

Revelation 4:1-11
“Around the throne”

I. Intro

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I. Intro

John follows a strict outline in his writing of the unveiling of Jesus. He does so in three locations:

- **In heaven**
- **In His Church**
- **On the earth**

Although this chapter starts off with the unveiling of Jesus in heaven it really starts the final section which will continue through the remainder of the book, “*The things which will take place after this*”. The events which we are in presently and examined in chapters 2-3 known as “*the church age*” is where Jesus is seen through His Church as redeemer calling people out of the kingdom of this world into the kingdom of the Son of His love (Col. 1:13).

The key to “*The things which will take place after this*” in this chapter is the word “*throne*” as it appears 12 times in 11 verses and 37 times through the book. In fact, the word appears first in chapter 1:4 and conclude with the word in 22:3. That is an indication of the theme of Revelation as the “**Throne book**”! Thrones are associated with **two events**:

- a. **Worship**: Throughout human history who sat upon thrones expected and received worship from those in their kingdom. Although different from the human perspective, still the central focus of heaven is the Lord seated upon His throne and the central activity will be His worship.
- b. **Judgement**: People used the throne as a courtroom and the king as a judge who would render his decision. In the heavenly realm the throne will be either a place to run to or run from depending upon what was in a person’s heart. We will either “**come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.**” (Heb. 4:16) Or we will, as those in **Rev. 6:15-16** “**hide themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, and say to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!**”

II. Vs. 1-9 The visible and verbal activity around the throne

Vs. 1 There are **three very important statements** made by John in this opening verse:

- a. “*After these things... things which must take place after this*”: John is very specific as to the time in which this next unveiling took place “*after these things*”. The question is “*after what things*”? That is answered in the text by the phrase “*The things which will take place after this*” which is the 7 letters from Jesus to the church or the events of the Church age. That also indicates that the vision John is going share is from the vantagepoint of heaven and not earth. John was on the island of Patmos and his circumstance could have made the world system look bright and glorious by comparison but once John cleared the clouds he could see clearly!
- b. “*After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven.*” With the timing of this stated John reveals that he saw: “*a door standing open in heaven*”.

This is the 4th time John has recorded that there was a door in the book of revelation.

1. In chapter 3:8 Jesus declared to the church in Philadelphia that He had “*set before them an open door, and no one can shut it; for they have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name.*” **There Jesus proclaimed an open door for service to reach those who had not received Him.**
2. In chapter 3:20 Jesus spoke to the lukewarm church at Laodicea, “*Behold, I stand at the door and knock.*” **There tragically we see Jesus on the outside of the Church trying to come in.**
3. Then a few words later Jesus exhorts the same church that “*If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come into him and dine with him, and he with Me.*” This is an invitation of grace to a church who had shut the door of their hearts to Jesus to answer His knock and allow Him to come in and have fellowship with them.

How fitting that John would see an “*open door*” into heaven prior to his being called up into heaven. In John 10:9 Jesus told the Pharisees “*I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.*” **Jesus is not one of many doors but rather “the door” in which all who wish to enter into heaven must pass.** How

great is the fact that “**The Door**” is knocking at the door of every human heart asking them if they want to come and be with Him?

c. “*And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, “Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this.” **This is one of the clearest statements concerning the rapture of the Church.** In chapter 3:10 Jesus promised that He would “keep us from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.” I believe that John represents those who are to be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. Paul spoke of this in 1 Corin. 15:51-52 when he said “We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. **For the trumpet will sound,** and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.” It is this trumpet that John hears calling him up into heaven through the Open Door. I can’t wait to hear those same words.*

Vs. 2 Notice that with the voice of a trumpet and the words “Come up here” that “**Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven**”. **Not after 7 years of tribulation or even 3 ½ years but “immediately” in other words as we have already read in Paul’s words it was “in the twinkling of an eye”!**

Also notice that John is taken to the truth that no matter what events on earth may seem to proclaim to its inhabitants that a “*throne **is** set in heaven, and One **sits** on the throne.” He alone is in control no matter the chaos and despair that living in this world system may produce.*

Vs. 3 Furthermore, ***He who sits on the throne is gloriously victorious as His glory is reflected in the material that John sees.*** Of further interest is **the rainbow around the throne.** God had made a promise to Noah after the flood that He would never again destroy the earth by water and

this promise had the sign of a semi-circle rainbow. **Here we see that the circle is not broken, and the promise forever kept but not on earth better yet in heaven.** God is faithful always to keep His promises even when man is not.

Vs. 4 John sees thrones or seats around the throne of God where the 24 elders were sitting. But just who are these 24 elders? Here is what we know:

- a. They are **not angels** because in chapter 5:8-10 they are seen worshipping the Lord because He has “**redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation**”.
- b. That would make them men, but it does not tell us who they are, and John (*if he knew*) does not reveal their identity.
- c. Based upon speculation some see them as representing the 12 tribes of Israel along with the 12 apostles. They come about this based upon **two verses**:
 1. Matt. 19:28 “**when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.**”
 2. Rev. 21:12-14 “**twelve angels at the gates, and names written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.**”

A further indication of their identity is found in the fact that they are wearing “**white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads.**” White robes are always a sign of the righteousness that is in Christ while the crowns according to 1 Peter 5:4 is awarded for faithful service which we will receive when our Chief Shepherd appears both of which are based upon His grace as we shall see that we will be casting those crowns at His feet in verse 10!

Vs. 5 John sees and hears certain specific activity around the throne that he writes down:

- a. First, note that before John heard or saw anything he first saw “**the One that sat on the throne**”. Whatever may be said about the activity **in heaven all eyes are at first**

drawn to the One who sits upon the throne. John's eyes are then peeled back to see those whom the One who sits on the throne has redeemed.

- b. Second, John has a very similar experience as did Israel when God met with Moses in Exodus 19:18. The similarities don't end there as Moses was given along with the commandments the blueprints of the Holy Tabernacle which we are told in Heb. 8:5 are a "*the copy and shadow of the heavenly things*". John sees first-hand the "*heavenly things*".
- c. We have already discussed the seven spirits of God which are defined for us in Isa. 11:1-2 as:

1. "*Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him*": Speaks of the authority and power.
2. "*The Spirit of wisdom*": Skillful wisdom in knowing what we need.
3. "*And understanding*": Perfect knowledge knowing all things.
4. "*The Spirit of counsel*": Advise, knows how to communicate truth.
5. "*And might*": Victorious power, able to enforce His council.
6. "*The Spirit of knowledge*": Can't be tricked or deceived.
7. "*And of the fear of the LORD*": Absolute reverence as all will bow before Him.

Vs. 6-8 Like that of the "***bronze laver***" in the Holy Tabernacle John sees a "*sea of glass*". In the tabernacle the High priest would prepare to go into the Holy of Holies by first washing and looking into this basin of water as he would see his own reflection reminding him that he was a sinner and in need to be washed from his sins. *Here before the throne for the first time we will not see our sins but rather see ourselves as He sees us in His Son.*

John also sees "***four living creatures***" they were the same who in Gen. 3:24 "*He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.*" Later Isaiah had a vision of them that he records in 6:2-3

where they are called seraphim. Ezekiel has visions of them both in chapter 1 and again in chapter 10 where he calls them cherubim. What we know of them is limited.

- a. They appear to be the highest order of angelic beings and their primary function is to lead worship. It is for this reason many believe that satan (Lucifer) was once one of them.
- b. John sees them as being “*full of eyes in front and in back.*” Which speaks of their knowledge. In Isa. 6 we are told that they “*each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.*” They cover their face as to not look upon One so lovely as the Lord, they cover their feet as to not show their unsightly parts, with two of them they fly.
- c. John in verse 7 adds one more piece of evidence concerning them, that they were “like”.

Many see the gospels in this description:

- d. The first living creature was like a lion: Matthew proclaims Jesus as King, thus like a lion.
- e. The second living creature like a calf: Mark proclaims Jesus as a servant, thus like a beast of burden.
- f. The third living creature had a face like a man: Luke portrays him as a perfect man thus a face like a man.
- g. The fourth living creature was like a flying eagle: John sees as God the Son, thus a flying eagle.

We will have to wait and see just what these angelic creatures will look like, but we don't have to wait to see their activity in heave as John records it for us.

Vs. 8 **They are unceasing in their adoration of the Lord:**

1. First their **praise is given in a threefold manor**, Holy is the Father, Holy is the Son and Holy is the Spirit.
2. Second, they **worship the Godheads sovereignty as He is the Lord God Almighty.**
3. Finally, they **worship His eternal nature** “*Who was and is and is to come!*”

Vs. 9 Not only do they worship three ways they do so in a threefold *manor* “*Whenever the living creatures*”:

1. give **glory**
2. and **honor**
3. and **thanks**

“*To Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever*” Won’t it be wonderful when we too can join in such praise?

III. Vs. 10-11 The worship of Him who lives forever

Vs. 10-11 At the four living creatures’ worship, redeemed man represented by the 24 elders respond three ways:

1. *fall down before Him who sits on the throne*
2. *and worship Him who lives forever and ever,*
3. *and cast their crowns before the throne, saying:*

They open their mouths in praise by proclaiming His worthiness to receive all that is do His name because He is the creator of all things, and it is by Him all things exist and continue to exist. The words “*were created*” suggests that this is **the beginning of the Lord redeeming the world back to Himself.** I’m reminded of two scriptures:

- a. Luke 19:40 Where Jesus says, “*I tell you that if these should keep silent, the stones would immediately cry out.*”
- b. Romans 8:21-22 as Paul says that “*creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.*”