

# John's Vision Of God's Throne In Heaven

## Revelation 4:1-11

**Rev. 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." 2 Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne was standing in heaven, and One sitting on the throne. 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. 4 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.

5 And from the throne proceed 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; 6 and before the throne there was, as it were, a sea of glass like crystal; and in the center and around the throne, four living creatures full of eyes in front and behind. 7 And 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. 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." (ISAIAH 6:3)

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, 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,

11 "Worthy art Thou, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for Thou didst create all things, and because of Thy will they existed, and were created."

**Intro:** What thoughts and images flood your mind when you think of heaven? Close your eyes if you will, and take a moment to picture heaven. For most of us, heaven is a place that is more comfortable and trouble-free than the rigors

that face us in our present daily lives here on earth. Someone might say, “If I have a thousand dollars here, I will have ten million dollars in heaven.” Another might say, “While my inter-personal relationships here are lousy, they will be fantastic in heaven. And, on and on we go. I would venture to say that most of us have a really distorted view of what heaven is truly going to be like.

A story is told about a man who found out it was his time to go to Heaven. He asked the Lord if he could bring just one thing. The Lord said, “No.” Finally after numerous requests the Lord said, “Alright, you can bring one thing.” Happily, the man packed his suitcase full of gold. When he arrived in Heaven he was met by an angel who said, “I’m sorry, but you can’t bring that in here.” The man responded, “The Lord said I could bring it.” “Okay,” said the angel. “By the way, what’s in there anyway?” The man opened the suitcase, and the angel looked in. The angel said, “Oh. It’s pavement” (*source unknown*).

As I thought about my own reflections on heaven, my mind wandered back to my days as a tuna fisherman. I was often at sea, and away from my family for one, two, and on a few occasions, three months. There was no greater joy for me, than loading our ship up with 1, 200 tons of tuna and heading for home. It would usually take a week to ten days to travel home to San Diego. During the entire trip home, the thought of being reunited with my wife and kids, was heaven to me.

I am sure all of us have thought about what heaven is going to be like. Let me just say, I am certain that nothing, absolutely nothing on this earth can compare with what awaits us in heaven. In fact, heaven, the paradise of God, is more glorious and grand than we can ever begin to imagine.

**This morning we are going to take a peak into the heavenly abode of God.** But before we commence our study of Revelation 4:1-11, let’s get our bearings. As we noted in our Introduction, most commentators view chapter 1, verse 19 as a divinely inspired outline for the book. This verse provides a three-fold outline. Chapter one presented the first major division of the book. John was told to write *the things which he had seen*—that is, *the vision he had just received of the glorified Lord, Jesus*. In chapters 2 and 3 John records *the things which are*—Christ’s messages to the seven churches of Asia. The third division beginning in chapter 4:1 and running to the very end of the book in chapter 22, concerns *the things which shall take place after these things*. This lengthy portion of Scripture reveals the details of future, prophetic events. This includes the release of a three-fold series of Divine judgments (chaps. 6-18);

culminating with the second coming of Christ (chap. 19); the establishment of His millennial Kingdom in Jerusalem (chap. 20); and finally the establishment of the eternal state with its new Jerusalem, and the new heaven and new earth (chaps. 21-22).

Dr. Pentecost points out that it is essential to remember, “While the events portrayed in this futuristic section are not necessarily all in strict chronological order, they are all yet future. As such, they present a more graphic picture of the future, given in more detail, than is found in any other part of the Bible. Such a revelation is a fitting climax to all the biblical prophecies relating to human history, which are properly centered in the person and work of Jesus Christ.” (“Revelation,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, 943).

Chapter 4 opens with the Apostle John being transported spiritually to heaven, where he finds himself in the throne room of God. John is given a spectacular vision of God on His throne, from which He emanates His resplendent glory and majesty. Many believe that John’s experience here in chapter 4, of being caught up spiritually into the very presence of God, symbolizes the true churches removal from earth to heaven at the Rapture. Therefore, the church comprised of all born-again believers is not involved in the events occurring down here on earth, as described in Revelation chapters 6–18.

Dr. David Jeremiah observes that while the word “church” occurs 19 times in the first three chapters, from Revelation 3:22 until chapter 19, the church is not mentioned as being on earth even once.” The church is not again mentioned until it is eluded to in Revelation 19 when believers accompany Christ at His second coming to this earth.

Once again, it is extremely important to grasp the fact that “the prophetic events recorded in chapters 6 through 22 occur *after the Rapture*. There is no way of knowing how long we have. It could be days, weeks, months, or even years, though the latter is highly unlikely since the only thing keeping Satan from raising up his last day man of sin is the presence of the Restrainer—the Holy Spirit operating through the body of Christ, the church (2 Thess. 2:5-9). Once the Restrainer (the Holy Spirit’s indwelling all true believers) is removed via the Rapture, Satan will move quickly to bring his diabolical one world system into being” (Hampton Keathley III, “Introduction to the Things Predictive,” *Revelation Series*, available online at Bible.org).

### III. The Revelation Of Future Events: “The Things Which Shall Take Place After These Things” (Revelation 4–22)

#### A. John’s vision of the heavenly throne (Rev. 4:1-11)

##### 1. The invitation (v. 1)

Chapter 4 opens with John seeing a door standing open in heaven, from which came a voice which he had heard previously, a voice, like the sound of a trumpet; and He said to him, “Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after these things.”

##### a. The door standing open in heaven

The word “door” is used only four times in Revelation. In 3:8 it is used in connection with the door of opportunity for ministry extended to the church at Philadelphia. In 3:20 it is used twice of the Savior standing at the door of lost people’s hearts desiring entrance. Here, the door is opened to give John, and us, insights into God’s future dealings with a Christ-rejecting world.

The fact that the door was “standing open” (*Greek passive verb*), reminds us that God alone opens the door of Divine revelation and gracious salvation. God reveals that which we could never see or know apart from His Spirit-inspired revelation.

Dr. David Jeremiah says, the door of heaven is opened here in 4:1 to provide believers access to heaven at the Rapture of the church. The door to heaven is again opened in Revelation 19:11 to allow glorified believers to accompany Christ when He returns to earth to defeat Satan, antichrist, and the false prophet at the close of the Tribulation.

##### b. The voice inviting John to come up

The voice John had heard previously was that of the Son of Man, the Lord Jesus Christ (Rev. 1:12). Here, Christ invites John to come up to heaven through the door being opened to him. Christ provides John with a vision of God on His glorious throne, which prepares him for the panoramic vision recorded in chapters 6–18 of the horrific events

that will take place during the Great Tribulation. Notice that the voice John heard was “like the sound of a trumpet.” This is similar to Paul’s two descriptions of the Rapture of the church in 1 Corinthians 15:52 and 1 Thessalonians 4:16. In both passages Paul describes a trumpet sounding, followed immediately by believers being raised and changed, transformed or glorified.

## 2. The translation (v. 2a)

John states that he immediately found himself in the spirit. He was translated from heaven to earth. This is the same thing he experienced back in chapter 1, verse 10. John was experientially taken up to heaven spiritually, though his body probably remained on earth. The Apostle Paul had a similar experience of being translated up to the third heaven—Paradise, which he shares in 2 Corinthians 12:1-10. And because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations Paul was given, God allowed Satan to afflict him with a thorn in the flesh to keep him from exalting himself.

## 3. The glorious throne of God (vv. 2b-3)

The first thing John saw when he arrived in heaven was the glorious throne of God. The word “throne” is one of the key words in Revelation. It is found 46 times throughout the Book of Revelation, and 12 times in chapter 4 alone. The throne of God represents one of the great themes of Revelation, in that it speaks of God as the supreme Ruler and Sovereign over all of His creation.

John next describes the Person on the throne, who is identified in verse 8, as “the Lord God, the Almighty.” God is described in terms of two precious stones, the jasper and the sardius. It must be remembered that God’s essential glory cannot be fully communicated to man. Scripture teaches that God “dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen, or can see” (1 Tim. 6:16). So these stones are used to provide a comparison with God’s eternal glory, awesome holiness, and majesty.

The jasper stone was a clear, crystal-like gem, known today as a diamond. It portrays the purity and brilliance of God’s holiness. The sardius stone, was a blood red color, like a ruby. This stone portrays

God's wrath and justice, but it would also portray His redemptive work of love and grace in the Person of His Son, Jesus Christ, who came to earth as the Lamb of God to take away the sin of the world through His death on the cross (John 3:16).

The throne's overall appearance is described in verse 3 as one of great beauty and color, enhanced by a rainbow resembling an emerald. The green color of the emerald added further beauty to the heavenly scene. Unlike the arc or half circle rainbows we see during and after a rain, this rainbow encircled the throne of God. The rainbow itself serves as a vivid reminder of God's mercy and faithfulness. Following the global flood of Noah's day, God promised Noah and his descendants that He would never again destroy mankind with a universal flood (Gen. 9:11-17). Green signifies fruitfulness and blessing; all who come to God in faith will experience His perpetual fruitfulness and blessing.

#### 4. The personages surrounding the throne of God (vv. 4-5)

John next describes 24 elders who are seated on 24 thrones surrounding God's throne (v. 4). The elders are described as wearing white robes and sporting golden crowns on their heads. While there has been much speculation on the identity of the elders, two major views have been proposed (1) they are heavenly beings of an angelic order who have been assigned large responsibilities in God's government; (2) the 24 elders represent the church, all believers who have been raptured and rewarded in heaven. The white robes refer to the righteousness of Christ, which every believer is clothed with. The gold crowns are one of the rewards assigned to believers (1 Cor. 9:25; 1 Thess. 2:19; 2 Tim 4:8; Jam. 1:12; 1 Pet. 5:4). This would lend support to the view that the 24 elders are redeemed human beings, and not angelic beings.

In verse 5a John describes flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder that proceed forth from God's glorious throne. Dr. Charles Ryrie believes that "these may be portents of God's coming judgments to be released during the Tribulation, for they are found again in 8:5; 11:19; and 16:18" (*Revelation*, 34).

Verse 5b describes 7 lamps of fire burning before the throne. Most

take this to be a reference to the seven Spirits of God. The number seven is an allusion to the Holy Spirit's fulness.

#### 5. The four living creatures (vv. 6-8)

6 And before the throne there was, as it were, a sea of glass like crystal; and in the center and around the throne, four living creatures full of eyes in front and behind. 7 And 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. 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.”

“Many interpretations have been given of the four living creatures. As the Holy Spirit was seen symbolically in the seven lamps, probably the four living creatures symbolically represent the attributes of God including His omniscience and omnipresence (indicated by the creatures being full of eyes)—with the four animals bringing out other attributes of God” (Dwight Pentecost, “Revelation,” in *BKC*, 945).

Significance of the four beasts: (a) The Lion stresses kingly majesty and omnipotence. Just as the lion is known as the king of beasts and highlights the attributes of majesty, strength or sovereignty; here it stresses that God is King. The gospel of Matthew presents Christ as King, as the lion of the tribe of Judah. (b) A calf or ox stresses service and patience. The Gospel of Mark presented Christ as the suffering servant. (c) Man emphasizes intelligence. (d) The eagle because he soars in the heavens, emphasizes deity, keen sight, and quick action.

#### 6. The praise to God on His throne (vv. 9-11)

Chapter 4 concludes with a tremendous anthem of praise (vv. 9-11)

In v. 9 the four living creatures ascribe glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, to Him who lives forever.” The living

creatures are joined by the 24 elders who likewise worship the One on the throne, and attribute to Him glory and honor and power, and acknowledge that He is the Creator and Sustainer of the universe. As a final act of reverence and worship the 24 elders cast their crowns before the throne and ascribe all glory to Him as the Sovereign Creator.

#### Conclusion:

If the subject of heaven intrigues you, spend some time in Revelation chapters 21 and 22. These chapters provide wonderful insights into our eternal home in heaven. Revelation ends with a tremendous chorus of praise to God who sits on the throne. He alone is worthy to receive our praises.

I would encourage you to spend some time this afternoon meditating on Revelation 4:8. Write down reasons why God is deserving of your praise and adoration, and then spend some time praising, adoring, and thanking Him for who He is and for all that He does for you.

Perhaps you're here this morning and you have never accepted Jesus Christ as your Savior from sin and death. As I close in prayer, speak to God in the quietness of your own heart, and invite him to come in to your heart and life, and He will.

Closing prayer:

**Closing song: *Heaven Come***