

After the Church Thing Revelation 4 FBC Canton Sunday am April 26, 2026

Introduction: One day there will be an end to gospel work we do as a church.

- All the prayer
- The worship
- The caring for those who lost loved ones
- The teaching
- The walking through life together
- The evangelism and missions
- The encouragement.

5 seconds after the church is removed from this earth, our perspective on our problems will end.

All apply to All Churches

- **Ephesus**
- **Smyrna**
- **Pergamos**
- **Thyatira**
- **Sardis**
- **Philadelphia**
- **Laodicea**
- **Devotion, not just doctrine**
- **Endure Persecution**
- **Stand fast against world**
- **Abandon Pagan Practices**
- **Watchfulness, Diligence**
- **Missionary outreach**
- **Prosperous compromise**

Personal Application

- **Ephesus**
- **Smyrna**
- **Pergamos**
- **Thyatira**
- **Sardis**
- **Philadelphia**
- **Laodicea**
- **Neglected Priorities**
- **Satanic Opposition**
- **Worldly Compromise**
- **Flee Pagan Practices**
- **Watchfulness, Diligence**
- **Loyal Ambassadorship**
- **Repent & be committed**

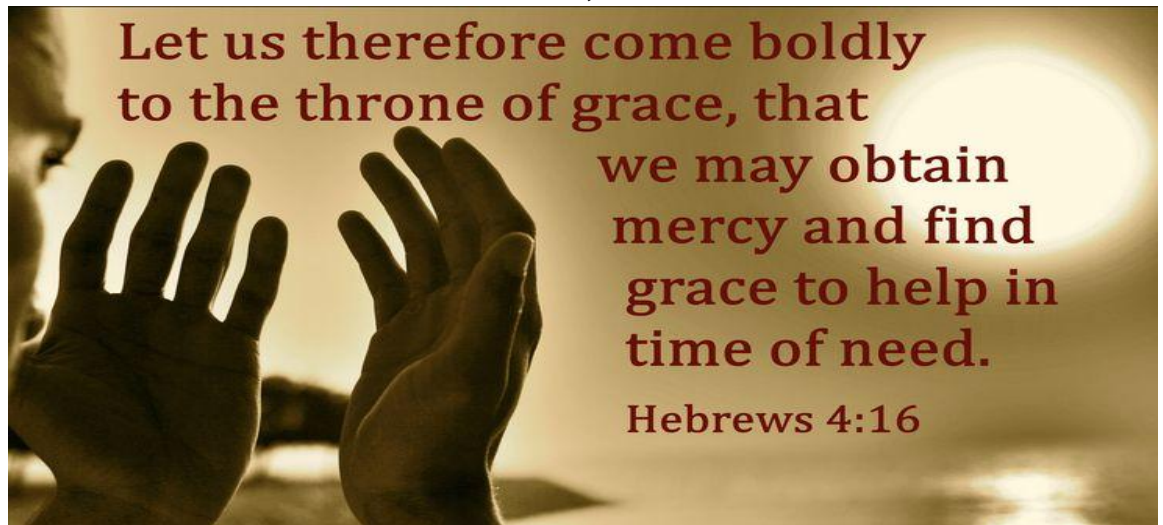
What will happen after this church thing is complete?

I want to inspire you today, to encourage you today to live for the moments that are to come...very soon!

- I. At the Rapture, we will be called up there. V. 1**
 - a. To see the Throne of God.**

Where we will know he has always been the King of Kings.

i. He who sits on the throne. V. 2-3, Hebrews 4:16



1. Like a jasper and sardius stone.
2. Rainbow like and emerald.

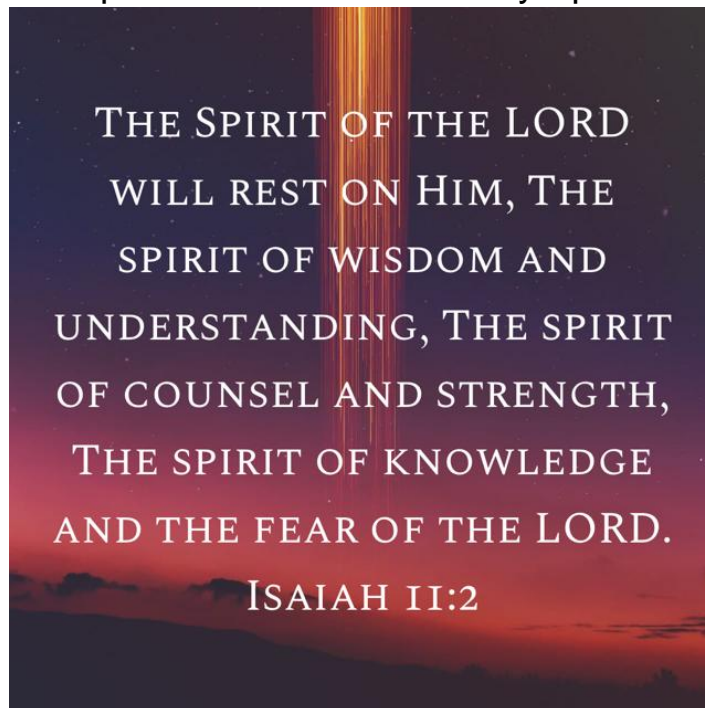
ii. Around the throne: 24 elders. V. 4

1. White robes of the overcomers.
2. Golden crowns from faithfulness, not success.

iii. From the throne. V. 5, Isaiah 11:2

1. Lightnings.
2. Thunderings.
3. Voices.

- a. 7 lamps of fire of the 7-fold Holy Spirit.



b.

iv. Before the throne. V. 6

1. Crystal glass sea. James 1:23

i. "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." (Trapp)

v. Midst of the throne. V. 6-8

1. 4 living creatures: Trinitarian blessing. Isaiah 6

i. Lord God almighty.

1. Before the beginning, after the end.

vi. When before the throne. V. 9-11

1. Give to the one who lives forever:

a. Glory.

b. Honor.

c. Thanks.

2. Fall down before the one who lives forever.

a. Worship.

b. Cast crowns.

c. Speak.

i. Worthy is the Creator, the end of evolution's debate!

Conclusion: That which defies description demands devotion!

Devotion of returning to your first love.

Dedication to fight the schemes of the devil with prayer.

Decision to stop compromising with the world.

Fleeing pagan practices that are being meshed with the church.

Wake up from being dead churches.

Decision to walk through every open door.

Repent from being lukewarm.

II Thessalonians 2: 5-12

⁵ Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? ⁶ And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. ⁷ For the ^[d]mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only ^[e]He who now restrains *will do so* until He is taken out of the way. ⁸ And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. ⁹ The coming of the *lawless one* is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, ¹⁰ and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. ¹¹ And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, ¹² that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

Slides from Chuck Missler Revelation 4 commentary

Real Experiences

- “I will show thee” Rev 4:1; 21:10
- “I looked” 70 times in Revelation
- “I saw” 35 times
- “I beheld” 7 times
- “I heard” 23 times

Harpazo (Summary)

- “A door was opened” 4X in Rev
- “Voice ... Trumpet” Cf. 1 Thes 4:16f
- “Come”
 - A real, material Heaven Lk 24:39
 - Veil Luk 23:45; Heb 10:19-20
- Rapture:
 - NT: 1Thes 4:13-17; 1Cor 15:50
 - OT: Isa 26:19-21; Zep 2:3; Ps 27:5
(See our *Rapture* briefing pack)

7 “Raptures”

- | | | |
|------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------|
| • Enoch | Gen 5:42; Heb 11:5 | |
| • Elijah | 2 Kings 2:1, 11 | |
| • Jesus | Mark 16:19; Acts 1:9-11; Rev 12:5 | |
| • Philip | Acts 8:39 | = ἁρπάζω harpazo |
| • Paul | 2 Cor 12:2-4 | |
| • Body of Christ | 1 Thess 4:17 | |
| • John | Rev 4:1 | |

The Doctrine of Imminence

- Imminent: Next expectation
 - not be confused with “immanent,” that God is not only transcendent, or far above us, but that He is always with us and active on our behalf.
 - Nor should it be confused with “eminent,” which is a title of honor reserved for persons of outstanding distinction.

Doctrine of Imminency

- Believers are taught to expect the Savior from heaven at any moment.
Phil 3:20; Titus 2:13; Heb 9:28;
1 Thess 1:10; 4:18; 5:6; Rev 22:20
- Expresses hope and a warm spirit of expectancy,
1 Thess 1:10
- Should result in a victorious and purified life.
1 John 3:2,3

Doctrine of Imminency

- Paul seemed to include himself among those who looked for Christ's return.
1 Thess 4:15,17; 2 Thess 2:1
- Timothy was admonished to "keep this commandment without spot, unrebukable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ."
1 Tim 6:14
- Jewish converts were reminded that "yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry."
Heb 10:37

"Occupy til I come" Luke 19:13

- The expectation of some were so strong that they had stopped work and had to be exhorted:
 - to return to their jobs 2 Thess 3:10-12
 - and have patience James 5:8

The Second Coming

| | |
|----------------|------------------|
| Daniel 2:44-45 | Acts 1:9-11 |
| Daniel 7:9-14 | Acts 3:19-21 |
| Daniel 12:1-3 | 1 Thess 3:13 |
| Zech 14:1-15 | 2 Thess 1:6-10 |
| Matt 13:41 | 2 Thess 2:8 |
| Matt 24:15-31 | 2 Peter 3:1-14 |
| Matt 26:64 | Jude 14-15 |
| Mark 13:14-27 | Rev 1:7 |
| Mark 14:62 | Rev 19:11-20:6 |
| Luke 21:25-28 | Rev 22:7, 12, 20 |

The "Rapture"

| | |
|-----------------|------------------|
| John 14:1-3 | 2 Thess 2:1, (3) |
| 1 Cor 15:1-53 | 1 Tim 6:14 |
| 1 Thess 4:13-18 | 2 Tim 4:1 |
| Rom 8:19 | Titus 2:13 |
| 1 Cor 1:7-8 | Heb 9:28 |
| 1 Cor 16:22 | James 5:7-9 |
| Phil 3:20-21 | 1 Peter 1:7, 13 |
| Col 3:4 | 1 John 2:28-3:2 |
| 1 Thess 1:10 | Jude 21 |
| 1 Thess 2:19 | Rev 2:25 |
| 1 Thess 5:9 | Rev 3:10 |
| 1 Thess 5:23 | |

Two Events?

| Rapture | 2nd Coming |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Translation of believers | No translation involved |
| Translated saints go to heaven | Translated saints return to earth |
| Earth not judged | Earth judged |
| Imminent, any moment, signless | Follows definite predicted signs |
| Not in the Old Testament | Predicted in Old Testament |
| Believers only | Affects all men on the earth |
| Before the day of wrath | Concludes the day of wrath |

Two Events?

Rapture

No reference to Satan
He comes *for* His own
He comes in the *air*
He claims His Bride
Only His own see Him
Great Tribulation begins
Church believers only

2nd Coming

Satan bound
He comes *with* His own
He comes to the *earth*
He comes with His Bride
Every eye shall see Him
Millennium begins
OT Saved raised later?

The Marriage Fulfilled

- Covenant established: 1 Cor 11:25
- Purchase price: 1 Cor 6:19-20
- Bride set apart: Eph 5:25-27;
1 Cor 1:2; 6:11; Heb 10:10; 13:12
- Reminded of the covenant: 1 Cor 11:25-26
- Bridegroom left for the Father's house...
- Escort to accompany Him upon His return to gather His Bride 1 Thess 4:16-17

Thrones

- The word "throne" appears
58 times in the NT; 43 in Rev; 14 in chap 4
- Messiah will sit
 - on His Father's Throne Psa 110:1; Rev 3:21
 - on the "Throne of His Mercy" Heb 4:16
 - on the "Throne of David" Isa 9:7 Luke 1:32
- The 12 apostles will
 - sit on 12 thrones and
 - judge the 12 tribes, angels Matt 19:28; 1 Cor 6:3
- 24 Elders sit on thrones Rev 4:4
- Unbelievers will be judged
 - at a "Great White Throne" Rev 20:12

The 24 Elders?

- Represent completed group 1 Chron 24
- Cannot be
 - Tribulation Believers Rev 7:13-14
 - Angels Rev 7:11
 - Nation of Israel Rev 7 & 12
- Distinguishing Characteristics:
 - Thrones Rev 3:21
 - White Raiment Rev 3:25
 - Crowns of gold Rev 2:10; 3:11
 - Song of Redeemed Rev 5:9,10
 - Called "Elders," "Kings & Priests" Rev 5:10

Crowns Promised

- **Crown of Life** Jas 1:12; Rev 2:10
for those who have suffered for His sake
- **Crown of Righteousness** 2 Tim 4:8
for those who loved His appearing
- **Crown of Glory** 1 Pet 5:4
for those who fed the flock
- **Crown Incorruptible** 1 Cor 9:25
for those who press on steadfastly
- **Crown of Rejoicing** 1 Thes 2:19
for those who win souls

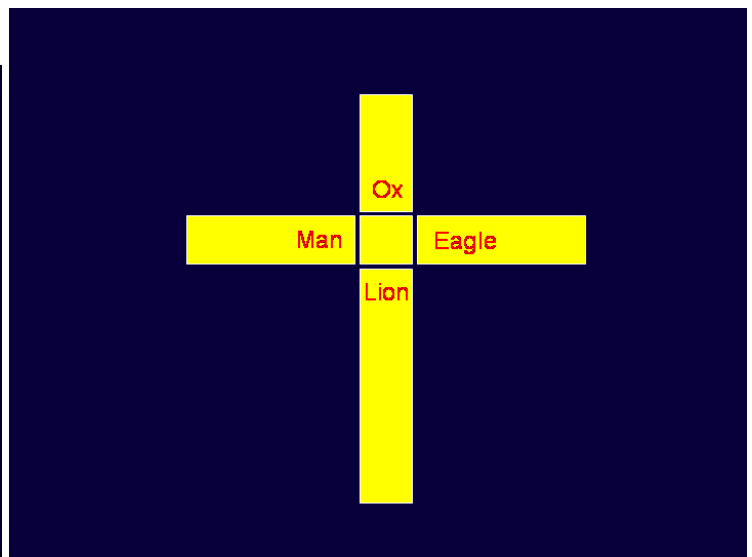
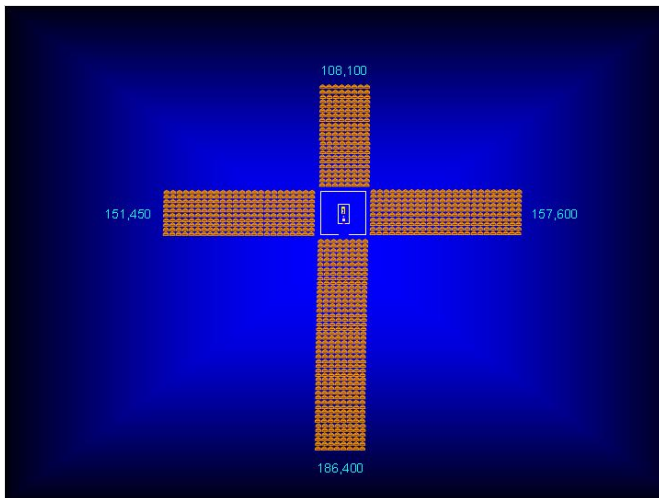
The Four Faces

Before the Throne of God

Isaiah 6
Ezekiel 1, 10
The Four Gospels
Numbers 2

The Design of the Gospels

| | Matthew | Mark | Luke | John |
|--------------|-------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Presents as: | Messiah | Servant | Son of Man | Son of God |
| Genealogy: | Abraham (Legal) | -- | Adam (Blood line) | Eternal (Preexistence) |
| What Jesus | Said | Did | Felt | Was |
| To the: | Jew | Roman | Greek | Church |
| 1st Miracle: | Leper cleansed (Jew = sin) | Demon expelled | Demon expelled | Water to Wine |
| Ends with | Resurrection | Ascension | Promise of Spirit: Acts | Promise of Return: Revelation |
| Camp Side: | East | West | South | North |
| Ensign: | Judah | Ephraim | Reuben | Dan |
| Face: | Lion | Ox | Man | Eagle |



The Bible Says Revelation 4:1-4 Meaning

Chapter 4 transitions into what most people think of when they think of Revelation: prophecies of what is to come. We have just finished the letters to the seven churches in Asia Minor in Chapters 2

& 3 that had lessons for us to learn, based on what the churches had done. Now, the invitation is to be a faithful witness and follow Jesus every day. It is the same admonition in a different format:

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" (v 1).

The previous section of John's vision was the letters to the seven churches. Now after *these things* (the information in the seven letters), he is picking back up with the vision. He describes seeing a *door standing open in heaven* (v 1).

This imagery explains the location in which John finds himself in this vision: he is *in heaven*. He sees a *door*, through which he hears a voice, which was *the first voice which I had heard* (v 1). The *first voice* that John had heard was back in [Revelation 1](#):

"I heard behind me a loud voice like *the sound* of a trumpet, saying, "Write in a book *what you see*, and send *it* to the seven churches: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea."

[\(Revelation 1:10-11\)](#)

In both places, the voice is described as *like the sound of a trumpet*. This time, in [Revelation 4](#), the *voice* is calling John to *Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after these things* (v 1). Remember, this vision is picking up after the letters to the seven churches in Asia Minor, so *these things* would be the promises to those churches.

After John hears the voice, *Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne was standing in heaven, and One sitting on the throne* (v 2). We are now in God's throne room, and God is sitting on His *throne*. He is One. We will see Jesus, the Lamb, and the Spirit, because God is three persons. But God is still One.

Much of the rest of the book of Revelation will take place here in the *throne* room. This is to remind us that God is the one who is in control. Many terrible things will take place, but God is on the *throne* through them all.

Next, John attempts to describe the *throne* room:

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. 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 (vv 3-4).

The throne room of God appears to defy description, so it is difficult to gather a full picture from John's words. He who was sitting on the throne is so magnificent that the best thing we have to describe the scene is colorful, shiny precious gemstones—a jasper stone and a sardius (possibly a ruby).

There is also a rainbow around the throne. This might indicate a great eminence of light. It could also be a reminder that God keeps His promises ([Genesis 9:13-17](#); [Romans 11:29](#)).

So God is on the throne because He is in charge, but there are also twenty-four elders sitting on their own thrones. It is not explained who these elders are, but we are told that they are clothed in white garments and have golden crowns on their heads.

The white garments are an indication of purity. Possession of a white garment is a reward given to those who overcome—those who are victorious in living life as a faithful witness ([Revelation 3:5, 18](#)).

The golden crowns and being seated on twenty-four thrones would be symbols of authority.

These elders could be certain humans who were granted the reward promised in [Revelation 3:21](#), that all who overcome as Jesus overcame will be given to share His throne with Him, meaning to share in His authority.

Because Jesus overcame temptation and learned obedience even unto death, He was given all authority over heaven and earth. ([Philippians 2:8-9](#); [Matthew 28:18](#); [Hebrews 1:8, 13, 2:9-10](#)). Jesus desires that many follow His example and share in His sufferings, to follow His ways regardless of rejection from the world.

Because Jesus was faithful to accomplish His Father's will, He was given the reward of "adoption" as a "son" (see [commentary on Hebrews 1:5](#)). Jesus desires to bring "many sons to glory" ([Hebrews 2:10](#)), which is to recover the "glory and honor" of reigning over the earth ([Hebrews 2:5-8](#)). Those who suffer the sufferings of Christ will gain the reward of sharing His authority ([Romans 8:17b](#)).

The twenty-four elders could be the most highly decorated of the overcomers. Or perhaps they are a symbol of those who overcome and share authority to reign.

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You can access the original article here: [Revelation 4:1-4 Meaning](#)

Chuck Smith

Verse by Verse Study on Revelation 4-6 (C2000)

Revelation chapter four begins with the Greek word "meta autos". And the first verse begins and ends with the same Greek words. The words literally from the Greek are "after these things". So as we come to this phrase, "after these things," our minds should flash back to chapter [1:19](#), where the book of Revelation was divided into three basic divisions. "Write the things which you have seen, the things which are, and the things which will be after these things", "meta autos". So obviously we are coming into the third section of the book of Revelation, after these things. After what things?

Well, it seems to me that it would be quite apparent and obvious. It would be after the things that he was just talking about. And the things that he was just talking about were the things of the church; so, after the things of the church. For we had in chapters two and three, the messages of Jesus to the seven churches of Asia, which as we pointed out represent seven periods of church history.

So, after these things, the things of the church,

I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will show you things which must be after these things ([Rev 4:1](#)).

I believe that when the church has completed its purpose upon the earth and has finished its witness, or as Paul describes, "when the fullness of the gentiles is come in," that the Lord is then going to catch away His church into heaven.

Paul said, "behold, I show you a mystery. We are not going to all sleep, but we are all going to be changed in a moment, in a twinkling of an eye. The trump of God shall sound, the dead in Christ shall be raised incorruptible." [First Thessalonians 4:16-17](#), Paul said, "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

So, I believe that the church is to be raptured. And I believe that the point of the rapture in the book of Revelation is in here in chapter [4:1](#). I believe that John was taken by the Spirit unto the day of the Lord and experienced through the Spirit the rapture of the church. When the Lord had completed His messages to the churches, then the call to John was "come up hither and I will show you things, which must be after these things, after the things of the church".

So as we enter then into the fourth chapter, we enter into the post-church era upon the earth. We will be coming back to the earth in chapter six, but it is the post-church era, when God now judges the world for its ungodliness and unrighteousness and for its rejection of His Son. But the church, with John here in chapter four caught up into heaven,

And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat upon the throne. And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald ([Rev 4:2-3](#)).

So the basic color that emanates from the throne is a green, along with the sardine red, along with the jasper which is a clear crystalline-type of a stone with a purple hue.

Now, Paul told us in Timothy that God dwells in a light that is unapproachable by man. And here in heaven, even in our glorified bodies, we only see the radiance of the glory of God as it emanates from His throne like a brilliant light, the predominant color being green, the rainbow about the throne like an emerald, green in color, with the sardine red color and the jasper stone in brilliance in coloring and light.

And round about the throne there were twenty-four lesser thrones: [thronus in Greek translated seats] and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold ([Rev 4:4](#)).

The twenty-four elders clothed in white raiment are representative of the church according to most Bible scholars. These twenty-four elders are representative. The fact that they are in white robes is the church is to be clothed in white robes, the righteousness through faith in Jesus Christ.

Jesus said to the church of Laodicea, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne" ([Rev 3:21](#)). The twenty-four lesser thrones. Now we see the heavenly scene sitting in white robes upon their thrones.

And out of the throne [that is the throne of God] there proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God ([Rev 4:5](#)).

Now again it is important that we place in our mind the tabernacle that Moses built in the wilderness, because we are told in the book of Hebrews that the tabernacle was actually a model of heavenly things. If you want to know basically what heaven is going to look like, you can go back to the tabernacle and you can get an idea of what the throne of God is like in heaven.

And there in the tabernacle we remember when the priest came into the holy place on the left-hand side, there was the seven candlesticks coming out of the one base. And these seven golden candlesticks, we now know from the book of Revelation, are representative of the Holy Spirit and the presence of the Holy Spirit there before the throne of God, the seven-fold work or the complete work of the Holy Spirit. We remember that in the Holy of Holies there was that Ark of the Covenant that Moses made covered with the gold lid, which was the mercy seat, upon which there was carved these golden cherubim with their wings touching the corners of the Holy of Holies of the tabernacle.

And so as we go on in the reading of the description here of heaven, we next come to these cherubim. These angelic beings created by God who seem to be the highest order of angelic beings.

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 living creatures full of eyes in front and behind. And the first living creature was like a lion, and the second was like a calf, and the third had a face as a man, and the fourth was like a flying eagle ([Rev 4:6-7](#)).

Now, there are those Bible scholars that see in this the four phases of Christ as represented in the Gospels. The first, Matthew, presents Jesus as the lion of the tribe of the Judah. The lion, of course, is known as the king of the beast. The second, like a calf, as Mark presents Jesus as the suffering servant. The ox is considered the top of the domesticated animals. The third, like a man, as Luke presents Jesus as the Son of man, and man the crowning order of God's creation. And the fourth, like an eagle, as John presents Jesus as the Son of the living God, and the eagle being the greatest of the flying fowl.

These cherubim were first mentioned in the book of Genesis. When God drove Adam out of the garden after his sin, He put the cherubim at the gate of the garden lest man should return to the garden and eat of the tree of life and live forever in a sinful state. The cherubim are again mentioned in the book of Ezekiel, as in chapter one and in chapter ten. Ezekiel had a vision of the throne of God, which parallels the vision of John here in the book of Revelation. As Ezekiel saw the cherubim, each had the four faces, so on each side a face, and the faces of the ox, and the lion, and the man and the eagle in the vision that Ezekiel had. And for background you should probably read Ezekiel one and ten to find parallel passages to John's vision here of the throne of God in heaven. And it is Ezekiel that names these creatures as the cherubim.

Now from the book of Ezekiel, also we know in the twenty-eighth chapter that that was the position that was once occupied by Satan. That the Lord speaks of him declaring that he was one of the anointed cherubs. So he had a place that was very close to God, for the cherubim are about the throne of God in their worship of God. And Ezekiel tells us that at one time Satan was one of these anointed cherub.

Again in a parallel passage Isaiah six, Isaiah also saw the throne of God. And when he got the vision of the throne of God, he said, "Woe is me, I am a man of unclean lips. I dwell amongst a people of unclean lips" ([Isaiah 6:5](#)). And he saw a seraphim, which is probably in the order of the cherubim. Cherubim is only the plural of cherub. So you have heard of cherubs, so the plural of cherub is cherubim, as the plural of seraph is the seraphim. The "im" is a plural in the Hebrew.

So he saw the seraphim, who came to the altar of God with a live coal and touched his lips and said, "Now, are you clean." But we find here in John's vision of them that,

each of them had six wings; 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 ([Rev 4:8](#)).

And so they are there around the throne of God declaring the holiness of the eternal God.

And when these living creatures give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever, [the eternal God] 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, 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 ([Rev 4:9-11](#)).

And so here we see the first scene in heaven. And this will probably be one of the first scenes that you will observe in heaven as John did; the throne of God and the cherubim about the throne of God, and the worship of God as He sits upon the throne.

And then the response to the declaration of the holiness of God made by the cherubim are the twenty-four elders responding saying, "Thou art worthy to receive glory and honor and power." Why? First of all, because You have created all things, not that You have allowed all things to evolve. You created all things. And not only that, but it is for Your pleasure they are and were created. Here is a statement of fact that is important for us to accept. I was created for God's pleasure. That means I was not created for my own pleasure.

Thus, I should not seek to please myself, because then I am not answering the purpose of my existence. I should seek to please God; then I am answering the purpose of my existence. But the interesting thing is when I live to please God I find great pleasure myself. Therein is happiness. Therein is satisfaction. Therein is fulfillment when I live to please God. "If any man seeks to save his life, he is going to lose it, but if he loses his life for My sake," Jesus said, "you will find it" ([Matthew 10:39](#)). And to really find what living is all about, you have got to just live for His pleasure. Thus, you are answering the purpose of your existence and thus your life is fulfilling and rich.

David Guzik

Study Guide for Revelation 4

BEFORE THE THRONE OF GOD

A. The transition to the fourth chapter of the Book of Revelation.

1. Taking [Revelation 1:19](#) as an outline of the book, chapter four begins the third section: *the things which shall take place after this*.

a. The phrase *after this* (*meta tauta* in ancient Greek) in [Revelation 1:19](#) is repeated twice in [Revelation 4:1](#). Certainly this is a marking point for beginning the third division of [Revelation 1:19](#).

2. Chapter four begins a heavenly perspective, looking down on the earth.

a. The Bible has other important references to heaven, in passages such as [Isaiah 6:1-8](#), [Ezekiel 1](#), and in passages describing the Tabernacle, which symbolically describes heaven ([Exodus 25-32](#) and [35-40](#)).

b. In the description of heavenly things, John uses symbols. However, not *everything* is symbolic. As in the parables of Jesus, many of the details are merely descriptive and they are not necessarily intended to carry a special significance of their own.

i. Also, we should keep in mind the nature of symbolism: the symbol is always *less* than the *reality*. The reality of heaven is even greater than the description we have of it.

ii. "It is very little that we can know of the future state, but we may be quite sure that we know as much as is good for us. We ought to be as content with that which is not revealed as with that which is. If God wills us not to know, we ought to be satisfied not to know. Depend on it, he has told us all about heaven that is necessary to bring us there; and if he had revealed more, it would have served rather for the gratification of our curiosity than for the increase of our grace." (Spurgeon)

3. From [Revelation 4](#) through [19](#) we have a section mainly concerned with God's judgment upon the world preceding Jesus' earthly reign, the period known as the "Messianic Woes" or the "Great Tribulation."

a. God's judgments are announced by a seven-sealed scroll, seven trumpets, seven signs, and seven bowls that pour out God's wrath.

b. Revelation four introduces us to the place judgment comes from: God's throne in heaven.

B. John enters heaven.

1. ([Revelation 4:1](#)) John is called up into heaven.

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."

a. **After these things**: Revelation [chapters 2](#) and [3](#) spoke to the churches, and the *seven churches* comprehended all churches. After Jesus was finished speaking to the churches, **after these things**, John experienced the vision of [Revelation 4](#).

b. **And the first voice which I heard**: The **first voice** that spoke to John in [Revelation 1:10](#) spoke to him again here — the voice of Jesus. Jesus called John up to heaven, through **a door standing open in heaven**.

i. **Like a trumpet**: The voice spoke loud and clear to John. It was like the trumpet that gathered the congregation of Israel together, or gathered an army for battle.

c. **Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this**: John will be shown things that concern the future (**which must take place after this**), not John's present day.

i. Some like to interpret what John saw up through [Revelation 19](#) as fulfilled in what took place **before** John's day — notably, in the Roman invasion and destruction of Jerusalem. Jesus clearly told John that He would **show** him **things which must take place after this**.

ii. Some like to interpret what John saw up through [Revelation 19](#) as fulfilled in history **after** John's day but **before** our present day. But these events have yet to be fulfilled in any sort of literal sense; they can only be said to have been fulfilled by making them wildly symbolic. Therefore, we regard what Jesus **will show** John in the following chapters of Revelation as belonging to the future, and as preceding the coming reign of Jesus on earth.

d. **Like a trumpet... Come up here**: Many see John's going up to heaven as a symbol of the rapture of the church. John was called up to heaven by a voice that sounds **like a trumpet**, just as the church will be as described in [1 Thessalonians 4:16-17](#).

i. The pattern is significant. Jesus finished speaking to and dealing with the churches in Revelation [chapters 2](#) and [3](#), and all churches are comprehended in the seven. Now, after dealing with the church, Jesus called John up to heaven, "catching him away" with a voice that sounded **like a trumpet**. All this happened **before** the great wrath that will be described beginning at [Revelation 6](#). As that great judgment on the earth unfolded, John — a representative of the church — was in heaven, looking down on earth.

ii. Significantly, the word **church** never occurs in the chapters describing this period of judgment on earth, no where in Revelation [chapters 4](#) through [19](#).

2. ([Revelation 4:2a](#)) John goes up, **in the Spirit**.

Immediately I was in the Spirit;

a. **Immediately I was in the Spirit**: John already said he was *in the Spirit* at [Revelation 1:10](#). This was yet a different experience, as John came to heaven and a heavenly perspective.

b. **In the Spirit**: Where was his body? Was John's body in heaven also, or was it just his spirit? This is impossible to know. Paul, when he had his heavenly experience, didn't know if he was **in the body** or not ([2 Corinthians 12:1-4](#)).

C. John's description of heaven.

1. ([Revelation 4:2b](#)) The point of focus: **a throne set in heaven**.

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

a. **And behold, a throne:** This **throne** was what first impressed John, and it is the centerpiece of this vision. John was fixated on the occupied **throne**, and everything else is described in relation to this **throne**.

i. The bottom line of atheism or materialism is that there **is no throne**, there is no seat of authority or power that the entire universe must answer to. The bottom line of humanism is that there is a throne, but **man** sits upon it.

ii. Essentially, man cannot live without the concept of **a throne**, a supreme ruler. So if man de-thrones God, he will inescapably place himself or some other man upon the throne, perhaps a political leader, as was the case with the dictators Lenin, Stalin, and Mao.

b. **And One sat on the throne:** The throne is not empty. There is some **One** who sits on this great heavenly throne. The throne is a powerful declaration of not merely God's **presence**, but of His **sovereign**, **rightful reign**, and His prerogative to judge.

i. 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)

2. (**Revelation 4:3**) What John saw at the heavenly throne.

And He who sat there was like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance; and **there was a rainbow around the throne, in appearance like an emerald.**

a. **And He who sat there was like:** As John described the occupant of the throne, he did not describe a distinct figure. "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." (Clarke)

b. **Like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance:** Instead of describing a specific form or figure, John described emanations of glistening light in two colors: white (**jasper** may mean "diamond") and red (**sardius**).

i. Perhaps these two colors are meant to communicate the glory of the empty tomb (white, **Matthew 28:1-3**) and the sacrificial love of Calvary (red, indicating blood). Or, perhaps they are linked with the first and last gems in the high priest's breastplate (**Exodus 39:8-13**).

c. **And there was a rainbow around the throne:** The throne was surrounded by a green-hued rainbow (**in appearance like an emerald**). The rainbow is a reminder of God's commitment to His covenant with man (**Genesis 9:11-17**).

i. Around this setting of all sovereignty, power, authority and glory — this setting of the throne of God — God has a **reminder** of His promise to never destroy the earth again with water, a promise that **directs** His sovereignty, so that it is not capricious or against His promises.

- ii. 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.
- iii. Trapp on the **rainbow**: “Which is *signum gratiae et foederis*, a sign of grace and the covenant of mercy, which is always fresh and green about Christ’s throne of grace.”
- iv. The believer **glories** in the sovereignty of God, because he knows that God’s sovereignty is **on his side**. It means that no good purpose of God relating to the believer will ever be left undone.
- v. “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.” (Spurgeon)

3. (Revelation 4:4) What John saw around the throne: the twenty-four elders.

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.

- a. **Around the throne were twenty-four thrones**: Before the elders caught John’s eye, he noticed the **twenty-four thrones** they sat on. These twenty-four elders sat on lesser thrones, **around the throne**. Later John will mention their song of worship (Revelation 4:10-11).
- b. **On the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting**: Who are these **twenty-four elders**? Commentators debate whether they are glorified human beings or angelic beings. Taking all things into consideration, the elders certainly seem to represent God’s people.

- i. **Elders** represent the people of God, especially in the Old Testament. The 24 courses of the priesthood represented all the priests (1 Chronicles 24), and the 12 tribes and the 12 apostles represent **all** the faithful.
- ii. In Revelation 5:9-10, the twenty-four elders sang a song of praise to Jesus, and they cried out: *For You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood, out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation*. In that passage, the twenty-four elders clearly spoke as representatives of all God’s people, of the great company of the redeemed.

- c. **Clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads**: The **white robes** and **crowns** of the elders seem to indicate that they are indeed human beings — in glory, of course.

- i. Angels are sometimes presented in white robes or garments (Mark 16:5; John 20:12; Acts 1:10), but saints also have white robes (Revelation 6:11, 7:9, 13-14) as a picture of their

imputed righteousness ([Isaiah 61:10](#), [Revelation 3:5-18](#)). However, we never see angels [crowned](#) but believers will be ([1 Corinthians 9:25](#); [2 Timothy 4:8](#); [1 Peter 5:4](#)).

ii. Therefore, redeemed, glorified man sits enthroned with Jesus. On lesser thrones, to be sure, but thrones none the less. We are [joint heirs with Christ](#) ([Romans 8:17](#)), and we will [reign with Him](#) ([2 Timothy 2:12](#)).

4. ([Revelation 4:5](#)) Impressive and fearful sights at the throne of God.

And from the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices. Seven lamps of fire [were](#) burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.

a. **And from the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices:** The lightning, thunder, voices and fire are reminiscent of God's fearful presence at Mount Sinai ([Exodus 19:16-19](#) and [20:18-19](#)). They communicate the awe associated with the throne of God.

b. **Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne:** The Holy Spirit (the **seven Spirits of God**), as referred to in [Revelation 1:4](#) and [Isaiah 11:2](#)) is represented by seven burning **lamps**. In other passages He is represented as a dove ([Matthew 3:16](#)) or a flame of fire ([Acts 2:3](#)).

i. The lamps of fire are important because the Holy Spirit is not [ordinarily](#) visible. To become visible, He represents Himself in a physical form like a dove or a tongue of fire.

5. ([Revelation 4:6a](#)) The sea of glass before the throne.

Before the throne [there was](#) a sea of glass, like crystal.

a. **A sea of glass:** Is this sea really made of **glass**, or did it just look like it? Commentators are divided on this point. For example, Robertson says, "appearance, not material" and Alford says, "material, not appearance." Whether it [looks](#) like glass or is actually [made of glass](#), it is the [finest](#) **glass, like crystal**.

b. **A sea:** This body of water before the throne is reminiscent of the laver in the Tabernacle, and our [washing of the water of the word](#) ([Ephesians 5:26](#)).

i. "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](#)." (Trapp)

6. ([Revelation 4:6b-8a](#)) The four living creatures all around the throne.

And in the midst of the throne, and around the throne, [were](#) four living creatures full of eyes in front and in back. 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, were full of eyes around and within.

a. **Four living creatures full of eyes:** From comparison with [Ezekiel 1:4-14](#) and [10:20-22](#), we understand these creatures to be [cherubim](#), the spectacular angelic beings surrounding the throne of God. Satan was once one of these high angelic beings, according to [Ezekiel 28:14](#).

i. Cherubim were also prominent in design of the tabernacle, particularly in the Most Holy Place ([Exodus 25:17-22](#) and [26:1-31](#)). The Scriptures show us that the tabernacle is a model of the throne of God, in some manner ([Exodus 25:8-9](#)).

b. **Full of eyes in front and in back... full of eyes around and within:** Their multitude of eyes indicates these **living creatures** (not “beasts” as in the KJV) are not blind instruments or robots. They know and understand, and have greater insight and perception than any man.

i. These beings of great intelligence and understanding live their existence to worship God. All failure to truly worship is rooted in a lack of [seeing](#) and [understanding](#).

ii. The way these super-intelligent beings worship God reminds us that [our worship must be intelligent](#). “Our service must not be rash but reasonable, [Romans 12:1](#), such as wherefore we can render a reason. God hates a blind sacrifice, a Samaritan’s service, when men worship they know not what nor why, [John 4:22](#).” (Trapp)

iii. “The word [beast](#) is very improperly used here and elsewhere in this description. [Wiclif](#) first used it, and translators in general have followed him in this uncouth rendering.” (Clarke)

c. **Like a lion... like a calf... a face like a man... like a flying eagle:** John described four cherubim, each with a different **face**. From comparison with [Ezekiel 1:6-10](#), we can see that each of the cherubim have [four faces](#), and at the moment, John saw each one of the four different faces pointed in his direction. The significance of these four faces has been interpreted in many ways.

i. The four faces have been said to represent the elements, the cardinal virtues, the faculties and powers of the human soul, the patriarchal churches, the great apostles, the orders of churchmen, the principal angels, and so forth.

ii. Some commentators say these four creatures speak of the ensigns of the head tribes as Israel camped in four groups around the tabernacle in the wilderness. [Numbers 2:3](#), [2:10](#), [2:18](#), and [2:25](#) mention this organization of the tribes under these four heads, but does not assign “mascots” to tribal banners. Seiss, Clarke, and Poole each mention this approach, and cite “Jewish writers” (Seiss), “the Talmudists” (Clarke), and “the learned Mede... from the Rabbins” (Poole). Poole explains: “That these were the four creatures whose portraiture were in the four ensigns of the Israelites as they were marshalled into four companies, allotting the men of three tribes to each company. Judah’s standard had a lion in its colours, according to Jacob’s prophecy of that tribe, [Genesis 49:9](#), Ephraim had an ox, Reuben had a man, Dan an eagle. This the learned Mede proves from the Rabbins, who, though fabulous enough, yet in such a thing may be credited.”

iii. The four different faces of the cherubim are often taken as symbols of Jesus as represented in each gospel. In classical church architecture, these four “characters” are repeated often as a motif that signifies both heaven and the four gospels.

iv. Because there is no specific connection between the four faces of the cherubim and a particular gospel, different traditions have connected these four faces of the cherubim in different ways. Some have seen Matthew as the "Lion" gospel, showing Jesus as the Lion of the Tribe of Judah. Mark is seen as the "Ox" gospel, showing Jesus as a humble servant, a worker. Luke is seen as the "Man" gospel, showing Jesus as the perfect man, the second Adam. John is seen as the "Eagle" gospel, showing Jesus as the man from heaven, the sky. Still, this approach also has other interpretations.

| Gospel | Victorinus | Irenaeus | Augustine | Clarke | Suggested |
|---------|------------|----------|-----------|--------|-----------|
| Matthew | Man | Man | Lion | Man | Lion |
| Mark | Lion | Eagle | Man | Lion | Ox |
| Luke | Ox | Ox | Ox | Ox | Man |
| John | Eagle | Lion | Eagle | Eagle | Eagle |

v. Perhaps it is safest to say that the four faces are important because they represent all of animate creation, in its utmost excellence. The lion is the mightiest of wild animals, the ox strongest of domesticated animals, the eagle king of all birds, and man is highest of all creation. "In *Shemoth Rabba*, sec. 23, fol. 122, 4, Rabbi Abin says: 'There are **four** which have principality in this world: among *intellectual creatures*, **man**; among *birds*, the **eagle**; among *cattle*, the **ox**; and among *wild beasts*, the **lion**: each of these has a kingdom and a certain magnificence, and they are placed *under the throne of glory*, [Ezekiel 1:10](#), to show that no creature is to exalt itself in this world, and that the kingdom of God is over all.' These creatures may be considered the representatives of the whole creation." (Clarke)

vi. These cherubim are "Qualified with all necessary endowments, for the discharge of their duties, being bold as lions, painful as oxen, prudent as men, delighted in high flying as eagles." (Trapp)

vii. As well, it is significant to see that the Bible associates a **face** with the idea of **person** ([1 Chronicles 12:8](#); [2 Chronicles 29:6](#); [Isaiah 3:15](#), [13:8](#)). Here we have singular beings with four faces. Apparently, there are beings that can be more than one person — as our God is One God in three Persons.

viii. Poole says that these four faces illustrate the different personalities God's ministers have: "By them is signified the various gifts with which God blesseth his ministers, giving to some more courage and fortitude, that they are like lions; to others more mildness and meekness, that they are like oxen or calves; others have more wisdom and prudence, which most adorn a man; others a more piercing insight into the mysteries of God's kindgom, rendering them like eagles."

D. John describes what happens at the throne of God.

1. ([Revelation 4:8b](#)) The living creatures constantly worship God.

And they do not rest day or night, saying:

“Holy, holy, holy,

Lord God Almighty,

Who was and is and is to come!”

a. **They do not rest day or night, saying, “Holy, holy, holy”**: The cherubim constantly repeat the phrase **holy, holy, holy**. God’s **holy** nature and character is declared, and emphasized with a three-time repetition.

i. “In Hebrew, the double repetition of a word adds emphasis, while the rare threefold repetition designates the superlative and calls attention to the infinite holiness of God.” (Johnson)

ii. **They do not rest**: “They have no rest, and yet they have no unrest neither, the sweet content they take in their continual employment is fitter to be believed than possible to be discoursed.” (Trapp)

b. **Lord God Almighty**: The cherubim declared that the **Lord God** is **Almighty**. As in [Revelation 1:8](#), the ancient Greek word is *pantokrator*, with the idea of “the One who has His hand on everything.”

c. **Who was and is and is to come**: This repeats another idea from [Revelation 1:8](#), and refers to God’s eternal Being. It translates the *thought* behind the meaning of the name “Yahweh.”

2. ([Revelation 4:9-11](#)) The twenty-four elders worship the enthroned God.

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.”

a. **Whenever the living creatures give glory... the twenty-four elders fall down before Him**: The worship of the twenty-four elders is prompted by the cherubim. Since the cherubim worship God day and night, so do the elders.

i. Knowing angels should worship God should prompt our worship also. Do we have any less to praise Him or thank Him for? “Do we sing as much as the birds do? Yet what have birds to sing about, compared with us? Do we sing as much as the angels do? Yet they were never redeemed by the blood of Christ. Birds of the air, shall you excel me? Angels, shall you

exceed me? You have done so, but I intend to emulate you, and day by day, and night by night, pour forth my soul in sacred song.” (Spurgeon, *Holy Song from Happy Saints*)
ii. “If we would have our souls set as a pearl in the fair ring of heavenly courtiers that compass the Lamb’s throne, let us praise God as they do.” (Trapp)

b. **The twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him:**

The twenty-four elders **worship** (which means to credit worth or worthiness to) God.

The **elders** credited God for their own work and reward, and they did this as they **cast their crowns before the throne**. They recognized that the worth, the worthiness belonged to God, not to themselves.

i. Casting the crowns simply acted out their declaration, **You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power**. If God was worthy of the **glory and honor and power**, then **He** should get the crown.

ii. There is also an allusion to a practice in the Roman Empire. The Emperor of Rome ruled over many lesser kings, and these kings were at times commanded to come before the Emperor and lay their crowns down before him in homage. Then he would give them back, as a demonstration that their crowns, their right to rule, their victory, came from him. “This is an allusion to the custom of prostrations in the east, and to the homage of petty kings acknowledging the supremacy of the emperor.” (Clarke)

iii. The **crowns** mentioned in [Revelation 4:10](#) are the **stephanos crowns**, the crowns of **victory**, not royalty. These are the crowns of achievement that a winning athlete would receive at the ancient Olympic Games. The **twenty-four elders** — representing all the redeemed of God — threw every achievement reward they had back to God, because they knew and proclaimed that He was **worthy... to receive glory and honor and power**.

iv. “Our text says they **all** cast their crowns before the throne. There are no divided opinions in heaven, no sects and parties, no schisms there. They are all in perfect harmony and sweet accord. What one does, all do. They cast their crowns, without exception, before the throne. Let us begin to practice that unanimity here. As fellow Christians, let us get rid of everything that would divide us from each other, or separate us from our Lord. I do not read that there was a single elder who envied his brother’s crown, and said, ‘Ah, I wish I were such an one as he is, and had his crown.’ I do not read that one of them began to find fault with his brother’s crown, and said, ‘Ah, his jewels may be bright, but mine have a peculiar tint in them, and are of greater excellence.’ I do not read ought of dissension; they were all unanimous in casting their crowns at Jesus’ feet. They were all unanimous in glorifying God.” (Spurgeon)

c. **For You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created:** The twenty-four elders worshipped God because of His creative power and glory. The fact that God is Creator

gives Him all right and every claim over everything — even as a potter has all rights and claims over the clay ([Romans 9:21](#)).

i. God's right over us as Creator is a fact that can be accepted and enjoyed, or rejected, leading to frustration. There is tremendous value in our recognizing our "creatureliness" before God.

ii. "God's power put forth in the creation and administration of the world is twice here mentioned; as that which can never be sufficiently admired and adored." (Trapp)

iii. We confess a fondness for the King James Version translation of [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*. The wonderful phrase *and for thy pleasure they are and were created* reminds us that we each exist to give glory and pleasure to God. Until we do that, we don't fulfill our created purpose.

d. Because they represent all the people of God, the worship, the crown, the robes, the heart of these twenty-four elders belongs to us also. "There is a throne in heaven that no one can occupy but you, and there is a crown in heaven that no other head can wear but yours, and there is a part in the eternal song that no voice can ever compass but yours, and there is a glory to God that would be wanting if you did not come to render it, and there is a part of infinite majesty and glory that would never be reflected unless you should be there to reflect it!" (Spurgeon)

i. But it also means that we should plan ahead for that great day. "If you and I should walk into some great cathedral where they were singing, and ask to be allowed to sing in the choir, they would ask whether we had ever learnt the tune, and they would not let us join unless we had. Nor can we expect that untrained voices should be admitted into the choirs above. Now, dear brothers and sisters, have you learnt to cast your crowns at the Savior's feet already?" (Spurgeon)

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Matthew Henry Commentary on Revelation 4

Chapter 4

In this chapter the prophetic scene opens; and, as the epistolary part opened with a vision of Christ ([ch. 1](#)), so this part is introduced with a glorious appearance of the great God, whose throne is in heaven, compassed about with the heavenly host. This discovery was made to John, and in this chapter he,

- I. Records the heavenly sight he saw ([v. 1-7](#)). And then,
- II. The heavenly songs he heard ([v. 8-11](#)).

[Rev 4:1-8](#)

We have here an account of a second vision with which the apostle John was favoured: *After this*, that is, not only "after I had seen the vision of Christ walking in the midst of the golden candlesticks," but "after I had taken his messages from his mouth, and written and sent them to the several churches, according to his command, after this I had another vision." Those who well improve the discoveries they have had of God already are prepared thereby for more, and may expect them. Observe,

- I. The preparation made for the apostle's having this vision.

- 1. A door was opened in heaven. Hence we learn,
 - (1.) Whatever is transacted on earth is first designed and settled in heaven; there is the model of all the works of God; all of them are therefore before his eye, and he lets the inhabitants of heaven see as much of them as is fit for them.
 - (2.) We can know nothing of future events but what God is pleased to discover to us; they are within the veil, till God opens the door. But,
 - (3.) So far as God reveals his designs to us we may and ought to receive them, and not pretend to be wise above what is revealed.
- 2. To prepare John for the vision, a trumpet was sounded, and he was called up into heaven, to have a sight there of the things which were to be hereafter. He was called into the third heavens.
 - (1.) There is a way opened into the holiest of all, into which the sons of God may enter by faith and holy affections now, in their spirits when they die, and in their whole persons at the last day.
 - (2.) We must not intrude into the secret of God's presence, but stay till we are called up to it.
- 3. To prepare for this vision, the apostle was in the Spirit. He was in a rapture, as before (ch. 1:10), whether in the body or out of the body we cannot tell; perhaps he himself could not; however all bodily actions and sensations were for a time suspended, and his spirit was possessed with the spirit of prophecy, and wholly under a divine influence. The more we abstract ourselves from all corporeal things the more fit we are for communion with God; the body is a veil, a cloud, and clog to the mind in its transactions with God. We should as it were forget it when we go in before the Lord in duty, and be willing to drop it, that we may go up to him in heaven. This was the apparatus to the vision. Now observe,
- II. The vision itself. It begins with the strange sights that the apostle saw, and they were such as these:-
 - 1. He saw a throne set in heaven, the seat of honour, and authority, and judgment. Heaven is the throne of God; there he resides in glory, and thence he gives laws to the church and to the whole world, and all earthly thrones are under the jurisdiction of this throne that is set in heaven.
 - 2. He saw a glorious one upon the throne. This throne was not empty; there was one in it who filled it, and that was God, who is here described by those things that are most pleasant and precious in our world: His countenance was like a jasper and a sardine-stone; he is not described by any human features, so as to be represented by an image, but only by his transcendent brightness. This jasper is a transparent stone, which yet offers to the eye a variety of the most vivid colours, signifying the glorious perfections of God; the sardine-stone is red, signifying the justice of God, that essential attribute of which he never divests himself in favour of any, but gloriously exerts it in the government

of the world, and especially of the church, through our Lord Jesus Christ. This attribute is displayed in pardoning as well as in punishing, in saving as well as in destroying sinners.

- 3. He saw a rainbow about the throne, like unto an emerald, v. 3. The rainbow was the seal and token of the covenant of the providence that God made with Noah and his posterity with him, and is a fit emblem of that covenant of promise that God has made with Christ as the head of the church, and all his people in him, which covenant is as the waters of Noah unto God, an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure. This rainbow looked like the emerald; the most prevailing colour was a pleasant green, to show the reviving and refreshing nature of the new covenant.
- 4. He saw four-and-twenty seats round about the throne, not empty, but filled with four-and-twenty elders, presbyters, representing, very probably, the whole church of God, both in the Old-Testament and in the New-Testament state; not the ministers of the church, but rather the representatives of the people. Their sitting denotes their honour, rest, and satisfaction; their sitting about the throne signifies their relation to God, their nearness to him, the sight and enjoyment they have of him. They are clothed in white raiment, the righteousness of the saints, both imputed and inherent; they had on their heads crowns of gold, signifying the honour and authority given them of God, and the glory they have with him. All these may in a lower sense be applied to the gospel church on earth, in its worshipping assemblies; and, in the higher sense, to the church triumphant in heaven.
- 5. He perceived lightnings and voices proceeding out of the throne; that is, the awful declarations that God makes to his church of his sovereign will and pleasure. Thus he gave forth the law on mount Sinai; and the gospel has not less glory and authority than the law, though it be of a more spiritual nature.
- 6. He saw seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are explained to be the seven Spirits of God (v. 5), the various gifts, graces, and operations of the Spirit of God in the churches of Christ; these are all dispensed according to the will and pleasure of him who sits upon the throne.
- 7. He saw before the throne a sea of glass, like unto crystal. As in the temple there was a great vessel of brass filled with water, in which the priests were to wash when they went to minister before the Lord (and this was called a sea), so in the gospel church the sea or laver for purification is the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, who cleanses from all sin, even from sanctuary-sins. In this all those must be washed that are admitted into the gracious presence of God on earth or his glorious presence in heaven.
- 8. He saw four animals, living creatures, between the throne and the circle of elders (as seems most probable), standing between God and the people; these seem to signify the ministers of the gospel, not only because of this their situation nearer to God, and between him and the elders or representatives of the Christian people, and because fewer in number than the people, but as they are here described,
 - (1.) By their many eyes, denoting sagacity, vigilance, and circumspection.

- (2.) By their lion-like courage, their great labour and diligence (in which they resemble the ox), their prudence and discretion becoming men, and their sublime affections and speculations, by which they mount up *with wings like eagles towards heaven* (v. 7), and these wings full of eyes within, to show that in all their meditations and ministrations they are to act with knowledge, and especially should be well acquainted with themselves and the state of their own souls, and see their own concern in the great doctrines and duties of religion, watching over their own souls as well as the souls of the people.
- (3.) By their continual employment, and that is, praising God, and not ceasing to do so night and day. The elders sit and are ministered unto; these stand and minister: they rest not night nor day. This now leads to the other part of the representation.

Rev 4:8-11

We have considered the sights that the apostle saw in heaven: now let us observe the songs that he heard, for there is in heaven not only that to be seen which will highly please a sanctified eye, but there is that to be heard which will greatly delight a sanctified ear. This is true concerning the church of Christ here, which is a heaven upon earth, and it will be eminently so in the church made perfect in the heaven of heavens.

- I. He heard the song of the four living creatures, of the ministers of the church, which refers to the prophet Isaiah's vision, ch. 6. And here,
 - 1. They adore one God, and one only, *the Lord God Almighty*, unchangeable and everlasting.
 - 2. They adore three holies in this one God, the Holy Father, the Holy Son, and the Holy Spirit; and these are one infinitely holy and eternal Being, who sits upon the throne, *and lives for ever and ever*. In this glory the prophet saw Christ, and spoke of him.
- II. He heard the adorations of the *four-and-twenty elders*, that is, of the Christian people represented by them; the ministers led, and the people followed, in the praises of God, v. 10, 11. Here observe,
 - 1. The object of their worship, the same with that which the ministers adored: *Him that sat on the throne*, the eternal everliving God. The true church of God has one and the same object of worship. Two different objects of worship, either co-ordinate or sub-ordinate, would confound the worship and divide the worshippers. It is unlawful to join in divine worship with those who either mistake or multiply the object. There is but one God, and he alone, as God, is worshipped by the church on earth and in heaven.
 - 2. The acts of adoration.
 - (1.) They *fell down before him that sat on the throne*; they discovered the most profound humility, reverence, and godly fear.
 - (2.) They *cast their crowns before the throne*; they gave God the glory of the holiness wherewith he had crowned their souls on earth and the honour and happiness with which he crowns them in

heaven. They owe all their graces and all their glories to him, and acknowledge that his crown is infinitely more glorious than theirs, and that it is their glory to be glorifying God.

- 3. The words of adoration: they said, *Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power,* [v. 11](#). Observe,
 - (1.) They do not say, *We give thee glory, and honour, and power;* for what can any creature pretend to give unto God? But they say, *thou art worthy to receive glory.*
 - (2.) In this they tacitly acknowledge that God is exalted far above all blessing and praise. He was worthy to receive glory, but they were not worthy to praise, nor able to do it according to his infinite excellences.
- 4. We have the ground and reason of their adoration, which is threefold:-
 - (1.) He is the Creator of all things, the first cause; and none but the Creator of all things should be adored; no made thing can be the object of religious worship.
 - (2.) He is the preserver of all things, and his preservation is a continual creation; they are created still by the sustaining power of God. All beings but God are dependent upon the will and power of God, and no dependent being must be set up as an object of religious worship. It is the part of the best dependent beings to be worshippers, not to be worshipped.
 - (3.) He is the final cause of all things: *For thy pleasure they are and were created.* It was his will and pleasure to create all things; he was not put upon it by the will of another; there is no such thing as a subordinate creator, that acts under and by the will and power of another; and, if there were, he ought not to be worshipped. As God made all things at his pleasure, so he made them for his pleasure, to deal with them as he pleases and to glorify himself by them one way or other. Though he delights not in the death of sinners, but rather that they should turn and live, *yet he hath made all things for himself,* [Prov. 16:4](#). Now if these be true and sufficient grounds for religious worship, as they are proper to God alone, Christ must needs be God, one with the Father and Spirit, and be worshipped as such; for we find the same causality ascribed to him. [Col. 1:16, 17](#), *All things were created by him and for him, and he is before all things, and by him all things consist.*

John Brown Revelation 4

I. INTRODUCTION

A. The key to understanding the book of Revelation is in [Revelation 1:19](#) "Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this. (NKJV)"

1. The book is divided into three sequential events:

a) (#1) "The things which (John) had seen" = This by the way, was shown to him in chapter 1 and that the Glorified Christ in all of His Heavenly Majesty!

b) (#2) "The things which are" = this time period represents the Church Age. The time of the 7 churches which we just completed in chapters 2 and 3.

c) And finally "the things which will take place after this." = That is, the things that will take place after the church age. = This is represented in chapters 4 through 22.

B. So, in this scene, the church has been raptured and the Lord is about to execute judgment upon the "earth dwellers" described in [Revelation 3:10](#) "Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. (NKJV)"

1. This gives us the proper "picture" for the opening of chapter 4.

a) There is one word that predominates this chapter and it is the word "throne"!

(1) It appears 12 times in these 11 verses and no less than 37 times in the book of Revelation.

(2) One might get the impression of judgment as the throne suggests!

(a) And the next 18 chapters will unveil judgment like the earth, (and the people dwelling on it) has never seen since the creation.

(b) Lets take a look at chapter 4!

II. TEXT

A. [Revelation 4:1](#) **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." (NKJV)**

1. The first thing we notice is "...a door standing open in heaven..."!

a) A door gives right of passage from one place to another.

b) This door is in heaven and it is giving John the right to enter heaven.

c) Scripture tells us that there is only one door to heaven!

(1) [John 10:9](#) "I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. (NKJV)

(2) [John 14:6](#) Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. (NKJV)

(a) John would not have been permitted this privilege without being born again!

2. The next thing we notice is the "...voice like a trumpet..."

a) Paul has already described the rapture in [1 Corinthians 15:51-52](#) Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed -- 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. (NKJV)

(1) This trumpet sound will close the dispensation of grace (the church age).

(2) This trumpet of blessing will call God's children home!

(a) John, in this chapter represents all of us who will be caught up in the air to meet the Lord!

(b) John was not only given a vision, but invited to "come up here" = he was spiritually translated in heaven!

B. [Revelation 4:2-3](#) Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne. 3 And He who sat there was like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, in appearance like an emerald. (NKJV)

1. John had to be "in the spirit" because his earthly body had not yet been "transformed" for space and time travel!

2. The first thing he saw upon entrance to heaven was "a throne."

3. The Greek word for "set" is present continuous, meaning that it "was being set" right before John's eyes.

a) Most commentators believe that this is the "judgment seat of Christ" before which all Christians must stand!

(1) Yes, ALL Christians will face a judgment!!

(2) [Romans 14:10](#) But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. (NKJV)

(3) [2 Corinthians 5:10](#) For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. (NKJV)

(a) This is a judgment for works and not for salvation!

(b) 1 Corinthians 3:13-15 *each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. 14 If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. 15 If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. (NKJV)*

4. "...He who sat there was like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance..." The Lord warned not to make any image of HIM because it "misrepresented" Him.

a) God cannot be captured on canvas or carved in stone!

(1) Whom John saw was "like" jasper and sardius stones. Not in shape, but in brilliance and magnificence.

(a) By the way, jasper is red and symbolic of judgment and sacrifice.

(b) The sardine stone was purple, symbolic of royalty!

5. Notice the rainbow!

a) This rainbow unlike anything we have ever seen is "around" or "round-a-bout" the throne.

(1) It is a complete circle, where as we loose part of ours due to the horizon!

b) The Bible refers to the rainbow only 4 times.

(1) The first is in Genesis promising mercy to mankind even in the midst of judgment.

(2) The second is in Ezekiel 1:28 as Ezekiel describes his vision of God.

(3) The third is here in verse 3.

(4) And lastly in Rev 10:1 again dealing with a vision of the Lord and His throne.

(a) So, unmistakably, John is in the throne room of God!

C. Revelation 4:4 **Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads. (NKJV)**

1. There are at least 4 reasons why these elders are human and not angels:

a) All angels are the same age. There can be no "elders" among them.

b) The term "elder" is only used in the Bible for human men.

c) These "elders" are wearing white, a promise to overcoming believers.

d) And these "elders" are also wearing crowns also promised to "overcomers".

2. These 24 "elders" represent all believers of all ages.

3. But they are also individual men, the representative "elders" of all humanity!

a) There are in Genesis, 24 patriarchs listed in the line of the promised seed of Abraham.

b) Perhaps these are the men. No one is absolutely sure!

D. [Revelation 4:5](#) And from the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices. Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God. (NKJV)

1. These "rumblings" from heaven are indicative of judgment one again!

a) If you will remember, the same thing happened at Sinai when the Law was given. Then like here, the Lord was not dealing in grace!

2. As we have said, the number 7 in scripture symbolizes completion and fullness.

a) So, then, seven separate spirits represent the "fullness" and "completeness" of the Lord's Holy Spirit!

E. [Revelation 4:6-9](#) Before the throne there was a sea of glass, like crystal. And in the midst of the throne, and around the throne, were four living creatures full of eyes in front and in back. 7 The first living creature was like a lion, the second living creature like a calf, the third living creature had a face like a man, and the fourth living creature was like a flying eagle. 8 The four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come." 9 Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever, (NKJV) (The SEA OF GLASS)

1. [2 Chronicles 4:2-6](#) Then he made the Sea of cast bronze, ten cubits (15 feet) from one brim to the other; it was completely round. Its height was five cubits (7.5 feet), and a line of thirty cubits (45 feet) measured its circumference. 3 And under it was the likeness of oxen encircling it all around, ten to a cubit (18 inches), all the way around the Sea. The oxen were cast in two rows, when it was cast. 4 It stood on twelve oxen: three looking toward the north, three looking toward the west, three looking toward the south, and three looking toward the east; the Sea was set upon them, and all their back parts pointed inward. 5 It was a handbreadth thick (3 inches); and its brim was shaped like the brim of a cup, like a lily blossom. It contained three thousand baths (17.4 thousand gallons). 6 He also made ten lavers, and put five on the right side and five on the left, to wash in them; such things as they

offered for the burnt offering they would wash in them, but the Sea was for the priests to wash in.

(NKJV)

2. Exodus 30:18-21 "You shall also make a laver of bronze, with its base also of bronze, for washing. You shall put it between the tabernacle of meeting and the altar. And you shall put water in it, 19 "for Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet in water from it. 20 "When they go into the tabernacle of meeting, or when they come near the altar to minister, to burn an offering made by fire to the LORD, they shall wash with water, lest they die. 21 "So they shall wash their hands and their feet, lest they die. And it shall be a statute forever to them -- to him and his descendants throughout their generations." (NKJV)

a) These priests were already washed by the blood of the Lamb, therefore the sea before John was hard and crystalline. The priests were able to "walk" right into the presence of the Lord!

3. Ezekiel also described these "living creatures" that are before John at the throne: Ezekiel 1:10 As for the likeness of their faces, each had the face of a man; each of the four had the face of a lion on the right side, each of the four had the face of an ox on the left side, and each of the four had the face of an eagle. (NKJV)

a) There is much speculation about these creatures, and no doubt, each face is significant and symbolic.

(1) You will notice that the oxen in 2 Chronicles face North, South, East, and West.

(2) Perhaps each face keeps a certain watch over the throne!

b) One thing is for sure, they are there to worship the Lord

c) Day and night they cry:

(1) ..."Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!"...

(2) It is interesting that their "holy"s are in threes. Perhaps for the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit!

(3) Or maybe it is for God's work of creation, redemption, and final restoration!

(4) Whatever the reasons, they dedicate their existence to glorify and honor the Lord eternally!

(5) And notice what happens when they do!

F. Revelation 4:10-11 the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying: 11 "You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created." (NKJV)

1. The "elders" cannot worship the Lord while they are on their own thrones.

a) They are compelled to fall at His feet in worship!

2. Notice also that although the crowns were earned and deserved, they were unbecoming in His presence!

3. Their thrones seemed unimportant and insignificant compared to Him.

4. Notice also, "the redeemed" cast their crowns before the Lord as they praise His name!

III. CONCLUSION

A. **Revelation 4:11 "You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created." (NKJV)**

1. Before we can be redeemed we must believe that we were created!

2. There is no room in Christianity for evolution!

3. These heavenly being have no problem believing that He is the creator of all things!

4. Therefore they give Him praise as such!

