

Thrown To The Throne

Revelation 4:1-8

I. Thrown: The Significance Of Getting Caught Up To Heaven (1-2a)

A. An Amazing Time: A Prophetic Sequence (1a)

After this I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven!

B. An Amazing Opportunity: A Heavenly Invitation (1b)

And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this."

C. An Amazing Delivery: A Rapturous Transport (2a)

^{2a}At once I was in the Spirit,

II. Throne: The Significance Of Seeing God In Heaven (2b-8)

A. On The Throne: God The Father (2b-3)

^{2b}and behold, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne. ³And he who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian, and around the throne was a rainbow that had the appearance of an emerald.

B. Around The Throne: The Redeemed Of God (4)

⁴Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones were twenty-four elders, clothed in white garments, with golden crowns on their heads.

C. From The Throne: The Power of God (5a)

^{5a}From the throne came flashes of lightning, and rumblings and peals of thunder,

D. Before The Throne: The Spirit of God And The All-Knowingness Of God (5b-6)

^{5b}and before the throne were burning seven torches of fire, which are the seven spirits of God, ⁶and before the throne there was as it were a sea of glass, like crystal And around the throne, on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind:

E. Surrounding The Throne: The Manifestations Of God (7-8)

⁷the first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with the face of a man, and the fourth living creature like an eagle in flight. ⁸And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say,

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After this I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven! And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this." ²At once I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne. ³And he who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian, and around the throne was a rainbow that had the appearance of an emerald. ⁴Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones were twenty-four elders, clothed in white garments, with golden crowns on their heads. ⁵From the throne came flashes of lightning, and rumblings and peals of thunder, and before the throne were burning seven torches of fire, which are the seven spirits of God, ⁶and before the throne there was as it were a sea of glass, like crystal.

And around the throne, on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind: ⁷the first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with the face of a man, and the fourth living creature like an eagle in flight. ⁸And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say,

Introduction:

1. Heaven From The Perspective Of Different Religions

(From: *How Different Religions View Death and Afterlife, Second Edition*, Edited by Christopher Jay Johnson and Marsha McGee, Charles Press, 1988
<http://www.charlespresspub.com/religionsq&a.html>)

- **Baha'is**
 - Heaven is not a physical place
 - It designates a spiritual proximity to God
 - Because spiritual development continues after physical life, heaven is not a fixed point of achievement, but part of an eternal spiritual evolution of the soul.

- **Buddhism**
 - There are numerous heavens, hierarchically arranged and inhabited by joyous, long-lived, but ultimately mortal beings known as "gods" and "demi-gods."
 - There are also heaven-like realms, usually called Pure Lands, where the Enjoyment Body — an exalted body composed of light — of an enlightened being resides.
 - Heaven is a product of one's enlightened wisdom
 - Without the person producing heaven through enlightenment through wisdom, heaven does not exist

- **Christian Science**
 - heaven is a state of consciousness that acknowledges the present power and perfection of God and one's permanent unity with God. Thus heaven is not reserved for a distant place or time, but describes a state that may be experienced right here and now.

- **Mormons**
 - There are three "degrees of glory" (I Corinthians 15). All are places of continuing growth and progress. The highest of these is the "Celestial Kingdom." Those who attain this level will live with God and Christ and with their own families. (Mormon Temple marriages are "for time and all eternity" rather than "till death do us part.")
- **Hinduism**
 - The most ancient sacred texts of the Hindus, the Vedas, speak of the journey of the "soul" to the heavenly realm of the ancestors. The body of the deceased is "purified" and the soul conveyed to heaven by the fire of the cremation. On arrival there it receives a subtle body in which it can enjoy pleasures like those on earth and enjoy the rewards of his or her good deeds. Heaven was conceived as a "place" somewhat similar to life on earth, but without sickness, old age and death. Heaven is presided over by Yama, the first man to die and find the road to the celestial world and later identified as the messenger or god of the dead. Later texts describe two paths that the departed soul may take: the path of the ancestors, which leads to rebirth and the path of the gods, which leads to liberation (from rebirth). For those who take the path of the ancestors, heaven is a temporary place for the soul to enjoy the fruits of his or her good actions performed while on earth. When their merit is exhausted, their desires drag them back to earth and to rebirth. The ancient texts of the Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita identify the "attainment" of the "heavenly realm" with spiritual knowledge and virtuous conduct.
- **Islam**
 - Heaven is described as a "Garden" having several layers (usually seven) with the highest being directly under God's throne. Souls are content; they eat, drink and are able to gaze into the face of God.
- **Judaism**
 - Heaven is a place where anxiety and travail are ended. Some sages have said that quiet, peaceful intellectual activity takes place and the mysteries of life are solved there. A praiseworthy life is of greater importance to the Jew than is seeking Heaven.
- **Unitarian Universalists**
 - This faith accepts a scientific view of life and sees life as lived in the here and now rather than in the hereafter. It is not known whether or not there is an afterlife.

2. Is Heaven For Real? If So, What Is It Like?

- "We are very shy nowadays of even mentioning Heaven. We are afraid of the jeer about 'pie in the sky,' and of being told that we are trying to 'escape from the duty of making a happy world here and now into dreams of a happy world elsewhere.' But either there is 'pie in the sky' or there is not. If there is not, then Christianity is false, for this doctrine is woven into its whole fabric. If there is, then this truth, like any other, must be faced, whether it is useful at political meetings or no." (C. S. Lewis, *The Problem Of Pain*, p. 144)

3. John's Description

- "Throne" – 14x in chapter 4; 46x in the whole book of Revelation

I. Thrown: The Significance Of Getting Caught Up To Heaven (1-2a)

A. An Amazing Time: A Prophetic Sequence (1a)

After this I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven! ... I will show you what must take place after this."

- "After this"
 - Does this indicate a greater prophetic timeline or is it just the next sequence of John's experience in heaven?
 - Later in v. 1: "I will show you what must take place after this."
- Many commentators see this is as a significant time marker
 - The Church is mentioned in chapter 2-3, but is absent after chapter 5
 - Don't see the church mentioned until 22:16

Revelation 22:16 "I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for the **churches**. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star."

- The Church is never called to prepare for the Tribulation, but to be comforted that they won't be a part of it
- The suggested prophetic time frame is:
 - 1) Church Age (Rev 2-3)
 - 2) Rapture (Rev 3:10)
 - 3) Tribulation (Rev 6-18)
 - 4) Second Coming of Christ (Rev 19)
 - 4) Millennial Reign of Christ (Rev 20)
 - 5) New Heaven & New Earth (21-22)
- "door standing open to Heaven"
 - Forget John Lennon telling us to "Imagine There's No Heaven"
 - The Bible speaks of heaven over 500x
 - Previously, Paul (2 Cor 12) and Ezekiel (Ez 1) have described heaven
 - Now the Apostle John will be a "skyview" glimpse into the throne of God
 - If someone gave us tickets to the skybox at a Warrior, Giant or Niner game, we'd jump at a chance
- "Door" – entry – door means walls, walls means exclusion
 - There is one access to heaven
 - **John 14:6** Christ is the way, truth and life. No man comes to the Father except through Him.

B. An Amazing Opportunity: A Heavenly Invitation (1b)

And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this."

- John is hearing the first voice that spoke – Christ who spoke to him in Rev 1

- Trumpet – call (1 Cor 15:52 – trumpet plays as a call for the rapture)
- Trumpet – majestic – horns playing (e.g. Trumpet Voluntary in our wedding)

C. **An Amazing Delivery: A Rapturous Transport (2a)**

²At once I was in the Spirit,

- “in the Spirit” occurs 4x in Revelation (1:10; 4:2; 17:3; 21:10) – each marks a significant event in Revelation
- Should this verse be used teaching about the Rapture? No.
- John was still in his body. The rapture translate the earthly body into a new spiritual body (1 Cor 15).
- But John does speak of the Rapture in the book of Revelation in
- John Walvoord: “It is clear from the context that this is not an explicit reference to the rapture of the church, as John was not actually translated; in fact he was still in his natural body on the island of Patmos. He was translated into scenes of heaven only temporarily.” (*Revelation*)

II. **Throne: The Significance Of Seeing God In Heaven (2b-8)**

A. **On The Throne: God The Father (2b-3)**

²and behold, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne. ³And he who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian, and around the throne was a rainbow that had the appearance of an emerald.

- Christ the Son comes to the throne in (5:6)
- The Holy Spirit is before the throne (4:5)
- Michael Vlach: “The members of the Trinity are present in Revelation 4-5 as God plans to take back planet earth with a successful mediatorial kingdom. The language here closely parallels Daniel 7:13-14 concerning the Son of Man who appears before the Ancient of Days to receive Kingdom power which then leads to a defeat of God’s enemies and the reign of the saints on earth (see Dan 7:24-27). With Revelation 4 and 5, heaven is the headquarters for the unleashing of divine wrath that will lead to the replacing of Satan’s kingdom with the Messiah rule.” (*He Will Reign Forever: A Biblical Theology of the Kingdom of God*, p. 478)
- “throne stood in heaven” – not a decorative piece of furniture but the central feature in heaven
- “one seated” – not about posture as it is about authority
- *Cathedra* = seat of power
 - Cathedrals – place of religious authority in a town
 - *Ex Cathedra* – when the pope speaks with divine authority
- “jasper” – clear, purity
- “carnelian” – red, picture of redemption

- “rainbow” – like Noah’s covenant (Genesis 9), rainbow represents God’s patient mercy
- “emerald” – 4th stone in the New Jerusalem foundation (Rev 21:19)

B. Around The Throne: The Redeemed Of God (4)

⁴Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones were twenty-four elders, clothed in white garments, with golden crowns on their heads.

- Some think they are angels, but angels don’t sit on thrones or wear crowns
- They are more likely the Redeemed, the Saved
- **24** symbolizes completion and representation
- Some think 24 represents 12 sons of Israel and 12 Apostles
 - How could it represent the 12 Apostles if John is there? – it is a representative number
- In the history of Israel and the Church, they have been led by Elders.

Revelation 21:12-14 12 It had a great, high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel were inscribed— 13 on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates. 14 And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

- They would be representative of the Redeemed
 - James M. Hamilton Jr.: “The twenty-four thrones are probably a symbolic number representing the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve apostles. They could be actual humans who have gone to their rewards, or they could be angelic representatives of all the people of God.” (*Revelation: The Spirit Speaks To The Churches*, Preaching the Word series, p. 144)
- Elders lead
- Elders saved (white)
- Elders crowned – rewarded

C. From The Throne: The Power of God (5a)

⁵From the throne came flashes of lightning, and rumblings and peals of thunder,

- A little kid claims he went to heaven and saw a warm comforting glow
- The Apostle John saw the power of lightning and thunder
- God’s omnipotence is in view here

D. Before The Throne: The Spirit of God And The All-Knowingness Of God (5b-6)

⁵and before the throne were burning seven torches of fire, which are the seven spirits of God, ⁶ and before the throne there was as it were a sea of glass, like crystal And around the throne, on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind:

- Spirits of God – Holy Spirit
- 7 Spirits of God – outdoor night torches
- Represents the fullness of the Holy Spirit
- Sea of crystal – refracts the luminescence of God

- Eyes front and behind – “eyes behind my head” – seeing all, knowing all

E. Surrounding The Throne: The Manifestations Of God (7-8)

7the first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with the face of a man, and the fourth living creature like an eagle in flight. 8And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say,

- “living creature” – similar to, if not the same as, the Cherubim of Isaiah 6:1-7
- “Like” these animals, not actual animals
- Lion – sovereignty
- Ox – servanthood
- Man – sinless humanity
- Eagle – supremacy (eagle, most majestic of birds)
- They reflect or manifest the glory of God
- Israel had 4 banners
 - Reuben – depicted by a man
 - Dan – depicted by an eagle
 - Ephraim – depicted by ox or calf
 - Judah – depicted by Lion

Ezekiel 1:5-10 ⁵And from the midst of it came the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance: they had a human likeness, ⁶but each had four faces, and each of them had four wings. ⁷Their legs were straight, and the soles of their feet were like the sole of a calf’s foot. And they sparkled like burnished bronze. ⁸Under their wings on their four sides they had human hands. And the four had their faces and their wings thus: ⁹their wings touched one another. Each one of them went straight forward, without turning as they went. ¹⁰As 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.