

Throne Room of Heaven

¹ Then as I (John) looked, I saw a door standing open in heaven, and the same voice I had heard before spoke to me like a (war) trumpet blast. The voice (Jesus) said, *Come up here, and I will show you what must happen after this (in the future).*" ² And instantly I was in the Spirit, and I saw a throne in heaven and Someone sitting on it. ³ The One sitting on the throne was as brilliant as gemstones—like jasper and carnelian. And the glow of an emerald circled His throne like a rainbow. ⁴ Twenty-four thrones surrounded Him, and twenty-four elders sat on them. They were all clothed in white and had gold crowns on their heads. ⁵ From the throne came flashes of lightning and the rumble of thunder. And in front of the throne were seven torches with burning flames. This is the sevenfold Spirit of God (the sevenfold Holy Spirit). ⁶ In front of the throne was a shiny sea of glass, sparkling like crystal. In the center and around the throne were four living beings, each covered with eyes, front and back. ⁷ The first of these living beings was like a lion; the second was like an ox; the third had a human face; and the fourth was like an eagle in flight. ⁸ Each of these living beings had six wings, and their wings were covered all over with eyes, inside and out. Day after day and night after night they keep on saying, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God, the Almighty—the One who always was, who is, and who is still to come." ⁹ Whenever the living beings give glory and honor and thanks to the One sitting on the throne (the One who lives forever and ever), ¹⁰ the twenty-four elders fall down and worship the One sitting on the throne (the One who lives forever and ever). And they lay their crowns before the throne and say, ¹¹ "You are worthy, O Lord our God, to receive glory and honor and power. For you created all things, and they exist because You created what You pleased."

Revelation 4:1-11 (NLT)

Revelation chapters 4 and 5 are the central and most important vision of the entire book of Revelation. The key to understanding Revelation comes from these two chapters. These two chapters are one vision with two parts. Significantly, Revelation chapters 4 and 5 provide the grandest and most magnificent picture of God in all the Scriptures. Isaiah 6 and Ezekiel 1 from the Old Testament comes close to Revelation chapters 4 and 5; however, Revelation chapters 4 and 5 give the most majestic vision of God from the Holy Scriptures.

The book of Revelation moves from earth with chapters 1 through 3 to heaven starting with chapter 4. Jesus' letters to the seven churches on earth are now complete. In the letters, Jesus encouraged His churches to remain faithful to God and not accommodate to the world's evil culture (see Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 27; Revelation 3:5, 12, 21). Now, John as the human author of Revelation is swept away in the Holy Spirit's power to the open door of heaven (Revelation 4:1). The same voice John heard in Revelation 1, which sounded like a mighty trumpet blast, spoke to him and that voice was the living and glorified Jesus (Revelation 4:1; see also Revelation 1:10-11). Jesus said to John, "Come up here and I will show you what must happen in the future!" (Revelation 4:1,

TLB). When John goes to heaven, John first sees a throne! The throne is a dominate image of Revelation, and John refers to the throne over forty times. On the throne, John sees the Lord God Almighty seated (Revelation 4:2, 8). With John's vision of the throne room, John uses many Old Testament references, including Ezekiel 1, Daniel 7, and Daniel 10. Many Old Testament prophets witnessed a similar vision of the true and living God.

In his second vision, John describes the transcendental glory and grandeur of the living God who reigns on the throne with dazzling brilliance and light (Revelation 4:5; see also Psalm 104:2; Ezekiel 1:26-28; 1 Timothy 6:16). John avoids any descriptive form of God in accord with Jewish tradition (see e.g., Exodus 20:4; Deuteronomy 4:12, 15-18). Instead, John says that the One who seats on the throne looks like precious stones of "jasper and carnelian" (Revelation 4:3). In addition, John saw around the throne "a rainbow that looks like an emerald" as a symbol of God's covenant mercy (Revelation 4:3; see also Genesis 9:11-17). Then, twenty-four smaller thrones surrounded God's glorious throne and twenty-four elders were sitting on these smaller thrones. The twenty-four elders all were clothed in white, with golden crowns upon their heads (Revelation 4:4).

For centuries, biblical scholars have debated the symbolic significance of the twenty-four elders. Some scholars argue that the twenty-four elders are the twenty-four courses of Aaronic priesthood from the Old Testament who provide priestly worship (see 1 Chronicles 24:4-19). However, a vast majority of scholars see the twenty-four elders as the combination of the twelve patriarchs (tribes) of Israel and the twelve apostles that form the church. Thus, the twenty-four elders is a symbolic representation of God's people - Israel in the Old Testament (old covenant) and the church in the New Testament (new covenant). Revelation and the New Testament teach that the church is the new Israel of God and there is continuity with church and the old Israel. However, the church does not replace Israel as seen by Romans chapters 9, 10, and 11. In these chapters, God promised Abraham that He would bless Abraham's descendants. The apostle Paul never denounces Israel because the promise of Abraham was without conditions. The church has not replace Israel. The twenty-four elders represent both communities.

Then, John saw "flashing of lightning, and rumbling and peals of thunder" issued from God's throne (Revelation 4:5). This scene is similar to God's divine revelation with the giving of His Law to Moses at Mount Sinai (see Exodus 19:16-19). In the Holy Scriptures, God's appearance was often accompanied by an impressive display of meteorological sights and sounds (see e.g., 1 Samuel 7:10-12; 1 Samuel 12:18; Job 38:1; Job 40:6; Psalm 18:13-14). Directly in front of God's throne were seven lighted lamps representing the seven-fold Spirit of God (Revelation 4:5). Seven is the number of completion and fulfillment. The Seven Spirit of God means the fullness, completion, and

majesty of the living God. Spread out before God's throne was a shiny crystal sea (Revelation 4:6; see also Exodus 24:10).

Surrounding God's throne on each side were four living creatures. (Revelation 4:6). These living creatures are similar to the four living creatures the prophet Ezekiel witnessed but the creatures are not an exact duplication (see Ezekiel 1:4-14). The first of these creatures was in the form of a lion; the second looked like an ox; the third had the face of a man; and the fourth, the form of an eagle, with wings spread out as though in flight (Revelation 4:7). Also, these four living creatures had six wings similar to the prophet Isaiah's vision, full of eyes all around, even underneath their wings, suggesting unsleeping watchfulness (Revelation 4:8; see also Isaiah 6:2). The four living creatures have no symbolic meaning except they sang praises to the true and living God seated on the throne, like choirmasters leading public worship. These living creatures praised God day and night in ceaseless worship for His holiness, eternity, and mighty power (omnipotence) (Revelation 4:8; see also Isaiah 6:1-3). Day after day and night after night, the four living creatures continual kept saying:

"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come."
Revelation 4:8 (NIV)

When the four living creatures gave glory, honor, and thanks to God sitting on the throne, who lives forever and ever (through the eternities of the eternities), the twenty-four elders fell down prostrate before eternal living God and worshiped Him and casted their crowns before His throne (Revelation 4:9-10). The twenty-four elders sang to God:

"You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for You created all things, and by Your will they were created and have their being."
Revelation 4:11 (NIV)

The vision of heaven reminded John and his readers that God alone is the holiest, most powerful, and everlasting One of the universe. Even more, John's vision reveals the true and living God as Creator, and He controls all the world and not political powers (Revelation 4:11). Most important, the great throne-room vision of chapters 4 and 5 remind everyone that the true and living God and His Son are "our Lord and God" and only God and His Son are worthy to receive glory, honor, and power (Revelation 4:11; Revelation 5:12-13).

No matter what may happen on earth the eternal and living God is fully and completely in control of the world. God is our all-powerful (omnipotent) and all-knowing (omniscient) Lord and King. That same power of God is available to everyone through wholehearted faith in Him!

References

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