

What Must Take Place After This! (A Trip to Heaven)

Text: Revelation 4

Main Idea: God alone, who gloriously sits on His throne, is worthy of all our worship.

1. **The Throne:** The fixed central object of heaven where God is the omnipotent **Ruler** of the universe. (v. 2a)
2. **On the Throne:** God the **Father**, the sovereign of the universe is sitting on His throne in all His glory. (v. 2b-3a, Is 6:1, 1 Kings 22:19, Ps 47:8, Daniel 7:9-10, Ez 1:26-28)
 - God is sovereignly omnipotent sitting on His throne. (Ps 115:3)
 - God is in all His glory, a faithful **covenant** keeping God with Israel (Jasper & Sardius). (Ex 28:17-21)
3. **Around the Throne:** Representatives of the **Church** surround the throne! (v. 3b-4)
 - **Rainbow:** Emerald in appearance symbolizing the mercy of God. (Ge 9:13-17)
 - **24 elders:** These are not **angelic** beings, nor do they represent **Israel**, but rather it is best to view these as representatives of the Church in heaven who have received their rewards just as Jesus promised the conquerors in Rev 2:10, 3:5, 21.
4. **From the Throne:** John saw a **preview** of God's divine fury that will be poured out on the sinful world. (v. 5a, Rev 8:5, 11:19, 16:18, Ex 19:16, Ez 1:13)
5. **Before the Throne:** The Holy Spirit is prepared to be a **war** torch when called upon. (v. 5b-6a)
 - 7 Torches of Fire: The Holy Spirit in **fullness** is God's war torch. (Is 11:2, Jud 7:16, 20, Nah 2:3-4)
 - Sea of glass like Crystal: Heaven is a beautiful array of brilliance. (Ex 24:10)
6. **In & Around the Throne:** Cherubim, exalted order of **angels**, who either represent different aspects of divine majesty, or the majesty of God's creative world, worship continually. (v. 6b-8a, Ez 1:4-25, 10:15)
 - Nothing escaped their **knowledge**: They had eyes in front and behind.
 - They had four facial features: Each of these faces represents an aspect of God's created world: Lion represents wild creatures (strength), calf domestic animals (service), eagle flying creatures (speed), and man the pinnacle of creation (reason). (Ez 1:6)
 - These living creatures will play an integral role in the coming **judgment**. (Rev 6:1-2, 6:6, 15:7)
 - They had six wings to fulfill their duty in worship.
7. **Toward the Throne:** **Worship** is directed toward God. (v. 8b-11)
 - God is the Holy & **Almighty** one!
 - God is the **Eternal** one!
 - God is the **Worthy** one!
 - God is the **Creator** of all things!

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(4:1-2) **“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 One sitting on the throne. ”**

From this point onward in John’s revelation he is brought to the throne room of heaven where he will observe all that is to take place ***after the church age***. Notice how John was brought to this place in the spirit which tells us that he was not merely dreaming; he was actually present in heaven to observe all of the future events that he writes down. Keeping in mind all that was previously discussed concerning the timing of the rapture, there will be many more details throughout the remaining revelation that will keep supporting the fact that the bride of Christ will be in heaven with Christ as the described events are taking place until she is seen coming with Christ to the earth.

The throne that John sees here speaks to the ***total authority of God*** over His creation (Lam 5:19; Ps 11:4; 103:19; etc.). Revelation 21:22 reveals that “the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb” are the temple (not a literal building) and the throne is said to be in the temple. Isa 66:1 and Acts 7:49 state that “heaven is My throne and the earth is My footstool”.

The most important thing to understand is that all of the events described in Revelation are under the direct control of God - specifically ***the Lord Jesus Christ*** who has been given all authority and judgement by the Father (Jhn 5:22, 27; Eph 1:20-23; Col 2:9,10; Jude 1:25; Rev 2:26,27). When all of the rule and authority of the Son of Man in His kingly role (as it pertains to this creation) has been completed as prophesied by the end of the Millennium, it will be abolished (1 Cor 15:24) because in the new heavens and earth all will be perfect.

Thrones in scripture

- ***Messiah*** seen as sitting:
 - on ***His Father’s Throne*** (Ps 110:1; Eph 1:20; Heb 8:1; 12:2; Rev 3:21)
 - on the “***Throne of His Mercy***” (Heb 4:16)
 - on the “***Throne of David***” (Isa 9:7 Lk 1:32) which is also
 - ***His throne*** (Zech 6:13; Dan 7:9; Mat 19:28; 25:31; Lk 1:32; Heb 1:8; 4:16; Rev 3:21)
- The throne of ***the 12 Apostles*** (Mt 19:28; Lk 22:30; 1 Cor 6:3)
- The throne of ***the 24 Elders*** (Rev 4:4; 11:16)
- The ***Great White Throne*** (Rev 20:12)
- The throne of the ***Saints of God*** (Rev 3:21; Rev 20:4)

Unlike many of the claims today of having seen heaven, all accounts given in scripture render those who have been given a rare vision or experience of heaven completely terrified and humbled. This is the case with Isaiah (6:5), Ezekiel (1:28) and Daniel (7:15).

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(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.”**

Rainbow = “iris” also meaning “halo”

Glory surrounds the throne of God. The rainbow consists of every color in the light spectrum and is illustrative of the fact that Christ is the “a to z” of all things created. This can be further seen in the two stones listed. The Sardius and the jasper were the first and last stone on the breastplate of the high priest. In it the Sardius represented Reuben (the first born) whose name means “***behold, a son***” and the Jasper represented Benjamin (the last born) whose name means “***son of my right hand***”.

The Lord used a rainbow to be a symbol of His covenant to Noah. The vision of these particular stones reminds us that not only is the Lord a God of covenant to all redeemed mankind, but it is also a reminder of His covenant with Israel.

(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.”**

Who are the 24 Elders?

Some see the 24 elders as angels but there are several facts that eliminate this possibility:

- Angels are always ***depicted as servants*** (Heb 1:14; Mat 18:10) and not as having thrones.
- The term “elders” (presbuteroi) is never given to angels, but is to men who are usually older in age and who have been given a place of leadership (true of both Israel and the church).
- Angels ***never need to be clothed*** - the “white” garments speak to the righteousness of Christ, something that Gods holy angels have been given and therefore do not need to be clothed in.
- Finally angels are ***never given crowns*** or are seen as wearing them in scripture.

The number 24 shows up in a significant way in the Old Testament. In 1 Chr 24:1-19, David had come up with 24 courses of priests to represent the entire Levitical line of priests due to the number of them. Also there were 24 divisions of singers in the temple (1 Chr 25). So the number 24 can be seen as a specific number to ***represent a whole body***.

The fact that these 24 elders are on thrones and clothed in the white garments of the righteousness of Christ indicate at the very least that these represent redeemed humanity, but they also have crowns, something promised specifically to the church. Even though all of redeemed humanity will be clothed

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in new white garments, this group is not representative of all of the redeemed; it is distinct. Only the body of Christ has been given the dual role as *kings and priests* and the 24 elders specifically sing this before the throne (5:8 -10). The idea that these 24 elders represent the whole bride of Christ is further supported in chapter 7: 11-14, where Israel, the angels, the saints from out of the tribulation, and the 24 elders are seen as distinct groups.

(4:5a) **“Out from the throne come flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder...”**

As the storm front approaches, lightning and thunder can be seen and heard off in the distance. As the lightning and thunder intensifies, the front arrives with it’s damaging winds and torrential down-pours. Throughout the storm the lightning and thunder continues to blast through the skies. In the storm that will be unleashed on the earth it is from the throne of God that all of the alarms sound and bring forth the storm.

(4:5b-6a) **“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;..”**

As seen in chapter 1 the seven fold nature of the Holy Spirit is *wisdom, understanding, counsel, strength, knowledge, reverence and deity* (Is 11:2). In the Old Testament torches are associated with war (Jud 7:16, 20; Nah 2:3-4) and the power of God will be the all consuming fire that devours the ungodly. Revelation 21:1 says that the final heavens and earth will have no sea. Even though the foundation of the throne is sure, it transparent and radiant and cannot be understood by the limitations of this material realm. Moses and Aaron saw this vision in Exodus 24:10.

(4:6b-8) **“and in the center and around the throne, four living creatures full of eyes in front and behind. 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. 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.”**

The 4 faces before the throne of God

These “living creatures” are seen in Ezk 1:4-25; 10 and Isaiah 6. They are always associated with the throne of God. Their faces are more than just a description, they actually tell a story about the glory of God. To be specific they tell of the glory of Jesus Christ. So how do the lion, ox, man and eagle speak of Jesus?

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The 4 faces of *the Gospels*

	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Presents Jesus as:	<u>Messiah</u>	<u>Servant</u>	<u>Son of Man</u>	<u>Son of God</u>
Face:	<u>LION</u>	<u>OX</u>	<u>MAN</u>	<u>EAGLE</u>
Genealogy:	<u>Abraham (Legal)</u>	<u>None given</u>	<u>Adam (bloodline)</u>	<u>Eternity (Preexistent One)</u>

The 4 faces of *the camp of Israel (numbers 2)*

These faces are also seen in an amazing way in the OT in the structure of the camp of Israel in Numbers chapter 2. The 12 tribes were grouped into 4 groups or camps of three tribes. Each camp was represented by the ensign of the lead tribe for their division of the camp.

<u>LION</u>		<u>OX</u>		<u>MAN</u>		<u>EAGLE</u>	
CAMP OF JUDAH		CAMP OF EPHRAIM		CAMP OF RUBEN		CAMP OF DAN	
Judah	74,600	Ephraim	40,500	Ruben	46,500	Dan	62,700
Issachar	54,400	Manasseh	32,200	Simeon	59,300	Nephtali	53,400
Zebulun	57,400	Benjamin	35,400	Gad	45,650	Asher	41,500
	186,400		108,100		151,450		157,600



N

Tent of Meeting dimensions found in Exodus 27

CAMP OF DAN (157,600)



W

CAMP OF EPHRAIM (108,100)

50 Cubits

LEVI

Tent of Meeting

100 Cubits

CAMP OF JUDAH (186,400)

E



CAMP OF RUBEN (151,400)

S



Keep in mind that the specifications of the camp was exact. There would have been no northwest, northeast, southwest or southeast camping

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Psalms 40:7 and Hebrews 10:7 declare that “the volume of the book is written of me” (Christ). This is a clear example of how the Lord ***designs everything***. There are no insignificant details in scripture and when Christ is put in the center of the details things seem to come into focus. These creatures are seen moving in and around the throne which speaks to their complete harmony with the glory of God. They testify continually to the eternal triune God (Father - Son - Holy Spirit).

He is holy (1Sam 2:2; Ex 15:11; Ps 47:8; 111:9; etc.) transcendent from all that is created (1Sam 6:20; Isa 6:5). Evil cannot be in His presence and it is by His holiness that He will bring judgement upon His enemies (Hab 1:13).

(4:9-11) “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, 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, “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.””

Johns gospel records that the Word was in the beginning with God and was God and it was by the Word that all things were created (John chapter 1). The great majestic reality is that ***the Word became flesh*** (v14) and that the God of all creation has revealed Himself to us through the physical manifestation of His Son. When Thomas was shown by Christ the wounds, Thomas declared “my Lord and my God” and it is Jesus’ overcoming victory that has caused Him to be worthy to “receive” glory and honor and power. Paul writes to the Philippians:

“Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”
Phil 2:8-11 (NASB)

Even though we will receive crowns for our service to Christ the response to His worthiness will be to cast them back to His throne. The combined thought of His creative role and His worthiness to receive glory and honor and power speak to the understanding that it is He who will bring ***judgement and restoration*** to the world.

“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now.”
Rom 8:18-22 (NASB)