



**Welcome to Heaven
Where Am I? Who Lives Here?
Revelation 4:1-11**

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Do you ever wonder what it will be like for us as believers in Jesus Christ after the rapture?

We have gone from living on planet earth and looking forward to the day we would be with Jesus to now, suddenly, we are in totally new bodies, all of our senses are accentuated beyond anything we have ever experienced here on earth. And we are now with Jesus.



And now we are surrounded by more people than we have ever seen at one time, and some of the locals there in heaven are rather unusual looking folks too. Some of the Divine Beings look, well, different. New smells, new sounds, and everyone is praising the Lord. We have looked forward to this but still, it is rather overwhelming.

We are now with Jesus; we are forever safe and in His love. Everyone here loves Him. We also now understand what is coming like we never have before. There is a lot to be done.

We have a one on one with Jesus to do.

And there is this big meeting coming up sometime after that.

And on top of it all, we are getting back with those loved ones who went before us.

And then there are all of those who are there who we have always wanted to meet.

We are introduced to our new home, our new way of living and are enjoying reestablishing relationships with those who went before us.

Everything is indeed new. I mean gold is used as a paving material here. New is the operative word.

No one is ill, sick, lame or disabled in any form at all.

And, this is weird, everyone looks to be about the same age too.

We all file into the throne room, we have already been there.

I can't wait. But it is that rather overwhelming sense of newness and distraction that hits John too as he arrives in heaven. He get's there in time for the big meeting.

Remember, the rapture has already taken place, the church is already there, and it appears that the Bema seat may have also already taken place too.

John's attention is directed to where he is brought to, the throne room of the universe and now he is the one trying to figure it all out.

Revelation 4:1-4

"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." Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne was standing in heaven, and someone was sitting on the throne. And He who was sitting was like a jasper stone and a sardius in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, like an emerald in appearance. 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." (NASB 2020)

Welcome to our new forever and it is kicking off with a bang, the Day of the Lord.

In our outline, we have now arrived at the things which will take place after these things. The church age, these things, is done. The entire church is now in heaven and with the Lord and all in glorified bodies. John was not the only one from outside in the meeting.



It appears that Daniel has also been invited to this meeting as well. Daniel writes about what he witnesses in Daniel 7:9-28. Daniel reported fourteen elements from what he saw, and John also reports on the same fourteen items.

What does Daniel see as he arrives?

Daniel 7:9–10

“As I looked, thrones were placed, and the Ancient of Days took his seat; his clothing was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames; its wheels were burning fire. A stream of fire issued and came out from before him; a thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him; the court sat in judgment, and the books were opened.” (ESV)

1. Introductory vision phraseology (Dan. 7:9 [cf. 7:2, 6–7]; Rev. 4:1)
2. The setting of a throne(s) in heaven (Dan. 7:9a; Rev. 4:2a [cf. 4:4a])
3. God sitting on a throne (Dan. 7:9b; Rev. 4:2b)
4. The description of God’s appearance on the throne (Dan. 7:9c; Rev. 4:3a)
5. Fire before the throne (Dan. 7:9d–10a; Rev. 4:5)
6. Heavenly servants surrounding the throne (Dan. 7:10b; Rev. 4:4b, 6b–10; 5:8, 11, 14)
7. Book(s) before the throne (Dan. 7:10c; Rev. 5:1–7)
8. The “opening” of the book(s) (Dan. 7:10d; Rev. 5:2–5, 9)
9. A divine (messianic) figure approaches God’s throne in order to receive authority to reign forever over a “kingdom” (Dan. 7:13–14a; Rev. 5:5b–7, 9a, 12–13)
10. This “kingdom” includes “all peoples, nations, and tongues” (Dan. 7:14a MT; Rev. 5:9b)
11. The seer’s emotional distress on account of the vision (Dan. 7:15; Rev. 5:4)
12. The seer’s reception of heavenly counsel concerning the vision from one among the heavenly throne servants (Dan. 7:16; Rev. 5:5a)
13. The saints are also given divine authority to reign over a kingdom (Dan. 7:18, 22, 27a; Rev. 5:10)
14. A concluding mention of God’s eternal reign (Dan. 7:27b; Rev. 5:13–14) (Beale and McDonough 2007, 1098)

About those throne servants. We will get there in Revelation 5 but suffice it to say, Ezekiel saw much of the same and gives us even more detail in Ezekiel 1 & 2. Then there are the eyewitness accounts of Isaiah in Isaiah 6.

John looked and he saw ἰδοῦ, “Behold (ἰδου [idou]). Exclamation of vivid emotion as John looked.” (Robertson 1933, Re 4:1)

In John’s experience up to this point in his life, he had already seen some amazing things, people raised from the dead, a man walking on the water, Jesus revealed in all His glory, more than once now, and then Jesus crucified. He also outran Peter in a foot race in order to confirm the empty tomb and he also saw the resurrected Jesus.

He saw Jesus ascend to the the Father and he also saw the tongues of fire descend on the disciples at the birth of the church in Acts 2. He has seen some amazing things, but this is something new which he has never seen before and the language he uses captures that amazement. John is viewing the third heaven.

The heavens have been opened and John has been invited by Jesus with the same voice he heard in chapter one, the same voice the church also heard when Jesus called them to Him in the rapture.

He tells us that he was called by a mighty voice to come up into heaven, and straightway “became in the Spirit”—in some mysterious, miraculous, ecstatic state, wrought by the power of God—which was, to all



intents and purposes, a complete translation from Patmos to the hidden sky. He was not dead; he was not in a mere swoon; he had all his senses entire; his ears heard; his eyes saw; his heart felt; his capacity to weep and to speak continued with him; and the thing was, in all respects, the same as a bodily carrying up to the heavenly sphere, where he found what he was commanded to describe. (Seiss 1901, 237)

John arrives and is in the throne room with the Divine Council, now with the church serving on it, and he is in the throne room of God. In the scriptures, we tend to hear about those around the throne, but not much about the throne itself.

By the way, what is happening to John is, for a prophet of God, a normal occurrence. John catches a glimpse of Yahweh's heavenly council. "Like the OT prophets, he is commissioned and called as a prophet by being summoned into the secret heavenly council of the Lord (see on 1:10–20 for the initial commissioning vision)." (Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary 1999, 319)

One more thing to remember, John has traveled through time and space to arrive in the third heaven in the throne room of God and he is now before the Divine Council. The heaven John refers to is in the singular, it is where God dwells.

This is the only place in the New Testament where we get a description of the throne of God.

John's attention is drawn to the throne. After the shock of arrival, he sees a throne and is able to see that there is someone sitting on the throne. But notice this, John does not describe or attribute a human shape to the one on the throne. The one who is there is a being of light as he uses various gemstones to describe the light he is seeing come from the one on the throne. We need to get used to John using this term, throne. He will use it forty-seven times. God's glory and majesty are seen coming from the throne and this seriously impacts John.

We also see a rainbow around the throne. This is a sign of the Noachic covenant of Genesis 9:16, not gay pride. Once again Satan is attempting to draw away the true meaning of what the Bible teaches. "The rainbow round the very throne of God then is a way of saying that the covenant is eternal. It will never be repudiated." (Morris 1987, 89)

An alternative translation model for this verse is:

At once God's Spirit took control of me, and I saw there in heaven a throne on which someone was sitting. (Bratcher and Hatton 1993, 88)

John is Jewish and he sticks with describing who is there as a being of light without going into too much other detail.

Paul also was privileged to come before the throne of God (2 Corinthians 2:12) and he tells us some of his view in 1 Timothy.

1 Timothy 6:13–16

"I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which he will display at the proper time—he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen." (ESV)



John then looks around the room a bit and sees that there are twenty-four thrones around THE THRONE. Yes, he had to have counted at least twice. Because he tells us the number of thrones and the number of those who are sitting on those thrones.

Who are those 24 “elders” that he sees seated around the throne of God.

To determine that, rather than going through the various views in various commentaries, and some are pretty unusual, let’s look at what we know.

We are in heaven, the rapture has already occurred, the church is already there. All the church has had a one on one with Jesus meaning, the Bema Seat is done, and rewards have been dealt out.

About the twenty-four elders. They are seated, in white garments and wearing golden crowns, the Greek word is stephanos, on their heads.

Rewards have already been given, thus the assumption the Bema Seat activity is complete.

In terms of timing, this also tends to show us that what we will see involving the seal judgements possibly do not begin until the church has been fully acclimated to where they now are.

We do not know how long this takes and we do not know how long between the rapture of the church and the beginning of the Tribulation.

The word for crown here is στεφάνου (stephanos) not diadem. A stephanos is “a wreath made of foliage or designed to resemble foliage and worn by one of high status or held in high regard, wreath, crown. An award or prize for exceptional service or conduct, prize.” (Arndt, et al. 2000, 944)

This is the crown of the overcomer (Revelation 3:11), so we see a crown only wearable by a believer.

The elders are wearing white too.

Revelation 3:5

“The one who overcomes will be clothed the same way, in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.” (NASB 2020)

They are overcomers, they have been saved. This is the church. But wait, what about the term being used, elder.

The term elder. Nowhere else in Scripture is the term used to describe celestial or angelic beings. This term is used of humans in positions of authority either in the synagogue or church. (Fruchtenbaum 2003, 165)

That is enough to convince me that these elders are the church. The church is in this Divine Council meeting.

The fact that these 24 elders are wearing these stephanos crowns also shows that the events described in chapters four and five occur after the Judgment Seat of Messiah but before the Marriage of the Lamb. (Fruchtenbaum 2003, 165)

Before we dig any further, let’s look at this entire section of scripture here in chapter 4, we are looking for the purpose of this meeting. There are three.



Revelation 4:1–11

“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.” Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne was standing in heaven, and someone was sitting on the throne. And He who was sitting was like a jasper stone and a sardius in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, like an emerald in appearance. 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. Out from the throne came 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; and before the throne there was something like a sea of glass, like crystal; and in the center and around the throne, four living creatures full of eyes in front and behind. The first living creature was like a lion, the second creature like a calf, the third creature had a face like that of a man, and the fourth creature was like a flying eagle. 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.” And when the living creatures give glory, honor, and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, to Him who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders will fall down before Him who sits on the throne, and they will worship Him who lives forever and ever, and will cast their crowns before the throne, saying, “Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created.”” (NASB 2020)

Right there in verse 11 we get reason number one for this Divine Council meeting. “The purpose of the council meeting is threefold: (1) exaltation of the Lamb that was slain (Rev 4:11; 5:11–12); (2) celebration of the Lamb’s victory (Rev 5:1–5), an event that made his followers “a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth” (Rev 5:10); and (3) opening of the seven seals (Rev 6).” (Heiser 2015, 357)

When you arrive in heaven and see that you already have this scheduled on your daytimer, there in your mansion in heaven, you want to be there. In fact, all the events that are on your schedule are ones the King wants you to be at, and you will see them, they are all biggies. You and I are invited. The uniform of the day is simple too, white robes.

This is no different than arriving at a new base as the incoming commander. Arriving in Kuwait. Isaiah, in the mini-apocalypse of Isaiah 24, also refers to this scene.

Isaiah 24:20–23

“The earth staggers like a drunken man; it sways like a hut; its transgression lies heavy upon it, and it falls, and will not rise again. On that day the LORD will punish the host of heaven, in heaven, and the kings of the earth, on the earth. They will be gathered together as prisoners in a pit; they will be shut up in a prison, and after many days they will be punished. Then the moon will be confounded and the sun ashamed, for the LORD of hosts reigns on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and his glory will be before his elders.” (ESV)

On one level, identification of the elders as human is quite consistent with...the presentation of glorified believers by Jesus in the divine council (Heb 1–2). Conversely, identifying them as divine doesn’t impinge on the human presence in the council. Heaven and earth, divinity and humanity, are not easily separable when it comes to the divine council and God’s plan for restoration of Eden. (Heiser 2015, 355)

All of this to say that those who are seated on the twenty-four thrones are representative of the church. And that also points to the rapture of the church taking place before the Tribulation, since the church is now in heaven and will see it, all unfold as John will outline for us.



We know the Father is on the throne, and then we see the Holy Spirit.

Revelation 4:5

“Out from the throne came 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;” (NASB 2020)

John hears thunder, or at least we think so based on the English translation, and he sees lightning.

The text reads “sounds and peals of thunder.” Wait a minute, are the sounds the peals or are the sounds something else on top of the peals? It is plural sounds.

John is getting the full Mount Sinai sensory experience here. The word we see translated sound is the word φωναί (phōnai). It means an auditory effect, sound, tone, noise...the faculty of utterance, voice. (Arndt, et al. 2000, 1071)

The voice may refer to the voice of God which was said to be heard in several different languages; cf. Shabbath 88b. However, these phenomena are traditional accompaniments to theophany. (Ford 2008, 73)

At Mount Sinai, the Rabbis believed that the voice of God was in all 70 language groups resulting from Genesis 11 and all at once. John is describing a similar scene here, God, as at Sinai, is preparing to work on behalf of the Jews.

It also means that He is preparing to turn the throne of grace into one of judgment.

The “thunder” is not just a natural force but the rumbling majestic voice of God, the Creator of the world, the Judge and the Holy Warrior, to which the chorus of heavenly beings responds in wonder and praise, v. 9b and which strikes with terror the enemies of Israel and the power of chaos. (Betz 1964-, 283)

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In the end-time, then, God’s speaking is replaced by the direction of the Son of Man. In plerophorous (complete assurance) expressions the signs of the theophany at Sinai are transferred to the world-shaking catastrophe of the last judgment; alongside one another we find βρονται και φωναι και αστραπαι και σεισμός, Rev. 8:5; cf. 4:5; 11:19; 16:18, cf. also Jub. 2:2. (Betz 1964-, 296)

The seven lamps of God speak to the seven attributes of the Holy Spirit as described to us in Isaiah.

Isaiah 11:2

“The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, The Spirit of wisdom and understanding, The Spirit of counsel and might, The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD.” (NKJV)

The Holy Spirit is no longer on earth, the restrainer has indeed been removed and He is in the throne room of the universe. God is preparing to purge evil from the face of earth once and for all. His war torches, the Holy Spirit, are ready.

Revelation 4:6

“and before the throne there was something like a sea of glass, like crystal; and in the center and around the throne, four living creatures full of eyes in front and behind.” (NASB 2020)

The picture we have so far is a comparative to the establishment of the law and the creation of Israel as a distinct people. Now, we see here in Revelation, the preparation for the start of the 70th week of Daniel. It will be about Israel again, the church is in heaven, clearly so.



God is revealing preparations for what is to come.

John gives us additional detail of the throne room first talking about a sea of glass around the throne, then his first glimpse of the throne guardians who he calls, “four living creatures.”

No, there is no large body of water around the throne. What John sees is what was seen earlier by Moses, Aaron and the elders of Israel in Exodus 24.

What is this sea? Remember, the Temple as well as the Tabernacle designs were intended to be a representation of the reality that exists in heaven.

Exodus 24:9–11

“Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and the seventy elders of Israel went up, and they saw the God of Israel. Under his feet there was something like a pavement made of sapphire, clear like the sky itself. But he did not lay a hand on the leaders of the Israelites, so they saw God, and they ate and they drank.” (NET 2nd ed.)

There are many views concerning what this is. But again, if we go back to the design for the Tabernacle and the Temple, we get a clue.

“In the tabernacle and temple of the Old Testament there was a brazen laver filled with water in which the priests were required to wash themselves when they came to minister before the Lord (Exod. 30:18; 38:8; 1 Kings 7:23). Symbolically, this ‘sea of glass’ represents the blood of Christ, which is a fountain opened in which we must be washed before we can approach the throne of God.” (Fortner 2002, 169)

This may represent typically the sanctifying power of the Word of God. (Walvoord 2008, 109)

Ephesians 5:25–27

“Husbands, love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave himself for her to sanctify her by cleansing her with the washing of the water by the word, so that he may present the church to himself as glorious—not having a stain or wrinkle, or any such blemish, but holy and blameless.” (NET 2nd ed.)

As the church, we are washed by the water of the Word of God. His Word is so reliable, we see a similar idiom from John talking about the throne. In heaven, everything sits on His Word. But John sees someone else.

Revelation 4:6b–8

“...and in the center and around the throne, four living creatures full of eyes in front and behind. The first living creature was like a lion, the second creature like a calf, the third creature had a face like that of a man, and the fourth creature was like a flying eagle. 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.”” (NASB 2020)

What or who are these four creatures? The word translated here as creature is ζῷα (zōa). The word means a living creature, wild or domesticated, but not including plants...a creature that transcends normal descriptive categories and is frequently composite, living thing/being. (Arndt, et al. 2000, 431)

It might be better to say around the throne are four living beings. Throne guardians. Who are they? What do they mean?



John would be familiar with the general area around the throne. He has studied Ezekiel as well as Isaiah and would be somewhat knowledgeable of what he would expect to see, but as an eyewitness, it still is something to behold.

I am reminded of the cherubim who bear the moveable throne of God that Ezekiel tries to describe to us and the wheels with the eyes he also describes. Then there are the seraphim that Isaiah sees in the throne room of heaven.

Ezekiel 1:5–12

“And from the midst of it came the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance: they had a human likeness, but each had four faces, and each of them had four wings. Their legs were straight, and the soles of their feet were like the sole of a calf’s foot. And they sparkled like burnished bronze. Under their wings on their four sides they had human hands. And the four had their faces and their wings thus: their wings touched one another. Each one of them went straight forward, without turning as they went. As for the likeness of their faces, each had a human face. The four had the face of a lion on the right side, the four had the face of an ox on the left side, and the four had the face of an eagle. Such were their faces. And their wings were spread out above. Each creature had two wings, each of which touched the wing of another, while two covered their bodies. And each went straight forward. Wherever the spirit would go, they went, without turning as they went.” (ESV)

Isaiah 6:2–3

“Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called to another and said: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!”” (ESV)

Here is what we do know. They are some order of Divine Being. We tend to use the term angel, but in reality, that is a job description, messenger.

These apparently are celestial servants, and they act in zeal for the holiness of God and against sin (Ezekiel 10:1–17; 11:22). They appear in a similar ministry in the judgment context of Revelation 4 as related to Chap. 5:1 and 6:1ff. (Rosscup 2008, 2733)

What is the significance of the four faces? Good question which we will get to next time.

What we are studying is not science fiction. It is not the next script for Marvel either. It is the book of Revelation, and we are seeing the future reported to us as it happens, to include views in the 3rd heaven. Here is the thing, we think this is way off in the future, it might be as soon as next month.

Are you ready to go? That is next by the way.

Romans 3:21–24

“But now God has shown us a way to be made right with him without keeping the requirements of the law, as was promised in the writings of Moses and the prophets long ago. We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are. For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God’s glorious standard. Yet God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins.” (NLT)

Romans 10:9–13

“If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by openly declaring your faith that you are saved. As the Scriptures tell us, “Anyone who trusts in him will never be disgraced.” Jew and Gentile are the same in this respect. They have the same Lord, who gives



generously to all who call on him. For “Everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved.”
(NLT)

ABC’s of Salvation

- A. Acknowledge that you are a sinner, tell Him that.
- B. Believe that Jesus died on the cross for our sin and that He rose from the dead.
- C. Confess that Jesus is Lord. Tell someone about what you have done.

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