] called out to another and said, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory." (Isa. 6:3)
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**Swindoll** concludes "The similarities between these three accounts lead me to the conclusion that the four living creatures are angelic beings called "seraphim" in Isaiah 6:2 and "[cherubim](#)" in Ezekiel 10:15. The Hebrew term [seraphim](#) literally means "burning ones," indicating their nature as heavenly beings. The term cherubim emphasizes their function as protectors or "guardians" of the throne of God. Of course, God doesn't need protection from anything in heaven or on earth. Rather, it may be that these intermediate beings serve to protect other creatures from being consumed by the blazing glory of God! These four living creatures—the highest-ranking angelic beings—lead all creation in worship of their almighty Creator." ([Insights on Revelation](#))

**Revelation 4:4** **Around the throne were twenty-four thrones; and upon the thrones / saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white garments, and golden crowns on their heads.**

- **twenty-four thrones:** Rev 11:16 20:4 Mt 19:28 Lu 22:30
- **twenty-four elders:** Rev 4:10 5:8,14 7:11 19:4
- **clothed:** Rev 3:4,5 6:11 7:9,13,14 19:14
- **crowns:** Rev 2:10 9:7 Es 8:15 Ps 21:3 2Ti 4:8
- [Revelation 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## TWENTY-FOUR ELDERS ON TWENTY-FOUR THRONES

**Around the throne** ([thronos](#)) **were twenty-four thrones** ([thronos](#)) **and upon the thrones / saw twenty-four elders** ([presbuteros](#)) **sitting** ([kathemai](#)) - John now presents a picture with 4 things stated - around the throne, 24 thrones, on thrones 24 elders, sitting. **Around** (kuklothen from [kuklo](#) - around) means all around, from all sides, on all sides of (Only 3 uses in NT - Rev 4:3, 4, 8).

Having established God as the central focus of heaven, John begins to move outward from the throne of God, first seeing **twenty-four thrones all around God's throne**. And John does not leave us in the dark, but explains that on each throne is an elder sitting. Unfortunately, he does leave us a little in the dark by not specifically giving the nature of the 24 elders (discussed more below) Personally, I feel the text definitely favors these figures as 24 elders, most likely representative of the church.

**Sitting** ([kathemai](#)) is a key word in Revelation (32x/32v) and in these first two "prologue" chapters, Revelation 4-5 (Rev 4:2, 3, 4, 9, 10, 5:1, 7, 13). **Sitting** is in the present tense indicating continually seated, except of course then they cast their crowns at He Who is on the throne (Rev 4:10 for [proskuneo](#) or worship indicates prostrating oneself).

**Alan Johnson** writes that "There are at least **thirteen different views of their identity**, ranging from the twenty-four ruling stars (or judges) in the heavens to the simple figure of wholeness and fullness (cf. *I Saw a New Earth*, p. 83)!" (See [Revelation](#))

**Mark Hitchcock** notes that "In Revelation there are 12 references to a group called the "twenty-four elders," or "elders" (Rev 4:4,10; Rev 5:5,6,8,11,14; Rev 7:11, 13; Rev 11:16; Rev 14:3; Rev 19:4). There are three main views concerning their identities: (1) angelic beings; (2) all of the redeemed, including Israel (the 12 tribes) and the church (12 apostles); and (3) the church (ED: HE FAVORS THIS LATTER GROUP). (See his full discussion in [101 Answers to Questions About the Book of Revelation](#))

It is clear from reviewing a number of commentaries by conservative writers that there is a major disagreement on the identity of these 24 elders, many favoring that they are 24 redeemed men (representative of all the redeemed) while others favor they are 24 celestial beings akin to angels. I think this is one of those sections of the Revelation where we will have to agree to disagree. And regardless of which side you come down on, it does not significantly affect the way one interprets the overall message of the Revelation. Below are some who favor each group.

**John MacArthur** - It is unlikely, then, that the twenty-four elders are angels, or that they represent Israel, the Tribulation saints, or a combination of Israel and the church. That leaves one most acceptable possibility, that they represent the raptured, glorified, coronated church, which sings the song of redemption (Rev 5:8–10). They have their crowns and live in the place prepared for them, where they have gone to be with Jesus (cf. John 14:1–4). (See [Revelation Commentary](#)) In his study notes MacArthur points out that the 24 are representatives of the church.

**Henry Morris** - These 24 elders are redeemed men (Revelation 4:10), representing all the redeemed saints



before God's throne. They are actually individual real men, not just symbols, for they speak individually to John (Revelation 5:5; 7:13). (BORROW [The Defender's Study Bible](#))

**Believer's Study Bible** - The identity of the 24 elders can be established from a careful observation of the descriptive data. They are clothed in white, indicating purity; seated on thrones, suggesting responsibility and status; crowned with victors' wreaths ([stephanos](#)); and they themselves bear witness that they have been redeemed by the blood of Christ and, therefore, constitute a kingdom of priests (Rev 5:10, "us" NU, M them, "kings" NU a kingdom). Such a description can only represent redeemed humanity. Twenty-four is twice twelve. In the picturesque vision of the New Jerusalem in Rev 21, the city is said to have twelve pearl gates, inscribed with the names of the twelve sons of Jacob, and twelve foundations, inscribed with the names of the twelve apostles. A similar truth is presented in the number of elders. Both O.T. and N.T. saints are gathered as the family of God in heaven and are here represented in the 24 elders. ([The Believer's Study Bible](#))

**Warren Wiersbe** - They are, as it were, the king's court. It is unlikely that they are angels, because angels are not numbered (Heb. 12:22), crowned, or enthroned. Besides, in Revelation 7:11, the elders are distinguished from the angels (see also Rev. 5:8-11). The crowns they wear are the "victor's crowns" (the Greek word [stephanos](#); see Rev. 2:10); and we have no evidence that angels receive rewards. (BORROW [Be Victorious](#))

In another book **Wiersbe** enumerates why he feels the 24 are not angels - "These elders cannot be angels, for several reasons: (1) we never see angels on thrones; (2) we never see angels with crowns; (3) in Rev 7:11, the elders are distinguished from the angels; (4) in Rev 5:8-10, the elders sing a hymn of praise, and we have no record that angels ever sing; (5) in their song, they claim to have been redeemed, something an angel could not say; (6) in Rev 5:12, the angels say, while in Rev 5:9 the elders sing; (7) the angels are never numbered, Heb. 12:22; (8) the name "elder" signifies maturity, while angels are timeless beings. Twenty-four priests served in the OT temple (1Chr 24:3-5, 18, and Luke 1:5-9). It seems likely that these twenty-four elders signify the saints raptured and reigning with Christ in glory. (BORROW [Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the New Testament](#))

**Charles Swindoll** - Though John never clearly identifies the heavenly elders, I understand them to be a select number of the redeemed who have been chosen to worship and serve before the throne of God. Are they a permanent number or a rotating office? Are there ever more or less than twenty-four? Are they Old Testament saints or New Testament saints—or both? These questions are left unanswered, so we'd be wise not to speculate. ([Insights on Revelation](#)) (See [his summary below](#))

**R L Thomas** disagrees with MacArthur and Swindoll writing "that the twenty-four elders are a special class or college of angels, beings of high authority that belong to the court of God in heaven." (See [Revelation Exegetical Commentary](#)) (His commentary has the longest discussion if you are interested in reading his logic).

**Grant Osborne** agrees with **R L Thomas** "that these are heavenly beings who reign with God and are part of the retinue surrounding his throne. Moreover, since "all the angels" also stand before the throne (Rev 7:11), these must be celestial beings with a ruling function. (See page 176 for his lengthy explanation of why these are celestial beings and not human beings) [Revelation Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament](#)

**Grant Osborne** makes an interesting observation regarding **around the throne** - In one sense, chapters 4 and 5 are built around a series of concentric circles of heavenly officials surrounding God's throne. The rainbow is "around" the throne, then the four living creatures, then the 24 elders surround the throne in Rev 4:4, and finally the entire heavenly host encircle the throne in Rev 5:11. This is the imperial court of God, rendering all human royalty paltry in comparison. The point for John's original audience is that God and not Caesar is worthy of worship. ([Revelation Verse by Verse](#))

**Clothed in white garments** - This is the third of four facts regarding this scene. Only believers are described as wearing **white garments** in the Revelation (read Rev 3:4, 5, 18, 6:11, 7:9, 7:13-14, 19:14 - some might suggest the last one does not say believers but compare similar description in Rev 17:14). Outside of the Revelation angels are occasionally described in white (Mk 16:5, Jn 20:12, Acts 1:10), but only believers wear them as symbols of imputed righteousness of Christ.

## **24 GOLDEN CROWNS ON THE ELDERS**

**And golden crowns ([stephanos](#)) on their heads** - There is no description of an angel in the Bible wearing a crown on their head unless these 24 elders are interpreted as angelic beings. Redeemed men and women are promised **crowns** in several passages in the NT (see discussion of [stephanos](#); see chart of believer's crowns). This type of **crown** ([stephanos](#)) is given as a reward to saints

in the Bible. There are no Scriptures describing rewards given to angels.

**MacArthur** adds that "**Stephanos** (crown) is the victor's crown, worn by those who successfully endured the trial, those who competed and won the victory." (See Rev 2:10, 1Co 9:25, 2Ti 4:8, Jas 1:12, 1Pe 5:4)." (See [Revelation Commentary](#))

I was surprised to read **Charles Swindoll's** comment on the elders stating "we can't be sure whether these elders are **symbols**, actual beings, representatives of a larger group, or a future order of beings not yet dwelling in heaven (**ED**: In fairness he does not mention "symbols" in his [list below](#))." While I do not know absolutely who the elders are, they are definitely not symbols but individuals! Here is **William Newell's** refutation of the idea that the **elders** are **symbolic** - ""Elders" are mentioned twelve times in The Revelation. That they are individuals and not a symbolic company, is evident, it seems to me, for several reasons: 1. The Revelation is an unsealed book. When symbols or signs are shown they are plainly said to be such: e.g., Rev 12:1–3. 2. If the twenty-four elders are representative or symbolic, then the four living creatures must be also; but we all believe that four means four when applied to the living creatures; just as to the cherubim in Ezekiel 1. 3. The language used concerning the elders compels our belief that they are individuals. "One of the elders saith unto me" (Rev 5:5). "One of the elders answered" (Rev 7:13). "The twenty-four elders sit before God upon their thrones" (Rev 11:16). 4. Any one who takes the first mention of these elders (Rev 4:4) as anything other than twenty-four individuals, must have thorough proof for it, and that scriptural and not conjectural. "**I saw four and twenty elders sitting" is a very definite statement indeed! We have found no Bible proof they are other than twenty-four individuals.**"

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**Charles Swindoll - FIVE VIEWS OF THE TWENTY-FOUR ELDERS** - Different theological traditions have proposed different views concerning the identification of the twenty-four elders. Here are five representative examples.

1. Twelve Old Testament patriarchs and twelve New Testament apostles representing the entire redeemed people of God (Rev. 21:12–14).
2. The great saints of the Old Testament, to be distinguished from New Testament saints (5:9–14; 15:2–4).
3. Representatives of the New Testament church wearing victory crowns and fulfilling the promise of Revelation 3:21.
4. God's angelic "council of holy ones" leading worship before the throne of God, as implied in Psalm 89:7.
5. A special human priesthood chosen from among the redeemed to worship before the throne in rotation, as in the Old Testament priestly orders (1 Chr. 24:4–5; 1 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 1:6). ([Insights on Revelation](#))

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**Elders** ([4245](#)) **presbuteros** the comparative form of **présbus** = an old man or an ambassador) referred to men who were older or more senior with no negative connotations but rather a sense of venerability. **Presbuteros** is transliterated into English as "presbyter" (a leader in one of the Jewish communities--especially a member of the **Sanhedrin**--or of the early Christian churches) and from which the word "priest" (from Late Latin presbyter) was derived.

**Presbuteros in the Revelation** - Rev. 4:4; Rev. 4:10; Rev. 5:5; Rev. 5:6; Rev. 5:8; Rev. 5:11; Rev. 5:14; Rev. 7:11; Rev. 7:13; Rev. 11:16; Rev. 14:3; Rev. 19:4

**Sitting** ([2521](#)) (**kathemai** from **kata** = down + **hemai** = to sit) literally means to sit down, to be in a seated position or to take a seated position. Figuratively **kathemai** means to a resident in a place and so to dwell, live, reside or settle there. **Friberg** - (1) literally; (a) sit (down), be sitting (Mt 27.61); (b) as sitting in a certain place as a mark of high distinction sit = be seated ( Mt 26.64); (c) imperatively sit down (Mt 22.44); (2) figuratively, as remaining in a certain place or condition = stay, reside, dwell (Mt 4.16; LU 21.35)

**W E Vine** notes that **kathemai** "is used (**a**) of the natural posture, e.g., Matt. 9:9, most frequently in the Apocalypse, some 32 times; frequently in the Gospels and Acts; elsewhere only in 1 Cor. 14:30; Jas. 2:3 (twice); and of Christ's position of authority on the throne of God, Col. 3:1, AV, "sitteth" (RV, "is, seated"); Heb. 1:13 (cp. Matt. 22:44; Matt. 26:64 and parallel passages in Mark and Luke, and Acts 2:34); often as antecedent or successive to, or accompanying, another act (in no case a superfluous expression), e.g., Matt. 15:29; Matt. 27:36; Mark 2:14; Mark 4:1; (**b**) metaphorically in Matt. 4:16 (twice); Luke 1:79; of inhabiting a place (translated "dwell"), Luke 21:35; Rev. 14:6, RV marg., "sit" (in the best texts: some have *katoikeō*, "to dwell"). ([Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old Testament and New Testament Words](#))

**Gilbrant** - The primary meaning of **kathēmai** in classical Greek, the Septuagint, and the New Testament is "to sit," though the imperative always means "to sit down." In the Septuagint it usually translates the Hebrew *yāshav* or the Aramaic *yēthiv*. In the King James Version it is translated "sit" 82 times, "sit by" twice, "sit down" 3 times, "be set down" once, and "dwell" once. However, the meaning "sit down" is clear in the references to Psalm 110:1 (LXX 109:1) found in Matthew 22:44; Mark 12:36; Luke 20:42; Acts 2:34; Hebrews 1:13; as well as in James 2:3 and probably in Matthew 13:1,2; 15:29; 26:58; 28:2; Mark 4:1; and John 6:3. The **figurative meaning** "live" or "dwell" (Luke 21:35) is also found in Revelation 14:6 in most ancient manuscripts and has the same

meaning in Luke 1:79 (quoting from Psalm 107:10). In the Septuagint the word is sometimes used of sitting at meals, but by New Testament times the Greek custom of reclining at a table had become common. The custom that the teacher should sit was retained, however, and Jesus usually sat as He taught whether He was in the temple, in a synagogue, or in the open. Though the heathen usually stood during their temple worship, Jews sat in their synagogues and the early Christians sat during the worship in their assemblies. "To sit" or "to sit down" can also mean "**to be enthroned.**" The references to Psalm 110:1 have this meaning. God is usually pictured as seated on His throne in heaven or seated (manifesting His glory) upon the mercy seat of the ark of the covenant between the cherubim (1 Samuel 4:4; 2 Samuel 6:2; 2 Kings 19:15; Psalm 80:1; Isaiah 6:1). Christ seated at the right hand of the Father and coming enthroned on the clouds of heaven can also signify His deity (Matthew 26:64). Sitting can also be used to signify an attitude of dejection or grief. The women at the tomb were sitting (Matthew 27:61), and Luke 10:13 speaks of sitting in sackcloth and ashes. ([Complete Biblical Library](#))

**Kathemai - 91x/89v - dwell(1), live(1), sat(15), sat down(4), seated(5), sit(16), sit down(1), sits(12), sitting(33), sitting down(3).** Matt. 4:16; Matt. 9:9; Matt. 11:16; Matt. 13:1; Matt. 13:2; Matt. 15:29; Matt. 19:28; Matt. 20:30; Matt. 22:44; Matt. 23:22; Matt. 24:3; Matt. 26:58; Matt. 26:64; Matt. 26:69; Matt. 27:19; Matt. 27:36; Matt. 27:61; Matt. 28:2; Mk. 2:6; Mk. 2:14; Mk. 3:32; Mk. 3:34; Mk. 4:1; Mk. 5:15; Mk. 10:46; Mk. 12:36; Mk. 13:3; Mk. 14:62; Mk. 16:5; Lk. 1:79; Lk. 5:17; Lk. 5:27; Lk. 7:32; Lk. 8:35; Lk. 10:13; Lk. 18:35; Lk. 20:42; Lk. 21:35; Lk. 22:30; Lk. 22:55; Lk. 22:56; Lk. 22:69; Jn. 2:14; Jn. 6:3; Jn. 9:8; Jn. 12:15; Acts 2:2; Acts 2:34; Acts 3:10; Acts 8:28; Acts 14:8; Acts 23:3; 1 Co. 14:30; Col. 3:1; Heb. 1:13; Jas. 2:3;

**Kathemai IS A KEY WORD IN THE REVELATION- 32x/32v -** Rev. 4:2; Rev. 4:3; Rev. 4:4; Rev. 4:9; Rev. 4:10; Rev. 5:1; Rev. 5:7; Rev. 5:13; Rev. 6:2; Rev. 6:4; Rev. 6:5; Rev. 6:8; Rev. 6:16; Rev. 7:10; Rev. 7:15; Rev. 9:17; Rev. 11:16; Rev. 14:6; Rev. 14:14; Rev. 14:15; Rev. 14:16; Rev. 17:1; Rev. 17:3; Rev. 17:9; Rev. 17:15; Rev. 18:7; Rev. 19:4; Rev. 19:11; Rev. 19:18; Rev. 19:19; Rev. 19:21; Rev. 20:11; Rev. 21:5

Kathemai in the Septuagint - Gen. 18:1; Gen. 19:1; Gen. 19:30; Gen. 21:16; Gen. 23:10; Gen. 38:11; Exod. 11:5; Exod. 12:29; Exod. 16:29; Exod. 17:12; Exod. 18:14; Lev. 8:35; Lev. 12:4; Lev. 13:46; Lev. 15:6; Num. 32:6; Deut. 6:7; Deut. 11:19; Jos. 5:8; Jdg. 3:20; Jdg. 4:5; Jdg. 5:10; Jdg. 6:10; Jdg. 13:9; Jdg. 16:9; Jdg. 17:10; Jdg. 18:7; Jdg. 18:8; Ruth 3:18; Ruth 4:4; 1 Sam. 1:9; 1 Sam. 1:22; 1 Sam. 1:23; 1 Sam. 4:4; 1 Sam. 4:13; 1 Sam. 5:7; 1 Sam. 12:2; 1 Sam. 14:2; 1 Sam. 20:5; 1 Sam. 20:19; 1 Sam. 22:5; 1 Sam. 22:6; 1 Sam. 22:23; 1 Sam. 23:14; 1 Sam. 23:18; 1 Sam. 24:3; 1 Sam. 27:5; 1 Sam. 27:11; 1 Sam. 30:24; 2 Sam. 6:2; 2 Sam. 7:2; 2 Sam. 16:3; 2 Sam. 16:18; 2 Sam. 18:24; 2 Sam. 19:8; 2 Sam. 23:10; 1 Ki. 1:17; 1 Ki. 1:20; 1 Ki. 1:24; 1 Ki. 1:27; 1 Ki. 1:30; 1 Ki. 1:35; 1 Ki. 1:48; 1 Ki. 2:36; 1 Ki. 7:8; 1 Ki. 8:25; 1 Ki. 11:43; 1 Ki. 13:14; 1 Ki. 13:20; 1 Ki. 17:19; 1 Ki. 22:10; 1 Ki. 22:19; 2 Ki. 1:9; 2 Ki. 2:2; 2 Ki. 2:4; 2 Ki. 2:6; 2 Ki. 2:18; 2 Ki. 4:38; 2 Ki. 6:32; 2 Ki. 7:3; 2 Ki. 9:5; 2 Ki. 10:30; 2 Ki. 14:10; 2 Ki. 15:12; 2 Ki. 18:27; 2 Ki. 19:15; 1 Chr. 13:6; 1 Chr. 20:1; 2 Chr. 6:16; 2 Chr. 18:9; 2 Chr. 18:18; 2 Chr. 25:19; 2 Chr. 26:21; 2 Chr. 32:10; Ezr. 9:3; Ezr. 9:4; Neh. 2:6; Neh. 11:6; Est. 5:1; Job 2:8; Job 2:9; Job 38:40; Ps. 47:8; Ps. 50:20; Ps. 69:12; Ps. 80:1; Ps. 99:1; Ps. 107:10; Ps. 110:1; Ps. 127:2; Prov. 3:24; Prov. 6:10; Eccl. 10:6; Cant. 5:12; Cant. 8:13; Isa. 6:1; Isa. 19:1; Isa. 36:12; Isa. 37:16; Isa. 42:7; Isa. 47:8; Jer. 8:14; Jer. 13:13; Jer. 15:17; Jer. 17:25; Jer. 21:9; Jer. 22:2; Jer. 22:4; Jer. 22:30; Jer. 25:29; Jer. 25:30; Jer. 36:12; Jer. 36:22; Jer. 36:30; Jer. 40:10; Jer. 44:1; Jer. 44:13; Jer. 44:15; Jer. 44:26; Jer. 48:18; Jer. 48:19; Jer. 48:43; Jer. 49:30; Jer. 49:31; Jer. 51:30; Lam. 3:28; Ezek. 8:1; Ezek. 8:14; Ezek. 23:41; Ezek. 33:31; Ezek. 44:3; Dan. 7:9; Dan. 9:7; Hos. 3:3; Hos. 3:4; Jon. 4:5; Zech. 3:8; Zech. 5:7; Zech. 8:4; Zech. 9:12

**Crowns (4735) stephanos** from **stepho** = to encircle, twine or wreath) was a wreath made of foliage or designed to resemble foliage and worn by one of high status or held in high regard. The **stephanos** was literally an adornment worn around the head as a crown of victory in the Greek athletic games, this reward being given to the runner who crossed the goal first, to the disc thrower with the longest toss, etc. Apart from recognition of athletes and winners of various kinds of competitions, in the Greco-Roman world, the awarding of a crown or wreath signified appreciation for exceptional contributions to the state or groups within it. The recipients were usually public officials or civic-minded persons serving at their own expense.

**W E Vine** says **stephanos** is "primarily, "that which surrounds, as a wall or crowd" (from stepho, "to encircle"), denotes (a) "the victor's crown," the symbol of triumph in the games or some such contest; hence, by metonymy, a reward or prize; (b) "a token of public honor" for distinguished service, military prowess, etc., or of nuptial joy, or festal gladness, especially at the parousia of kings. It was woven as a garland of oak, ivy, parsley, myrtle, or olive, or in imitation of these in gold. In some passages the reference to the games is clear, 1 Corinthians 9:25 ; 2 Timothy 4:8 ("crown of righteousness"); it may be so in 1 Peter 5:4 , where the fadeless character of "the crown of glory" is set in contrast to the garlands of earth. In other passages it stands as an emblem of life, joy, reward and glory, Philippians 4:1 ; 1 Thessalonians 2:19 ; James 1:12 ("crown of life"); Revelation 2:10 (ditto); 3:11; 4:4,10: of triumph, Revelation 6:2 ; 9:7 ; 12:1 ; 14:14 ([Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old Testament and New Testament Words](#))

**Stephanos - 18x/18v -** Mt. 27:29; Mk. 15:17; Jn. 19:2; Jn. 19:5; 1Co 9:25; Phil. 4:1; 1Th 2:19; 2Ti 4:8; Jas. 1:12; 1Pe 5:4; Rev. 2:10; Rev. 3:11; Rev. 4:4; Rev. 4:10; Rev. 6:2; Rev. 9:7; Rev. 12:1; Rev. 14:14

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**QUESTION - [Who are the twenty-four \(24\) elders in Revelation?](#)**

**ANSWER -** Revelation 4:4 declares, "Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders. They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads." The book of Revelation nowhere specifically identifies who the twenty-four elders are. However, they are most likely representative of the Church. It is unlikely that they are angelic beings, as some suggest. The fact that they sit on thrones indicates that they reign with Christ. The Church is repeatedly said to rule and reign with Christ (Revelation 2:26-27, 5:10, 20:4; Matthew 19:28; Luke 22:30).

In addition, the Greek word translated here as “elders” is **never used to refer to angels**, only to men, particularly to men of a certain age who are mature and able to rule the Church. The word **elder** would be inappropriate to refer to angels, who do not age.

Their mode of dress would also indicate these are men. While angels do appear in white, white garments are more commonly found on believers, symbolizing Christ’s righteousness imputed to us at salvation (Revelation 3:5,18; 19:8).

The **golden crowns** worn by the elders also indicate these are men, not angels. Crowns are never promised to angels, nor are angels ever seen wearing them. The word translated “crown” here refers to the victor’s crown, worn by those who have successfully competed and won the victory, as Christ promised (Revelation 2:10; 2 Timothy 4:8; James 1:12).

Another reason to view the twenty-four elders as the Church is the bowls they hold in Revelation 5. There, we read,

. . . the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of God’s people. And they sang a new song, saying: “You are worthy to take the scroll

and to open its seals,  
because you were slain,  
and with your blood you purchased for God  
persons from every tribe and language and people and nation.  
You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God,  
and they will reign on the earth” (Revelation 5:8–10).

Note that the elders hold symbols of “the prayers of God’s people” (verse 8). This further substantiates the idea that the twenty-four elders are representative of the Church.

Some people believe these twenty-four elders represent Israel, but at the time of this vision, Israel as a whole nation had not yet been redeemed. The elders cannot represent tribulation saints for the same reason—not all had yet been converted at the time of John’s vision. The most likely option is that the elders represent the raptured Church which sings songs of redemption (Revelation 5:8-10). They wear the crowns of victory and have gone to the place prepared for them by their Redeemer (John 14:1-4). [GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

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## Who Are the 24 Elders of Revelation? Dr. Thomas Ice

And around the throne were twenty-four thrones; and upon the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white garments, and golden crowns on their heads (Revelation 4:4).

An important interpretative issue in the Book of Revelation revolves around the identity of the 24 elders. Who the 24 elders represent can be very important in regards to the pre-trib rapture. The 24 elders are mentioned five times in the Book of Revelation as follows: 4:4, 10; 5:8; 11:16; and 19:4. If they represent the church, then it reflects what one would expect if the rapture has occurred before the tribulation has begun. If it represents someone else, then it would not necessarily argue against pretribulationism, especially if they were angels. I think it is clearly the church that these 24 elders represent and therefore it supports the fact that Christ’s Bride has been taken to heaven before the start of the tribulation.

### Angels or Humans?

Some think that the 24 elders are angels. If they are angels then they cannot represent the church or redeemed humans of any distinction. Robert Thomas argues that the 24 elders are angels and says the following:

This particular group of angels primarily assists in the execution of the divine rule of the universe. Very probably they are part of the assembly of heavenly beings that are regularly pictured as present with God in heaven (cf. 1 Kings 22:19; Ps. 89:7; Isa. 24:23). [1]

John MacArthur makes a strong case that the 24 elders represent a completed body of redeemed humanity, which at this point in future history could only be the church.

First, the reference to the twenty-four thrones on which the twenty-four elders sat indicates that they reign with Christ. Nowhere in Scripture do angels sit on thrones, nor are they pictured ruling or reigning. Their role is to serve as “ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation” (Heb. 1:14; cf. Matt. 18:10). The church, on the other hand, is repeatedly promised a co-regency with Christ (2:26–27; 3:21; 5:10; 20:4; Matt. 19:28; Luke 22:30; 1 Cor. 6:2–3; 2 Tim. 2:12).

Presbuteroi (elders) is never used in Scripture to refer to angels, but always to men. It is used to speak of older men in general, and the rulers of both Israel and the church. There is no indisputable use of presbuteroi outside of Revelation to refer to angels. (Some

believe that "elders" in Isaiah 24:23 refers to angels, but it could as well refer to humans.) Further, "elder" would be an inappropriate term to describe angels, who do not age.

While angels do appear in white (e.g., John 20:12; Acts 1:10), white garments more commonly are the dress of believers. That is particularly true in the immediate context of Revelation. Christ promised the believers at Sardis that they would "be clothed in white garments" (3:5). He advised the apostate Laodiceans to "buy from Me ... white garments so that you may clothe yourself" (3:18). At the marriage supper of the Lamb, His bride will "clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean" (19:8). White garments symbolize Christ's righteousness imputed to believers at salvation.

That the elders wore golden crowns on their heads provides further evidence that they were humans. Crowns are never promised in Scripture to angels, nor are angels ever seen wearing them. Stephanos (crown) is the victor's crown, worn by those who successfully endured the trial, those who competed and won the victory. Christ promised such a crown to the loyal believers at Smyrna: "Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life" (2:10). "Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things," wrote Paul. "They then do it to receive a perishable wreath [stephanos], but we an imperishable" (1 Cor. 9:25). He wrote of that imperishable crown again in 2 Timothy 4:8: "In the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing." James wrote of "the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him" (James 1:12), and Peter of "the unfading crown of glory" (1 Pet. 5:4). Holy angels do not personally struggle with and triumph over sin; thus, the overcomer's crown, the crown of those who successfully ran the race and finished victorious, would not be appropriate for them. [2]

It is clear to me that the 24 elders must be a reference to humans, not angels. The angels are represented in verse six by the four living creatures. The throne-room scene of chapter four depicts God on His throne and representatives of His domain, which is all of creation, are depicted there. The church is present also represented by the 24 elders.

## **The 24 Elders**

### **Why the Number Twenty-Four?**

Some believe that the number 24 represents all the redeemed throughout history and not just the church. It is argued that in Revelation 21:12–14 the New Jerusalem in the Eternal State is made up of 12 gates with the names of the 12 tribes of Israel written on them (21:12). In verse 14, the wall around the city is made up of 12 foundation stones with the names of the 12 apostles of the Lamb written on them. Thus, 12 plus 12 equals 24 and that would mean that the 24 elders must be composed of all the redeemed, both Israel and the church.

There are a number of problems with this view. First, Revelation 21 does not use the number 24. Instead, to come up with 24 one must add the two numbers together and that requires an assumption not stated in the text. Why did Revelation 21 not use the number 24? Instead, there are two different items to which the two sets of 12 refer. The 12 gates signify the sons of Israel while the church is represented by 12 foundation stones. To mix the gates and foundation stones would be a case of mixing apples and oranges, so to speak. The 24 elders are seen throughout Revelation as a single group, whoever they represent. Revelation 21 does not use the number 24 and is not a reference to the 24 elders.

The number 24 is used in the Old Testament in a similar way that we see its use in Revelation. "There were twenty-four officers of the sanctuary representing the twenty-four courses of the Levitical priests (1 Chron. 24:4–5, 7–18), as well as twenty-four divisions of singers in the temple (1 Chron. 25)." [3] We see in both instances in Chronicles 24 was God's choice to represent the Levitical priests and the Levitical singers. Thus, 24 appears to be a representative number in Revelation 4 as the elders denote the church in heaven before God's war council in preparation for the judgment of the world during the tribulation.

Only in one instance does an individual from the 24 elders act as an individual (Rev. 5:5). In this instance it is to speak as the interpreting person to tell John to stop bawling because no one was found to open the scroll. The elder says, "Stop weeping; behold, the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome so as to open the book and its seven seals." Why is one of the 24 elders called upon to explain things to John? One of the 24 elders is called upon, instead of an angel that normally explains things in Revelation, because they are the only ones within God's throne-room that has personally experienced salvation. Since John's question relates to salvation, it was appropriate for a redeemed individual to note that the Lamb of God—Jesus—was the one qualified to open the scroll. That scroll is the title deed to planet earth and if no one was able to open it then the redemption of earth and mankind could not have been carried out. That is why John was weeping, because he knew that his destiny and that of all of humanity depended upon finding one qualified to open the scroll.

## **Conclusion**

Since the 24 elders of Revelation represent the church in heaven, this means that the church—the body of Christ and His Bride—is complete, since she has received her rewards (i.e., the crowns) and is in a position of co-rulership with Christ (Rev. 3:21). This

depiction supports a pre-trib rapture because from a chronological perspective of Revelation 4 the events of the tribulation have yet to begin. How do we know? We know because Revelation 5 presents the plan for tribulation judgment as contained in the scroll that only the Lamb is worthy to open. Revelation 6 portrays the Lamb's opening of each seal as the initiating cause of those judgments on earth. This would mean that since all 19 seal, trumpet and bowl judgments are contained in the scroll then none of these events of the tribulation could have transpired in Revelation 4. Therefore, if the church is in heaven before the tribulation then pretribulationism is supported by the notion that the 24 elders represent the church.

The reason the 24 elders cannot represent simply redeemed mankind as a whole, which would include Israel, is because the redemption of those people is not yet complete by Revelation 4. The 24 elders cannot include tribulation saints, since their group of redeemed individuals is not complete until the second coming. The same would be true of Israel. It would appear that tribulation saints are grouped with other Gentile believers down through history from Adam until the church and then the tribulation saints. Thus, they are not yet complete. The church alone will be the only complete redeemed people group by the time Revelation 4 occurs in history. This is why the 24 elders in heaven at this time support the church's blessed hope of the pretribulation rapture. Maranatha!

### Endnotes

[1] Robert L. Thomas, Revelation 1-7: An Exegetical Commentary (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1992), p. 348

[2] (Emphasis original) John MacArthur, Revelation 1-11 (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), Rev. 4:4.

[3] MacArthur, Revelation 1-11, Rev. 4:4.

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### C H Spurgeon - Morning and Evening - Revelation 4:4

These representatives of the saints in heaven are said to be around the throne. In the passage in Canticles, where Solomon sings of the King sitting at his table, some render it "a round table." From this, some expositors, I think, without straining the text, have said, "There is an equality among the saints." That idea is conveyed by the equal nearness of the four and twenty elders. The condition of glorified spirits in heaven is that of nearness to Christ, clear vision of his glory, constant access to his court, and familiar fellowship with his person: nor is there any difference in this respect between one saint and another, but all the people of God, apostles, martyrs, ministers, or private and obscure Christians, shall all be seated near the throne, where they shall for ever gaze upon their exalted Lord, and be satisfied with his love. They shall all be near to Christ, all ravished with his love, all eating and drinking at the same table with him, all equally beloved as his favourites and friends even if not all equally rewarded as servants.

Let believers on earth imitate the saints in heaven in their nearness to Christ. Let us on earth be as the elders are in heaven, sitting around the throne. May Christ be the object of our thoughts, the centre of our lives. How can we endure to live at such a distance from our Beloved? Lord Jesus, draw us nearer to thyself. Say unto us, "Abide in me, and I in you"; and permit us to sing, "His left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me."

O lift me higher, nearer thee,  
And as I rise more pure and meet,  
O let my soul's humility  
Make me lie lower at thy feet;  
Less trusting self, the more I prove  
The blessed comfort of thy love.

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### Revelation 4:5 Out from the throne come flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder. And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God;

BGT Revelation 4:5 Κα κ το θρ νου κ πορε ονται στραπα κα φωνα κα βροντα , κα πτ λαμπ δεσ πυρ ς και μεναι ν πιον το θρ νου, ε σιν τ πτ πνε ματα το θεο ,

KJV Revelation 4:5 And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.

NET Revelation 4:5 From the throne came out flashes of lightning and roaring and crashes of thunder. Seven flaming torches, which are the seven spirits of God, were burning in front of the throne

CSB Revelation 4:5 Flashes of lightning and rumblings of thunder came from the throne. Seven fiery torches were burning before the throne, which are the seven spirits of God.



ESV Revelation 4:5 From the throne came flashes of lightning, and rumblings and peals of thunder, and before the throne were burning seven torches of fire, which are the seven spirits of God,

NIV Revelation 4:5 From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder. Before the throne, seven lamps were blazing. These are the seven spirits of God.

NLT Revelation 4:5 From the throne came flashes of lightning and the rumble of thunder. And in front of the throne were seven torches with burning flames. This is the sevenfold Spirit of God.

NRS Revelation 4:5 Coming from the throne are flashes of lightning, and rumblings and peals of thunder, and in front of the throne burn seven flaming torches, which are the seven spirits of God;

NJB Revelation 4:5 Flashes of lightning were coming from the throne, and the sound of peals of thunder, and in front of the throne there were seven flaming lamps burning, the seven Spirits of God.

NAB Revelation 4:5 From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings, and peals of thunder. Seven flaming torches burned in front of the throne, which are the seven spirits of God.

YLT Revelation 4:5 and out of the throne proceed do lightnings, and thunders, and voices; and seven lamps of fire are burning before the throne, which are the Seven Spirits of God,

MIT Revelation 4:5 From the throne lightning proceeded and peals of thunder reverberated. Seven torches of fire were burning in the vicinity of the throne; they are the seven spirits of God.

- **Out from the throne:** Rev 8:5 11:19 16:17,18 Ex 19:16 20:18 Ps 18:13,14 68:35 Joe 3:16 Heb 12:18-29
- **seven:** Ge 15:7 Ex 37:23 2Ch 4:20 Eze 1:13 Zec 4:2,11-14
- **the seven:** Rev 1:4 3:1 5:6 Mt 3:11 Ac 2:3 1Co 12:4-11
- [Revelation 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Exodus 19:16+ So it came about on the third day, when it was morning, that there were **thunder and lightning flashes** and a thick cloud upon the mountain and a very loud trumpet sound, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled.

Hebrews 12:18-19 For you have not come to a mountain that can be touched and **to a blazing fire**, and to darkness and gloom and whirlwind, 19 and to the blast of a trumpet and the sound of words which sound was such that those who heard begged that no further word be spoken to them

## LIGHTNING AND THUNDER AND THE SEVEN FOLD SPIRIT

[Danny Akin](#) notes "We have seen the one on the throne. We have seen the ones around the throne. Now we see what comes forth from the throne and who is before the throne.

**Out from the throne** ([thronos](#)) **come flashes of lightning** ([astrape](#)) **and sounds** ([phone](#)) **and peals of thunder** ([bronte](#)) - **Out from the throne** surely speaks of these cosmic phenomena as coming from the immediate presence of God the Father, the Source of awesome power (cf Ex 19:16+). Both **lightning** and **thunder** are in the plural indicating what John saw and heard was not one and done, but a dramatic display of light and sound! As on earth, the sight of lightning ([see note below](#)) precedes the sound of thunder. These sights and sounds certainly speak of God's awesome power. I live on the ocean and a lightning and thunder storm over the ocean is far more awesome and frightening to me than the same events on land. And so on earth these celestial events usually signify a storm is coming. **Lightning** occurs 4 times in Revelation and speak of a "divine storm" for the 3 subsequent uses are associated with judgment (Rev 8:5, Rev 11:19, Rev 16:18)

**Warren Wiersbe** notes that Rev 4:5 "describes not a throne of grace (cf Heb 4:16+), but a throne of judgment. Thunder and lightning are warnings that the storm is coming! God thundered at Sinai when He gave the Law (Ex. 19:16), and He will thunder again to judge those who have broken His Law (see Ps. 29 and Ps. 77:18). God warned Egypt in this way (Ex. 9:23-28), and He will also warn this wicked world. See Ps. 9:7. (BORROW [Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the New Testament](#))

**Robertson** on **flashes**, etc - The imagery is kin to that in Exodus 19:16+; Exodus 24:9-10+; Ezekiel 1:22, 27+.

[Danny Akin](#) on **lightning** and **thunder** - these things also meant then what they mean now: a storm; and in Revelation, a storm of God's judgment. In Revelation 8:5 they follow the breaking of the 7th seal; in Rev 11:19 the blowing of the 7th trumpet and in Rev

16:18 the pouring out of the 7th bowl. In 10:4, 7 thunders are about to come forth, but in mercy God seals them up. In awesome strength God will judge this rebellious and sinful world, and each time He does His glorious power and strength will be revealed.

**NET Note on sounds** - Or "sounds," "voices." It is not entirely clear what this refers to. BDAG 1071 s.v. *fwnh*, 1 states, "In Rev we have *astrapai kai. phonai kai. brontai*, (cp. Ex 19:16) Rev 4:5; 8:5; 11:19; 16:18 (are certain other sounds in nature thought of here in addition to thunder, as e.g. the roar of the storm?...)."

**Wikipedia on Lightning** - **Lightning** is a [natural phenomenon](#) formed by [electrostatic discharges](#) through the [atmosphere](#) between two [electrically charged](#) regions, either both in the atmosphere or with one in the atmosphere and on the [ground](#), temporarily neutralizing these in a near-instantaneous release of an average of one [gigajoule](#) of [energy](#).<sup>[1][2][3]</sup> This discharge may produce a wide range of [electromagnetic radiation](#), from heat created by the rapid movement of [electrons](#), to brilliant flashes of [visible light](#) in the form of [black-body radiation](#). Lightning causes [thunder](#), a sound from the [shock wave](#) which develops as gases in the vicinity of the discharge experience a sudden increase in pressure. Lightning occurs commonly during [thunderstorms](#) as well as other types of energetic [weather](#) systems.

**Wikipedia on Thunder** - **Thunder** is the [sound](#) caused by [lightning](#).<sup>[1][2][3]</sup> Depending upon the distance from and nature of the lightning, it can range from a long, low rumble to a sudden, loud crack. The sudden increase in [temperature](#) and hence [pressure](#) caused by the lightning produces rapid [expansion of the air](#) in the path of a [lightning bolt](#).<sup>[4]</sup> In turn, this expansion of air creates a [sonic shock wave](#), often referred to as a "thunderclap" or "peal of thunder". The scientific study of thunder is known as *brontology* and the irrational fear ([phobia](#)) of thunder is called *brontophobia*.

**Swete** comments that "The thunderstorm is in Hebrew poetry a familiar symbol of the Divine power: cf., e.g., 1Sa 2:10; Ps 18:9-10; Job 37:4-5." ([The Apocalypse of St John](#))

**R L Thomas** - [flashes of] lightning and voices and [peals of] thunder") are important in Revelation in tying the manifestations of God's displeasure in the remainder of the book to His throne. They are found in conjunction with the seventh seal (Rev. 8:5), the seventh trumpet (Rev. 11:19), and the seventh bowl of wrath (Rev. 16:18) (Mounce). In each instance, they are in the setting of this heavenly temple where the throne stands (Mounce). In the OT, such phenomena are common manifestations of the glory of God (e.g., Ex. 9:23, 28; 1 Sam. 7:10; 12:17-18) and a display of His omnipotence (cf. Ps. 29:3), particularly as exercised in judgment against a sinful world (cf. Ezek. 1:4, 13, 24).

**Ryken** adds that "**Lightning** represents one of our great primordial fears. Its grandeur and awe reduce us to frightened children, acutely aware of our powerlessness and insignificance. To observe the activity of **lightning**, especially in antiquity (in the absence of our current naturalistic explanations), was to witness the direct involvement and response of the Creator to creation—a creator in control of nature that seems at the same time paradoxically out of control. **Lightning** symbolizes at once both the untamable power and unapproachable presence of God....Scripture uses **lightning** as proof of God's terrifying presence. It frightens believer and infidel alike." **Ryken** says "The image of **thunder** in the Bible is based on a paradox: it is a force of nature that consistently images forth something beyond nature, namely, the presence, power and judgment of deity, evoking primarily awe and dread.

## SEVEN FOLD ASPECT OF THE PERFECT SPIRIT

**And there were seven (hepta) lamps (lampas - torches) of fire burning (kaio) before (enopios) the throne (thronos), which are the seven (hepta) Spirits (pneuma) of God (theos) - NET** = "Seven flaming torches" See "[Seven](#)" below. Note John describes seven lamps, not something *like* seven lamps. This would support that he saw actual 7 lamps, and given the fact that the Holy Spirit is not ordinarily visible, these seven lamps in some way represent His presence (cf similar symbolism of "tongues as of fire" in Acts 2:3). We have seen seven Spirits in Revelation 1:4 and while some parallel this description with Isaiah 11:2 close inspection of this latter verse does not reveal 7 aspects of the Spirit as is so commonly taught (unless you count the phrase "of the LORD" as the first aspect). Clearly there is only one Holy Spirit, not seven (1Co 12:13; Eph 4:4). If we keep it simple, the most obvious meaning is that given the fact that seven is the number of completeness, John is identifying the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

**Warren Wiersbe on seven lamps of fire burning** - These are symbols of the Holy Spirit (Rev 1:4), who is the Spirit of burning (Isa. 4:4). Christ has the fullness of the Spirit, for seven is the number of fullness (Rev 3:1). During this age of grace, the Spirit is pictured as a dove of peace (John 1:29-34+); but after the church is taken away, the Spirit will minister a judgment of fire. (BORROW [Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the New Testament](#))

**Danny Akin** - The perfect light bearing Spirit Who convicts us of our sin is the same Spirit Who is forever blazing before the throne in heaven. He is **perfect** in His person, **perfect** in his position and **perfect** in His performance. Of this **perfect** Holy Spirit Charles

Spurgeon wrote

*Not far away is He, to be by prayer brought nigh,  
But here in present majesty, as in His courts on high.*

**NET Note** has a surprising note (mentioned just to give you a sense of the wide range of variation in interpretations in the Revelation) - Some interpret the seven spirits of God as angelic beings, while others see them as a reference to the sevenfold ministry of the Holy Spirit. (ED: THIS IS CLEARLY A REFERENCE TO THE HOLY SPIRIT!)

**William Newell** on **seven Spirits of God** - that is, complete active discernment of all matters and affairs in judgment,—the Holy Spirit: but in governmental administration, not as the “Comforter” of saints, and as Revealer of Christ to sinners, as now.

**Pulpit Commentary** on **seven Spirits of God** -The Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father and the Son, with His sevenfold gifts, is indicated by these symbols of illumination. For He illuminates and makes brighter those in whom He dwells, and renders clearer to them those things outside themselves, and enables them more fully to appreciate the manifold wisdom of God.

**Sam Gordon** said, “It is fascinating to compare the seven lamps which we read about here with the seven-branched lampstand or menorah which was located in the holy place of the tabernacle and temple. Its main function was to cast light on the Ark of the Covenant and the mercy seat in the Holy of holies. On a similar vein, the chief ministry of the Holy Spirit is to throw light on Jesus Christ in our lives so that we can see Him and understand Him better.”

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**Lamps** (2985) (lampas from lampo = to shine) is not the usual very small household type lamp but more like a torch as in Jn 18:3 when they came to arrest our Lord "with lanterns and **torches** (lampas) and weapons." **Friberg** adds "(1) as a resinous burning brand of pine-covered or pitch-covered dry twigs torch (Jn 18.3); (2) as an oil-fed light lamp (Mt 25.1)"

**Gilbrant** - In classical Greek **lampas** is a “torch” or “lamp.” This was a resinous pine-wood torch or a ceramic lamp used with olive oil and a wick. It was lit during a festal procession or when a leader made an official visit to a city. In the Septuagint **lampas** is used to translate the Hebrew *lappîdh*, a “torch” like Gideon (Judges 7:16,20) and Samson (Judges 15:5,6) used in their exploits. The word also describes something that was brilliant (Ezekiel 1:13), e.g., a “flaming torch” symbolizing judgment (Zechariah 12:6) and the presence of God (Genesis 15:17). In the New Testament the word is used five times in the Parable of the Ten Virgins (Matthew 25:1-8). Alfred Edersheim says, “The lamps consisted of a round receptacle for pitch or oil for the wick. This was placed in a shallow cup or deep saucer...which was fastened by a pointed end into a long wooden pole, on which it was borne aloft” (Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, 2:455). The torch was used for general illumination as seen in the arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane (John 18:3). The reference in Acts 20:8 is to the typical small ceramic lamp containing olive oil for fuel and a wick for the flame which provided light in the upper room at Troas. In Revelation the word is used to describe a heavenly manifestation before the throne of God (4:5) and the great star that fell from heaven during the third trumpet judgment (8:10). ([Complete Biblical Library](#))

**Lampas** - 9x/9v Matt. 25:1; Matt. 25:3; Matt. 25:4; Matt. 25:7; Matt. 25:8; Jn. 18:3; Acts 20:8; Rev. 4:5; Rev. 8:10

**Lightning** (796) (astrape from **astrapto** = to flash forth) as a natural phenomenon lightning (Mt 24.27); as light radiating from a lamp bright beam, ray (Lk 11.36)

**Gilbrant** - In Luke 11:36 this word refers to the illumination or beam of light given off by a lamp. *Astrapē* is often used in comparisons. In Matthew 28:3 “brightness” is stressed, and in 24:27 the inescapable visibility of Christ’s coming as well as its suddenness are pictured. The idea of greatest speed is found in Luke 10:18 referring to Satan’s fall from heaven. In Revelation 4:5, 8:5, 11:19, and Rev 16:18 lightning and thunder are part of awe-inspiring manifestations of God’s presence symbolizing His power and glory. The expressions link John’s visions to the Old Testament theophanies (e.g., Exodus 19:16). ([Complete Biblical Library](#))

**Zodhiates** - (I) The physical phenomenon of lightning (Rev. 4:5; 8:5; 11:19; 16:18; Sept.: Ex. 19:16; Jer. 10:13). (II) By implication, brightness, splendor (Matt. 28:3; Luke 11:36; Sept.: Deut. 32:41; Dan. 10:6). God is generally represented as sending lightning, and the lack of the power to do so is one proof of the weakness of man (Job 38:35). Lightning is associated with theophanies or appearances of God, as at Sinai (Ex. 19:16; 20:18), in Ezekiel’s vision (Ezek. 1:13, 14), and in various stages of the Revelation (Rev. 4:5; 8:5; 11:19; 16:18). It is regarded as an instrument of God’s judgment (Ps. 144:6). In Zech. 9:14, God’s “arrows” of destruction are compared to lightning, which seems also to be spoken of as His “sword” in Deut. 32:41, and as His “spear” in Hab. 3:11. Lightning is a figure for brightness of countenance (Dan. 10:6; Matt. 28:3) and of

raiment (Luke 24:4), for the suddenness of the Second Coming (Matt. 24:27; Luke 17:24), and for the swift completeness of Satan's overthrow (Luke 10:18). In some passages, fire evidently refers to lightning, as when fire and hail are mentioned together (Ex. 9:23; Ps. 105:32; 148:8), and when fire from heaven is spoken of either as an agency of destruction (2 Kings 1:10, 12, 14; Job 1:16) or as a token of God's acceptance of a sacrifice (1 Kings 18:38; 1 Chr. 21:26). (III) As the symbol of speed (Matt. 24:27; Luke 10:18; 17:24; Sept.: Nah. 2:4). (BORROW [Complete Word Study Dictionary:NT page 280](#))

**Astrape - 9x/9v - lashes of lightning(4), lightning(4), rays(1).** Matt. 24:27; Matt. 28:3; Lk. 10:18; Lk. 11:36; Lk. 17:24; Rev. 4:5; Rev. 8:5; Rev. 11:19; Rev. 16:18.

**Astrape in the Septuagint** - Ex 19:16; Deut. 32:41; 2Sa 22:15; Job 20:25; Ps. 18:14; Ps. 77:18; Ps. 97:4; Ps. 135:7; Ps. 144:6; Jer. 10:13; Jer. 51:16; Ezek. 1:13; Dan. 10:6; Nah. 2:4; Hab. 3:11; Zech. 9:14;

[Dictionary of Biblical Imagery page 1736](#) - **LIGHTNING** A few natural elements such as wind and fire, perhaps because their essence is discernible yet intangible, transparent and difficult to control, occur repeatedly in literature as metaphors for the divine or the spiritual. They often do surrogate duty for the image of the invisible God. Fire represents God's presence (Gen 15:17; Ex 13:21; 14:24; Mt 3:11; Acts 2:3), his deliberate action (1 Kings 18:24, 38) or his judgment (Gen 19:24; Job 36:31–33; Sir 43:13; Mt 13:20; 18:9; Lk 9:54). The association of fire and God is so close that Scripture takes pains to distinguish them (1 Kings 19:12). After all, God is light (1 Jn 1:5; Rev 21:23) and the Father of lights (Jas 1:16). What manifestation of light could be more awesome and frightening than that most potent, uncontrollable and blinding fire-lightning? Lightning is fire on a supernatural scale with a supernatural purpose.

**Lightning as God's Power and Mystery.** Lightning represents one of our great primordial fears. Its grandeur and awe reduce us to frightened children, acutely aware of our powerlessness and insignificance. To observe the activity of lightning, especially in antiquity (in the absence of our current naturalistic explanations), was to witness the direct involvement and response of the Creator to creation—a creator in control of nature that seems at the same time paradoxically out of control. Lightning symbolizes at once both the untamable power and unapproachable presence of God. Biblical authors return again and again to the theme of God's control over nature as the most obvious and easily understood measure of his power (Ps 65:8; 89:9–10; 107:25–29; Acts 2:2). In the NT the obedience of nature serves as tacit testimony to Christ's deity (Mt 21:20; Mk 4:41; Col 1:17). In several biblical accounts lightning is the divine tool of choice because it is swift, precise, unambiguous and has the added advantage of putting a rebellious humanity in a respectful frame of mind (Job 36:29–33). For Job there was no hope of knowing how God “causes the lightning of his cloud to shine” (Job 37:15 RSV).

Scripture uses lightning as proof of God's terrifying presence. It frightens believer and infidel alike. Mount Sinai flashes and smolders as evidence of God's occupancy (Ex 19:16–20:18). As proof that God attends his chosen people in battle, lightning routs his enemies (Ps 77:18; 97:4, cf. 144:6; 2 Sam 22:13–15, cf. Ps 18:14).

**Lightning as Divine Weapon.** Just as the Canaanite Baal and Akkadian Adad were depicted holding a lightning bolt as their emblematic weapon, the poets of the OT employed verbal images of the conquering Lord armed with lightning. Lightning appears as the spear of God (Hab 3:11) but more commonly as the arrow of God (Ps 7:13; 18:14; 77:18; 144:6), just as the storm flood is the work of his bow (Gen 9:13). Even human weapons, with their flashing blades conjuring up images of lightning, intimidated the foe (Ezek 21:10, 15, 28). Lightning is again the divine weapon in the contest on Mount Carmel. Baal and his prophets were ceded every advantage (1 Kings 18:23–25). As the Canaanite storm god who wields the thunderbolt, Baal should have been in his element answering his worshipers by lightning. His failure made clear to the spectators that the God of Elijah overpowered Baal at his own game (see DIVINE WARRIOR).

**Lightning as God's Finger.** Lightning covers God's hand, suggesting that it is his fingers (Job 36:32). The finger as opposed to the whole hand suggest a deftness and precision. It is an accurate weapon in his hands (v. 32). Elsewhere God's fingers are his supernatural agents (Ex 8:19; 31:18; Deut 9:10) or even the work of God's spirit (Lk 11:20). The law in the OT was delivered through God's fingers, but in the NT the law is delivered by angels (Acts 7:53; Gal 3:19; Deut 33:2 LXX). God's fingers are responsible for his creative acts (Ps 8:3). Lightning is also his creation (Jer 10:13–16; 51:16–19). Man's fingers, in contrast, create mere idols (Is 8:2).

**Lightning as God's Agents and Angels.** God's tools and weapons are often difficult to distinguish from his agents. His means easily merge with his messengers, personified and pictured as attendants, spiritual

beings doing his bidding. So in the ancient mind lightning was evidence of divine activity mediated by angels. The cosmological imagery of the psalms equates the wind and fire with angels (Ps 104:4; Heb 1:7; further elaborated in the meteorological sections of 1 Enoch). The LXX understood the "furies of God's wrath" and the heat of his nostrils manifested in storms to be angels (Job 40:11).

A flaming appearance marks celestial armies, whether fiery chariots or angels on horseback, with lightning (2 Kings 6:17; 4 Macc 4:10). Angels are clothed in lightning (Mt 28:3), underscoring both the residual brightness from the presence of God (Mt 18:10; Dan 10:6, cf. Moses, Ex 34:29) and their otherworldly connection. The lightning aura surrounding the creatures in Ezekiel's vision indicates both their power over the created order and their access to God's throne (Ezek 1:13). Lightning not only marks the activity of God's loyal messengers but also traces the downward trajectory of the fallen angel (Lk 10:18).

**Lightning as Swift and Omnipresent.** God dispatches lightning "to the corners of the earth" (Job 37:3RSV). There is nowhere to hide from it. Lightning, which appears in the east at the same instant it appears in the west, suggests the omnipresence of God and serves as proof of the worldwide appearance of the returning Christ (Mt 24:27; Lk 17:24).

See also ARROW, ARROW OF GOD; DIVINE WARRIOR; FIRE; STORM; THUNDER; WEAPONS, HUMAN AND DIVINE.

**Peals of thunder** (1027)(bronte) describes the loud, reverberating sound that follows a flash of lightning. On a number of occasions a mighty voice was taken to be thunder (John 12:29; Revelation 6:1; 10:3,4; 19:6). linked with lightning in the Book of Revelation (Rev 4:5; 8:5; 11:19; 16:18). James and John were surnamed Boanerges by the Lord, meaning "the sons of thunder" (Mark 3:17), probably indicative of their fiery dispositions (Luke 9:54). Liddell-Scott describe the state of one struck with thunder, astonishment. In the Septuagint **bronte** denotes God's terrifying revelation (Ps. 104:7; Isa. 29:6). In a Phrygian inscription "bronton theos" is a standing title of the "sky god."

**Bronte - 12x/11v - peals of thunder(8), Thunder(1), thunder(2), thundered\*(1).**Mk. 3:17; Jn. 12:29; Rev. 4:5; Rev. 6:1; Rev. 8:5; Rev. 10:3; Rev. 10:4; Rev. 11:19; Rev. 14:2; Rev. 16:18; Rev. 19:6

Revelation 6:1 Then I saw when the Lamb broke one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures saying as with a voice of thunder, "Come."

Revelation 8:5 Then the angel took the censer and filled it with the fire of the altar, and threw it to the earth; and there followed **peals of thunder** and sounds and flashes of lightning and an earthquake.

Revelation 10:3 and he cried out with a loud voice, as when a lion roars; and when he had cried out, the seven **peals of thunder** uttered their voices.

Revelation 10:4 When the seven **peals of thunder** had spoken, I was about to write; and I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Seal up the things which the seven **peals of thunder** have spoken and do not write them."

Revelation 11:19 And the temple of God which is in heaven was opened; and the ark of His covenant appeared in His temple, and there were flashes of lightning and sounds and **peals of thunder** and an earthquake and a great hailstorm.

Revelation 14:2 And I heard a voice from heaven, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud **thunder**, and the voice which I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harps.

Revelation 16:18 And there were flashes of lightning and sounds and **peals of thunder**; and there was a great earthquake, such as there had not been since man came to be upon the earth, so great an earthquake was it, and so mighty.

Revelation 19:6 Then I heard something like the voice of a great multitude and like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, saying, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns.

**Bronte in the Septuagint** - Esther 1:1; Job 26:14; Ps. 77:18; Ps. 104:7; Isa. 29:6; Amos 4:13;

**Dictionary of Biblical Imagery page 2920- THUNDER** Thunder is a vivid biblical image, appearing two dozen times. The meaning of the image is linked to thunder's physical properties as a force of terrifying power beyond the human, accompanied by lightning and other aspects of rainstorms.

The primal imagination links thunder with the presence, power and wrath of deity. In the Bible, accordingly, most references make thunder a manifestation of God. Within this, four motifs appear.



Sometimes thunder is simply one of the forces of nature controlled by God. Thus God “made a decree for the rain, and a way for the lightning of the thunder” (Job 28:26 RSV; see also Job 38:25). The preeminent example is Psalm 29, the song of the thunderstorm, where the metaphoric voice of God thunders as the storm unfolds. Sometimes such divine control over thunder expands into the storm God motif, in which the focus is not so much a literal storm as a symbolic use of natural forces to picture the power of God. Thus the psalmist claims that “the crash of thy thunder was in the whirlwind; thy lightnings lighted up the world; the earth trembled and shook” (Ps 77:18RSV).

A second cluster of images make thunder a symbol for the transcendent power of God. On the day of God’s speaking from Mount Sinai, “there were thunders and lightnings” (Ex 19:16 RSV). Job asks, “The thunder of his power who can understand?” (Job 26:14RSV). The voice from the whirlwind challenges Job with the question “Can you thunder with a voice like [God’s]?” (Job 40:9 RSV). In the little creation story of Psalm 104, it is God’s thunder that makes the personified waters take to flight (Ps 104:7). The equation of thunder with supernatural power also appears in the book of Revelation (Rev 6:1; 10:4; 14:2).

As an extension of the power of God, thunder is one of God’s weapons against his enemies (see [DIVINE WARRIOR](#)). Thunder and hail are prominent in the seventh plague (Ex 9:13–35), for example. In the case of the plagues, Moses’ ability to influence the presence of thunder by his prayers marks him as a holy person and his God as a powerful God. “I will spread out my hands in prayer to the Lord. The thunder will stop” (Ex 9:29). Hannah’s song of praise claims that “the adversaries of the LORD shall be broken to pieces; against them he will thunder in heaven” (1 Sam 2:10 RSV). When God “thundered with a mighty voice ... against the Philistines,” they were thrown into confusion and defeated by the Israelites (1 Sam 7:10 RSV). Isaiah predicts that Israel’s foes “will be visited by the LORD of hosts with thunder and with earthquake and great noise, with whirlwind and tempest, and the flame of a devouring fire” (Is 29:6 RSV).

Yet another category of references extends the power of God in the specific direction of divine wrath and judgment against evildoers. For example, in the middle of Samuel’s farewell discourse as Israel’s prophet, God sends thunder and rain in the harvest season so the people can see that their wickedness is great in asking for a king (1 Sam 12:17–18). In one of the visions of Revelation, flashes of lightning and peals of thunder, accompanied by an earthquake, usher in the final judgment (Rev 16:18).

The image of thunder in the Bible is based on a paradox: it is a force of nature that consistently images forth something beyond nature, namely, the presence, power and judgment of deity, evoking primarily awe and dread.

See also [DIVINE WARRIOR](#); LIGHTNING; NATURE; STORM; VOICE; WEATHER.

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**SEVEN** from [Dictionary of Biblical Imagery](#) (online)- Of the numbers that carry symbolic meaning in biblical usage, seven is the most important. It is used to signify completeness or totality. Underlying all such use of the number seven lies the seven-day week, which, according to Genesis 1:1–2:3 and Exodus 20:11, belongs to the God-given structure of creation. God completed his own work of creation in seven days (Gen 2:2), and seven days constitute a complete cycle of time.

The symbolism of completeness occurs in a wide variety of uses of the number seven. For example, sprinkling the blood of a sacrifice seven times (Lev 16:14, 19) indicates complete purification. The seven “eyes of the LORD, which range through the whole earth” (Zech 4:10 NRSV), indicate the completeness of God’s sight of everything in his creation. When the prophet John sees the Lamb, an image of Christ, “having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth” (Rev 5:6 NRSV; cf. 1:4; 3:1; 4:5), the seven spirits are the fullness of the divine Spirit (see [HOLY SPIRIT](#)), going out into the world as the Spirit of Christ with complete power (“seven horns”) and complete knowledge and insight (“seven eyes”). The seven heads of the dragon (Rev 12:3) and the beast (Rev 13:1; 17:3, 9–11) represent the totality of Satanic opposition to God and the complete sequence of rulers opposed to God’s rule. In Hebrews 1:5–14 a series of seven OT quotations provide a complete demonstration of the point at issue.

Since seven is the number of completeness, a specific series of seven can function as representative of the whole. The seven “signs” in the Gospel of John, the first two of which are numbered (Jn 2:11; 4:54) to encourage the reader to continue to count up to seven (five other events are called “signs”: Jn 6:2; 6:14, 26; 9:16; 12:18; 2:18–19), are representative of the “many other signs” Jesus did (Jn 20:30). The seven parables in Matthew 13, the seven churches in Revelation 2–3, the seven characteristics of wisdom in James 3:17 and the seven disciples in John 21:2 are in each case representative of all.

The model provided by the week of six days and a sabbath means that in a series of seven the seventh is sometimes different from the other six and climactic. The seventh of the seven signs in the Gospel of John is the death and resurrection of Jesus (Jn 2:18–19;



cf. Jn 20:30), a climax toward which the other six signs, which are miracles of Jesus, point. In the series of seven seal-openings (Rev 6:1–8:1) and the series of seven trumpet-blasts (Rev 8:2–11:19), the seventh in each case is a climax set apart from the preceding six. Enoch's special importance is indicated by calling him "seventh" in descent from Adam (Jude 14).

Sometimes the number seventy functions like seven. Seventy years are the full human life span (Ps 90:10; Is 23:15). The table of the nations in Genesis 10 lists seventy nations, representing all the nations of the world, and the seventy disciples sent out by Jesus (Lk 10:1) may be symbolically connected with this idea.

If seven represents completeness, seventy-seven represents unrestricted and unsurpassable fullness. Thus, compared with Cain's sevenfold vengeance, Lamech's is seventy-sevenfold (Gen 4:24), whereas, conversely, Jesus commands forgiveness not just seven times but seventy-seven times (Mt 18:21–22). In Luke's genealogy of Jesus he is the seventy-seventh generation of human history (Lk 3:23–38).

Sets of seven are by no means always on the literary surface but need to be detected. The book of Revelation contains seven beatitudes scattered through it (Rev 1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7, 14). The Gospel of John contains two sets of "I am" sayings of Jesus. One set is of absolute "I am" sayings, in which the simple "I am" is a declaration of divine identity (Jn 4:26; 6:20; 8:24, 28, 58; 13:19; 18:5, 6, 8). The other is of "I am" sayings with predicates (e.g., "I am the bread of life," Jn 6:35; 8:12; 10:7, 9; 10:11, 14; 11:25; 14:6; 15:1, 5). Together they indicate the fullness of Jesus' divine identity and of his saving significance.

See also SABBATH; SEVENTY.

**Revelation 4:6 and before the throne there was something like a sea of glass, like crystal; and in the center and around the throne, four living creatures full of eyes in front and behind.**

BGT Revelation 4:6 καὶ ἐν πρὸς τὸ θρόνον ἑστῆσαν ὡς κρυστάλλου θάλασσα. Καὶ ἐν μέσῳ τοῦ θρόνου καὶ κύκλῳ τοῦ θρόνου τέσσαρα ζῴοντα φθάλμινα ἔχοντα ἔμπροσθεν καὶ ὀπίσθεν.

KJV Revelation 4:6 And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind.

NET Revelation 4:6 and in front of the throne was something like a sea of glass, like crystal. In the middle of the throne and around the throne were four living creatures full of eyes in front and in back.

CSB Revelation 4:6 Something like a sea of glass, similar to crystal, was also before the throne. Four living creatures covered with eyes in front and in back were in the middle and around the throne.

ESV Revelation 4:6 and before the throne there was as it were a sea of glass, like crystal. And around the throne, on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind:

NIV Revelation 4:6 Also before the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal. In the center, around the throne, were four living creatures, and they were covered with eyes, in front and in back.

NLT Revelation 4:6 In front of the throne was a shiny sea of glass, sparkling like crystal. In the center and around the throne were four living beings, each covered with eyes, front and back.

NRS Revelation 4:6 and in front of the throne there is something like a sea of glass, like crystal. Around the throne, and on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind:

NJB Revelation 4:6 In front of the throne was a sea as transparent as crystal. In the middle of the throne and around it, were four living creatures all studded with eyes, in front and behind.

NAB Revelation 4:6 In front of the throne was something that resembled a sea of glass like crystal. In the center and around the throne, there were four living creatures covered with eyes in front and in back.

YLT Revelation 4:6 and before the throne is a sea of glass like to crystal, and in the midst of the throne, and round the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes before and behind;

MIT Revelation 4:6 In front of the throne was a pool as transparent as crystal. In the central arc before the throne there were four animate creatures full of circumferential eyes.

- **a sea:** Rev 15:2 Ex 38:8 1Ki 7:23
- **crystal:** Rev 21:11 Rev 22:1 Job 28:17 Eze 1:22

- **the midst:** Rev 5:6 Rev 7:17 Eze 1:4-5
- **four living creatures:** Rev 4:8-9 Rev 5:6,14 Rev 6:1 Rev 7:11 Rev 14:3 Rev 15:7 Rev 19:4 Eze 1:5-28 10:14
- **full:** Rev 4:8 Eze 1:18 10:12
- [Revelation 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Ezekiel 1:22 Now over the heads of the living beings there was **something like an expanse, like the awesome gleam of crystal**, spread out over their heads.

Revelation 15:2 And I saw **something like a sea of glass** mixed with fire, and those who had been victorious over the beast and his image and the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, holding harps of God.

Revelation 21:11 having the glory of God. Her brilliance was like a very costly stone, as a stone of **crystal-clear jasper**.

Revelation 22:1 Then he showed me a river of the water of life, **clear as crystal**, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb,

Revelation 5:6 And I saw between the throne (with the four living creatures) and the elders a Lamb standing, as if slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent out into all the earth.

Revelation 7:17 for the Lamb in the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and will guide them to springs of the water of life; and God will wipe every tear from their eyes."

Ezekiel 1:4-5 As I looked, behold, a storm wind was coming from the north, a great cloud with fire flashing forth continually and a bright light around it, and in its midst something like glowing metal in the midst of the fire. 5 Within it there were figures resembling four living beings. And this was their appearance: they had human form.

### A SEA LIKE GLASS OR CRYSTAL AND FOUR LIVING CREATURES

and before ([enopios](#)) the throne ([thronos](#)) there was something like a sea of glass, like crystal - Like a sea of glass...like crystal would indicate this is a term of comparison (since there is no sea in Heaven - Rev 21:1), and thus is not actual glass or crystal but just looks like those substances. In other words **glass** and **crystal** describe the appearance not the material. We read a similar description in Ex 24:10+ when when Moses, Aaron, and the elders of Israel "saw the God of Israel; and under His feet there appeared to be a pavement of sapphire, as clear as the sky itself." (cf Rev 15:2+).

**Glass** (hualinos from hualos - clear transparent stone, glass) is used only here and Rev 15:2 "I saw something like a sea of **glass**." Glass was very rare in New Testament times, and crystal-clear glass was virtually impossible to find.

**Crystal** (krustallos from kruos = cold) can refer to ice (Lxx - Job 6:16,38:29 Ps 148:8,147:17 also in Nu 11:7; Isa 54:12; Ezek 1:22) or crystal because of its resemblance to ice and only in Rev 4:6 and Rev 22:1 ("a river of the water of life, clear as **crystal**").

**William MacDonald** on **like a sea of glass** - The sea of glass like crystal tells us that the throne is located in a place that is undisturbed by the restless, wild tossings of this world, or by the opposition of the wicked, who are like a troubled sea. (BORROW [Believer's Bible Commentary](#))

**MacArthur** points out that "Heaven is not a shadowy world of mists and indistinct apparitions. It is a world of dazzlingly brilliant light, refracting and shining as through jewels and crystal in a manner beyond our ability to describe or imagine (cf. Rev. 21:10–11, 18)."

**A T Robertson** on **glassy** - here it is the appearance, not the material. Glass was made in Egypt 4,000 years ago. In Exodus 24:10 the elders see under the feet of God in the theophany a paved work of sapphire stone (cf. Ezekiel 1:26).

**Trapp** applies this picture writing "The word is to us a crystal glass, giving us a clear sight of God and of ourselves, 2 Corinthians 3:18; James 1:23."

and in the center and around the throne ([thronos](#)) - NET = "In the middle of the throne," really before it. **Around the throne** as in Rev 5:11 ("voice of many angels **around** the throne") and Rev 7:11 ("all the angels were standing **around** the throne").

**A T Robertson** - This seems to mean that on each of the four sides of the throne was one of the four living creatures either stationary or moving rapidly round (Ezekiel 1:12-13 - "*And each went straight forward; wherever the spirit was about to go, they would go, without turning as they went. 13 In the midst of the living beings there was something that looked like burning coals of fire,*

like torches darting back and forth among the living beings. The fire was bright, and lightning was flashing from the fire.").

## THE "EYES" HAVE IT

**Four living creatures full** ([gemo](#) in present tense) **of eyes in front and behind** - ([See note below](#) on their description and purpose) **Living creatures**, not beasts (as in the KJV) which is another word (therion). **Alford** aptly remarks that *beasts* is the most unfortunate word that could be imagined because *zoon* emphasizes the vital element and therion the bestial. **Full of eyes** signifies awareness, alertness, and suggests comprehensive knowledge. Adrian Rogers calls them "God's cheerleaders!"

**THOUGHT** - It is interesting that these **creatures full of eyes** are continually worshiping God (see Rev 4:8). One has to wonder if we presently earthbound humans could better see the heavenly majesty and holiness of God NOW (in His Word, illuminated by His Spirit), would we too not be more prone to live our lives as a continual act of worship? Just wondering! Perhaps the following song is a bit repetitive but how would our worship be different if God answered the prayer of this praise song? Sing it as a prayer to the One Who sits on the Throne - [Open the Eyes of My Heart](#). (note the song cries out "Holy, Holy, Holy" like the four living creatures!)

**Warren Wiersbe** has an interesting comment on **four** - Four is the number of the earth, so we have here God's covenant with creation. Read Gen. 9:8-13 and you will see that God has made His covenant with mankind, fowls, cattle, and the wild beasts; and each of these is represented by a face on the living creatures. God gave man dominion over creation, but this rule was lost through sin (Gen. 1:28-31; Ps. 8). However, in Christ, that dominion will be regained when the kingdom is established; see Isa. 11:6-8 and Isa 65:25. The presence of the four creatures (symbolizing creation) before God's throne teaches us that He is in control of creation, and that He will keep His promise to one day deliver creation from the bondage of sin (Rom. 8:19-24). (BORROW [Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the New Testament](#))

**Henry Morris** wrote on the **4 living creatures**, "The picture seems to be one of four mighty angelic cherubs, each of whom has four faces. The four faces represent the lion (greatest of the wild animals), the ox (greatest of the domestic animals), the eagle (greatest of the flying animals) and the man (greatest of all creatures)." (Borrow [The Revelation Record](#))

**Lehman Strauss** wrote, "Judging from what is said of them in later passages, they seem to be administrators of divine government and authority. They stand ready to render service to God in any part of the universe. They possess strength like a lion, they render service like the ox, they possess intelligence as does man, and they are swift like the eagle."

**Vincent** - The four living beings are mainly identical with the [cherubim](#) of Ezek. 1:5-10; 10:5-20; Isa. 6:2, 3; though with some differences of detail. For instance, Ezekiel's [cherubim](#) have four wings, while the six described here belong to the seraphim of Isaiah. So also the Trisagion (thrice holy) is from Isaiah. In Ezekiel's vision each living being has all four faces, whereas here, each of the four has one.

**Warren Wiersbe** on **four living creatures** - who were nearer to God than the angels and the elders. They resemble the cherubim that the Prophet Ezekiel saw (Ezek. 1:4-14; 10:20-22), but their praise (Rev. 4:8) reminds us of the seraphim of Isaiah 6. (BORROW [Be Victorious](#))

**A T Robertson** on **full of eyes** - here unlimited intelligence (Beckwith), the ceaseless vigilance of nature (Swete).

The **four living creatures** play a significant role in the Revelation (9 verses - Rev 4:8-9 Rev 5:6,14 Rev 6:1 Rev 7:11 Rev 14:3 Rev 15:7 Rev 19:4). The resemblance is of the four living creatures bears a striking resemblance with the vision of Ezekiel 1:4-28.

**NET Note** on **living creatures** - On the meaning of **zoon** BDAG states, "Of the four peculiar beings at God's throne, whose description Rev 4:6-9 reminds one of the zoa in Ezek 1:5ff, the [cherubim](#). S. also Rev 5:6, 8, 11, 14; Rev 6:1, 3, 5-7; 7:11; 14:3; 15:7; 19:4."

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**Living creatures** (2226) **zoon** from **zao** = to live, breathe - **zoe** = life) is a living creature, a live thing, the exact phrase that reverberates through the unfolding of the book of the Revelation. Jude also uses *zoon* figuratively in reference to the ungodly who have crept in unnoticed and turn the grace of God into licentiousness (Jude 1:4) **Zōon** is not limited to mean "beast" as an animal. It may be that **zōon** can refer to a life-form other than what we know, i.e., of another order as in the Book of Revelation where **zōon** occurs 20 times.

**Zoon - 23x/20v by far most concentrated in the Revelation - animals(3), creature(4), living creature(3), living creatures(13).** Heb. 13:11; 2 Pet. 2:12; Jude 1:10; Rev. 4:6; Rev. 4:7; Rev. 4:8; Rev. 4:9; Rev. 5:6; Rev. 5:8; Rev. 5:11; Rev. 5:14; Rev. 6:1; Rev. 6:3; Rev. 6:5; Rev. 6:6; Rev. 6:7; Rev. 7:11; Rev. 14:3; Rev. 15:7; Rev.

**Full** (1073)(**gemo**) means to be full (of something). To contain.

**Gilbrant** - In classical Greek usage *gemō* means “to be full.” The verb *gemizō* (1065) is derived from it. The Septuagint uses *gemō* in a variety of ways. It refers to a heavy load of material goods in a camel caravan (Genesis 37:25), a ship’s cargo of precious goods (2 Chronicles 9:21), a mouth which is full of cursing and bitterness (Psalm 10:7 [LXX 9:28]), and a wagon load of straw (Amos 2:13).

In the New Testament, as in the Septuagint, *gemō* is used both in the literal sense of something which is filled to capacity and in a metaphoric sense. The metaphoric usage of *gemō* is most common in the New Testament. For example, Jesus portrayed the scribes and Pharisees, who were so careful to maintain proper outward appearances, as being “full” of robbery and self-indulgence (Matthew 23:25; Luke 11:39), and as being “full” of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness (Matthew 23:27).

The Book of Revelation often uses *gemō* in describing events of the end times. For example, the four living creatures before the throne of God are “full” of eyes in front and behind (Revelation 4:6,8) who possess golden bowls “full” of incense, described as the prayers of the saints (Revelation 5:8). The living creatures also possess golden bowls “full” of the wrath of God (15:7) to be poured out upon the wicked. (Also see Revelation 17:3,4 and 21:9 for further uses of *gemō*).

**Gemo - 11x/11v - full** - Matt. 23:25; Matt. 23:27; Lk. 11:39; Rom. 3:14; Rev. 4:6; Rev. 4:8; Rev. 5:8; Rev. 15:7; Rev. 17:3; Rev. 17:4; Rev. 21:9

**Gemo in the Septuagint** - Gen. 37:25; 2 Chr. 9:21; Ps. 10:7; Ps. 14:3; Amos 2:13;

#### QUESTION - [Who are the four living creatures in Revelation?](#)

**ANSWER** - The **four living creatures** are found in Revelation 4:6–9; 5:6–14; 6:1–8; 14:3; 15:7; 19:4. The texts that describe these creatures do not indicate that they are figurative—they are real, actual beings. The four living creatures (literally “beings”) are a special, exalted order of angelic being or [cherubim](#). This is clear by their close proximity to the throne of God. Ezekiel 1:12–20 suggests that they are in constant motion around the throne.

Revelation 5:6–14 describes the duties or purposes of the four living creatures. They fall down and worship the Lamb, Jesus Christ, offering the same reverence to Him that they did to the Father (Revelation 4:6–9), **proof positive of the deity of Jesus Christ**. Along with the twenty-four elders, they have “harps and golden vials full of incense, which are the [prayers of the saints](#)” (Revelation 5:8). **Harps** are frequently associated with worship in the Old Testament, as well as with prophecy (2 Kings 3:15; 1 Chronicles 25:1). **Incense** represents the prayers of the saints. Therefore, taken together, **the four living creatures** and twenty-four elders hold in their hands all that prophets ever prophesied and believers ever prayed for—all about to come to pass.

**The purpose of the four living creatures also has to do with declaring the holiness of God and leading in worship and adoration of God, and they are involved in some way with God’s justice, for when He opens the first four seals and sends out the four horsemen to destroy, their powerful voices, like thunder, command “come”** (Revelation 6:1–8). **The horsemen respond to the summons of the four powerful creatures, indicating the power the creatures possess. That power is seen again in Revelation 15:7 when one of the four unleashes the last seven plagues (THE SEVEN BOWLS) of God’s wrath on mankind.**

The four living creatures are very similar, if not the same, beings as those in Ezekiel chapters 1 and Ezekiel 10 and Isaiah 6:1–3. They are four in number, full of eyes, have faces like the beings in Ezekiel 1:10, have six wings (Isaiah 6:2), and offer worship as the beings in Isaiah 6:3, saying, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord.” They may not be the exact same beings, but they definitely are comparable and probably of the same order.

In summary, these beings are an exalted order of angels whose purpose is primarily that of worship (Revelation 19:4). They are very similar to the beings in Ezekiel 1 and 10 and Isaiah 6:1-3, and they are in some ways involved in God’s divine justice. [GotQuestions.org](#)

#### QUESTION - [What is the sea of glass mentioned in Revelation 4:6 and 15:2?](#)

**ANSWER** - Twice in the book of Revelation, John mentions a “sea of glass” near the throne of God. John does not elaborate much about what this sea of glass actually is. Is it water that looks like glass? Is it smooth or rough like broken glass? Does it move like the waves of the sea, or is it stationary? As we know it, the sea is a dynamic, moving force, but “glass” gives the impression of stillness. How can a sea be made of glass? What is John talking about?

Revelation 4:6 says, "Before the throne there was as it were a sea of glass, like crystal." And Revelation 15:2 says, "I saw what appeared to be a sea of glass mingled with fire." In neither verse does John say that he saw a literal sea of glass; rather, he says, "There was *as it were* a sea of glass" and "I saw *what appeared to be* a sea of glass." The words of comparison make a big difference. It is one thing to say you were struck by lightning; it is quite another thing to say you *feel as if* you were struck by lightning.

Apparently, what John saw was impossible to describe – it was so different from anything he had seen that he was compelled to describe it using a contradictory statement. Expressing the inexpressible may demand an oxymoron. Whatever John saw, it obviously had qualities both of the sea and of glass. Perhaps it had the sea's motion and expanse and glass's transparency and purity. Add to that the words "crystal" and "mingled with fire," and chances are that John was trying to convey the vivid brilliance, vast expanse, and lucid purity of what he saw.

Daniel's vision of four beasts. Ezekiel's vision of wheels with eyes. John's vision of a sea of crystalline glass. Any time the prophets described visions of the spiritual world, they were forced to use metaphorical language, and that can be confusing. Finite human language cannot fully describe infinite things. The human mind is too limited to apprehend all the realities of the spiritual realm. But we have this confidence: the prophets and apostles wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and the words they chose are the best possible communication. Daniel, Ezekiel, and John faithfully described what they saw, and we must faithfully attempt to "decode" their descriptions. For now, we see "through a glass darkly," and, to a certain degree, the "sea of glass" and other heavenly verities will remain mysteries – until we see them for ourselves with glorified eyes and minds. [GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

**Warren Wiersbe** suggests that in the Revelation, the heavenly sanctuary follows a pattern of the earthly tabernacle and temple (cf Heb 9:23+) as shown in the following table. He adds that "There is no temple in heaven in a material sense. All of heaven is God's sanctuary for those who serve before His holy throne (Rev. 7:15). However, John indicates in Revelation 15:5-8 that there is a special "sanctuary" of God (note also Rev. 11:19). In the eternal state, there will be no temple (Rev. 21:22)." (BORROW [Be Victorious](#))

Earthly temple	Heavenly sanctuary
Holy of holies	The throne of God
Seven-branched candlestick	Seven lamps of fire before the throne
Bronze laver	Sea of glass
Cherubim over the mercy seat	Four living creatures around the throne
Priests	Elders (kings and priests)
Brazen altar	Altar (Rev. 6:9-11)
Incense altar	Incense altar (Rev. 8:3-5)
Ark of the covenant	Ark of the covenant (Rev. 11:19)

**Revelation 4:7 The first creature was like a lion, and the second creature like a calf, and the third creature had a face like that of a man, and the fourth creature was like a flying eagle.**

BGT Revelation 4:7 κα τ ζ ο ν τ π ρ τ ο ν μ ο ι ο ν λ ο ν τ ι κ α τ δ ε τ ε ρ ο ν ζ ο ν μ ο ι ο ν μ σ χ κ α τ τ ρ τ ο ν ζ ο ν χ ω ν τ π ρ σ ω π ο ν ς ν θ ρ π ο υ κ α τ τ α ρ τ ο ν ζ ο ν μ ο ι ο ν ε τ π ε τ ο μ ν .

KJV Revelation 4:7 And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle.

NET Revelation 4:7 The first living creature was like a lion, the second creature like an ox, the third creature had a face like a man's, and the fourth creature looked like an eagle flying.

CSB Revelation 4:7 The first living creature was like a lion; the second living creature was like a calf; the third living creature had a face like a man; and the fourth living creature was like a flying eagle.

ESV Revelation 4:7 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 an eagle in flight.

NIV Revelation 4:7 The first living creature was like a lion, the second was like an ox, the third had a face like a man, the fourth was like a flying eagle.

NLT Revelation 4:7 The first of these living beings was like a lion; the second was like an ox; the third had a human face; and the fourth was like an eagle in flight.

NRS Revelation 4:7 the first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with a face like a human face, and the fourth living creature like a flying eagle.

NJB Revelation 4:7 The first living creature was like a lion, the second like a bull, the third living creature had a human face, and the fourth living creature was like a flying eagle.

NAB Revelation 4:7 The first creature resembled a lion, the second was like a calf, the third had a face like that of a human being, and the fourth looked like an eagle in flight.

YLT Revelation 4:7 and the first living creature is like a lion, and the second living creature is like a calf, and the third living creature hath the face as a man, and the fourth living creature is like an eagle flying.

MIT Revelation 4:7 The first of these was like a lion, the second like a young steer, the third had a human physiognomy, and the fourth was like an eagle in flight.

- the first beast: Rev 4:6 Ge 49:9 Nu 2:2-34 23:24 24:9 Pr 28:2 Eze 1:10 10:14,21
- like a calf: Eze 1:10 1Co 9:9,10
- as: 1Co 14:20
- a flying: De 28:49 2Sa 1:23 Isa 40:31 Eze 1:8,10 10:14 Da 7:4 Ob 1:4
- [Revelation 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries



4 Living Creatures

## FOUR TERMS OF COMPARISON

**The first creature ([zoon](#)) was like a lion, and the second creature ([zoon](#)) like a calf, and the third creature ([zoon](#)) had a face like that of a man, and the fourth creature ([zoon](#)) was like a flying eagle** - Note the four terms of comparison, all similes. Who or what does each simile represent? I do not know. Guzik comments that "The significance of these four faces has been interpreted in many ways." Therefore caution is in order lest one go too far afield from God's intended meaning. If you want more discussion of these "many ways," of interpretation, see Guzik's comments on verses 6-8 in [Revelation 4](#).

Some think the foursome are [cherubim](#) which is interesting as [cherubim](#) were certainly prominent in the design of God's "dwelling place" in the Tabernacle (See Ex 25:17-22+ = cherubs at each side of the [Mercy Seat](#) on the [Ark of the Covenant](#) and Ex 26:1-31). In some way the OT tabernacle and the ark of the covenant were a model of the actual throne of God.

Exodus 25:8-9+ says "Let them construct a sanctuary for Me, that I may dwell among them. 9 "According to all that I am going to show you, as the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furniture, just so you shall construct it.

**R L Thomas** summarizes the multiple suggestions of these four living creatures - A merging of these four aspects results in the following identification of the four living beings of the Apocalypse: they are of an exalted angelic order engaged in worship, who bear a special relationship to those angelic beings described in Ezekiel and Isaiah (and whose special function in the context of the Apocalypse is the administering of divine justice in the realm of animate creation. (See [Revelation Exegetical Commentary](#))

**Vincent** - From this passage is derived the familiar symbolism of the four Evangelists; Mark seated on a lion, Luke on a steer, Matthew on a man, and John on an eagle. These are varied however. Irenæus attributes the lion to John, and the eagle to Mark. Augustine the lion to Matthew, the man to Mark.

**Vincent** - The interpretations of the symbols of the four living creatures are, of course, numerous and varied. Some of them are: the four Evangelists or Gospels; the four elements; the four cardinal virtues; the four faculties or powers of the human soul; the Lord in



the fourfold great events of redemption; the four patriarchal churches; the four great apostles, the doctors of the Church; the four principal angels, etc.

[Danny Akin](#) on the four living creatures...

God is perfect in His authority. **Lion** – king of the animal world, strength, honor. That which is noble, respected. It was the mightiest among the wild animals.

God is perfect in His activity. Calf – or ox – servant, strength, great power exercised for the benefit of others. It was the mightiest among the domesticated animals.

God is perfect in His majesty. Man is the pinnacle of creation, and only man has a “face” in this vision. He is intellectual, intelligent, rational and spiritual. He is the mightiest of all that God made. He is God’s vice – regent on earth.

God is perfect in His deity. The eagle soars in the heavens and often represented deity. It is the mightiest among the birds and the swiftest of God’s creatures.

Summary - These creatures are strong like a lion, serve like an ox, see like a man and are swift like an eagle. Each in its particular appearance gives witness to the greatness and glory of our God. No creature is as strong as He. No creature serves as does He. No creature sees as does He. No creature is as swift as is He!

**Revelation 4:8 And the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings, are full of eyes around and within; and day and night they do not cease to say, "HOLY, HOLY, HOLY IS THE LORD GOD, THE ALMIGHTY, WHO WAS AND WHO IS AND WHO IS TO COME."**

BGT Revelation 4:8 κα τ τ σσαρα ζα, ν καθ ν ατ ν χων ν πτρυγας ξ, κυκλθεν κα σωθεν γμουσιν φθαλμ ν, κα ν παυσιν οκ χουσιν μρας κα νυκτς λγοντες· γιος γιος γιος κριος θες παντοκρτωρ, ν κα νκα ρχμενος.

KJV Revelation 4:8 And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.

NET Revelation 4:8 Each one of the four living creatures had six wings and was full of eyes all around and inside. They never rest day or night, saying: "Holy Holy Holy is the Lord God, the All-Powerful, Who was and who is, and who is still to come!"

CSB Revelation 4:8 Each of the four living creatures had six wings; they were covered with eyes around and inside. Day and night they never stop, saying: Holy, holy, holy, Lord God, the Almighty, who was, who is, and who is coming.

ESV Revelation 4:8 And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!"

NIV Revelation 4:8 Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under his wings. Day and night they never stop saying: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come."

NLT Revelation 4:8 Each of these living beings had six wings, and their wings were covered all over with eyes, inside and out. Day after day and night after night they keep on saying, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God, the Almighty-- the one who always was, who is, and who is still to come."

NRS Revelation 4:8 And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and inside. Day and night without ceasing they sing, "Holy, holy, holy, the Lord God the Almighty, who was and is and is to come."

NJB Revelation 4:8 Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was studded with eyes all the way round as well as inside; and day and night they never stopped singing: Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God, the Almighty; who was, and is and is to come.'

NAB Revelation 4:8 The four living creatures, each of them with six wings, were covered with eyes inside and

out. Day and night they do not stop exclaiming: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God almighty, who was, and who is, and who is to come."

YLT Revelation 4:8 And the four living creatures, each by itself severally, had six wings, around and within are full of eyes, and rest they have not day and night, saying, 'Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was, and who is, and who is coming;'

MIT Revelation 4:8 All four animate creatures had six wings extended circumferentially, and they were full of eyes inside. They did not cease exclaiming day and night: Holy, holy, holy—is Yahveh, the almighty God, The one whose being encompasses the past, present, and future.

- **six:** Isa 6:2-13 Eze 1:6 10:21,22 2Ti 4:2
- **full:** Rev 4:6 1Ti 4:16
- **and they:** Rev 7:15 Isa 62:1,6,7 Ac 20:31 1Th 2:9 2Th 3:8,9
- **Holy:** Rev 3:7 Ex 15:11 Isa 6:3
- **Lord God Almighty:** Rev 1:8 11:17 15:3 16:7,14 19:15 21:22 Ge 17:1 Ps 91:1 Isa 13:6 Joe 1:15 2Co 6:18
- **Who:** Rev 4:4 Heb 13:8
- [Revelation 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Isaiah 6:2-3+ **Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings:** with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called out to another and said, "**Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts**, The whole earth is full of His glory."

## FOUR LIVING CREATURES CRY HOLY, HOLY, HOLY

**And the four living creatures ([zoon](#)), each one of them having six wings, are full ([gemo](#) in present tense) of eyes around and within** - The plethora of eyes (he does not say "like eyes all around") is amazing and seems to signify unceasing vigilance. They resemble the seraphim of Isaiah (Isa. 6:2) and the cherubim of Ezekiel (Ezek. 1:4–14; Ezek 10:1)

**NET Note** - Some translations render *esothēn* as "under [its] wings," but the description could also mean "filled all around on the outside and on the inside with eyes." Since the referent is not available to the interpreter, the exact force is difficult to determine.

**And day and night they do not cease to say** - Lit., "they have no rest." "Sleepless angels!" There is a saying "no rest for the weary," but that does not describe Heaven, for there we see "no rest for the worshippers," and for that we say "Praise God!"

**HOLY ([hagios](#)), HOLY ([hagios](#)), HOLY ([hagios](#)) IS THE LORD GOD, THE ALMIGHTY ([pantokrator](#))** - **Holy** in triplicate speaks of superlative attribution, and indirectly implies the Trinity. Holiness is that which makes God God. The **THE ALMIGHTY ([pantokrator](#))** is the One Who is all powerful and in context of this section of the Revelation is fully able to carry out the judgments in Revelation 6-19 (see uses in [Revelation below](#)). He is of unlimited power and might. Nothing is beyond His control.

*He that sees the beauty of holiness, or true moral good,  
sees the greatest and most important thing in the world.*

-- Jonathan Edwards

(See [Holiness-Quotes](#), [Devotionals](#), [Illustrations](#))

**William Barclay** on **HOLY** - Again and again, we have seen that the basic idea of holiness is difference. That is supremely true of God. He is different from human beings. That is precisely the reason why we are moved to adoration of God. If he were simply a glorified human person, we could not praise. As the poet had it: 'How could I praise, if such as I could understand?' The very mystery of God moves us to awed admiration in his presence and to amazed love that that greatness should stoop so low for us and for our salvation.

**Reginald Showers** - God's holiness is His quality of being distinct from His creation. When Satan began His revolt against God, he challenged God's holiness by asserting, "I will be like the Most High" (Isa. 14:14). This was Satan's way of saying, "God, You are not unique or different in contrast with Your creation. As one of Your creatures, I shall become just like You." In contrast with this bold challenge, four of God's heavenly creatures continuously assert His holiness. (BORROW [Maranatha, our Lord, come! : a definitive study of the rapture of the church](#))

**William Barclay** on **ALMIGHTY** - It praises *his omnipotence*. God is the Almighty. The people to whom Revelation was written are

under the threat of the Roman Empire, a power which no individual or nation had ever successfully withstood. Think what it must have meant to be sure that behind them stood the Almighty. The very giving of that name to God affirms the certainty of the safety of Christians—a safety which did not mean release from trouble but which made people secure in life and in death.

**Vincent on holy, holy holy** - Compare Isa. 6:3, which is the original of the formula known as the Trisagion (thrice holy), used in the ancient liturgies.

**Grant Osborne** on worship - John describes these scenes in such detail because Christians in the first century came from many backgrounds. Not all of them understood Jewish history or knew the glory of the Temple. Revelation instructs us in worship. It shows us where, why, and how to praise God. What does worship do? Worship takes our minds off our problems and focuses them on God. Worship leads us from individual meditation to corporate worship. Worship causes us to consider and appreciate God's character. Worship lifts our perspective from the earthly to the heavenly. (See [Revelation](#))

**Warren Wiersbe** on **cast their crowns** - The stage is now set: the church has been taken to heaven; the Lord is on the throne; all of heaven praises Him and awaits the outpouring of His wrath. It is interesting to note that the name of God used here is "Lord God Almighty" (Rev 4:8). History tells us that this was the official title used by [Emperor Domitian](#), who was responsible for the persecutions that sent John to Patmos. Men and women may honor themselves, but the day will come when everybody—great and small—will acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord of all. (BORROW [Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the New Testament](#))

Eternal Father, strong to save,  
Whose arm hath bound the restless wave,  
Who biddest the mighty ocean deep  
Its own appointed limits keep;  
Oh, hear us when we cry to Thee,  
For those in peril on the sea!  
([Eternal Father, Strong to Save](#))

**WHO WAS AND WHO IS AND WHO IS TO COME** - Here they extol God's attribute of [eternity](#), echoed in Rev 4:10+. Him Who lives forever and ever.. This is like Rev 1:4, 8, but with the order changed. [Akin](#) says "looks to the I AM of Ex. 3:14. The Lord of creation is the Lord of the ages." While this speaks primarily of the Father, it is true of the Son, and this book speaks directly to the One "Who is to come!"

### [SING IT OUT - HOLY HOLY HOLY](#)

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!  
Early in the morning our song shall rise to Thee;  
Holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty!  
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!

Holy, holy, holy! All the saints adore Thee,  
Casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea;  
Cherubim and seraphim falling down before Thee,  
Who was, and is, and evermore shall be.

Holy, holy, holy! though the darkness hide Thee,  
Though the eye of sinful man Thy glory may not see;  
Only Thou art holy; there is none beside Thee,  
Perfect in power, in love, and purity.

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!  
All Thy works shall praise Thy Name, in earth, and sky, and sea;  
Holy, holy, holy; merciful and mighty!  
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!

**Danny Akin** - In heaven we will cast our crowns and worship our God. It will be both an appropriate and happy assignment in light of who He is, and what He does. We will know He is worthy then. Shouldn't we know He is worthy now?

### **Related Resources:**

- [Holy, Holiness - Attribute of God](#)
- **BORROW** - A MODERN DAY CLASSIC - [The holiness of God](#) by R C Sproul ([Read some of the reviews - there are over](#)

[2000!](#)

- **WATCH** R C Sproul's powerful series [The Holiness of God](#) - Six videos ~30' each. This classic was first presented in 1970. If you have never seen this, you owe it to yourself to "binge" God's Holiness, in lieu of the latest popular Netflix flick! (Are you as convicted as I am as I write those words?) Here is my challenge - [watch the first 5 minutes of the introduction](#) I think you will want to watch more! **As an aside**, I do not (cannot) watch uncensored Netflix, Prime, etc videos but can safely watch using [Vidangel](#) which removes the sex and language. I highly recommend it)

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**Holy** ([40](#)) [hagios](#) set apart ones, separated ones, sanctified ones, holy ones) is literally a holy one and properly means different, set apart, distinct, holy.

**Almighty** ([3841](#)) ([pantokrator](#) from **pás** = all + **kratos** = strength or might, especially manifested power, the power to rule or control) is literally the ruler over all or the One Who controls all things and Who has power over everything. The One in total control! Pantokrator thus describes God's sovereign, omnipotent, irresistible power. Note that **Vine** gives the derivation of **pantokrator** as from pas = all + krateo = to hold or to have strength. **Krateo** means to hold or cling to is derived from **kratos** and gives the picture of being in the grip of Him in Whose hand are all things. God is the Almighty One, the One Who has His hand in everything and on everything! If believers are in the hands of a God like that (and they are), nothing can pluck them away. The word was used in secular literature to describe the attributes of the gods and is probably used in Revelation 1 in contrast to the Roman emperor's self-designation as **autokrator**, a designation that appears on numerous Roman milestones along the Roman roads of Asia Minor.

**Pantokrator** - 10x/10v - all translated "**Almighty**" - 2 Co. 6:18; Rev. 1:8; Rev. 4:8; Rev. 11:17; Rev. 15:3; Rev. 16:7; Rev. 16:14; Rev. 19:6; Rev. 19:15; Rev. 21:22. Pantokrator is used over 100x in the Septuagint.

Revelation 1:8 (SOME SEE THIS AS THE FATHER) "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is and who was and who is to come, **the Almighty.**"

Revelation 4:8 And the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings, are full of eyes around and within; and day and night they do not cease to say, "HOLY, HOLY, HOLY is THE LORD GOD, **THE ALMIGHTY, WHO WAS AND WHO IS AND WHO IS TO COME.**"

Revelation 11:17 saying, "We give You thanks, O Lord God, the Almighty, who are and who were, because You have taken Your great power and have begun to reign.

Revelation 15:3 And they \*sang the song of Moses, the bond-servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, "Great and marvelous are Your works, O Lord God, **the Almighty**; Righteous and true are Your ways, King of the nations!

Revelation 16:7 And I heard the altar saying, "Yes, O Lord God, **the Almighty**, true and righteous are Your judgments."

Revelation 16:14 for they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them together for the war of the great day of God, **the Almighty.**

Revelation 19:6 Then I heard something like the voice of a great multitude and like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, saying, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, **the Almighty**, reigns.

Revelation 19:15 From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, **the Almighty.**

Revelation 21:22 I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God **the Almighty** and the Lamb are its temple.

**Lawrence Richards** adds that "**Pantokrator** signifies the unmatched greatness of God, who has power over all humankind and every competing authority (Ep 1:19-21<sup>±</sup>). Occurrences of this word predominate (9 of the 10 uses) in Revelation. **There they pick up the OT theme of God's final, decisive intervention in history, when He acts to destroy this world's kingdoms and to establish His own (EDITORIAL NOTE: Thus fulfilling His covenant promises to the patriarchs and the Nation of Israel, which is *not* the church but the actual nation that will be composed of 100% believing Jews at the return of the Messiah, when as Paul states "all Israel will be saved" - Ro 11:26<sup>±</sup>). As the Almighty, God makes promises to people and commits his own power to see these promises carried out. This God is ever-present, hovering over history and free to act within it, even though his authority may be unacknowledged by those who do his will. Ultimately, he will undertake a great, final intervention. Then every competing power will be visibly crushed, and God's hidden authority will be overwhelmingly visible. When this happens, the irresistible power that makes God almighty will be known and**

acknowledged by all (cf. Php 2:9-11<sup>±</sup>; Rev 19:6<sup>±</sup>). (Borrow [Expository Dictionary of Bible Words](#)) (Bolding added)

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Baxter - O blessed rest! When we rest not day and night, saying, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty!" When we shall rest from sin, but not from worship; from suffering and sorrow, but not from joy! O blessed day, when I shall rest with God; when I shall rest in knowing, loving, rejoicing, and praising; when my perfect soul and body shall together perfectly enjoy the most perfect God; when God, who is love itself, shall perfectly love me, and rest in His love to me, and I shall rest in my love to Him; when He shall rejoice over me with joy, and joy over me with singing, and I shall rejoice in Him!

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Robert Hawker - Make a solemn pause, my soul, over these words; and when thou hast found a fixedness of thought, that every faculty may be engaged in the contemplation, ponder well this divine perfection of Jehovah, the holiness of his nature, by which an eternal distinction is drawn between him and all his creatures. None but Jehovah can be essentially holy. Angels, who have never sinned, have indeed a holiness: but it is derived from him, and not in themselves, and, in point of comparison, is but as the shadow to the substance; moreover, being in their nature mutable creatures, their holiness may be changed also: the fallen angels are proofs in point. But with Jehovah, holiness is in himself the peculiar glory of his nature, and inseparable from his very existence. Pause over this view, for it is scriptural, and truly blessed. Go on to another observation. Thrice is the ascription of holiness given, in this sublime song of the blessed in heaven, as if to point out the personality of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, the holy undivided three, "which bear record in heaven, for these three are one." (1 John 5:7.) When these glorious truths are suitably impressed upon thee, pause once more and consider with what distinguishing characters the holiness of Jehovah is set forth in the word of God. The heavenly host are said to rest not day and night in proclaiming their deep sense and adoration of Jehovah in this glorious attribute. Now here is somewhat for the mind to lean upon, in contemplating Jehovah's holiness. Jehovah is eternal also, and hath commanded the Church to know him as the faithful God. (Deut. 7:9.) But we never read that the host of worshippers thrice repeat his eternity, or his faithfulness, in their hymns of adoration and praise. Moreover, Jehovah himself seems to have pointed out this divine attribute as among the distinguishing excellencies he will be known by; for he singles it out to swear by: "I have once sworn by my holiness, that I will not lie unto David." (Psalm 89:35.) Precious thought for the poor timid believer to keep always in view! For it is as if Jehovah had said, "I have pledged my holiness, as an attribute essential to my very nature, that what I have promised to David's Lord, even, my dear Son, of the redemption of his seed, as sure as I am holy, I will most certainly perform!" Moreover, my soul, holiness is the glory of Jehovah. Hence the song of the Church: "Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods, who is like unto thee, glorious in holiness?" (Exod. 15:11.) And hence, Jehovah is said to be worshipped "in the beauties of holiness." (Psalm 110:3.) My soul! keep this also in remembrance. If the representation of an angel, or a man, were to be made, we should figure to ourselves the most beautiful countenance; and if Jehovah be represented to us, how is it done? Surely in the beauty of holiness; for God the Holy Ghost gives us "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ!" (2 Cor. 4:6.) Pause over these infinitely solemn meditations, and while thou art overawed (as, indeed, it is impossible but to be so) in the contemplation of so distinguishing a perfection of the divine nature, and, moreover, as this view of God's holiness is so directly opposed to the unholiness of a poor, fallen, sinful creature, as thou art, look up for grace from the Holy Ghost the comforter, and take relief in the sweet and consoling, consideration that to this glorious God thou art permitted, yea, commanded and encouraged, to draw near, in and through the holiness of thy Redeemer. Hail, blessed Jesus! upheld by the right arm of thy righteousness, and washed from all our sins in thy blood, all thy Church may here draw nigh by faith, and send I forth their feeble breathings in the same strain as the Church in thy presence doth above, while in their hymns, day and night, they shout aloud, "Holy! holy! holy! Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come."

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### **Holy, Holy, Holy**

They do not rest day or night, saying: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!" —  
Revelation 4:8

Today's Scripture: Revelation 4

"Time flies when you're having fun." This cliché has no basis in fact, but experience makes it seem true.

When life is pleasant, time passes all too quickly. Give me a task that I enjoy, or a person whose company I love, and time seems irrelevant.

My experience of this "reality" has given me a new understanding of the scene described in Revelation 4. In the past, when I considered the four living creatures seated around God's throne who keep repeating the same few words, I thought, What a boring existence!

I don't think that anymore. I think about the scenes they have witnessed with their many eyes (v.8). I consider the view they have

from their position around God's throne (v.6). I think of how amazed they are at God's wise and loving involvement with wayward earthlings. Then I think, What better response could there be? What else is there to say but, "Holy, holy, holy"?

Is it boring to say the same words over and over? Not when you're in the presence of the one you love. Not when you're doing exactly what you were designed to do.

Like the four creatures, we were designed to glorify God. Our lives will never be boring if we're focusing our attention on Him and fulfilling that purpose. By: Julie Ackerman Link

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty!  
Early in the morning our song shall rise to Thee;  
Holy, holy, holy! Merciful and mighty!  
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!  
—Heber

A heart in tune with God can't help but sing His praise.

([Click to go to the full devotional](#) including a related picture and a link at the bottom of the page to one of their excellent devotional booklets. Reprinted by permission from Our Daily Bread Ministries. Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

**Revelation 4:9 And when the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, to Him who lives forever and ever,**

BGT Revelation 4:9 Κα ταν ὀ σουσιβ τ ζα ὀ ξαν κα τιμ ν κα ε χαριστ αν τ καθημ ν π τ θρ ν τ ζ ντι ε ς το ς α νας τ ν α νων,

KJV Revelation 4:9 And when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever,

NET Revelation 4:9 And whenever the living creatures give glory, honor, and thanks to the one who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever,

CSB Revelation 4:9 Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor, and thanks to the One seated on the throne, the One who lives forever and ever,

ESV Revelation 4:9 And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever,

NIV Revelation 4:9 Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives for ever and ever,

NLT Revelation 4:9 Whenever the living beings give glory and honor and thanks to the one sitting on the throne (the one who lives forever and ever),

NRS Revelation 4:9 And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to the one who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever,

NJB Revelation 4:9 Every time the living creatures glorified and honoured and gave thanks to the One sitting on the throne, who lives for ever and ever,

NAB Revelation 4:9 Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to the one who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever,

YLT Revelation 4:9 and when the living creatures do give glory, and honour, and thanks, to Him who is sitting upon the throne, who is living to the ages of the ages,

MIT Revelation 4:9 When the animate creatures give glory, honor, and thanksgiving to the one seated on the throne, the one who lives forever and ever,

- **when:** Rev 5:13,14 7:11,12
- **who:** Rev 1:18 5:14 10:6 15:7 Ex 15:18 Ps 48:14 Heb 7:8,25
- [Revelation 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries



## GLORY AND HONOR AND THANKS UNTO OUR GREAT GOD ON THE THRONE

**And when** - This time sensitive word marks a perfect coordination in this worship service between the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders (Rev 4:11).

**the living creatures** ([zoon](#)) **give glory** ([doxa](#)) **and honor** ([time](#)) **and thanks** ([eucharistia](#)) **to Him who sits** ([kathemai](#) in present tense) **on the throne** ([thronos](#)), **to Him who lives forever** ([aion](#)) **and ever** ([aion](#))

*"Created life adores the Uncreated"*

-- Swete

**Warren Wiersbe** - The Book of Revelation is filled with hymns of praise (Rev. 4:8, 11; 5:9-13; 7:12-17; 11:15-18; 12:10-12; 15:3-4; 16:5-7; 18:2-8; 19:2-6). The emphasis on praise is significant when you remember that John wrote this book to encourage people who were going through suffering and persecution! The theme of this hymn is God the Creator, while in Revelation 5 the elders praise God the Redeemer. The praise in Revelation 4 is given to the Father on the throne, while in Revelation 5 it is directed to the Son (the Lamb) before the throne. The closing hymn (Rev. 5:13) is expressed to both, another proof of the deity of Jesus Christ. (BORROW [Be Victorious](#))

**Thomas Watson** described God's glory - Glory is the sparkling of the Deity...We may see God's glory blazing in the sun and twinkling in the stars (Ps 19:1)...A sight of God's glory humbles. The stars vanish when the sun appears.

### FOREVER AND EVER

Note that it comes as no surprise that the great phrase **forever and ever** is found most often in the New Testament in the book of the Revelation - While most of the uses refer to God, two notable uses refer to the forever fate of God's enemies, the great city Babylon (Rev 19:3) and the devil, the beast and the false prophet (Rev 20:10).

Rev. 1:6; Rev. 4:9; Rev. 4:10; Rev. 5:13; Rev. 7:12; Rev. 10:6; Rev. 11:15; Rev. 14:11; Rev. 15:7; Rev. 19:3;  
Rev. 20:10; Rev. 22:5

The other NT uses - Eph. 3:21; Phil. 4:20; 1 Tim. 1:17; 2 Tim. 4:18; Heb. 1:8; Heb. 13:21; 1 Pet. 4:11; 1 Pet. 5:11;

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**Glory** ([1391](#)) ([doxa](#) from **dokeo** = to think) in simple terms means to give a proper opinion or estimate of something. Glory is something that is a source of honor, fame, or admiration. It describes renown, a thing that is beautiful, impressive, or worthy of praise. It follows that the **glory** of God expresses all that He is in His Being and in His nature, character, power and acts. He is glorified when He is allowed to be seen as He really is. To be where God is will be glory. To be what God intended will be glory. To do what God purposed will be glory. **Glory (doxa)** speaks of a manifestation of God's true nature, presence, or likeness. The basic idea in the word *doxa* is that of manifestation. The glory of God is the manifestation of His Being, His character and His acts. The glory of God is what He is essentially. Glory, therefore, is the true apprehension of God or things. The glory of God must mean His unchanging essence.

**Doxa in the Revelation - 17x** - Rev. 1:6; Rev. 4:9; Rev. 4:11; Rev. 5:12; Rev. 5:13; Rev. 7:12; Rev. 11:13;  
Rev. 14:7; Rev. 15:8; Rev. 16:9; Rev. 18:1; Rev. 19:1; Rev. 19:7; Rev. 21:11; Rev. 21:23; Rev. 21:24; Rev.  
21:26

**Honor** ([5092](#)) [time](#) basically is the worth ascribed to a person or the value ascribed to a thing. Nuances include (1) The amount at which something is valued, the price, value Mt 27:6, 9; Ac 5:2f; 7:16; 19:19. times - for a price 1 Cor 6:20; 7:23. (2) manifestation of esteem, honor, reverence, respect Jn 4:44; Ac 28:10; Ro 2:7,10; 12:10; 13:7; 1 Ti 6:1; 2 Ti 2:20f; 1 Pe 3:7; Rev 4:9; 5:13; 21:26. A right that is specially conferred, a privilege 1Pe 2:7. Respectability 1 Th 4:4. Place of honor, office Heb 5:4. The honor conferred through compensation = Honorarium, compensation may be the sense in 1 Ti 5:17, though honor and respect are also possible.— The expression *ouk en time tini* Col 2:23 is probably they are of no value in. As **John Piper** asks "How can we not be thankful when we owe everything to God? (A Godward Life) **TDNT** adds that "The Greek world holds thanksgiving in high esteem. With the ordinary use we find a public use (gratitude to rulers) and a religious use (thanksgiving to the gods for blessings)."

Time in the Revelation - Rev. 4:9; Rev. 4:11; Rev. 5:12; Rev. 5:13; Rev. 7:12; Rev. 21:26

**Thanksgiving** ([2169](#)) [eucharistia](#) from **eú** = well, + **charizomai** = to grant, give freely; English = Eucharist as related to Lord's Supper) is the expression of thanks or gratitude for favor and mercy shown. Thankfulness from one conscious of benefit received. **Thanksgiving** expresses what ought never to be absent from any of our devotions. We should always be ready to

express our grateful acknowledgement of past mercies as distinguished from the earnest seeking of future mercies. It is notable that one the chief traits of unregenerate men is the absence of gratitude to God. Paul uses the related verb in Romans 1, explaining that "even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God, or **give thanks** (eucharisteo); but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. (Ro 1:21<sup>±</sup>)

**Eucharistia - 15x/15v - giving of thanks(3), gratefully\*(1), gratitude(2), thankfulness(1), thanks(2), thanksgiving(4), thanksgivings(2).** Acts 24:3; 1 Co. 14:16; 2 Co. 4:15; 2 Co. 9:11; 2 Co. 9:12; Eph. 5:4; Phil. 4:6; Col. 2:7; Col. 4:2; 1 Thess. 3:9; 1 Tim. 2:1; 1 Tim. 4:3; 1 Tim. 4:4; Rev. 4:9; Rev. 7:12 = "saying, "Amen, blessing and glory and wisdom and **thanksgiving** and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen." ([Play Amen, Blessing and Glory and Power](#) or [another version with the Brooklyn Tabernacle Choir](#) - it will bring tears to your eyes!)

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**QUESTION - [What is the glory of God? Watch the video.](#)**

**ANSWER -** The glory of God is the beauty of His spirit. It is not an aesthetic beauty or a material beauty, but the beauty that emanates from His character, from all that He is. The glory of man—human dignity and honor—fades (1 Peter 1:24). But the glory of God, which is manifested in all His [attributes together](#), never passes away. It is eternal. Moses requested of God, "Now show me your glory" (Exodus 33:18). In His response, God equates His glory with "all my goodness" (verse 19). "But," God said, "you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live" (verse 20). So, God hid Moses in "a cleft in the rock" to protect him from the fulness of God's glory as it passed by (verses 21–23). No mortal can view God's excelling splendor without being utterly overwhelmed. The glory of God puts the pride of man to shame: "Enter into the rock, and hide in the dust, From the terror of the Lord And the glory of His majesty. The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, The haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, And the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day" (Isaiah 2:10–11NKJV).

Often, in the Old Testament, the manifestation of God's glory was accompanied by supernatural fire, thick clouds, and a great quaking of the earth. We see these phenomena when God gave the law to Moses: "[Mount Sinai](#) was covered with smoke, because the Lord descended on it in fire. The smoke billowed up from it like smoke from a furnace, and the whole mountain trembled violently" (Exodus 19:18; see also Deuteronomy 5:24–25; 1 Kings 8:10–11; and Isaiah 6:1–4). The prophet Ezekiel's vision of the glory of God was full of fire and lightning and tumultuous sounds, after which he saw "what looked like a throne of lapis lazuli, and high above on the throne was a figure like that of a man. I saw that from what appeared to be his waist up he looked like glowing metal, as if full of fire, and that from there down he looked like fire; and brilliant light surrounded him. Like the appearance of a rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so was the radiance around him. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord" (Ezekiel 1:26–28).

In the New Testament, the glory of God is revealed in His Son, Jesus Christ: "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). Jesus came as "a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of [God's] people Israel" (Luke 2:32). The miracles that Jesus did were "signs through which he revealed his glory" (John 2:11). In Christ, the glory of God is meekly veiled, approachable, and knowable. He promises to return some day "on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory" (Matthew 24:30).

Isaiah 43:7 says that God saved Israel for His glory—in the redeemed will be seen the distillation of God's grace and power and faithfulness. The natural world also exhibits God's glory, revealed to all men, no matter their race, heritage, or location. As Psalm 19:1–4 says, "The [heavens declare](#) the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge. They have no speech, they use no words; no sound is heard from them. Yet their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world."

Psalm 73:24 calls heaven itself "glory." Sometimes Christians speak of death as being "received unto glory," a phrase borrowed from this psalm. When the Christian dies, he or she will be taken into God's presence and surrounded by God's glory and majesty. In that place, His glory will be seen clearly: "For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face" (1 Corinthians 13:12). In the future New Jerusalem, the glory of God will be manifest: "The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp" (Revelation 21:23).

God will not give His glory to another (Isaiah 42:8; cf. Exodus 34:14). Yet this is the very thing that people try to steal. Scripture indicts all idolaters: "Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles" (Romans 1:22–23). Only God is eternal, and His perfect and eternal attributes of holiness, majesty, goodness, love, etc., are not to be exchanged for the imperfections and corruption of anything in this world. [GotQuestions.org](#)

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**Revelation 4:10 the twenty-four elders will fall down before Him who sits on the throne, and will worship Him who lives forever and ever, and will cast their crowns before the throne, saying,**

BGT Revelation 4:10 πεσο νται ο ε κοσι τ σαρες πρεσβ τεροι ν πιον το καθημ νου π το θρ νου κα προσκυν σουσι ν τ ζ ντι ε ς το ς α νας τ ν α νων κα βαλο σι ν το ς στεφ νους α τ ν ν πιον το θρ νου λ γοντες·

KJV Revelation 4:10 The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying,

NET Revelation 4:10 the twenty-four elders throw themselves to the ground before the one who sits on the throne and worship the one who lives forever and ever, and they offer their crowns before his throne, saying:

CSB Revelation 4:10 the 24 elders fall down before the One seated on the throne, worship the One who lives forever and ever, cast their crowns before the throne, and say:

ESV Revelation 4:10 the twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever. They cast their crowns before the throne, saying,

NIV Revelation 4:10 the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne, and worship him who lives for ever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and say:

NLT Revelation 4:10 the twenty-four elders fall down and worship the one sitting on the throne (the one who lives forever and ever). And they lay their crowns before the throne and say,

NRS Revelation 4:10 the twenty-four elders fall before the one who is seated on the throne and worship the one who lives forever and ever; they cast their crowns before the throne, singing,

NJB Revelation 4:10 the twenty-four elders prostrated themselves before him to worship the One who lives for ever and ever, and threw down their crowns in front of the throne, saying:

NAB Revelation 4:10 the twenty-four elders fall down before the one who sits on the throne and worship him, who lives forever and ever. They throw down their crowns before the throne, exclaiming:

YLT Revelation 4:10 fall down do the twenty and four elders before Him who is sitting upon the throne, and bow before Him who is living to the ages of the ages, and they cast their crowns before the throne, saying,

MIT Revelation 4:10 the 24 senior men fall prostrate before the one seated on the throne and worship the one who lives eternally. They present their crowns before the throne exclaiming:

- **fall:** Rev 5:8,14 19:4 Job 1:20 Ps 72:11 Mt 2:11
- **worship:** Rev 4:9 7:11 15:4 22:8,9 1Ch 29:20 2Ch 7:3 Ps 95:6 Mt 4:9,10 Lu 24:52
- **cast:** Rev 4:4 1Ch 29:11-16 Ps 115:1 1Co 15:10
- [Revelation 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **PROSTRATION THE PROPER POSITION BEFORE HIS POWER**

Note their "cue" (so to speak) to fall and worship is identified by the time word **'when...'** in the previous passage (Rev 4:9). When they hear "Holy, holy, holy," the fall before the Holy One!

**The twenty-four elders** ([presbuteros](#)) **will fall down** ([pipto](#)) **before** ([enopios](#)) **Him who sits** ([kathemai](#) in present tense) **on the throne** ([thronos](#))

**NET Note** - "fall down, throw oneself to the ground as a sign of devotion or humility, before high-ranking persons or divine beings."

**And will worship** ([proskuneo](#)) **Him who lives** ([zao](#) - present tense) **forever** ([aion](#)) **and ever** ([aion](#)) - See [below](#) for the discussion of the verb for **worship**.

*True spiritual worship is perhaps one of the greatest needs in our individual lives and in our churches!*

-- Warren Wiersbe

**Warren Wiersbe** - True spiritual worship is perhaps one of the greatest needs in our individual lives and in our churches. There is a constant emphasis today on witnessing for Christ and working for Christ, but not enough is said about worshiping Him. To worship means "to ascribe worth" (see Rev. 4:11; 5:12). It means to use all that we are and have to praise God for all that He is and does. Heaven is a place of worship, and God's people shall worship Him throughout all eternity. Perhaps it would be good for us to get in practice now! A study of Revelation 4–5 will certainly help us better understand how to worship God and give Him the glory that He deserves. (See [Be Victorious - Page 49](#))

**and will cast ([ballo](#)) their crowns ([stephanos](#)) before the throne ([thronos](#)) saying** - The casting of the crowns is an act of submission and homage and an acknowledgement that all the merit is **to Him Who sits on the throne!**

**Warren Wiersbe on cast their crowns** - The elders join in this praise and cast their crowns before the throne. These crowns symbolize their rewards for service while on earth. When we get to heaven, we will realize in a new way that all praise belongs to God and to God alone. (BORROW [Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the New Testament](#))

First, they "worship Him." Worship in the Scriptures has several connotations, such as obeisance, reverence, homage, honor, service. I have never found in Scripture any definition of worship. Worship is not confined to praise. W. E. Vine wrote, "Broadly it may be regarded as the direct acknowledgement to God, of His nature, attributes, ways, and claims, whether by the outgoing of the heart in praise and thanksgiving or by deed done in such acknowledgement." The first and fundamental claims of God upon His redeemed ones is that they worship Him. The devil would claim the worship of men, but God only must be worshiped (Matthew 4:9-11). How it must grieve Him when we become weak in our worship! Here on earth we rob Him of the honor, homage, and service that is due Him. But in Heaven we shall worship Him as we ought.

**Lehman Strauss on cast their crowns**- They lay aside their given glory to add to His glory, thereby ascribing all glory to Him. They realize that they owe their victory to Him who sits upon the central throne, thus He alone is worthy to receive their crowns. Here on earth we want to get credit for what we do, and while it is true that crowns of reward will be given for faithfulness in service, in Heaven we will recognize that we are not worthy of them. We will lay them at the feet of Him who saved us by His matchless grace. At that day we shall admit that we were unprofitable servants, not even worthy to serve Him.(BORROW [The Book of the Revelation: Outlined Studies](#))

Play Chris Tomlin's [We Fall Down](#).

## HOW SHOULD REVELATION 4-5 AFFECT MODERN WORSHIP?

Charles Swindoll makes a poignant point that the modern church needs to hear, especially in light of several exposes of modern worship trends, especially those begun by Hillsong (if you have not seen the **The Secrets of Hillsong, a four-part FX documentary series**, you might want to google it and watch it. There are a number of other churches that have spun off - see article on [Hillsong, Bethel, Jesus Culture, and Elevation](#)). While Swindoll does not mention any of these specific groups, the general tenor of this thoughts is applicable to how real worship should be assessed in the modern church. He entitles it "**Restoring the Missing Jewel of the Church**"

Back in the 1960s, A. W. Tozer described worship as "[the missing jewel in modern evangelicalism](#)." He was a prophet ahead of his time. If truth be told, many of us in the twenty-first century don't have a clue what real worship is. We wonder: Does worship mean I have to hold my hands up when I sing and pray, like some Christians do? Does worship mean I need to close my eyes and envision something heavenly, lest I become distracted by something earthly? Does worship mean I have feelings that are a little bit ecstatic, maybe bordering on the supernatural? My great concern is that we tend to play the game of "church." We learn how to dress, learn how to sit, and learn how to look. We even learn the words of the songs. But what is our focus as we sing them? While we sing, "A mighty fortress is our God," we're thinking, Why did she wear a dress like that? We belt out, "A bulwark never failing," and wonder, Did I turn the lights off on my car? We can do that and not even change our expressions. That's not worship—that's playing the church game.

What, then, is worship? Simply put, worship is ascribing "worth" to something or someone. We attribute value, honor, and devotion to our object of worship. When we truly worship God, we turn all of our attention, affection, and adoration toward Him. That's the missing jewel—worshiping God by ascribing supreme worth to Him, for He alone is worthy. God alone is the subject of our praise and the object of our worship. We miss it when we focus on the horizontal—on people and things—rather than on the vertical—on God and God alone. It has

become too common for Christians to surrender everything for their work yet sacrifice nothing in worshiping the One who gave His life to save ours. Stop and think. Is that you?

Our great need is to restore the missing jewel of worship in our churches—and in our lives. Ask yourself some probing questions and answer honestly. Are you more preoccupied with the pastor's preaching style than with the One he preaches? Are you more concerned about the lyrics than about the One listening? Do your thoughts wander, or do they take in the wonder?

Look again at Revelation 4. Notice the focus of the twenty-four elders and four living creatures. God alone is at the center of their attention. They praise Him for who He is and for what He has done. They aren't distracted by each other, by the furniture of the throne room, or by their own wandering thoughts. Instead, they keep their eyes and ears on the One who is worthy of all praise. Do I? Do you? (See [Insights on Revelation - Page 98](#))

#### Related Resources:

- [Worship: The Missing Jewel](#) - A W Tozer (12 page article) "*worship is the missing jewel in modern evangelicalism*"
- [God's Great Purpose in Redemption-Worship](#) - listen to A W Tozer speak on this vital topic. Transcription is also available.
- [Revelation 4:1-1 A Towering Transcendent Vision of God the Father](#) - 54' sermon by Dr Steve Lawson
- BORROW [Real worship : it will transform your life](#) by Warren Wiersbe ([Read some of the reviews](#))
- BORROW [Classic sermons on worship](#) compiled by Warren Wiersbe
- Sermon - [The Blessings of Public Worship](#) - C H Spurgeon
- BORROW [Worship : rediscovering the missing jewel](#) by Ronald Allen ([Read some of the reviews](#))
- BORROW [Living a life of true worship](#) 40 minute Bible study series from Precept Ministries
- BORROW [Worship : adoration and action](#) by Carson, D. A and other writers - "Dutch Reformed, Presbyterian, Anglican, Lutheran, and British Free Church views of worship. Four additional studies reflect on South and Central American practices, the charismatic movement, and patterns of worship among students worldwide." ([See review by Craig Blomberg](#))
- BORROW [How then shall we worship? : biblical principles to guide us today](#) by R C Sproul ([Read some of the reviews](#))
- BORROW [Worthy of Worship](#) by Sammy Tippit
- [What's the big deal about worship?](#) from Our Daily Bread Ministries
- See **Dictionary of Biblical Imagery** discussion of [WORSHIP - page 3256](#).
- [What is a biblical theology of worship? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Are any of the various worship styles unbiblical? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [What does the Bible say about worship? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [What does the Bible say about the position of worship leader? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [What is true worship? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [How much of a role should media have in worship services? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [What is the meaning of Christian worship? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Regulative vs. normative principle of worship—which viewpoint is correct? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [What are the ingredients to a truly biblical worship service? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Should we raise our hands/clap our hands during worship? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [What is the difference between praise and worship? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Why should we worship God? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [How can I know how to properly worship God? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [What does it mean to worship the Lord in spirit and truth? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Should an unbeliever be allowed to participate in a church worship team? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Can a Christian worship God using music from a church with unbiblical teachings? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [How much of a priority should worship be in the church? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Worship Services — Article Index | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [What are some Bible verses about worship? | GotQuestions.org](#)

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**Before** (1799)(enopios from **en** + **ops** = the eye, face) means before, in sight of in the face of, in the presence of. Summary - 1. before Lk 1:19; Ac 10:30; Rv 3:8; 7:15.—2. in the sight or presence of Lk 23:14; Jn 20:30; Ac 10:33; 1Ti 6:12; Rev 3:5; 13:13.—3. in the opinion or judgment of Lk 16:15; 2 Cor 8:21.—4. Various uses: simply to Ac 6:5; 2 Cor 7:12. Among Lk 15:10. Against Lk 15:18, 21. By the authority of, on behalf of Rev 13:12, 14.

**Strong's** - 1) face 1a) face, faces 1b) presence, person 1c) face (of seraphim or cherubim) 1d) face (of animals) 1e) face, surface (of ground) 1f) as adv of loc/temp 1f1) before and behind, toward, in front of, forward, formerly, from beforetime, before 1g) with prep 1g1) in front of, before, to the front of, in the presence



of, in the face of, at the face or front of, from the presence of, from before, from before the face of

**Friberg** - νόπιον neuter of νόπιος (in sight or in front); used as an improper preposition with the genitive; (1) of place before, in front of (Rev 4:10); (2) of doing something in someone's presence in the presence of, in the sight of, before (Jn 20:30); (3) metaphorically in the sight of, in the eyes of (Gal 1:20); (4) as acknowledging the opinion or judgment of another in the opinion of, in the eyes of (Acts 4:19); (5) special uses; (a) with μαρτῶν sin or do wrong against (Lk 15:18); (b) by the authority of, on behalf of (Rev 13:12, 14; 19:20) (BORROW [Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament](#))

**Gilbrant - Classical Greek and Septuagint Usage** - Enōpion functions as an improper preposition which takes an object in the genitive case. The prepositional phrase, nonetheless, still functions adverbially. Several other Greek words in many cases convey the same meanings as enōpion: e.g., enantion (1710), enanti (1709), and emprosthen (1699). (In fact, two codices, A and B, of the Septuagint at Judges 2:11 and 3:12 interchange enanti and enōpion.) Other references use these synonyms side by side. Enōpion is actually the neuter form of the adjective enōpios (which does not occur in the New Testament). It derives from a combination of two words, en (1706) and opion, and generally means "before," either in terms of space, sight, relationships, time, or rank. However, a number of different words translate enōpion. Enōpion occurs in writings from the time of Homer to those well beyond the New Testament era. This word is used frequently by the Septuagint translators and by the New Testament writers. The majority of the New Testament references are in Luke–Acts and Revelation. Matthew and Mark did not use the term enōpion.

**New Testament Usage - Enōpion in Luke–Acts describes relationships**— people whom God approves and appoints to serve Him. Furthermore, the relationships which this word depicts are dynamic. For instance, Luke 1:15,17 says that the angel's assessment of John the Baptist's ministry was that he would be great before (enōpion) the Lord and that he would go before (enōpion) Him "in the spirit and power of Elijah." In like manner, Gabriel who stands "in the presence (enōpion) of God" was sent to speak to Zechariah (1:19; see also Luke 1:75; Revelation 8:2). Luke's use of enōpion in these instances follows the same pattern as that which occurs in Samuel's priestly ministry before the Lord, as translated in the Septuagint of 1 Samuel 2:11,18,21 (LXX 1 Kings 2:11,18,21).

**Enōpion** expresses relational qualities in another way. It depicts salvation or judgment in a legal, forensic manner (i.e., in terms of a court or judicial scene). A person is righteous (or not) before God. Both Luke (Acts 4:19) and Paul (Romans 3:20, "There shall no flesh be justified in his sight") used the word in this manner. In judgment men will stand before God (Revelation 20:12).

Some of the references speak of moral relationships among men and with God. For example, Romans 12:17 reads, "Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight (enōpion) of all men" (see also Romans 14:22; Galatians 1:20).

**Enōpion** also expresses a public manifestation of someone or something for special effect, such as a testimony. Acts 4:10, for instance, relates that the sick man stood among, or before, the elders of the people healed and in good health (see also Acts 6:5,6; 19:9,19; 27:35; 2 Corinthians 8:21; 1 Timothy 5:20). ([Complete Biblical Library](#))

**Enopios - 89x/82 verses with 29 uses in the Revelation - before(46), front(1), presence(20), sight(22)** - Lk. 1:15; Lk. 1:17; Lk. 1:19; Lk. 1:75; Lk. 1:76; Lk. 4:7; Lk. 5:18; Lk. 5:25; Lk. 8:47; Lk. 12:6; Lk. 13:26; Lk. 14:10; Lk. 15:10; Lk. 15:18; Lk. 15:21; Lk. 16:15; Lk. 23:14; Lk. 24:43; Jn. 20:30; Acts 2:25; Acts 4:10; Acts 4:19; Acts 6:6; Acts 7:46; Acts 9:15; Acts 10:30; Acts 10:31; Acts 10:33; Acts 19:9; Acts 19:19; Acts 27:35; Rom. 3:20; Rom. 12:17; Rom. 14:22; 1 Co. 1:29; 2 Co. 4:2; 2 Co. 7:12; 2 Co. 8:21; Gal. 1:20; 1 Tim. 2:3; 1 Tim. 5:4; 1 Tim. 5:20; 1 Tim. 5:21; 1 Tim. 6:12; 1 Tim. 6:13; 2 Tim. 2:14; 2 Tim. 4:1; Heb. 4:13; Heb. 13:21; Jas. 4:10; 1 Pet. 3:4; 1 Jn. 3:22; 3 Jn. 1:6; Rev. 1:4; Rev. 2:14; Rev. 3:2; Rev. 3:5; Rev. 3:8; Rev. 4:5; Rev. 4:6; Rev. 4:10; Rev. 5:8; Rev. 7:9; Rev. 7:11; Rev. 7:15; Rev. 8:2; Rev. 8:3; Rev. 8:4; Rev. 9:13; Rev. 11:4; Rev. 11:16; Rev. 12:4; Rev. 12:10; Rev. 13:12; Rev. 13:13; Rev. 13:14; Rev. 14:3; Rev. 14:10; Rev. 15:4; Rev. 16:19; Rev. 19:20; Rev. 20:12

Enopios in the Septuagint - Gen. 11:28; Gen. 24:51; Gen. 30:33; Gen. 30:38; Gen. 31:35; Exod. 3:6; Exod. 14:2; Exod. 21:1; Exod. 22:8; Exod. 22:9; Exod. 23:15; Exod. 23:17; Exod. 32:33; Exod. 33:17; Exod. 34:9; Exod. 34:10; Exod. 34:20; Exod. 34:23; Lev. 4:4; Lev. 4:18; Lev. 4:24; Lev. 20:17; Lev. 24:3; Lev. 24:8; Lev. 25:53; Num. 13:33; Num. 17:10; Num. 19:3; Num. 32:4; Num. 32:5; Deut. 1:8; Deut. 1:42; Deut. 4:8; Deut. 4:34; Deut. 4:44; Deut. 6:22; Deut. 11:26; Deut. 11:32; Deut. 12:8; Deut. 16:16; Deut. 29:2; Deut. 31:11; Jos. 8:30; Jos. 10:8; Jos. 24:25; Jdg. 2:11; Jdg. 3:12; Jdg. 4:1; Jdg. 4:15; Jdg. 6:1; Jdg. 6:18; Jdg. 8:28; Jdg. 9:39; Jdg. 10:6; Jdg. 11:9; Jdg. 11:11; Jdg. 13:1; Jdg. 13:15; Jdg. 16:25; Jdg. 18:6; Jdg. 20:23; Jdg. 20:26; Jdg. 20:28; Jdg. 20:32; Jdg. 20:35; Jdg. 20:39; Jdg. 20:42; Jdg. 21:2; Jdg. 21:25; 1 Sam. 1:9; 1 Sam. 1:11; 1 Sam. 1:12; 1 Sam. 1:15; 1 Sam. 1:24; 1 Sam. 1:26; 1 Sam. 2:11; 1 Sam. 2:17; 1 Sam. 2:18; 1 Sam. 2:21; 1 Sam. 2:30; 1 Sam. 2:35; 1 Sam. 3:1; 1 Sam. 3:18; 1 Sam. 3:21; 1 Sam. 4:2; 1 Sam. 4:3; 1 Sam. 5:3; 1 Sam. 5:4; 1 Sam. 6:20; 1 Sam. 7:6; 1 Sam. 7:10; 1 Sam. 9:24; 1 Sam. 10:19; 1 Sam. 10:25; 1 Sam. 11:10; 1 Sam. 11:15; 1 Sam. 12:2; 1 Sam. 12:3; 1 Sam. 12:7; 1 Sam. 12:17; 1 Sam. 14:18; 1 Sam. 14:36; 1 Sam. 14:40; 1 Sam. 15:17; 1 Sam. 15:19; 1 Sam. 15:21; 1 Sam. 15:30; 1 Sam. 15:33; 1 Sam. 16:6; 1 Sam. 16:10; 1 Sam. 16:16; 1 Sam. 16:21; 1 Sam. 16:22; 1 Sam. 19:7; 1 Sam. 19:24; 1 Sam. 20:1; 1 Sam. 21:7; 1 Sam. 21:13; 1 Sam. 23:18; 1 Sam. 25:23; 1 Sam. 26:19; 1 Sam. 26:24; 1 Sam. 28:22; 1 Sam. 28:25; 1 Sam. 29:8; 1 Sam. 29:10; 2 Sam. 2:14; 2 Sam. 2:17; 2 Sam. 3:34; 2 Sam. 3:36; 2 Sam. 4:10; 2 Sam. 5:3; 2 Sam. 5:20; 2 Sam. 6:5; 2 Sam. 6:7; 2 Sam. 6:14; 2 Sam. 6:16; 2 Sam. 6:17; 2 Sam. 6:21; 2



Sam. 7:16; 2 Sam. 7:18; 2 Sam. 7:19; 2 Sam. 7:29; 2 Sam. 10:3; 2 Sam. 11:13; 2 Sam. 13:9; 2 Sam. 16:19; 2 Sam. 18:7; 2 Sam. 18:9; 2 Sam. 18:14; 2 Sam. 18:24; 2 Sam. 19:13; 2 Sam. 19:18; 2 Sam. 22:25; 2 Sam. 24:4; 1 Ki. 1:25; 1 Ki. 1:28; 1 Ki. 1:32; 1 Ki. 2:4; 1 Ki. 2:26; 1 Ki. 2:35; 1 Ki. 2:45; 1 Ki. 3:6; 1 Ki. 3:10; 1 Ki. 3:16; 1 Ki. 3:22; 1 Ki. 3:24; 1 Ki. 8:22; 1 Ki. 8:23; 1 Ki. 8:25; 1 Ki. 8:28; 1 Ki. 8:33; 1 Ki. 8:46; 1 Ki. 8:50; 1 Ki. 8:59; 1 Ki. 8:62; 1 Ki. 8:64; 1 Ki. 8:65; 1 Ki. 9:3; 1 Ki. 9:4; 1 Ki. 9:6; 1 Ki. 10:8; 1 Ki. 11:6; 1 Ki. 11:33; 1 Ki. 11:36; 1 Ki. 11:38; 1 Ki. 12:6; 1 Ki. 12:24; 1 Ki. 14:22; 1 Ki. 15:3; 1 Ki. 15:5; 1 Ki. 15:11; 1 Ki. 15:26; 1 Ki. 15:34; 1 Ki. 16:7; 1 Ki. 16:19; 1 Ki. 16:25; 1 Ki. 16:28; 1 Ki. 16:30; 1 Ki. 17:1; 1 Ki. 18:15; 1 Ki. 19:11; 1 Ki. 19:19; 1 Ki. 21:2; 1 Ki. 21:20; 1 Ki. 21:25; 1 Ki. 22:10; 1 Ki. 22:21; 2 Ki. 1:18; 2 Ki. 3:14; 2 Ki. 4:12; 2 Ki. 4:38; 2 Ki. 4:43; 2 Ki. 5:1; 2 Ki. 5:2; 2 Ki. 5:3; 2 Ki. 5:16; 2 Ki. 6:1; 2 Ki. 6:22; 2 Ki. 8:9; 2 Ki. 8:18; 2 Ki. 8:27; 2 Ki. 11:4; 2 Ki. 12:2; 2 Ki. 14:24; 2 Ki. 18:22; 2 Ki. 20:3; 2 Ki. 22:10; 2 Ki. 22:19; 2 Ki. 23:3; 2 Ki. 24:19; 2 Ki. 25:8; 2 Ki. 25:29; 1 Chr. 17:17; 1 Chr. 29:10; 2 Chr. 1:6; 2 Chr. 1:10; 2 Chr. 14:2; 2 Chr. 14:13; 2 Chr. 18:20; 2 Chr. 20:32; 2 Chr. 24:2; 2 Chr. 25:2; 2 Chr. 26:4; 2 Chr. 27:2; 2 Chr. 28:1; 2 Chr. 29:2; 2 Chr. 33:22; 2 Chr. 34:31; 2 Chr. 36:2; 2 Chr. 36:9; 2 Chr. 36:12; Ezr. 4:23; Ezr. 7:19; Ezr. 8:21; Ezr. 8:29; Ezr. 9:9; Ezr. 9:15; Ezr. 10:1; Ezr. 10:11; Neh. 1:4; Neh. 1:6; Neh. 1:11; Neh. 2:1; Neh. 2:5; Neh. 2:6; Neh. 4:2; Neh. 8:2; Neh. 8:5; Neh. 9:8; Neh. 9:11; Neh. 9:24; Neh. 9:28; Neh. 9:32; Neh. 9:35; Est. 1:1; Est. 2:9; Est. 4:17; Est. 5:1; Est. 5:8; Est. 6:13; Est. 7:3; Est. 10:3; Job 1:6; Job 2:2; Job 14:3; Job 26:6; Job 31:34; Job 42:7; Ps. 5:8; Ps. 9:19; Ps. 10:3; Ps. 15:4; Ps. 16:8; Ps. 18:6; Ps. 18:12; Ps. 18:22; Ps. 18:24; Ps. 19:14; Ps. 22:25; Ps. 22:27; Ps. 22:29; Ps. 23:5; Ps. 36:2; Ps. 38:17; Ps. 39:5; Ps. 41:12; Ps. 50:8; Ps. 51:3; Ps. 51:4; Ps. 54:3; Ps. 56:8; Ps. 56:13; Ps. 61:7; Ps. 62:8; Ps. 68:3; Ps. 68:4; Ps. 68:7; Ps. 69:22; Ps. 72:9; Ps. 72:14; Ps. 79:10; Ps. 79:11; Ps. 86:9; Ps. 86:14; Ps. 88:2; Ps. 90:8; Ps. 96:6; Ps. 98:6; Ps. 100:2; Ps. 106:23; Ps. 119:169; Ps. 119:170; Ps. 141:2; Ps. 142:2; Ps. 143:2; Prov. 3:4; Prov. 5:21; Prov. 11:1; Prov. 12:15; Prov. 20:10; Prov. 20:23; Prov. 22:14; Prov. 25:6; Prov. 25:26; Cant. 8:12; Isa. 1:7; Isa. 5:21; Isa. 9:3; Isa. 13:16; Isa. 24:23; Isa. 38:3; Isa. 48:19; Isa. 49:16; Isa. 52:10; Isa. 65:6; Isa. 66:22; Isa. 66:23; Jer. 7:10; Jer. 7:11; Jer. 16:9; Jer. 18:4; Ezek. 2:10; Ezek. 5:8; Ezek. 5:14; Ezek. 6:4; Ezek. 8:1; Ezek. 10:2; Ezek. 10:19; Ezek. 12:3; Ezek. 12:5; Ezek. 12:6; Ezek. 12:7; Ezek. 16:41; Ezek. 16:50; Ezek. 20:9; Ezek. 20:14; Ezek. 20:22; Ezek. 21:23; Ezek. 28:9; Ezek. 28:25; Ezek. 37:20; Ezek. 38:16; Ezek. 39:27; Dan. 4:1; Dan. 4:17; Dan. 8:4; Dan. 9:10; Dan. 9:18; Hos. 2:10; Hos. 6:2; Zeph. 3:19; Hag. 2:3; Hag. 2:14; Zech. 8:6; Zech. 11:12; Zech. 12:8; Mal. 2:17; Mal. 3:16;

**Worship** (bow down) ([4352](#)) [proskuneo](#) from **pros** = before + **kuneo** = kiss or adore) means to prostrate oneself in homage before another in the full sense of worship, not mere reverence or courtesy. When Jesus Christ was born into this world, He was attended and worshipped by angels. (Lu 2:13f). **Proskuneo** represents the most common Near Eastern act of adoration and reverence and also carries the idea of profound awe and respect. Some believe that the root word **kuneo** may be related to **kuon** which is the Greek word for dog and which then could be picturing a dog licking his master's hand. The word [proskuneo](#) literally means to kiss toward someone, to throw a kiss in token of respect or homage, to prostrate oneself in homage, to do reverence to, to adore and so to worship and show respect. In the ancient Oriental (especially Persia) the mode of salutation between persons of equal rank was to kiss each other on the lips. When the difference of rank was slight, they kissed each other on the cheek. When one was much inferior, he fell upon his knees touched his forehead to the ground or prostrated himself, and as he was bowing down he would be throwing kisses toward the superior. It is this latter mode of salutation that is intended by the Greek writers in the use of the verb [proskuneo](#) .

See **Dictionary of Biblical Imagery** discussion of [WORSHIP - page 3256](#).

**Cast** ([906](#)) [ballo](#) in all its applications retains the idea of impulse (the idea of force and/or effort). It describes a powerful movement of throwing or propelling. The primary senses are to throw or to put. **Ballo** means to throw, hurl, in contrast to striking. **Ballo** is frequent in the four Gospels and Revelation

**Ballo in the Revelation** - Rev. 2:10; Rev. 2:14; Rev. 2:22; Rev. 2:24; Rev. 4:10; Rev. 6:13; Rev. 8:5; Rev. 8:7; Rev. 8:8; Rev. 12:4; Rev. 12:9; Rev. 12:10; Rev. 12:13; Rev. 12:15; Rev. 12:16; Rev. 14:16; Rev. 14:19; Rev. 18:19; Rev. 18:21; Rev. 19:20; Rev. 20:3; Rev. 20:10; Rev. 20:14; Rev. 20:15

**Revelation 4:11 "Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created."**

BGT Revelation 4:11 ξιος ε , κ ριος κα θε ς μ ν, λαβε ν τ ν δ ξαν κα τ ν τιμ ν κα τ ν δ ναμιν, τι σ κτισας τ π ντα κα δι τ θ λημ σου σαν κα κτ σθησαν.

KJV Revelation 4:11 Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

NET Revelation 4:11 "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, since you created all things, and because of your will they existed and were created!"

CSB Revelation 4:11 Our Lord and God, You are worthy to receive glory and honor and power, because You have created all things, and because of Your will they exist and were created.

ESV Revelation 4:11 "Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created."

NIV Revelation 4:11 "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being."

NLT Revelation 4:11 "You are worthy, O Lord our God, to receive glory and honor and power. For you created all things, and they exist because you created what you pleased."

NRS Revelation 4:11 "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created."

NJB Revelation 4:11 You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for you made the whole universe; by your will, when it did not exist, it was created.

NAB Revelation 4:11 "Worthy are you, Lord our God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things; because of your will they came to be and were created."

YLT Revelation 4:11 'Worthy art Thou, O Lord, to receive the glory, and the honour, and the power, because Thou -- Thou didst create the all things, and because of Thy will are they, and they were created.'

MIT Revelation 4:11 You are worthy, Yahveh, our God, to receive glory, honor, and power, because you created everything; By your will they were [conceived] and created.

- **art:** Rev 5:2,9,12 2Sa 22:4 Ps 18:3
- **to receive:** Rev 14:7 De 32:4 1Ch 16:28,29 Ne 9:5 Job 36:3 Ps 29:1,2 68:34 Ps 96:7,8
- **for You:** Rev 10:6 Ge 1:1 Ex 20:11 Isa 40:26,28 Jer 10:11 32:17 Joh 1:1-3 Ac 17:24 Eph 3:9 Col 1:16,17 Heb 1:2,10
- **and because:** Pr 16:4 Ro 11:36
- [Revelation 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## WORTHY IS OUR GOD THE CREATOR TO RECEIVE OUR PRAISE

**Worthy** (*axios*) are You, our Lord (*kurios*) and our God (*theos*) - **Worthy** (*axios*) means God is of commendable, inestimable excellence and forever deserving of our time, attention, interest. Note that these are the 24 elders praising God. The fact that they call Him our Lord and our God, indicates personal relationship, personal possession, which seems to me to support the interpretation that these are redeemed men rather than angels. In Romans 11:36+ Paul adds "For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen." True worship exalts God to his rightful place in our lives.

**John Phillips** wrote, "**Worship** is the ascription of 'worth-ship' to the Lord. It is the function of telling Him how absolutely worthy He is to receive our praise and our adoration."

*What people worship is a good indication of what is really valuable to them.*  
-- Warren Wiersbe

**Wiersbe** - We aren't worthy of worship, and certainly the idols that we make are not worthy. Only God is worthy of our worship. What people worship is a good indication of what is really valuable to them. (BORROW [Real worship : it will transform your life](#))

*Worship is the declaration by a creature of the greatness of his Creator.*  
*To worship God is to realize the purpose for which God created us.*  
-- Herbert Carson

**Herbert Carson** wrote that "To adore God is to be lifted outside our selves. To bow in wonder before this transcendent majesty whose glory fills the heavens and whose mighty power spans the wide compass of history and reaches with unerring accuracy into every crevice of time and space, this is to mount up from a grovelling obsession with our own needs to an awe-inspiring glimpse of the glory of the eternal God."

**Puritan Stephen Charnock** - Without the heart it is no worship. It is a stage play. It is an acting a part without being that person, really. It is playing the hypocrite.

**Grant Osborne** notes that "The phrase "**you are worthy**" was used to herald the entrance of an emperor when he came in his triumphal procession. Later, the emperor Domitian added the phrase "our Lord and God" as a reference to himself, thereby promoting the cult of emperor worship. Christians, however, are to acknowledge only one Lord and God." (See [Revelation](#))

**Louis Pasteur** - "The more I study nature, the more I am amazed at the Creator."

**To receive glory** (*doxa*) and **honor** (*time*) and **power** (*dunamis*) - No one in all creation is worthy to receive these praises.

**Vincent** - Instead of the **thanks** in the ascription of the living creatures (Rev 4:9). In the excess of gratitude, self is forgotten. Their thanksgiving is a tribute to the creative power which called them into being. Note the articles, "the glory," etc. (so Rev.), expressing the absoluteness and universality of these attributes.

**For** is **hoti** and in this context introduces the reason He is worthy to receive praise (**glory and honor and power**).

**You created** (*ktizo*) **all things** - Nothing would exist if our Lord and our God had not created it! We would not exist!!! The clear conclusion is that He owns everything. **Vincent** adds on **all things** "With the article signifying the universe."

## ALL CREATION IS A RESULT OF HIS WILL

**And because of Your will ([thelema](#)) they existed, and were created ([ktizo](#)) - Will ([thelema](#))** speaks of the result of what the Lord has decided. His will is not to be conceived as a demand, but as an expression or inclination of pleasure towards that which is liked, that which pleases and creates joy to Him. In short, His will signifies His gracious disposition toward His creation and existence of His creatures. God Himself does this (creates) by His gracious design and for His own good pleasure.

**[William Barclay](#)** - God is Creator. It is through his will and purpose that all things existed even before creation and were in the end brought into actual being. Human beings have acquired many powers, but we do not possess the power to create. We can alter and rearrange; we can make things out of already existing materials; but only God can create something out of nothing. That great truth means that in a very real sense everything in the world belongs to God, and there is nothing that we can handle which God has not given to us.

Unfortunately **Augustine** was right when he said "Thus does the world forget You, its Creator, and falls in love with what You have created instead of with You."

**Lehman Strauss** - We praise God for saving us, but seldom have I heard a believer praise God for creating him. In Heaven we will know the joy of having been created. There are no songs of evolution in Heaven, only of creation. Our Saviour is the Origin and Source of all creation (John 1:3; Colossians 1:16). He caused all things and all creatures to exist. This is the reason why the elders worship Him. They acknowledge God as the Source and Sustainer of the universe and of all life. (BORROW [The Book of the Revelation: Outlined Studies](#))

**R. H. Charles** declares that in Revelation 4 "God the Creator is the centre of worship." ([A Critical And Exegetical Commentary On The Revelation Of St John](#))

**Reginald Showers** writes "As the unique, eternal being who had no beginning, God is the one who had the wisdom and power to create everything for His own sovereign purpose."...Revelation 4:11 declares that God is worthy to possess the power or authority to rule all of creation because He created "all things" that have been created, and He created them for His own benefit and sovereign purpose. Since God is the one who created the universe and everything in it, and since He created it for His own benefit and sovereign purpose, it all belongs to Him. As Creator, He alone is its legitimate owner; therefore, the right to rule the entire universe is exclusively His, including the right to use His power to crush any enemy who challenges His rule. (BORROW [Maranatha, our Lord, come! : a definitive study of the rapture of the church](#))

**Danny Akin** - God willed it and it happened. God spoke it and it was so. Such a God is worthy of our praise. Such a God is worthy of our worship.

*The dearest idol I have known,  
Whate'er that idol be,  
Help me to tear it from Thy throne,  
And worship only Thee.*

--William Cowper

**Warren Wiersbe** - The Book of Revelation is filled with hymns of praise (Rev. 4:8, 11; 5:9-13; 7:12-17; 11:15-18; 12:10-12; 15:3-4; 16:5-7; 18:2-8; 19:2-6). The emphasis on praise is significant when you remember that John wrote this book to encourage people who were going through suffering and persecution! The theme of this hymn is God the Creator, while in Revelation 5 the elders praise God the Redeemer. The praise in Revelation 4 is given to the Father on the throne, while in Revelation 5 it is directed to the Son (the Lamb) before the throne. The closing hymn (Rev. 5:13) is expressed to both, another proof of the deity of Jesus Christ. If the twenty-four elders typify the people of God in heaven, then we must ask, "Why should God's people praise God the Creator?" If the heavens are declaring the glory of God, why shouldn't God's heavenly people join the chorus? Creation bears constant witness to the power, wisdom, and glory of God (Ps. 19). Acknowledging the Creator is the first step toward trusting the Redeemer (see Acts 14:8-18; 17:22-31). "All things were created by Him [Christ] and for Him ... and by Him all things consist [hold together]" (Col. 1:16-17) But sinful man worships and serves the creature rather than the Creator, and this is idolatry (Rom. 1:25). Furthermore, sinful man has polluted and destroyed God's wonderful creation; and he is going to pay for it (see Rev. 11:18). Creation is for God's praise and pleasure, and man has no right to usurp that which rightfully belongs to God. Man plunged creation into sin, so that God's good creation (Gen. 1:31) is today a groaning creation (Rom. 8:22); but because of Christ's work on the cross, it will one day be delivered and become a glorious creation (Rom. 8:18-24). It is unfortunate that the church today often neglects to worship the God of creation. The real answer to the ecological problem is not financial or legal, but spiritual. It is only when man acknowledges the Creator and begins to use creation to God's glory that the problems will be solved. (BORROW [Be Victorious](#))

**NET Note** - The past tense of "they existed" (esan) and the order of the expression "they existed and were created" seems backwards both logically and chronologically. The text as it stands is the more difficult reading and seems to have given rise to codex A omitting the final "they were created," 2329 replacing "they existed" (h=san) with "have come into being" (egeneto), and 046 adding ouk (ouk, "not") before esan ("they did not exist, [but were created]"). Several MSS (1854 2050 Ū(A) sa) also attempt to alleviate the problem by replacing esan with "they are" (eisin).

**John MacArthur** - You cannot worship God in a vacuum. You cannot worship God apart from his revelation. Worship begins in holy ecstasy; it ends in holy obedience—or it isn't worship.

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**Worthy** (adjective) (514) ([axios](#)) from **ágō** = to weigh) strictly speaking means bringing up the other beam of the scales. Having the weight of another thing of like value, worth as much. Counterbalancing - weighing as much (of like value, worth as much). Deserving of our respect and admiration and praise.

**Axios in the Revelation** - Heb. 11:38; Rev. 3:4; Rev. 4:11; Rev. 5:2; Rev. 5:4; Rev. 5:9; Rev. 5:12; Rev. 16:6

**Lord** (master, owner) ([2962](#)) ([kurios](#)) from **kuros** = might or power, related to **kuroo** = to give authority) primarily means the possessor, owner, master, the supreme one, one who is sovereign and possesses absolute authority, absolute ownership rights and uncontested power. **Kurios** is used of the one to whom a person or thing belonged, over which he has the power of deciding, the one who is the master or disposer of a thing. **Lord** is used 139 times in the NT of *the Godhead* (or particularly of God the Father), and 489 times directly of *Jesus*. Therefore at the outset should be noted that in the NT Jesus is referred to as **Lord** (**Kurios**) more frequently than by any other title. **Thayer** says **kurios** is "he to whom a person or thing belongs, about which he has the power of deciding; master, lord."

**Lord** is not merely a name that composes a title, but signifies a call to action so that every saint should willingly, reverently bow down to Jesus Christ. If Christ is our Lord, we are to live under Him, consciously, continually submitting our wills to him as His loyal, loving bondservants ("love slaves"), always seeking first His Kingdom and His righteousness (Mt 6:33+). According to this practical working "definition" beloved we all need to ask ourselves "Is Jesus Christ my Lord?". "Do I arise each day, acknowledges this is the day the Lord hath made?" (Ps 118:24+) "Do I surrender my will to His will as I begin each day?" (cp Ro 12:1+, Ro 12:2+) Beloved, don't misunderstand. None of us have "arrived" in this area of Jesus as Lord of our lives. And it is precisely for that reason that Peter commands us to continually "Grow ([present imperative](#)) in the grace (unmerited favor, power to live the supernatural, abundant life in Christ) and knowledge (not just intellectual but transformational) of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen." (2Pe 3:18+) So do not be discouraged. Don't "throw in the towel" as they say. Keep on keeping on, pressing (continually = [present tense](#)) "on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." (Php 3:14+)

**Kurios in the Revelation** - Rev. 1:8; Rev. 4:8; Rev. 4:11; Rev. 7:14; Rev. 11:4; Rev. 11:8; Rev. 11:15; Rev. 11:17; Rev. 14:13; Rev. 15:3; Rev. 15:4; Rev. 16:7; Rev. 17:14; Rev. 18:8; Rev. 19:6; Rev. 19:16; Rev. 21:22; Rev. 22:5; Rev. 22:6; Rev. 22:20; Rev. 22:21

**Power** (1411) ([dunamis](#)) from [dunamai](#) = to be able, to have power) power especially achieving power. It refers to intrinsic power or inherent ability, the power or ability to carry out some function, the potential for functioning in some way (power, might, strength, ability, capability), the power residing in a thing by virtue of its nature.

**Dunamis in the Revelation** - Rev. 1:16; Rev. 3:8; Rev. 4:11; Rev. 5:12; Rev. 7:12; Rev. 11:17; Rev. 12:10; Rev. 13:2; Rev. 15:8; Rev. 17:13; Rev. 18:3; Rev. 19:1

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## Surrendered Crowns

You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power. — Revelation 4:11

Today's Scripture: Revelation 4:6-11

Once during her reign, England's Queen Victoria listened to a chaplain preach a sermon about the second coming of Christ. Those near the royal box noticed that the queen's eyes were filled with tears.

When the service ended, she asked to see the chaplain alone. Seeing her great emotion, he asked why she was so moved. She replied, "Because of what you said about the coming again of the world's rightful King, I wish still to be here when He returns that I might lay my crown at His blessed feet!"

There are many incentives for faithful service that involve both our acts and our motives. These rewards, which are designated as

“crowns” in the New Testament, are to be earned by those who have first received the gift of eternal life.

Perhaps you’re saying, “I would never expect to be rewarded for what I do for Christ.” Have you considered what you may do with any crown you receive on that day? There will be no trophy cases in heaven; no gloating over earthly accomplishments. Redeemed sinners will have the transcendent joy of casting their crowns before the throne and saying, “You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power” (Revelation 4:11). By: Paul Van Gorder

Crown Him with many crowns,  
The Lamb upon His throne;  
Hark! how the heavenly anthem drowns  
All music but its own!  
—Bridges

Heaven’s crowns are not for keeping but for casting at Christ’s feet.

[\(Click to go to the full devotional\)](#) including a related picture and a link at the bottom of the page to one of their excellent devotional booklets. Reprinted by permission from Our Daily Bread Ministries. Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

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### **Jon Courson - Why is worship so important?**

First, worship is the program in heaven. If you want heaven in your heart tonight or heaven in your home—if you feel as if you’re trapped in a hellish situation at work or in a terrible situation in a relationship—you can bring heaven into it by worshipping.

Secondly, worship is the purpose of creation. You see, everything exists for one reason: to please God. Therefore, to the extent you please Him is the extent to which you will experience fulfillment in the deepest part of your soul.

How do we worship? The word itself tells us. Proskuneo in Greek, means ‘to turn and kiss.’ Thus, true worship is any sincere expression intended for the Lord’s pleasure. Worship is the program in heaven, the purpose of creation on earth. May His will be done in our lives, as it is in heaven. (A Day’s Journey: 365 Daily Meditations from the Word)

## **HEAVEN SUPPLEMENTARY DISCUSSION**

### **QUESTION - [Is Heaven real?](#)**

**ANSWER** - Heaven is indeed a real place. The Bible tells us that heaven is God’s throne (Isaiah 66:1; Acts 7:48-49; Matthew 5:34-35). After Jesus’ resurrection and appearance on earth to His disciples, “He was taken up into heaven and sat at the right hand of God” (Mark 16:19; Acts 7:55-56). “Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; He entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God’s presence” (Hebrews 9:24). Jesus not only went before us, entering on our behalf, but He is alive and has a present ministry in heaven, serving as our high priest in the true tabernacle made by God (Hebrews 6:19-20; 8:1-2).

We are also told by Jesus Himself that there are many rooms in God’s house and that He has gone before us to prepare a place for us. We have the assurance of His word that He will one day come back to earth and take us to where He is in heaven (John 14:1-4). Our belief in an eternal home in heaven is based on an explicit promise of Jesus. Heaven is most definitely a real place. Heaven truly does exist.

When people deny the existence of heaven, they deny not only the written Word of God, but they also deny the innermost longings of their own hearts. Paul addressed this issue in his letter to the Corinthians, encouraging them to cling to the hope of heaven so that they would not lose heart. Although we “groan and sigh” in our earthly state, we have the hope of heaven always before us and are eager to get there (2 Corinthians 5:1-4). Paul urged the Corinthians to look forward to their eternal home in heaven, a perspective that would enable them to endure hardships and disappointments in this life. “For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal” (2 Corinthians 4:17-18).

Just as God has put in men’s hearts the knowledge that He exists (Romans 1:19-20), so are we “programmed” to desire heaven. It is the theme of countless books, songs, and works of art. Unfortunately, our sin has barred the way to heaven. Since heaven is the abode of a holy and perfect God, sin has no place there, nor can it be tolerated. Fortunately, God has provided for us the key to



open the doors of heaven—Jesus Christ (John 14:6). All who believe in Him and seek forgiveness for sin will find the doors of heaven swung wide open for them. May the future glory of our eternal home motivate us all to serve God faithfully and wholeheartedly. “Since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is his body, and since we have a great high priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart full of assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water” (Hebrews 10:19-22). [GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

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#### QUESTION - [What is Heaven like?](#)

**ANSWER** - Heaven is a real place described in the Bible. The word “heaven” is found 276 times in the New Testament alone. Scripture refers to three heavens. The apostle Paul was “caught up to the third heaven,” but he was prohibited from revealing what he experienced there (2 Corinthians 12:1-9).

If a third heaven exists, there must also be two other heavens. The first is most frequently referred to in the Old Testament as the “sky” or the “firmament.” This is the heaven that contains clouds, the area that birds fly through. The second heaven is interstellar/outer space, which is the abode of the stars, planets, and other celestial objects (Genesis 1:14-18).

The third heaven, the location of which is not revealed, is the dwelling place of God. Jesus promised to prepare a place for true Christians in heaven (John 14:2). Heaven is also the destination of Old Testament saints who died trusting God’s promise of the Redeemer (Ephesians 4:8). Whoever believes in Christ shall never perish but have eternal life (John 3:16).

The apostle John was privileged to see and report on the heavenly city (Revelation 21:10-27). John witnessed that heaven (the new earth) possesses the “glory of God” (Revelation 21:11), the very presence of God. Because heaven has no night and the Lord Himself is the light, the sun and moon are no longer needed (Revelation 22:5).

The city is filled with the brilliance of costly stones and crystal clear jasper. Heaven has twelve gates (Revelation 21:12) and twelve foundations (Revelation 21:14). The paradise of the Garden of Eden is restored: the river of the water of life flows freely and the tree of life is available once again, yielding fruit monthly with leaves that “heal the nations” (Revelation 22:1-2). However eloquent John was in his description of heaven, the reality of heaven is beyond the ability of finite man to describe (1 Corinthians 2:9).

Heaven is a place of “no mores.” There will be no more tears, no more pain, and no more sorrow (Revelation 21:4). There will be no more separation, because death will be conquered (Revelation 20:6). The best thing about heaven is the presence of our Lord and Savior (1 John 3:2). We will be face to face with the Lamb of God who loved us and sacrificed Himself so that we can enjoy His presence in heaven for eternity. [GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

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#### QUESTION - [What will we be doing in Heaven? What will we do in Heaven?](#)

**ANSWER** - In Luke 23:43, Jesus declared, “Truly I say to you, today you shall be with me in paradise.” The word Jesus used for “paradise” is *paradeisos* which means “a park, that is, (specifically) an Eden (place of future happiness, paradise)”. *Paradeisos* is the Greek word taken from the Hebrew word *pardes* which means “a park: - forest, orchard” (Strong’s). Jesus said, “Today you shall be with me “en *paradeisos*,” not “en *nephele*” which is Greek for “in clouds.” The point is that Jesus picked and used the word for “a park.” Not just any park but “the paradise of God” or park of God (Revelation 2:7) which for us will be a place of future happiness. Does this sound like a boring place? When you think of a park, do you think of boredom?

*Worship, however, is from the heart.*

*Worship manifests itself in praise.*

Jesus said, “You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve” (Matthew 4:10). It’s interesting to note that Jesus did not say “**praise and serve**.” Even the briefest examination of the word **praise** in the Bible quickly shows it’s a verbal thing and is for the most part singing. **Worship**, however, is from the heart. **Worship** manifests itself in **praise**. **Serving God is worship, and Scripture is clear we will serve God in heaven. “His servants will serve Him”** (Revelation 22:3).

We are unable to fully serve God in this life due to sin, but in heaven “every curse will no longer be” (Revelation 22:3). We will not be under the curse of sin any longer, so everything we do will be worship in heaven. We will never be motivated by anything other than our love for God. Everything we do will be out of our love for God, untainted by our sin nature.

So what will we do? My favorite thing is to learn. “For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor?” (Romans 11:34), “in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Colossians 2:3). God is the “the high and lofty One who inhabits eternity” (Isaiah 57:15). God is bigger than forever, and it will take eternity “to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ” (Ephesians 3:18-19). In other words, we will never stop



learning.

God's Word says we won't have to be in His paradise alone. "I shall fully know even as I also am fully known" (1 Corinthians 13:12). This would seem to indicate that we will not only know our friends and family, we will "fully know" them. In other words, there is no need for secrets in heaven. There is nothing to be ashamed of. There is nothing to hide. We will have eternity to interact with "a great multitude, which no man could number, out of all nations and kindreds and people and tongues" (Revelation 7:9). No wonder heaven will be a place of infinite learning. Just getting to know everyone will take eternity!

Any further anticipation about what we shall do in God's eternal park, heaven, will be far surpassed when "the King shall say to those on His right hand, 'Come, blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world'" (Matthew 25:34). Whatever we will be doing, we can be sure it will be wonderful beyond our imaginations![GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

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#### QUESTION - [What is the second heaven?](#)

**ANSWER** - The second heaven is not called such in Scripture; rather, the existence of the second heaven is inferred from the fact that the Bible speaks of a "third heaven," and, if there is a third heaven, there must be a first heaven and second heaven, too. The idea that more than one type of "heaven" exists is confirmed in Hebrews 7:26, which says that Jesus, our High Priest, is "exalted above the heavens"; in other words, Jesus is in a heaven beyond other heavens.

The third heaven is mentioned in 2 Corinthians 12:2. Paul says, "I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know—God knows." In verse 4, Paul equates the third heaven with "paradise," the realm where God dwells. If the third heaven is God's dwelling place, then we could consider the second heaven to be "outer space," the realm of the stars and planets; and the first heaven to be earth's atmosphere, the realm of the birds and clouds.

The term *heaven* is used in Scripture to refer to all three realms. Psalm 104:12 speaks of "the birds of the heavens" (ESV)—this would be the first heaven, the atmosphere of Earth. In Isaiah 13:10 we find "the stars of heaven and their constellations"—a reference to the second heaven, outer space. And Revelation 11:19 describes the opening of "God's temple in heaven"—the third heaven, or God's dwelling place.

Some [Charismatic groups](#) use the term *second heaven* in reference to Satan's domain and anything that comes from there. They take biblical descriptions of Satan being "the ruler of the kingdom of the air" (Ephesians 2:2) and [demons](#) being "the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (Ephesians 6:12) and develop a theology of [spiritual warfare](#). According to these groups, "second heaven revelations" are false visions coming from Satan in an attempt to deceive God's prophets on earth. Prophets must learn to distinguish between "second heaven revelations" (from the devil) and "third heaven revelations" (from God). These same groups also sometimes teach a hierarchy of demonic power, with the first-heaven (earth-bound) demons being of lesser authority and power than the second-heaven demons.

Categorizing demons into first-heaven and second-heaven types goes beyond what the Bible says. Again, the Bible does not include the term *second heaven* anywhere. Those who look for prophecies or new revelations from God set themselves up for deception. God has spoken, and the Bible's canon is closed. We do not need a "new word" from God; we need to obey His "old word."[GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

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#### QUESTION - [What does it mean that Paul went to the third heaven?](#)

**ANSWER** - [Paul](#) describes a time when he was caught up to the third heaven (2 Corinthians 12:2–4). He mentions himself in the third person: "I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know—God knows. And I know that this man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows—was caught up to paradise and heard inexpressible things, things that no one is permitted to tell."

The word *heavens* can be used to refer to different realms. *Heavens* can refer to the sky and the earth's atmosphere, making it the "first heaven" (Deuteronomy 11:11; Psalm 104:12; Isaiah 55:10). It can also refer to outer space, where the stars and planets are—the "second heaven" (Psalm 8:3; Isaiah 13:10). And it can refer to God's dwelling place, which is beyond the other "heavens," a place known as the "third heaven" (Psalm 33:13–14; Isaiah 66:1; Matthew 6:9; Hebrews 7:26; Revelation 11:19). When Paul says that he went to the third heaven, he means that he went to the place where God dwells.

Interestingly, Paul uses the phrase *caught up* to refer to how he was transported to heaven; it's the same Greek word used in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 to refer to the rapture of the church. Following his list of "boasts" in 2 Corinthians 11:22–33, Paul further verifies his apostolic office by including his "visions and revelations from the Lord" (2 Corinthians 12:1). The apostle is unsure whether he was physically in the body or apart from the body when he experienced heaven (2 Corinthians 12:2–3). While there, he heard and

saw things that he couldn't describe and was forbidden to relate (verse 4). Some believe this event occurred during Paul's first missionary journey, when he was stoned and left for dead in Lystra, but we can't be sure. The privilege of seeing heaven no doubt gave Paul courage to face his later trials and suffering (2 Corinthians 4:17).

Christians today may have not seen the third heaven as Paul did, we can be just as confident of our future in heaven because we are in Christ. The Bible does not tell us everything we might like to know about heaven, but we know that it will be a wonderful place where we will dwell with Christ (John 14:3). Paul knew that being with Christ is far better than anything he could experience on earth (Philippians 1:21–23). Until the day we eternally enter God's presence, we can state with confidence along with the apostle Paul, "For we live by faith, not by sight. We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord" (2 Corinthians 5:7–8). [GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

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- [What will we look like in Heaven?](#)
- [What age will everyone be in Heaven?](#)
- [Where is Heaven? What is the location of Heaven?](#)
- [Will we have physical bodies in Heaven?](#)
- [Will we remember our earthly lives when we are in Heaven?](#)
- [Will we be able to see and know our friends and family members in Heaven?](#) (Short answer = YES!)
- [What are the New Heavens and the New Earth?](#)

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## Ouranos in Old (Septuagint) and New Testaments...

In the NASB ouranos is rendered as **air(9), heaven(218), heavenly\*(1), heavens(24), sky(22)**.

**SEPTUAGINT** - Gen. 1:1; Gen. 1:8; Gen. 1:9; Gen. 1:14; Gen. 1:15; Gen. 1:17; Gen. 1:20; Gen. 1:26; Gen. 1:28; Gen. 1:30; Gen. 2:1; Gen. 2:4; Gen. 2:19; Gen. 2:20; Gen. 6:7; Gen. 6:17; Gen. 7:3; Gen. 7:11; Gen. 7:19; Gen. 7:23; Gen. 8:2; Gen. 9:2; Gen. 11:4; Gen. 14:19; Gen. 14:22; Gen. 15:5; Gen. 19:24; Gen. 21:17; Gen. 22:11; Gen. 22:15; Gen. 22:17; Gen. 24:3; Gen. 24:7; Gen. 26:4; Gen. 27:28; Gen. 27:39; Gen. 28:12; Gen. 28:17; Gen. 40:17; Gen. 40:19; Gen. 49:25; Exod. 9:8; Exod. 9:10; Exod. 9:22; Exod. 9:23; Exod. 10:13; Exod. 10:21; Exod. 10:22; Exod. 16:4; Exod. 17:14; Exod. 20:4; Exod. 20:11; Exod. 20:22; Exod. 24:10; Exod. 31:17; Exod. 32:13; Lev. 26:19; Deut. 1:10; Deut. 1:28; Deut. 2:25; Deut. 3:24; Deut. 4:11; Deut. 4:17; Deut. 4:19; Deut. 4:26; Deut. 4:32; Deut. 4:36; Deut. 4:39; Deut. 5:8; Deut. 8:19; Deut. 9:1; Deut. 9:14; Deut. 10:14; Deut. 10:22; Deut. 11:11; Deut. 11:17; Deut. 11:21; Deut. 17:3; Deut. 25:19; Deut. 26:15; Deut. 28:12; Deut. 28:23; Deut. 28:24; Deut. 28:26; Deut. 28:62; Deut. 29:19; Deut. 30:4; Deut. 30:12; Deut. 30:19; Deut. 31:28; Deut. 32:1; Deut. 32:40; Deut. 32:43; Deut. 33:13; Deut. 33:26; Deut. 33:28; Jos. 2:11; Jos. 8:20; Jos. 8:21; Jos. 10:11; Jos. 10:13; Jdg. 5:4; Jdg. 5:20; Jdg. 13:20; Jdg. 20:40; 1 Sam. 2:10; 1 Sam. 5:12; 1 Sam. 17:44; 1 Sam. 17:46; 2 Sam. 18:9; 2 Sam. 21:10; 2 Sam. 22:8; 2 Sam. 22:10; 2 Sam. 22:14; 1 Ki. 8:22; 1 Ki. 8:23; 1 Ki. 8:27; 1 Ki. 8:30; 1 Ki. 8:32; 1 Ki. 8:34; 1 Ki. 8:35; 1 Ki. 8:36; 1 Ki. 8:39; 1 Ki. 8:43; 1 Ki. 8:45; 1 Ki. 8:49; 1 Ki. 8:53; 1 Ki. 8:54; 1 Ki. 12:24; 1 Ki. 16:4; 1 Ki. 18:36; 1 Ki. 18:38; 1 Ki. 18:45; 1 Ki. 20:24; 1 Ki. 22:19; 2 Ki. 1:10; 2 Ki. 1:12; 2 Ki. 1:14; 2 Ki. 2:1; 2 Ki. 2:11; 2 Ki. 7:2; 2 Ki. 7:19; 2 Ki. 14:27; 2 Ki. 17:16; 2 Ki. 19:15; 2 Ki. 21:3; 2 Ki. 21:5; 2 Ki. 23:4; 2 Ki. 23:5; 1 Chr. 16:26; 1 Chr. 16:31; 1 Chr. 21:16; 1 Chr. 21:26; 1 Chr. 27:23; 1 Chr. 29:11; 2 Chr. 2:5; 2 Chr. 2:11; 2 Chr. 6:13; 2 Chr. 6:14; 2 Chr. 6:18; 2 Chr. 6:21; 2 Chr. 6:23; 2 Chr. 6:25; 2 Chr. 6:26; 2 Chr. 6:27; 2 Chr. 6:30; 2 Chr. 6:33; 2 Chr. 6:35; 2 Chr. 6:39; 2 Chr. 7:1; 2 Chr. 7:13; 2 Chr. 7:14;

2 Chr. 18:18; 2 Chr. 20:6; 2 Chr. 28:9; 2 Chr. 30:27; 2 Chr. 32:20; 2 Chr. 33:3; 2 Chr. 33:5; 2 Chr. 36:23; Ezr. 1:2; Ezr. 5:11; Ezr. 5:12; Ezr. 6:9; Ezr. 6:10; Ezr. 7:12; Ezr. 7:21; Ezr. 7:23; Ezr. 9:6; Neh. 1:4; Neh. 1:5; Neh. 1:9; Neh. 2:4; Neh. 2:20; Neh. 9:6; Neh. 9:13; Neh. 9:15; Neh. 9:23; Neh. 9:27; Neh. 9:28; Est. 4:17; Ps. 2:4; Ps. 8:2; Ps. 8:4; Ps. 8:9; Ps. 10:4; Ps. 13:2; Ps. 17:10; Ps. 17:14; Ps. 18:2; Ps. 18:7; Ps. 19:7; Ps. 32:6; Ps. 32:13; Ps. 35:6; Ps. 49:4; Ps. 49:6; Ps. 49:11; Ps. 52:3; Ps. 56:4; Ps. 56:6; Ps. 56:11; Ps. 56:12; Ps. 67:9; Ps. 67:34; Ps. 68:35; Ps. 72:9; Ps. 72:25; Ps. 75:9; Ps. 77:23; Ps. 77:24; Ps. 77:26; Ps. 78:2; Ps. 79:15; Ps. 84:12; Ps. 88:3; Ps. 88:6; Ps. 88:12; Ps. 88:30; Ps. 88:38; Ps. 90:1; Ps. 95:5; Ps. 95:11; Ps. 96:6; Ps. 101:20; Ps. 101:26; Ps. 102:11; Ps. 102:19; Ps. 103:2; Ps. 103:12; Ps. 104:40; Ps. 106:26; Ps. 107:5; Ps. 107:6; Ps. 112:4; Ps. 112:6; Ps. 113:11; Ps. 113:23; Ps. 113:24; Ps. 118:89; Ps. 120:2; Ps. 122:1; Ps. 123:8; Ps. 133:3; Ps. 134:6; Ps. 135:5; Ps. 135:26; Ps. 138:8; Ps. 143:5; Ps. 145:6; Ps. 146:8; Ps. 148:1; Ps. 148:4; Ps. 148:13; Prov. 3:19; Prov. 8:26; Prov. 8:27; Prov. 8:28; Prov. 25:3; Prov. 30:4; Eccl. 1:13; Eccl. 3:1; Eccl. 5:1; Eccl. 10:20; Job 1:7; Job 1:16; Job 2:2; Job 5:10; Job 7:9; Job 9:6; Job 9:8; Job 9:13; Job 11:8; Job 12:7; Job 14:12; Job 15:15; Job 16:19; Job 18:4; Job 18:19; Job 20:6; Job 20:27; Job 22:14; Job 22:26; Job 26:11; Job 26:13; Job 28:21; Job 28:24; Job 34:13; Job 35:5; Job 35:11; Job 37:3; Job 38:18; Job 38:24; Job 38:29; Job 38:33; Job 38:37; Job 41:3; Job 42:15; Hos. 2:14; Hos. 2:20; Hos. 2:23; Hos. 4:3; Hos. 7:12; Hos. 13:4; Amos 9:2; Amos 9:6; Joel 2:10; Joel 3:3; Joel 4:16; Jon. 1:9; Nah. 3:16; Hab. 3:3; Zeph. 1:3; Zeph. 1:5; Hag. 1:10; Hag. 2:6; Hag. 2:21; Zech. 2:10; Zech. 5:9; Zech. 6:5; Zech. 8:12; Zech. 12:1; Mal. 3:10; Isa. 1:2; Isa. 8:21; Isa. 13:5; Isa. 13:10; Isa. 13:13; Isa. 14:12; Isa. 14:13; Isa. 18:6; Isa. 24:18; Isa. 24:21; Isa. 34:4; Isa. 34:5; Isa. 37:16; Isa. 38:14; Isa. 40:12; Isa. 40:22; Isa. 42:5; Isa. 44:23; Isa. 44:24; Isa. 45:8; Isa. 45:12; Isa. 45:18; Isa. 47:13; Isa. 48:13; Isa. 49:13; Isa. 50:3; Isa. 51:6; Isa. 51:13; Isa. 51:16; Isa. 55:9; Isa. 55:10; Isa. 63:15; Isa. 63:19; Isa. 65:17; Isa. 66:1; Isa. 66:22; Jer. 2:12; Jer. 4:23; Jer. 4:25; Jer. 4:28; Jer. 7:18; Jer. 7:33; Jer. 8:2; Jer. 8:7; Jer. 9:9; Jer. 10:2; Jer. 10:11; Jer. 10:12; Jer. 10:13; Jer. 14:22; Jer. 15:3; Jer. 16:4; Jer. 19:7; Jer. 19:13; Jer. 23:24; Jer. 25:16; Jer. 28:9; Jer. 28:15; Jer. 28:16; Jer. 28:53; Jer. 38:35; Jer. 39:17; Jer. 41:20; Jer. 51:17; Jer. 51:18; Jer. 51:19; Jer. 51:25; Lam. 2:1; Lam. 3:41; Lam. 3:50; Lam. 3:66; Lam. 4:19; Ezek. 1:1; Ezek. 8:3; Ezek. 29:5; Ezek. 31:6; Ezek. 31:13; Ezek. 32:4; Ezek. 32:7; Ezek. 32:8; Ezek. 38:20; Dan. 2:28; Dan. 2:37; Dan. 2:38; Dan. 2:44; Dan. 3:17; Dan. 3:36; Dan. 3:59; Dan. 3:60; Dan. 3:63; Dan. 3:80; Dan. 4:11; Dan. 4:12; Dan. 4:13; Dan. 4:16; Dan. 4:17; Dan. 4:21; Dan. 4:22; Dan. 4:27; Dan. 4:31; Dan. 4:33; Dan. 4:34; Dan. 4:37; Dan. 7:2; Dan. 7:13; Dan. 7:27; Dan. 8:8; Dan. 8:10; Dan. 9:12; Dan. 11:4; Dan. 12:3; Dan. 12:7;

**NEW TESTAMENT** - Matt. 3:2; Matt. 3:16; Matt. 3:17; Matt. 4:17; Matt. 5:3; Matt. 5:10; Matt. 5:12; Matt. 5:16; Matt. 5:18; Matt. 5:19; Matt. 5:20; Matt. 5:34; Matt. 5:45; Matt. 6:1; Matt. 6:9; Matt. 6:10; Matt. 6:20; Matt. 6:26; Matt. 7:11; Matt. 7:21; Matt. 8:11; Matt. 8:20; Matt. 10:7; Matt. 10:32; Matt. 10:33; Matt. 11:11; Matt. 11:12; Matt. 11:23; Matt. 11:25; Matt. 12:50; Matt. 13:11; Matt. 13:24; Matt. 13:31; Matt. 13:32; Matt. 13:33; Matt. 13:44; Matt. 13:45; Matt. 13:47; Matt. 13:52; Matt. 14:19; Matt. 16:1; Matt. 16:2; Matt. 16:3; Matt. 16:17; Matt. 16:19; Matt. 18:1; Matt. 18:3; Matt. 18:4; Matt. 18:10; Matt. 18:14; Matt. 18:18; Matt. 18:19; Matt. 18:23; Matt. 19:12; Matt. 19:14; Matt. 19:21; Matt. 19:23; Matt. 20:1; Matt. 21:25; Matt. 22:2; Matt. 22:30; Matt. 23:13; Matt. 23:22; Matt. 24:29; Matt. 24:30; Matt. 24:31; Matt. 24:35; Matt. 24:36; Matt. 25:1; Matt. 26:64; Matt. 28:2; Matt. 28:18;

Mk. 1:10; Mk. 1:11; Mk. 4:32; Mk. 6:41; Mk. 7:34; Mk. 8:11; Mk. 10:21; Mk. 11:25; Mk. 11:30; Mk. 11:31; Mk. 12:25; Mk. 13:25; Mk. 13:27; Mk. 13:31; Mk. 13:32; Mk. 14:62; Mk. 16:19;

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Jn. 1:32; Jn. 1:51; Jn. 3:13; Jn. 3:27; Jn. 3:31; Jn. 6:31; Jn. 6:32; Jn. 6:33; Jn. 6:38; Jn. 6:41; Jn. 6:42; Jn. 6:50; Jn. 6:51; Jn. 6:58; Jn. 12:28; Jn. 17:1;

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Rom. 1:18; Rom. 10:6; 1 Co. 8:5; 1 Co. 15:47; 2 Co. 5:1; 2 Co. 5:2; 2 Co. 12:2; Gal. 1:8; Eph. 1:10; Eph. 3:15; Eph. 4:10; Eph. 6:9; Phil. 3:20; Col. 1:5; Col. 1:16; Col. 1:20; Col. 1:23; Col. 4:1; 1 Thess. 1:10; 1 Thess. 4:16; 2 Thess. 1:7;

Heb. 1:10; Heb. 4:14; Heb. 7:26; Heb. 8:1; Heb. 9:23; Heb. 9:24; Heb. 11:12; Heb. 12:23; Heb. 12:25; Heb. 12:26;

Jas. 5:12; Jas. 5:18; 1 Pet. 1:4; 1 Pet. 1:12; 1 Pet. 3:22; 2 Pet. 1:18; 2 Pet. 3:5; 2 Pet. 3:7; 2 Pet. 3:10; 2 Pet. 3:12; 2 Pet. 3:13;

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TDNT - BORROW [Kittel's Theological Dictionary of the New Testament : abridged in one volume](#)(TDNT) - see page 128ff

## Greek Usage.

1. The Basic Idea. ouranós in the singular means “heaven” either as the overarching firmament or as that which embraces all things. This duality is already present in the notion of the cosmic egg, in Homer’s view of a solid heaven on pillars which can yet be called the abode of the gods, or in Plato’s use of heaven for both the cosmos and the perfect or the absolute (cf. also Aristotle, the Stoics, and the Gnostics). There is one heaven, but it is given both a natural and a divine reference, with a realistic, symbolical, or figurative link. Up to a later period we find representations of the god Uranos.

2. The Cosmological Sense. In Homer heaven is a solid vault or half-globe (of iron or brass). An effort is made later to understand heaven in terms of thought and experience. The phrase “heaven and earth” is common, and “under heaven” also comes into use. Heaven is the cause and prototype of all being and may be equated with the universe or cosmos. For Plato it is the starting point for the contemplation of being and for absolute knowledge.

3. The Mythological Sense.

a. The God Uranos. Uranos is a god of pre-Homeric religion. He is emasculated and overthrown by his son Cronos, who is then replaced by Zeus, but depictions of Uranos continue into the period of the empire.

b. The Abode of the Gods. Heaven in this sense is Olympus; the Olympians are dwellers in heaven. The lord of heaven is the lord of the universe (Zeus). Prayer is made to heaven, oaths are taken by heaven, and crimes can reach to heaven.

c. Orphic Writings. These integrate heaven and earth (cf. the cosmic egg, of which heaven is the upper shell). Initiates recapture this unity by becoming divine. Heaven is also presented as the mantle of the world.

d. The Magic Papyri. Heaven is important in these papyri, e.g., in invocations.

4. Gnosticism. In the Hermetic writings heaven is divided into seven “cycles.” It is created by the demiurge and serves as his dwelling. It lies above ether, air, and earth. The heavenly god is a bad god; mysteries are shut up in heaven, necessity rules there, and its inhabitants have demonic souls. Light brings liberation from it. The upward journey leads through the heavenly spheres. In general, heaven is a sign of dualism; the view of it is profoundly pessimistic.

5. Philo. Philo combines Plato, Stoicism, and the OT. Heaven and earth for him are God’s votive offering. Heaven, which is noncorporeal, represents the cosmos, although it has a material counterpart. The heavenly man is the prototype of the earthly, but man himself is a heaven with starlike natures. Heaven for Philo is a sign of cosmic unity and helps to effect it. [H. TRAUB, V, 497–502]

## B. The OT.

1. Heaven in Ancient Israel. The Hebrew term for heaven is šāmayim (a plural word of obscure etymology). It is first depicted as something fixed, with windows, pillars, and foundations. It is largely equivalent to “firmament.” Above it is the heavenly ocean which can bless with rain or destroy with flood. Heaven can also denote the atmosphere, but is not limited to this sense. Heavenly spheres are sometimes suggested (cf. the “ends” of heaven), but the phrase “heaven of heaven” is largely hyperbolic. “Days of heaven” is a phrase that denotes lasting duration (Dt. 11:21). The cosmos consists of heaven, earth, and the lower waters (Ex. 20:4), but often only heaven and earth are mentioned. Only fragments of mythical ideas occur. In poetic imagery heaven is a tent (Isa. 40:22), or a stretched out scroll (34:4). It has chambers for snow, hail, wind, and water (Job 37:9; 38:22, 37). It is also a place of signs and calendar references. In general it is presented on the

basis of simple observation.

2. God and Heaven. God created heaven (Gen. 1:1). He dwells in it, although he also dwells in the sanctuary, the ark, etc. Possibly the twofold dwelling reflects Near Eastern ideas of temples of dwelling and temples of manifestation. While the ark, e.g., is a place of temporary presence, heaven is the real abode of God. Yet the OT presentation is complex. The belief that God is the God of heaven is undoubtedly ancient, as is the concept of the heavenly court and the heavenly host (1 Kgs. 22:19ff.; Job 1:6ff.). There may be some influence here of the Canaanite pantheon, but the depiction is fluid, for the heavenly host may consist of spirits (1 Kgs. 22:19), but it may also be the heavenly army (Josh. 5:14), or simply the stars (Gen. 2:1). The cult of the host of heaven is sternly resisted (2 Kgs. 17:6; cf. Jer. 7:18). Because God dwells in heaven, hands are lifted up to heaven in oaths (Dt. 32:4) or prayer (Ex. 9:29), and God is asked to look down from heaven (Dt. 26:15). Deuteronomy explains that in the Sinai revelation God really speaks from heaven, not from the mountain (4:36), and if God dwells in the sanctuary, it is as he sets his name and causes it to dwell there, the name representing God's turning to Israel in self-revelation (cf. Dt. 12:5, 11; 14:23-24; 26:2). In cultic practice, of course, the main concern is with the manifestation. Ezekiel depicts the throne-carriage coming forth from heavenly transcendence, but his message has to do with the revealed God. Earth is God's sphere of dominion (Dt. 4:39), but heaven itself cannot contain him (1 Kgs. 8:27). Enthroned on high, he rules on earth (Ps. 113:5-6). In times of affliction he seems to be wrapped in clouds (Lam. 3:44), and prayer is made that he will rend the heavens and come down (Isa. 63:19). Eliphaz accuses Job of thinking that thick clouds cover him so that he cannot see (Job 22:13). Ecclesiastes warns against foolish talk in view of the divine transcendence (5:2). In the main, however, the OT links God's dwelling in heaven with his mighty works on earth. The "God of heaven" of the later period is the God who in historical omnipotence controls the destinies of empires and works out his plan for the world.

3. Heaven as the Place of Salvation. As the dwelling of God, heaven is the source of blessing, the setting of life, and the place where God's planned salvation is already present. The isolated idea of rapture (2 Kgs. 2:11) relates to this concept. The thought of God's word being fixed in heaven (Ps. 119:89) has a more general application (cf. 89:2). There is a model of the earthly tabernacle in heaven (Ex. 25:9, 40), and Ezekiel (2:1ff.) refers to a roll that is preexistent in heaven. In the visions of Zechariah the kingdom of God is already prepared in heaven. In Dan. 7:13ff. the kingdom of the Son of Man is one that comes down from heaven in contrast to the earthly empires that come up from below (v. 17). Since heaven is also created, it, too, may be shaken (cf. Amos 8:9; Jer. 4:23ff.). A cosmic collapse is foreseen in Isa. 51:6, and a new heaven and earth will be created according to 65:17. Thus heaven itself is drawn into the circle of soteriology. But heaven is never of primary interest in the OT; even when salvation comes from heaven, the central point is that it comes to earth. Only once (Dan. 4:23) is heaven substituted for the name of God, though cf. Ps. 73:9; Job 20:27. [G. VON RAV, V, 502–09]

## C. The LXX and Judaism.

### I. The LXX.

#### 1. Additions.

a. ouranós is used 667 times in the LXX, sometimes in additions. These may be designed to give greater vividness (cf. Josh. 8:21; Ex. 9:29; Dt. 9:15; Job 7:9, etc.).

b. Another reason for adding ouranós may be to give greater concreteness (cf. Isa. 8:21; 24:18, 21; 38:14).

c. At times the belief that God the Creator is linked with heaven is the reason for adding ouranós (cf. Ps. 91:1; Isa. 14:13; Job 22:26). There may be anticipations here of the substitution of heaven for the name of God, or the point may be to protect the divine transcendence.

2. The Plural ouranoí. The LXX has the plural 51 times. It is alien to secular Greek and follows Hebrew usage. It occurs mostly in the Psalms or similar pieces (cf. 1 Sam. 2:10; Dt. 32:43). The only prose use is in 2 Chron. 28:9, but it becomes more common in 2 and 3 Maccabees, Wisdom, etc. The phrase "heaven of heavens" (Dt. 10:14; 1 Kgs. 8:27) reflects the idea of a plurality of heavens but it is used to suggest the comprehensiveness of the universe and of God's dominion over it.

### II. Judaism.

a. Judaism engages in speculation about heaven which leads to the idea of various heavens. These are usually seven in number, each with its own name and all loved by God. Other texts, however, speak of two,

three, five, of ten heavens. En. 71:5ff. offers a vivid description of the heaven of heavens with the Ancient of Days, the seraphim, angels, etc. in a house of crystal stones with living fire running between them.

b. Another development in Judaism is the widespread use of heaven instead of God.

c. Judaism expects a new creation in the last time in the form either of a transfiguration or of a complete destruction and replacement of the old creation.

**D. The NT.** - ouranós occurs 284 times (94 in the plural) in the NT. It is most common in Matthew (84 times) and Revelation (54). It is chiefly used in Matthew in the formulas “Father in heaven” and “kingdom of heaven” (plural in both instances). The plural usage of the NT derives mainly from Jewish sources, although Hellenistic Gnosticism might have had some influence on Eph. 1:10; 4:10; 6:9; Col. 1:16, 20, and just possibly Heb. 4:14; 7:26; 9:23. NT usage in general reflects on the one side the ancient view of heaven as a vault and on the other side the belief that heaven is the divine sphere from which God comes down. These ideas go together, for the relation to God involves the cosmological sense, and the cosmological sense the relation to God. The cosmos is “heaven and earth,” with heaven as the controlling part. The integration of the two is God’s work. Their relationship symbolizes that of Creator and creation (cf. Isa. 55:9).

## 1. Heaven and Earth.

a. With earth, heaven was created by God (Acts 4:24; Rev. 10:6; cf. Acts 17:24). The creation of a new heaven and earth is promised (Rev. 21:1). Sin has disrupted the old creation, but the new creation is already prepared in God’s saving purpose (2 Pet. 3:13; cf. Rom. 8:21ff.).

b. Heaven will pass away as well as earth (Mark 13:31; Rev. 21:1; Heb. 12:26). Both are kept for destruction (2 Pet. 3:7), and they flee before God in terror (Rev. 20:11). The law is valid so long as the first heaven and earth remain (Matt. 5:18), but the word of Jesus will remain even when these perish (Mark 13:31). The judgment of God on heaven and earth is the background to the true message of the NT, i.e., the intimation of what is enduring and unshakable (Heb. 12:27).

c. With earth, heaven stands under God’s lordship. God is Lord of heaven and earth (Matt. 11:25; cf. Gen. 24:3). He is so not merely as Creator (cf. Rev. 17:24) but as Father, i.e., as God of the covenant. With Isa. 66:1, Matt. 5:34 and Acts 7:49 describe heaven and earth as the absolute sphere of God’s dominion. When the Son of Man comes, he will gather his elect from the ends of earth to the ends of heaven — an intentional paradox designed to indicate universal gathering.

d. Heaven and earth are given a new relation by Christ’s saving work. This is expressed by the “in heaven and on earth” of Eph. 1:10 and Col. 1:16, 20. With “all things,” this phrase denotes absolute comprehensiveness and yet also makes “all things” more concrete. Heavenly things are probably to be equated with the “invisible” things of Col. 1:16. The universe in this total sense is strictly related to Christ. Its very being is grounded in him through whom the work of reconciliation and peace is done. The formula serves as a basis for the idea of the body in Col. 1:18. Everything in heaven and on earth is integrated as a body whose head is Christ (Eph. 1:10, 21-22). In 1 Cor. 8:5-6 the many gods in heaven and on earth may be called lords but they have no reality. What is real is defined only by the one God and the one Lord. In Eph. 3:15 all families in heaven and on earth derive not merely from God the Creator but from the God who is the Father of Jesus Christ. In Rev. 5:3 Christ is the only one in heaven and on earth who can open the book, and in 5:13 all creation, in heaven, on earth, and under the sea, praises the Lamb. In Acts 2:17-18 the outpouring of the Spirit means signs and wonders in heaven above and on earth beneath. In Matt. 28:18 the risen Christ has all exousía in heaven and on earth; in virtue of his saving work, no entity exercises autonomy. The unity of heaven and earth that Christ’s work effects finds expression in the petition of Matt. 6:10 that God’s will be done on earth as it is (already) in heaven. Earth is taken up to heaven, or heaven descends to earth, yet heaven is superior because God’s will is done there and his throne is set there (cf. Heb. 8:1, 4). To be sure, what is decided on earth is ratified in heaven (Matt. 16:19), yet only in the eschatological community in which God’s will is already done and there is thus a unity of earth and heaven. In Luke 15:18, 21 “heaven and you” represent heaven and earth, although here heaven probably stands for God. The eis means “against,” not “up to heaven.”

## 2. God in Heaven.

a. God is called the “God of heaven” only in Rev. 11:13; 16:11. This denotes an affinity of God to heaven but not vice versa, for heaven is God’s work. What is implied is not just divine transcendence but divine dominion. God rules from heaven and initiates his saving work in heaven. “Father in heaven” in Matthew (5:16, 45; 6:1, 9, etc.) and Mark (11:25) has the same thrust but with more stress on the approach to humanity. Father is not just a substitute for God. Where “in heaven” is not added we mostly have statements of Jesus about his



Father. Parallel sayings show that “in heaven” denotes God’s freedom from restriction; he knows, sees, and can do all things. The “from” of Luke 11:13 shows that God acts from heaven.

b. “Heaven” is sometimes thought to be used as a substitute for God, e.g., in the phrase “kingdom of heaven.” Yet the NT shows no fear of using the name of God, and while heaven obviously relates to God, it may also help to define God’s lordship as that which comes down from heaven. Heaven, then, carries a reference to God’s saving work. God’s kingdom sets heaven in motion (Matt. 3:2) and breaks in from it.

c. God’s throne is in heaven, or is heaven itself (Heb. 8:1; Matt. 5:34). “Throne” here denotes government. The point is not that heaven is God’s location but that it expresses his absolute and inviolable lordship.

### **3. Heaven and Jesus Christ.**

a. Jesus Christ is awaited from heaven (1 Th. 1:10). He will come with the clouds of heaven (Matt. 14:62; 24:30); the expression implies apotheosis. His sign will be visible in heaven. Session at God’s right hand is linked with coming from heaven (Mark 14:62). In 1 Th. 1:10 Christ’s raising from the dead is related to his coming from heaven (cf. 1 Cor. 15:23, 47). His resurrection is the basis of the parousia. When the Lord descends from heaven, the dead in Christ will rise (1 Th. 4:16). There will be a manifestation of what is concealed in heaven (2 Th. 1:7). In this concealment lies the *politeuma* of believers as they await their Savior from heaven (Phil. 3:20). Christ’s coming means eschatological manifestation.

b. Since Jesus comes from heaven, it is natural to refer to Christ as the lord or master in heaven (Col. 4:1). This is not so much a reference to location as to rule. Christ is lord over believers and the ruler who sees and knows all things.

c. In Acts 2:32ff. raising up and exalting at God’s right hand imply ascension (v. 34). One reading of Luke 24:51 intimates ascent. In Acts 1:10-11 the disciples see Jesus go up as far as the sky, which is here the margin of the heaven that receives and conceals him. Heaven also stands for God’s sovereignty that has still to be consummated on earth (2:35; 3:21). The determinative factor is that heaven is seen from the standpoint of the right hand of God (1 Pet. 3:22; Mark 16:19). In Acts 3:21 heaven receives Christ in virtue of its concealing function. In Eph. 4:9-10, however, the picture differs. Christ ascends above the heavens, shattering the isolation imposed by evil forces. The ascent is Christ’s triumphal procession through the subjugated zones of heaven. A similar thought is present in Rom. 10:6-7. In Jn. 3:13 only he who comes from heaven can mount up to it. God’s saving will characterizes the heaven from which Jesus comes and to which he returns. The divine will and plan are “heavenly things” (3:12). The incarnation does not interrupt fellowship with the Father, for heaven is open to the Son (1:51), and he has his true existence there (15:16, 19; 1 Jn. 4:6). Coming from heaven, he is the true bread from heaven (6:41, 50-51). Only God can give this bread; it is uniquely the bread of God that gives life to the world (v. 33). Hebrews refers to Christ’s session at God’s right hand in heaven (8:1) and also to his passing through the heavens (4:14), or into heaven as the innermost sanctuary (9:24). Where heaven is the innermost sanctuary, it is thought of eschatologically as the perfect tent not made with hands. It is here in the presence of God that he has offered his once-for-all sacrifice of himself. Before God’s face there are no more types of shadows but fulfilment. God is both high above heaven and yet also in heaven. In Col. 3:1 heaven is where Christ is, but only in the sense that this defines the purpose rather than the nature of heaven, i.e., to denote the right hand of God. In 1 Cor. 15:47 Christ is the second man from heaven in contrast to Adam as the first man from earth. Behind the phrase lies the idea of the primal man that is also found in Philo (with Platonic links). But Paul’s use is different, for he stresses *sōma*, and his man from heaven belongs to the eschatological present understood as the last time. He thus selects the phrase more from the standpoint of exaltation, i.e., the victory over death, than from that of eternity. The Christ who rose in the *sōma*, and is awaited from heaven, is the Christ who has come already in the incarnation. He is the initiator of the aeon of resurrection.

### **4. Heaven Opened.**

At the baptism of Jesus opened heaven corresponds to eschatological expectation. God is at hand in him (cf. Matt. 3:16). In Jn. 1:51 heaven is always open to Jesus. He is Bethel, the gate of heaven on earth. Opened heaven enables faith to see his glory (cf. Acts 7:56). Christ’s messianic work is the basis of the opening of heaven. Hence the vision of open heaven in Rev. 19:11 is the revelation of Jesus Christ (1:1). Heaven is here a temple into which a door is opened (4:1). Peter receives his vision, too, from this opened heaven (Acts 10:11, 16; 11:5).

### **5. Heaven as the Starting Point of the Event of Revelation.**

God's revelations come from heaven. The voice at the baptism (Mark 1:11) is God's authoritative voice initiating the eschatological aeon. The same applies to Jn. 12:28 and cf. Mark 9:7; Rev. 10:4, 8; 11:12, etc., although in Revelation the voices are probably those of angels speaking with divine authority. Heb. 12:25 is perhaps referring to God's speaking from heaven. Like the voice, the Spirit also comes from heaven (Mark 1:10; cf. Jn. 1:32). He is sent from heaven in 1 Pet. 1:12 (cf. Acts 2:2). Heaven denotes origin and authority. John's baptism is from heaven; hence its validity (Mark 11:30). Not to acknowledge this baptism is to render futile the seeking of a sign from heaven (Mark 8:11). The light from heaven in Acts 9:3 is a light from the Lord that leads to faith and knowledge. Jn. 3:27 says that we can receive only what is given from heaven; the reference is to the exclusiveness of God's saving lordship (cf. 6:65; 19:11). All giving is from the dominion of the Father of Jesus and beyond human control or influence. In Rom. 1:18 God's wrath is also revealed from heaven in and with the revelation of righteousness. OT figures are used to depict wrath concretely, e.g., fire from heaven (Luke 9:54), or hailstones from heaven (Rev. 16:21). Closed heaven may also be a form of wrath, i.e., the withholding of rain and fruitfulness (Luke 4:25; Jms. 5:18; Rev. 11:6).

## **6. Heaven and the Blessings of Salvation.**

As God's throne and the place from which Christ comes and to which he returns, heaven is a focus for present and future blessings in the new aeon, e.g., citizenship (Phil. 3:20), dwelling (2 Cor. 5:1), inheritance (1 Pet. 1:4), reward (Matt. 5:12), and treasure (6:20). Being in heaven, these blessings are with God or Christ, with whom believers already are, although incomprehensibly. The new Jerusalem is also present in heaven in the same reality and concealment (Rev. 3:12; 21:2, 10; cf. Heb. 12:22, 25).

## **7. Heaven and the Angels.**

Heaven is the sphere of angels and is served by them (Matt. 18:10). They come from it and return to it (Matt. 28:2; Luke 2:15). The divine in Rev. 10:1 etc. sees them there. Their heavenly origin denotes their divine authority. If evil powers also seem to live in heaven (1 Cor. 8:5; Acts 7:42), the reference here seems to be to the firmament (though cf. Luke 10:18; Rev. 12:7ff.). Satan's fall from heaven means that he can no longer stand in God's presence (Rev. 12:10). Since God's will is done in heaven, it is summoned to rejoice with those who overcome (12:12). Heaven is defined here in terms of the perfect service of God.

## **8. Heaven as the Firmament.**

This is the meaning when Jesus and others lift up their eyes to heaven (Mark 6:41; Jn. 17:1; Acts 1:11). The sky hides God's throne but also signifies his ruling presence. Oaths and prayers are directed to it, i.e., to God. It also denotes the height of human arrogance (Matt. 11:23). Hypocrites interpret the signs in it but not the signs of the times (Luke 12:56). Birds fly in it (Matt. 6:26). Stars falling from it are apocalyptic signs (Mark 13:25). The final catastrophe is a collapse of the vault of heaven that shakes its powers (Matt. 24:29; Mark 13:25).

## **9. Heaven in the Plural.**

Paul speaks of a rapture to the third heaven in 2 Cor. 12:2 (cf. v. 3) but says nothing specific about the three heavens. The things he hears are *árrêta*: they may not and cannot be uttered. The heavens of Hebrews are filled with ministering angels.

## **E. The Apostolic Fathers.**

The use in the apostolic fathers is much the same as that of the NT (and the LXX in 1 Clement). 1 Clement usually quotes in the singular but itself has the plural. There are OT and even Stoic echoes in what it says about God's creating and sustaining the heavens. Barnabas has OT quotations and touches on the ascension. In Hermas Visions 1.1.4 heaven opens and closes for the vision. Its unattainable height plays a role in Mandates 11.18. Did. 8.2 has the singular in the Lord's Prayer, and in 16.6 the opening of heaven is an apocalyptic sign. In Mart. Pol. 9.1 Polycarp hears a voice from heaven, and in 14.1 he prays toward heaven. Gnostic influences may be seen in 2 Clem. 1.16.3. Diog. 5.9 says that while Christians live on earth they are citizens of heaven. God sends down his truth and Logos, the Creator of the heavens, from heaven (7.2). In Ignatius Smyrneans 11.2 the work of believers is to be perfect on earth and in heaven, and in Ephesians 19.2 a star in heaven marks the incarnation. (Page 736ff in [Theological Dictionary of the New Testament: Abridged in One Volume.](#))

Here is the entry from Colin Brown's (editor) [New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology. see page 188-196.](#)

**CL ouranos, heaven, possibly related to an Indo-European root meaning water, rain, means that which moistens or fructifies.** The related adj. ouranios means what is in heaven, comes from heaven, or appears in the heavens, i.e. heavenly. But it can also mean what is appropriate to a god, i.e. divine, and can even stand for god or the deity. On the other hand, it can mean simply that which belongs to the firmament or sky. epouranios means in heaven, belonging to the divine heaven.

**1. ouranos is found in Gk. from Homer on meaning the vault of heaven, the firmament.** Viewed as that which embraces everything, ouranos is divine. In pre-Homeric religious myth Uranus (in its Latinized form) derived from the → earth, Ge, which he impregnated in a holy marriage. According to the myth, Uranus was castrated and deposed as a god by Cronus the son of Uranus and Ge. But the image of the god Uranus remained alive until imperial times. In Orphic mythology heaven derived from the upper half of the cosmic egg. According to Homer, the (brazen, iron) heaven rests on pillars which Atlas carries. In heaven dwell the gods, the immortal ouranioi or epouranioi, above all Zeus. One also finds in Gk. writing the idea of a heavenly garment.

In the Gk. enlightenment the old mythological concepts dissolved; ouranos became simply the firmament, and ouranios was applied to phenomena appearing in this firmament. In Plato heaven can be equated with the → all, the cosmos (→ Earth). The starry heavens viewed as the dwelling place of the gods became the starting point for the investigation of existence and absolute knowledge. Hence Plato used ouranios to denote what really is and what is truly coming to be. The Stoics understood heaven as the outermost layer of the ether, and then also as the directing world principle. In Gk. the expression “earth and heaven” can denote the whole world. (See further H. Traub, TDNT V 498 ff.)

**2. In gnostic systems the ouranioi, the heavenly ones, have a body and are transitional beings of a supernatural nature.** (See further TDNT V 501; W. Foerster, op. cit., see indexes.)

### **OT 1. The OT concepts of heaven.**

(a) In the OT concepts of heaven there are many links with ancient oriental ideas. The underworld (→ Hell, art. ὄης), → earth (art. γῆ) and heaven together form the cosmic building. The scant references suggest the picture of the flat disc of the earth, surrounded by the ocean, above which heaven or the firmament forms a vault like an upturned bowl or a hollow sphere. Above this there is the heavenly ocean (Gen. 1:8; Ps. 148:4–6). According to the ancient oriental view, there are many other heavenly spheres beyond the firmament which is visible from the earth. Such concepts are echoed in the expression “the heaven of heavens” (Deut. 10:14; 1 Ki. 8:27; Ps. 148:4). The OT, however, lacks a single, definitive and comprehensive cosmogony (→ Creation; and cf. A. Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis*, 19632).

The OT understanding of the world is throughout sober and rational, even if there are occasional echoes in poetical language of ancient mythological ideas. Thus heaven is said to have windows (Gen. 7:11; 2 Ki. 7:2) through which the waters restrained by the firmament can pour. Heaven rests on pillars (Job 26:11) or on foundations (2 Sam. 22:8). It is like a pitched → tent (Isa. 40:22; 44:24; Ps. 104:2). It is an unrolled scroll (Isa. 34:4; → Book, art. βιβλος) and can be torn (Isa. 64:1 [MT 63:19]). Together with the earth and the water under it, the heavens make up the universe (cf. Exod. 20:4; Ps. 115:15–17). But there is no word for universe in Heb. It is compared to a house in which the heavens are like a loft (Ps. 104:3; Amos 9:6). In addition to the firmament, the air above the earth can also be called the heavens (e.g. Gen. 1:26; 6:7; → Demon, Air, art. ἦρ).

(b) Above the firmament there are the storehouses of snow, hail (Job 38:22), wind (Jer. 49:36; Job 37:9; Ps. 135:7), and likewise the waters (Ps. 33:7; Job 38:37) which return to heaven when it has rained (Job 36:27; Isa. 55:10).

(c) In the sense of horizontal expanse it is possible to speak of the four ends of heaven (Jer. 49:36; Zech. 2:6 [10]; 6:5; Dan. 7:2). Man cannot ascend to heaven (Deut. 30:12; Prov. 30:4). The attempt to build a tower whose top will reach to heaven is arrogant folly which is punished (Gen. 11:4ff.; → Babylon).

(d) Heaven is the embodiment of permanence (Deut. 11:21; Ps. 89:29 [30]). On the other hand, prophetic preaching also refers to judgment on the heavens (Jer. 4:23–26; Isa. 13:13; 34:4; 50:3; 51:6); God's judgment is a cosmic catastrophe. Isaiah speaks of the creation of a new heaven (Isa. 65:17; 66:22).

(e) The “host of heaven” means the stars (Gen. 2:1; Deut. 4:19; Jdg. 5:20), or supernatural spiritual beings (1 Ki. 22:19; Job 1:6ff.; → Spirit). This host is under a commander (Jos. 5:14); it has fiery horses (2 Ki. 2:11; 6:17). Under Assyrian influence the host of heaven became the object of worship, a practice against which the prophets protested (e.g. 2 Ki. 17:16; 21:3). In Deut. 4:19 the host of heaven is assigned to the peoples of the world for worship (cf. NEB).

(f) In the OT, however, heaven is never accorded any ruling function. This is shown, for example, in the fact that the stars in the firmament are merely lights which serve to divide up the calendar (Gen. 1:14). They are not, therefore, considered to be gods, or the manifestations or vehicles of gods. The ancient oriental viewpoint has, in this respect, been radically demythologized. Astrological ideas which elsewhere were richly developed in the East appear only on the periphery (Deut. 18:9ff.; Isa. 47:13; Jer. 10:2).

(g) Ancient oriental concepts also lie behind the correspondence between the heavenly and the earthly, especially in the case of things which have a sacral value. Thus, in the priestly view, the Tabernacle was built following a heavenly model (Exod. 25:9, 40). Ezekiel speaks of a scroll which already pre-existed in heaven (Ezek. 2:9ff.; cf. Isa. 34:5 on God's sword). The future, i.e. the whole eschatological order of salvation, is prefigured and already exists or has happened in heaven, so that it precedes the earthly event (Zech. 2f.). The "→ Son of man," as the personification of the eschatological people of God, is already present in heaven (Dan. 7:13ff.).

## 2. Yahweh and heaven.

(a) More important for faith than these cosmological concepts is the statement that Yahweh created the heavens and the earth, i.e. the whole universe (Gen. 1:1; cf. Isa. 42:5; Ps. 33:6). Like the whole creation, the firmament and the heavens praise Yahweh (Ps. 19:1 [2]). The heavenly beings praise Yahweh because of his acts, for everything that happens on earth reveals God's glory (Ps. 29:9; → Glory, art. δόξα).

(b) Many interpret passages like Jdg. 5:4f., Deut. 33:2 and Hab. 3:3, to mean that in an earlier period Yahweh was conceived as dwelling on Sinai from which he came and intervened in history, while later people believed that Yahweh dwelt on Zion (Amos 1:2; Isa. 8:18). But religious interest did not centre on Yahweh's dwelling, but on the God who deals with Israel and the nations. So apparently contradictory statements can stand side by side. In 1 Ki. 8:12–13 Yahweh is said to dwell in the darkness of the Holy of Holies, i.e. in the → Temple. 1 Ki. 8:27, on the other hand, says that the whole of heaven could not contain him.

(c) As Israel entered into deeper contact with Canaanite religion, it took from the cult of Baal an important expression which it assimilated to its own faith in Yahweh. Yahweh was now described as the God or king of heaven, and this title became in fact very popular (Ezr. 5:11f.; 6:9f.; 7:12, 21, 23; Dan. 2:18f., 28, 37, 44; cf. Gen. 11:5; 24:3; Ps. 29:10). It could now be said that Yahweh, like the Canaanite gods, rides on the clouds (Deut. 33:26; Ps. 68:4 [5]; cf. 18:10 [11]; Isa. 19:1). As king of heaven, Yahweh had built his palace upon the heavenly ocean (Ps. 104:3). Like the Ugaritic father god, El, Yahweh was imagined as enthroned in heaven, surrounded by heavenly beings and taking counsel with them (1 Ki. 22:19ff.; Isa. 6:3ff.; Job 1:6ff.; Ps. 82:1; Dan. 7:9ff.). It is remarkable how forcefully and how freely such originally foreign views could be accepted in Israel and transferred to Yahweh. The gods of the Canaanite pantheon had become Yahweh's servants. So Yahweh is the only God in heaven above and on earth below (Deut. 4:39; 10:14).

(d) This view of Yahweh as enthroned in heaven eventually obliterated completely the old view of the God of Sinai: Yahweh came down from his dwelling above the firmament (Exod. 24:9ff.) to Sinai (Exod. 19:18). Above all according to the theology of Deut., Yahweh dwells in heaven and speaks from there (Deut. 4:36; 12:5, 11, 21; 26:15; etc.). Only his "Name" (šēmḥ; → Name) dwells on earth, according to this view, and that only in the → Temple in → Jerusalem. Further reflection still is revealed in the statement that all heaven cannot contain Yahweh (1 Ki. 8:27; Ps. 113:5f.). Neither the visible nor the invisible world could enclose Yahweh, for they were after all both created by him. But in any case he is superior to them and does not allow himself to be confined in any way in them.

(e) Just as Yahweh is in heaven, his → Word which remains eternally has its place in heaven (Ps. 89:2 [3]; 119:89). The godly man, praying in his need, complains that Yahweh is hidden (Lam. 3:4), and asks him to rend the heavens and come down (Isa. 64:1 [MT 63:19]). Yahweh who dwells in heaven is invoked in prayer (Deut. 26:15; 1 Ki. 8:30), while the suppliants raise their hands to heaven (Exod. 9:29, 33). The same thing happens at the taking of an oath (Deut. 32:40).

(f) It is possible for Yahweh to take chosen people to himself in heaven (Gen. 5:24; 2 Ki. 2:11; cf. Ps. 73:24). This is a particular favour and honour, for on the OT view heaven is not otherwise the place where the dead or the soul go (cf. → Hell, art. ἄδης).

## 3. The LXX and late Judaism.

(a) With few exceptions, ouranos in the LXX (667 times) always occurs as the rendering of šamayimh. It is in the plur., 51 times, a usage introduced through the LXX but unknown in secular Gk. It may be explained as translation Gk. (for the Heb. šamayimh is plur.) and as a plur. of completeness (above all in the Pss.). In later writings the frequency of the plur. increases considerably, indicating that the ancient oriental conception of several heavens had begun to have an effect (2 Macc. 15:23; 3 Macc. 2:2; Wis. 9:10; Tob. 8:5, etc.).

In Judaism the tendency to avoid the use of God's name became increasingly stronger (cf. Exod. 20:7). In its place substitutes were used, among them "heaven" (1 Macc. 3:18f.; 4:10f.; 12:15; Pirke Aboth 1:3, 11). Later even heaven was replaced (e.g. by māqîm, place). ouranos only occurs 9 times in the LXX, for the God of Israel (1 Esd. 6:15; → Lord, art. κύριος), his power (Dan. 4:23; → Might, art. ξουσία), the angels as a heavenly army (4 Macc. 4:11; cf. Lk. 2:13), and the children of God (2 Macc. 7:34). epouranos only occurs 7 times in the LXX.

(b) Contact with the intellectual climate of the ancient East resulted in a variety of cosmological speculations in pseudographic and

Rab. writings. In them apocalyptists and Rabbis undertake journeys to heaven and give revelations about things on the other side, but no generally binding doctrines about these things were ever arrived at. Some apocalyptic writings know only of one heaven (Eth. Enoch, 4 Esd., Syr.Bar.). Others speak of three heavens (Test. Lev. 2 f., according to the original text), of five heavens (Gr. Bar.). Sl. Enoch, Test. Abr., and Rab. tradition speak of seven heavens. A further result of eastern influence is the doctrine that everything corresponds to an archetype and pattern in heaven, and that all earthly existence and events are prefigured in heaven (→ συλλαμβάνω). Astronomical instruction is given allegedly as revelations from the → angels (Eth. Enoch 72–82; Jub.). But also we are shown all meteorological phenomena (rain, sun, etc.) coming from heaven, where they are kept in store-houses. Angels are set over both as controllers and supervisors.

(c) In certain writings → Paradise is located in heaven, either in the third (Sl. Enoch 8:1–8; Ass. Mos. 37), or especially in Rab. tradition in the seventh. Even → hell (art. γέεννα) can be located in heaven. After death the righteous go to heavenly dwelling-places.

There are many traditions about the heavenly Jerusalem. Speculation was particularly concerned with God's throne in heaven (in connection with Ezek. 1f.; Exod. 24:9–11; 1 Ki. 22:19ff.; Isa. 6:1ff.; Dan. 7:9f.) and with the → angels in heaven, their names, classes and functions. It was believed that God was worshipped in a heavenly cultus, the archangel Michael sacrificed on a heavenly altar, and the heavenly beings sang songs of praise.

Finally, → Satan is also to be found in heaven. In connection with OT traditions he is viewed as the → accuser of men before God (cf. Job 1f.), and also as an evil power opposed to God. Jewish traditions about the heavenly treasure-houses are important (→ Possessions, art. θησαυρός). In them are kept, e.g., the good works of men, and also the heavenly books and tablets on which are written the fate of earthly beings. Also recorded are the rewards and punishments that await the last → judgment.

(d) Philo combined Gk. and OT ideas. The ouranos noētos, the immaterial heaven of conceptual thinking present only in idea (Spec. Leg., 1, 302; Op. Mund. 29; Decal. 102), must be distinguished from the ouranos aisthētos, the tangible heaven which must not be deified (Op. Mund., 117). The visible heaven depends on both spiritual and earthly things. Heaven actualizes the unity of the whole cosmos. Philo speaks of the heavenly man as ouranios, a copy of God (Op. Mund., 82). In so far as every man is a part of him, every man is also an inhabitant of heaven. Correspondingly Philo can talk about heavenly and earthly virtues. (See further H. Traub, TDNT V 502 f.)

**NT In the NT ouranos occurs 272 times; most frequently in Matt. (82 times) especially in the phrase basileia tōn ouranōn, the → kingdom of heaven. ouranos occurs 34 times in the writings of Luke (of which 26 are in Acts); 18 times each in Mk. and Jn.; 21 times in Paul and 52 in Rev. Apart from Matt., it occurs mostly in the sing. ouranios occurs only 9 times, of which 7 are in Matt. in the phrases “your heavenly Father” (Matt. 5:48; 6:14, 26, 32; 23:9) and “my heavenly Father” (15:13; 18:35). Behind this there lies an Aram. phrase which is translated in other passages (e.g. 18:19) by “my [your] Father in heaven.” epouranios is found 18 times in the NT, of which 11 are in Paul, 6 in Heb. and one in Jn. In contrast to the very limited use of ouranios, epouranios is the adj. which was clearly preferred and which later prevailed.**

## 1. Conceptions of the world.

**(a) The NT also presupposes ancient eastern world views.** Rev. makes the most statements about heavenly beings and objects, but the interest is not cosmological but theological and soteriological. There is clearly no attempt to give definitive instruction about the geography of heaven as in certain Rab. writings (cf. above OT 3). In this context it is striking that there is never any mention of several heavens but only of one. The only passage in the NT which, in agreement with Rab. teaching, speaks of three heavens is 2 Cor. 12:2–4, but we are not given any more precise information (cf. P. E. Hughes, Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians, 1962, 432 ff.). As in the OT, the expression “heaven and earth” means the universe (Matt. 5:18, 34f.; 11:25; 24:35; Lk. 12:56, etc.). Occasionally a reference to the sea is added, giving rise to a tripartite formula (Acts 4:24; 14:15; Rev. 14:7). Since, according to this world picture, heaven is “above” (→ συλλαμβάνω), people raise their hands or their eyes towards it (Mk. 6:41 par. Matt. 14:18, Lk. 9:16; Mk. 7:34; Lk. 18:13; Jn. 17:1; Acts 1:11; 7:55; Rev. 10:5). The air can also be called heaven (Matt. 6:26; 16:2; 8:20; Mk. 4:32; Lk. 8:5; Acts 10:12; 11:6). In heaven, i.e. the firmament, are set the stars (→ Sun, Moon, Stars) which in eschatological discourse about the parousia fall to the earth (Mk. 13:25 par. Matt. 24:29; Lk. 21:25; Rev. 6:13; 8:10; 9:1; 12:4 → Present, art. παρουσία). Portents are seen in heaven (Rev. 12:1, 3; 15:1; → Miracle, art. σημεῖον). Jesus refused to perform a miracle from heaven (Mk. 8:11 f. par. Matt. 16:1). On the other hand, the beast (→ Animal), as → Antichrist, performs such miracles (Rev. 13:13).

**(b) There are → angels in heaven as messengers and servants of God** (Matt. 18:10; Mk. 12:25; 13:32 par. Matt. 24:36; Eph. 3:15; Rev. 12:7; 19:1). They come from and return to heaven (Matt. 28:2; Lk. 2:15; 22:43; Gal. 1:8). They appear in the visions of John (Rev. 10:1; 18:1 etc.). → Satan is thrown out of heaven so that he may no longer → accuse Jesus' disciples (Lk. 10:18; Jn. 12:31; Rev. 12:12; cf. Isa. 49:13 LXX). At this, heaven and the martyrs in heaven rejoice (Rev. 18:20; 11:12; 7:14). It is at this point that a development begins in cosmological thinking which leads eventually to a fundamental difference between the late Jewish apocalyptic and the Christian views of heaven. Since Satan has been banished from heaven as the consequence of Jesus Christ's

saving work, everything dark and evil vanishes from heaven, with the result that it becomes a world of pure light (thus in the post-NT writings which deal with the heavenly realm, e.g. Asc. Isa.). Where evil powers in heaven are mentioned, the reference is primarily to the air or to the firmament (Eph. 2:2; 3:10; 6:12; Acts 7:42). Their sphere of influence, therefore, is entirely this side of God's realm of light.

**(c) In agreement with the OT it is stated that God created heaven and earth** (Acts 4:24; 14:15; 17:24; Rev. 10:6; 14:7), and that he will re-create them (2 Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21:1). The present heaven is passing away like the earth (Mk. 13:31 par. Matt. 24:35, Lk. 21:32; Heb. 12:26; 2 Pet. 3:7, 10, 12; Rev. 20:11), but Jesus' words remain (Mk. 13:31 par. Matt. 24:35, Lk. 21:33). God is Lord of heaven and earth (Matt. 11:25; Acts 17:24; Matt. 5:34; Acts 7:49; cf. Isa. 66:1).

**(d) God is said to dwell "in heaven"**, but there is never any evidence of reflection on the difficulties inherent in this statement. Occasionally God is referred to by the OT expression "God of heaven" (Rev. 11:13; 16:11). Heaven itself is God's throne (Matt. 5:34), and God's throne is said to be in heaven (Acts 7:49; Heb. 8:1; Rev. 4f.). It follows from this (in correspondence with Rab. terminology, see above OT 3 (c)) that heaven can be used as a substitute for → God (Matt. 5:10; 6:20; Mk. 11:30; Lk. 10:20; 15:18, 21; Jn. 3:27), especially in Matt. in the expression "the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 3:2, 4:17; etc.; → Kingdom).

It is more important theologically that God is called "→ Father in heaven" (Matt. 5:16, 45; 6:1, 9; 7:11, 21; 10:32f.; 12:50): in Christ God turns towards man. Because God is in heaven his revelation takes place from heaven (Matt. 11:27). At Jesus' baptism and at other crises in his earthly ministry God's voice was heard from heaven (Mk. 1:11 par. Matt. 3:17, Lk. 3:22; Jn. 12:28; cf. Heb. 12:25). The seer heard voices from heaven (Rev. 10:4, 8; 11:12; 14:13; 18:4; 21:3), and the Holy → Spirit came down from heaven (Mk. 1:10 par. Matt. 3:16, Lk. 3:21; Acts 2:2; 1 Pet. 1:12). But in the same way God's wrath goes forth from heaven: in the form of the fire of judgment (Lk. 17:29; cf. 9:54; Rev. 20:9), and in general upon all the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men (Rom. 1:18).

**(e) According to Acts 14:17, God gives rain and fruitful seasons ouranotthen, from heaven, implying both the physical and spiritual source.** The only other occurrence of the word is in Acts 26:13, where it is used as an alternative to ek tou ouranou, from heaven (cf. Acts 9:3; 22:6). In period of drought heaven is considered to have been shut up at God's command (Lk. 4:25; Jas. 5:17f.; Rev. 11:6).

**(f) The NT also speaks of treasures of salvation in heaven.** → Rewards (art. μισθός) are in heaven (Matt. 5:12 par. Lk. 5:23). There is treasure in heaven (Matt. 6:20). The → names of the disciples are recorded in heaven (Lk. 10:20; cf. Heb. 12:23). Their → inheritance is there also (1 Pet. 1:4). Christians have a building (2 Cor. 5:1f. oikodomē; cf. → House) and their citizenship or their home (Phil. 3:20) in heaven. There is mention of a heavenly → Jerusalem which is the Christians' true home (Gal. 4:26; Heb. 12:22; Rev. 3:12; 21:2, 10), and even of a → temple in heaven (Rev. 11:19; but cf. 21:22).

## 2. Christological statements.

**(a) The statements about heaven are particularly important when they stand in relation to → Jesus Christ.** At his baptism the heavens opened, the Holy → Spirit descended upon him and God the Father acknowledged him (Matt. 3:16f.; cf. above 1 (d)): the eschatological events began in Jesus and in him God was near. Heaven was open above him because he himself was now the door of heaven and of God's house (Bethel) on earth (Jn. 1:51; cf. Gen. 28:12). Jesus taught his disciples to pray that God's will would be done on earth as in heaven (Matt. 6:10; → Prayer, art. προσεύχονται). When Jesus gave authority to Peter or to the disciples, their actions were valid in heaven, i.e. with God (Matt. 16:19; 18:19; → Bind; → Open).

Because their guardian angels behold God's face, Jesus taught that little ones come under his special protection (Matt. 18:10; → Large, art. μικρός). The Dead Sea Scrolls witness to belief in angels sharing in the community's worship (1QSa 2:9 f.) and in their role as guardians of the meek and needy (1QH 5:20 ff.; cf. D. Hill, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1972, 275). The Jesus of Nazareth who stood before the Sanhedrin will sit at God's right hand (→ Hand, art. δεξιός) and come with the clouds of heaven (Mk. 14:62 par. Matt. 26:64, Lk. 22:69; cf. Ps. 110:1; Dan. 7:13). At the parousia the sign of the Son of man will appear in heaven (Matt. 24:30; → Son, art. υς το ανθρώπου). The Son of man will gather his → elect from one end of heaven to the other (Mk. 13:27 par. Matt. 24:31; cf. Deut. 4:32; Zech. 2:6 [10]). All power in heaven and on earth has been given to the Risen One (Matt. 28:18). He is the → Lord (art. κύριος) who has been raised to God's throne and to whom everything on earth and in heaven will pay homage (Phil. 2:10). He bestows the Holy Spirit from heaven and displays wonders and signs in heaven (Acts 2:17f., 32–36). The Christian community is waiting for him to come to judge and to save (Phil. 3:20; 1 Thess. 1:10; 4:16; 2 Thess. 1:7). The disciple's task is to wait for the coming of the Lord, not to look up into heaven (Acts 1:10f.). Heaven must receive Christ until the parousia (Acts 3:21). As the → Lamb (art. μνός) who has been exalted to God's throne, Christ has the power to open the sealed book and thus to set in motion the final phase of the world's history (Rev. 5:3, 5f.). Therefore the whole of creation praises him (Rev. 5:11ff.). This means, moreover, that Christ does not belong to the realm of the world, but to the realm of God. As the One who has come from heaven and returned there, Jesus Christ reveals himself as the true → bread (art. πρως) from heaven, by means of which God bestows eternal life (Jn. 6:31f., 38, 41f., 50f.; cf. Exod. 16:4, 13–15).



**(b) As in the OT (Exod. 25:9), the earthly sanctuary in Heb. is a copy of the heavenly one.** But as such it is only a shadow and the heavenly sanctuary is the only true and real one. This heavenly sanctuary is still, eschatologically speaking, to come (Heb. 8:5; 9:23f.). Since Christ has entered the heavenly sanctuary, he has shown himself to be the true High → Priest (8:5). The Christian's calling to → faith is also epouranios (3:1; cf. Phil. 3:14). So too are the gifts, the eschatological salvation which Christians have tasted (Heb. 6:4; 9:28). The homeland of the pilgrim people of God (11:16) and their Jerusalem, viewed as an eschatological → goal, are likewise epouranios, heavenly (12:22).

According to Heb., Jesus' exaltation (1:3; 8:1; → Height) signifies the fulfilment of his high priestly office. He has passed through the heavens and has been raised higher than they (4:14; 7:26; 9:11, 23f.), since he has reached the very throne of God. There he has performed his real, true priestly service (8:1f.), at the same time fulfilling and surpassing that of the OT. One cannot say in detail what cosmological perspectives underlie this statement. However, it seems clear that God is thought of here as not dwelling in heaven, i.e. not within his creation to which heaven of course belongs, but above or beyond the heavens. This idea is the outcome of reflection, although even here God's transcendence over his creation is still expressed in spatial terms.

(c) Certain special emphases are to be found in Eph. and Col. Christ is not only the agent of → creation (cf. 1 Cor. 8:6): primitive Christianity had no special belief in creation apart from belief in Christ. Christ was before anything created came to be, and he himself was not created (Col. 1:16). Christ is the instrument, the agent and the goal of creation; without him nothing can exist. Special emphasis is laid on the fact that everything, including the heavenly powers, was created "in Christ" and has been reconciled through him (Col. 1:15–23). The very heavenly powers were created solely for Christ (Col. 1:16; cf. 1 Cor. 15:24: Christ will destroy the heavenly powers). Christ is → head over all principalities and powers (cf. Col. 2:20). (On the background ideas see R. P. Martin, *Colossians: The Church's Lord and the Christian's Liberty*, 1972, 4–20.)

It is the exalted Christ who has penetrated all the heavenly spheres and come down to earth. He has broken through the barrier erected by the evil powers which isolated men from God (Eph. 1:10; 4:9; cf. Pss. 67:18 [LXX]; 68:18 [MT]; Rom. 9:5). Similarly Eph. 1:23 and 4:10 apply to Christ the OT statement that Yahweh fills heaven and earth. This is a consequence of the thought of Eph. 1:10 (cf. Col. 1:16, 20) that every created thing has its goal in Christ and has no independent existence apart from him. → Creation is strictly related to the redeemer and to → redemption. Creation and redemption, therefore, cannot be sundered in the gnostic fashion. Admittedly there are echoes of gnostic thought in the statement that heaven is filled with demonic powers which enslave men (Eph. 1:10–23; Col. 1:16f.). The passages quoted, however, show equally that everything is understood as referring strictly to Christ (Col. 1:20), and creation is envisaged from the standpoint of redemptive history (Col. 1:16f.).

**Christ's exaltation** (Phil. 2:9f.) is expressed in Eph. 1:10 by means of the image of the primal man with → body and → head. Everything is bound together under Christ as head, whether on earth or in heaven (i.e. all the members of the body, the complete "→ all"). There is no other realm but that of Christ. Eph. 3:15 puts it somewhat differently: heaven and earth are realms in which there are races or tribes (cf. Eth. Enoch 69:4; 71:1; 106:5; cf. the Rab. expression "higher families" for the angelic world) whose Father is God.

**3 (a) In Jn. the word ouranos, heaven, only occurs in the sing.** This is an indication that both gnostic and Jewish speculations about the heaven are absent. God's will to save and the salvation effected by Jesus Christ determine the statements about heaven. Jesus comes from heaven and returns there. In principle the Son of man who has come down from heaven has much to say about heaven (epourania) and the plans of God concealed there. But such statements would call forth an even smaller response of faith than those he makes about God's present activity on earth (Jn. 3:12 f., 31f.).

(b) 1 Cor. 15:40 refers to the bodily form of heavenly beings—whether stars or angelic powers. Christ, the pre-existent, risen and coming One, is the heavenly → man, whose image, i.e. whose bodily form, Christians will receive at the parousia (1 Cor. 15:48f.). All beings, even the heavenly ones, will bow the knee before the risen and exalted Jesus Christ (Phil. 2:10f.). God has raised Jesus to his right hand, en tois epouraniois (from ta epourania, a circumlocution for heaven), i.e. in heaven, and thus blessed Christians with spiritual blessing (Eph. 1:3, 20). For spiritually they have already risen with Christ and been exalted to heaven (Eph. 2:6; cf. Ps. 110:1). The manifold wisdom of God will be made known to the principalities and powers in heaven (Eph. 3:10; the same phrase as above): the saving work of Christ has cosmic significance. According to 2 Tim. 4:18, Christ's kingdom is epouranios, i.e. it possesses heavenly authority and glory, and it is therefore superior to every temptation and persecution which the apostle has to suffer.

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