

Revelation 4 (NASB)

Scene in Heaven

Chapter 1 gave us “The things that were”. Chapters 2-3 gave us “The things that are.” And Chapters 4-22 will cover “The things which must shortly take place.” The phrase ‘meta tauta’ appears twice in the first verse of Chapter 4 and means “after this or after these things”. In the following verses the authors saw heaven in a vision from God. In Isaiah 6:1, Isaiah saw heaven, in Ezekiel 1:1, so did Ezekiel and in Daniel 7:9, Daniel also saw heaven. In Revelation, John uses a lot of symbolism. Some things that are not symbolic in the rest of the Bible include: Jesus’ return, evil defeated, Lake of fire and . . .

“We ought to be equally content with that which is not revealed, as with that which is revealed. If God wills us not to know, we ought to be satisfied with not knowing. 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)

Chapters 4-19 of Revelation describe the Great Tribulation. Revelation 4 also shows us the source of judgment. Judgment occurs at God’s throne in heaven.

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.”

The phrase “After these things” refers to a time after the warnings to the church. The phrase “a voice like a trumpet” is significant because this is how Israel summoned the people when it was time to move during the Exodus. Many skeptics, pastors, and theologians teach us that verses 4-19 have already been fulfilled in the Old Testament. We know they are wrong because Jesus is revealing things that will take place AFTER these things have occurred. Specifically, this includes the time of the Gentiles. Romans 11:25 also teaches us that there will be a Rapture. The verse in Romans says “*I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery—so that you will not be wise in your own estimation—that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in;*” This verse in Romans also teaches us that God has NOT replaced Israel with the Church. It is only a “partial hardening” of the hearts of the Jews. John is called up to heaven by a trumpet. We will be raptured with the call of a trumpet. 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 tells us so, “*16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.*” The church does not appear in chapters 4-19, which will deal with judgment on earth.

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

The phrase “in the Spirit” in Revelation 1:10 meant that John had received the Spirit of prophecy and was under its influence when he saw the first vision. This phrase “Immediately I was in the Spirit” points to an interlude in the vision. He received the vision where Christ gave him the letters to the churches when he was summoned to heaven in Revelation 1:10. Here at the beginning of Chapter 4, he is once again summoned to heaven which suggests there was a break in the vision. He was still physically in Patmos but the visions that he is seeing are as real to him as if he were in

heaven. John was NOT actually physically in heaven. John 3:13 tells us that *“No one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven: the Son of Man.”* The first thing that John notices in his vision is the Throne. He must have noticed it because it must have been beyond impressive. Only the real ruler could possibly sit on this throne.

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

When John gets around to the One on the throne, this is the Father and not Jesus. Psalm 47:8 tells us *“God reigns over the nations, God sits on His holy throne.”* Likewise, Psalm 113:5 says *“Who is like the Lord our God, Who is enthroned on high.”* We can know for certain from Revelation 5:13. This verse clearly shows that the One on the Throne is separate from the Lamb, Jesus. It says *“And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, “To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever.”* The shape or form is not given to the One on the throne and it does line up with Scripture. Exodus 33:20 says *“But He said, “You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!”* The two stones used to describe God are Sardis and Jasper. They allude to or point to the first and last stones on the breastplate of the High Priest as described in Exodus 39:10 and 13 (KJV). Other translations may say carnelian or ruby. Both are names for sardis. The KJV translation says *“10 And they set in it four rows of stones: the first row was a sardius, a topaz, and a carbuncle: this was the first row. . . .13 And the fourth row, a beryl, an onyx, and a jasper: they were inclosed in ouches of gold in their inclosings.”* Theologian John Trapp (1601-1669) said about 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.”*

4:4 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.

The next thing John sees are 24 thrones. And then he sees the 24 elders, they aren’t blind robots but all-seeing intelligent beings. The 24 Elders may represent the 24 priestly divisions of Israel. (See 1 Chronicles 24.) They are clothed in white robes. We are unsure whether these are people or angels. Revelation 7:9 says *“After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands;”* The following verses do not clarify it either because both angels and humans are shown wearing white robes.

- Mark 16:5 *“Entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting at the right, wearing a white robe; and they were amazed.*
- John 20:12 *“and she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had been lying”*
- Acts 1:10 *“And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was going, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them.”*

At the end of this verse says that the 24 Elders are also wearing crowns. This tells us positively that the elders are humans/people because the following verses tell us that only humans are given crowns. (See 1 Corinthians 9:25, 2 Timothy 4:8 and 1 Peter 5:4).

The Throne and Worship of the Creator

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

This verse confirms that it is God seated on the throne because it is the same way God spoke to Moses and all of Israel. (See Exodus 19:16-19 and Exodus 20:18.) The seven lamps of fire represent the Holy Spirit. Isaiah 11:2 gives the seven spirits of God which are the Holy Spirit. "The Spirit of the Lord will rest on Him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and strength, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord." The Holy Spirit is described as tongues of fire in Acts 2:3.

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.

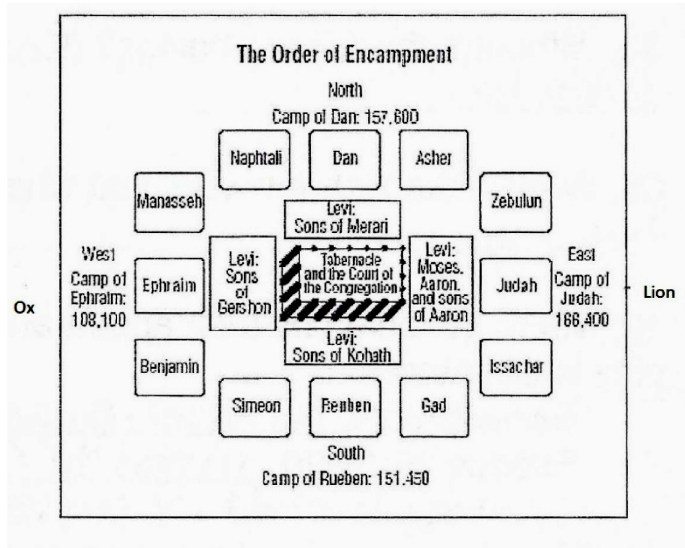
The sea of glass most likely represents the Bronze Laver in the inner tabernacle. The priest would wash in a laver (pool of water) before going before the Ark of the Covenant. It is like the cleansing power of God. Ephesians 5:26 says "so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word". Some versions say it is a sea of glass and some that it just appears that way. What do you think and why? (No right or wrong answers because no one knows for sure). Exodus 24:10 calls it a pavement made of sapphire. It could be the same type of vision.

The 4 living beings were cherubims. (See Ezekiel 10:20-22.) The Hebrew word "keruvim" is used here and it means "like a young child". Not to be fooled by their appearance, their role is to guard the garden entrance they also cover the Holy of Holies. Genesis 3:24 says "So He drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life." (See also Exodus 25:18-20.) Satan was one of these creatures. Ezekiel 28 is referring to Satan and verse 14 of Ezekiel says "You were the anointed cherub who guards/covers and I placed you there." The Ark needed to be covered with cherubims and it confirms that John is seeing the throne because God's throne is set up the same way in Heaven. Exodus 25:8-9 says "8 Let them construct a sanctuary for Me, that I may dwell among them.9 According to all that I am going to show you, as the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furniture, just so you shall construct it." Some versions say "creatures" and some say "beasts." Both are incorrect. The word used is 'zoon' and means "living ones". It differs from the word 'therion' which does translate as "wild creatures or beasts". 'Therion' is used in Revelation 13 to describe the beast coming out of the sea. It is uncertain what the phrase 'Full of eyes' shows. Some say it is the 4 gospels but some believe that they show God's Omniscience (all-knowing) and omnipotence (unlimited power).

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

It is not known what the four living ones represent. Some believe they are a special, exalted order of angelic being or cherubim. Some say they are the sons of Levi or the four Gospels. The figure below and the subsequent table have been used by theologians to try to explain the descriptions of the four creatures using the Gospels and the Order of Encampment. The heads of the creatures

have been assigned to the directions of the Order of Encampment or to each of the Gospels. This shows the lengths that men will go to understand the symbolism found in Revelation.



| Gospel | Primary Audience | Portrait of Jesus | Key Verses | Face | Camp of Israel |
|---------|------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------|
| Matthew | Jews | King Messiah | Mat. 1:1; 16:16; 20:28 | Lion (Gen. 49:9; Rev. 5:5+) | Judah (East) |
| Mark | Romans | Lowly Servant | Mark 1:8; 8:27; 10:45; 15:34 | Ox | Ephraim (West) |
| Luke | Hellenists | Son of Man | Luke 19:10 | Man (Dan. 7:13+) | Reuben (South) |
| John | Greek World | Son of God (Ps. 2:7; Pr. 30:4) | John 20:31 | Eagle (Gen. 49:16) | Dan (North) |

4:8 And the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings, are full of eyes around and within; and day and night they do not cease to say,

"HOLY, HOLY, HOLY IS THE LORD GOD, THE ALMIGHTY, WHO WAS AND WHO IS AND WHO IS TO COME."

This verse is the one of the few places in the New Testament where the same word is repeated three times in successions. This is very significant. The ceaseless behavior of the 4 living creatures shows that there is no fatigue in Heaven. They never need to rest. The phrase "Who was, Who is, and Who is to come" shows us that God had no creator. He has no beginning and no end. He is the Alpha and the Omega and everything in between. Think hard. What does the phrase "and is to come" tell us about the cosmic battle of spiritual warfare? It tells us that Satan loses and he is trying to take as many as possible with him.

4:9 And when the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, to Him who lives forever and ever, 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 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."

The 24 elders are humans and not angels because in the nowhere in the Scriptures are we are told that angels have crowns. There are five different types of crowns mentioned in Scripture as rewards for believers. The five crowns and what they are rewards for. . .

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| 1 Corinthians 9:25 | Imperishable crown for being faithful under trials, don't give up. |
| 1 Thessalonians 2:19 | Crown of joy or rejoicing. Those who have led others to Christ. |
| Philippians 4:4 | Crown of joy or rejoicing. Those who have led others to Christ. |
| 2 Timothy 4:8 | Crown of righteousness. Given by Christ Himself to believers. |
| 1 Peter 5:4 | Crown of Glory. Allowing the glory of God to shine through us. Usually refers to Deacons, Elders, Pastors, Sunday School teachers. (Those who help others grow in their walk with Christ. |
| Revelation 2:10 | Crown of Life. Eternal life. |
| 1 John 2:25 | |

Isaiah 42:8 says "*I am the LORD, that is My name; I will not give My glory to another, Nor My praise to graven images.*" Isaiah 48:11 says "*And My glory I will not give to another.*" Romans 8:18 says "*the glory that is to be revealed to us.*" These verses are related because they talk about God's glory.

We give our crowns back to God in praise. We do not deserve the crowns. He alone is worthy of these gifts. Without Him, we are nothing and would have nothing of lasting value. See Revelation 4:11. According to this same verse in the King James version, we were created for God's pleasure, and we should live triumphantly because God delights in us just the way we are, flaws and in light of this. Revelation 4:11 - KJV - "*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.*"