

The Revelation of Jesus Christ – Message #3 Revelation 4 – The Throne in Heaven

1. The Summons from Heaven (1)

Jesus Again Speaks to John

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

- **The order of this event**

This continues the chronology from 1:19, the inspired outline of the book.

“The things which you have seen” – Chapter 1, the vision of Jesus

“The things which are” – Chapters 2 & 3, the seven letters

“The things which will take place after this” – Chapters 4-22

We are now entering into the part that deals with future events.

The focus upon the throne of God in heaven is a sort of prologue to these future events. John is about to give us the most detailed view of heaven in scripture.

- **The absence of the word “church”**

The word appears 18 times in chapters 1-3 but does not appear again until 22:16. We will see that the 24 elders in this chapter probably represent the church but the scene is in heaven. We will also see that the church is pictured as the wife of the lamb in 19:7 immediately before the Second Coming Christ.

- **The extensive use of Old Testament language and symbols**

The focus in chapters 4-18 will be upon Israel and the Gentile nations. No such distinction between Jew and Gentile is seen in the church.

- **The similarity to 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**

There is a transition from earth to heaven accompanied by the voice like the sound of a trumpet. In a book of signs and symbols it is not impossible that this symbolizes the rapture though it is not specifically stated.

The Passage Does Depict John Going into Heaven to Receive a Revelation

2. The Throne in Heaven (2-3a)

The Central Theme of the Vision

“Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven”

The word “throne” is used 11 times in this chapter, 45 times in the entire book. The heaven is the 3rd heaven where God manifests His presence. The throne is “set” showing that God’s sovereign rule is permanently established in heaven.

- **The person on the throne**

“...and One sat on the throne. And He who sat there was like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance”

The person is God the Father. The fact that He is sitting implies that He is reigning not resting. Jasper is a clear gem probably a diamond. Sardius is a deep red. These were the first and last stones on the breastplate of Israel’s high priest. They represented Reuben and Benjamin. This vision is similar to the visions of Ezekiel and Daniel.

Ezekiel 1:26-28, “And above the firmament over their heads was the likeness of a throne, in appearance like a sapphire stone; 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.”

Daniel 7:9, “I watched till thrones were put in place, and the Ancient of Days was seated; His garment was white as snow, and the hair of His head was like pure wool. His throne was a fiery flame, its wheels a burning fire.”

The Calamities that are Coming upon the Earth Proceed from God’s Throne

3. The Things around the Throne (3b-4)

Everything John Sees Is Significant

• **The picture around the throne**

“...and there was a rainbow around the throne, in appearance like an emerald.”

The first rainbow in scripture was the one that Noah saw and is an emblem of God’s grace.

The awesome picture of God as a consuming fire is encircled by a symbol of His mercy.

Hebrews 4:16, “Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

God’s Attributes Exist in Perfect Harmony

• **The people around the throne**

“Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads.”

There has been much debate as to who these people are. The best explanation seems to be that they represent the church.

(1) The number 24 is representative of a larger group in Israel. The priesthood and the Levitical singers were represented in 24 courses.

(2) Angels nowhere are said to sit on thrones but the church is promised to rule and reign with Christ.

2 Timothy 2:12, “If we endure, we shall also reign with Him.”

(3) Elder is a word that particularly relates to the church and nowhere in scripture is an angel referred to as an elder.

Titus 1:5, “...appoint elders in every city as I commanded you”

(4) The promise of the white robe was seen in two letters to the churches and appears again in 19:8 at the Marriage Supper.

(5) The crowns are *stephanos* or victors crowns which are promised to church age believers.

1 Corinthians 9:25, “And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things.

Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown.”

Pictures the Church in Heaven before the Tribulation

4. The Things that Come from the Throne (5a)

Symbolic of Divine Presence

“...And from the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices.

Exodus 19:16, “Then it came to pass on the third day, in the morning, that there were thunderings and lightnings, and a thick cloud on the mountain; and the sound of the trumpet was very loud, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled.”

Ezekiel also witnessed flashings of lightning, [Ezekiel 1:13](#).

- **Also symbolic of the judgment of God**

The word “thunder” will occur seven more times in Revelation in connection with dramatic events. Isaiah prayer is about to be answered. “Oh, that You would rend the heavens! That You would come down! That the mountains might shake at Your presence”, [Isaiah 64:1](#).

God Is Preparing to Dramatically Intervene in Human History

5. [The Things that Are before the Throne \(5b-6a\)](#)

John Saw Two Things

- **The seven lamps depict the Holy Spirit**

“Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.”

This is most likely from [Isaiah 11:2](#) describing the Holy Spirit in all His fullness. God the Father is seated on the throne and the Holy Spirit is represented in front of the throne.

The Stage Is Set for the Introduction of the Lamb of God

- **The glass pavement**

“Before the throne there was a sea of glass, like crystal.”

The sea is John’s way of describing a pavement in front of the throne. Moses and the elders of Israel witnessed this scene.

[Exodus 24:10](#), “and they saw the God of Israel; and under His feet there appeared to be a pavement of sapphire, as clear as the sky itself.” (NASU)

God’s view of His universe is unhindered.

Heaven Is a Place of Dazzling Light and Splendor

6. [The Things that Are In the Midst of the Throne \(6b-11\)](#)

John’s Attention Is Now Focused on Four Living Beings

(6) “And in the midst of the throne, and around the throne, were four living creatures”

The word creature is not the best translation. They are living beings.

- **Their identification**

These are similar to the creatures that Ezekiel saw in his vision of Jehovah’s throne chariot in [Ezekiel 1](#). He identifies them later.

[Ezekiel 10:15](#), “And the cherubim were lifted up. This was the living creature I saw by the River Chebar.

Cherubim appear to be an exalted rank of angel. Lucifer is described as “the anointed cherub who covers”; [Ezekiel 28:14](#).

It was a Cherubim that guarded the Garden of Eden after the fall, [Genesis 3:24](#). Cherubim were depicted in both the Tabernacle and the Temple and were part of the mercy seat.

They Are Holy Angels who Attend to God’s Throne

- **Their description**

(6) “full of eyes in front and in back.” (8) were full of eyes around and within.”

Their eyes reveal their alertness to do God’s holiness. Ezekiel saw a similar thing. [Ezekiel 1:18](#), “their rims were full of eyes.” They are not omniscient but completely aware.

(7-8a) “The first living creature was like a lion, the second living creature like a calf, the third living creature had a face like a man, and the fourth living creature was like a flying eagle. The four living creatures, each having six wings”

The twelve tribes of Israel camped with these four banners. There are different views as to what these symbolize. Some see the lion as symbolizing strength, the calf service, the man reason, and the eagle speed. Some see the number 4 as the number of earth. Their six wings symbolize their swiftness in carrying out God’s commands.

These Living Ones Appear throughout Revelation

- **Their doxology**

(8b) “And they do not rest day or night, saying: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!"”

This is the first of 14 doxologies in Revelation. The three-fold repetition reveals what these angels fell in God’s presence.

Holiness is the essence of God’s nature. It means that He is complete separate from sin, evil, impurity and defilement. They also praise God for His power “Lord God Almighty”. There is no one who can stand against Him.

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

The second doxology is by the 24 elders. They prostrate themselves before God and cast their crowns at His feet. They praise Him as the Creator and sustainer. He alone has the right to redeem and to judge His creation. God is about to take back His creation.

In Revelation God’s Holiness and Power Will Be Exhibited through Judgment