

Pastor Grady Covin
The Mission
March 26, 2025

Revelation 4:1-11

So once again we're in the Book of Revelation tonight, and if you were here last week, you know that we talked about the Rapture, and how, and when that will occur, at some time in the future. And here at this church, we believe the Bible teaches that will happen prior to the seven year tribulation period and that members of the church, who are genuine born again Christians, will be spared of all the judgment that God is going to unleash or allow to come upon this earth. And of course we call this the pre-tribulation view. And then we talked about the other views that some folks have and if you weren't here and want to learn about those you can go to our website and all our past lessons are there for your review.

And so tonight we're going to be in chapter four again; only this time we're going to get a lot farther than we did last week.

Now, the key word in this chapter is "throne"; and it's used twelve times in this one chapter alone. And it's used at least forty-six times in the entire book. And so the Book of Revelation makes it very clear that it is the throne of God, and the God on the throne, that rules the universe, and not the thrones of men like some men suppose.

Psalm 103:19 says, The Lord has established His throne in heaven, And His kingdom rules over all.

And we're going to see how true that is as we make our way through this chapter and the rest of this book.

So if someone would help me out and read the entire chapter through and then we'll go back and I'll explain it one verse at a time.

Revelation 4:1, After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. 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."

2 Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne.

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

4 Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads.

5 And from the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices. Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.

6 Before the throne there was a sea of glass, like crystal. And in the midst of the throne, and around the throne, were four living creatures full of eyes in front and in back.

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

8 The four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was, and is, and is to come!"

9 Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever,

10 the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying:

11 “You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created.”

Okay so look at verse one. Again, this is the Apostle John writing and he says:

1, After these things I looked,

After what things? Well, after all the things we talked about last week. After the Rapture of the church. After the lukewarm church has been spued out and the genuine church has been brought out of this world. In fact, that's why he makes the next statement.

and behold, a door standing open in heaven.

The door to heaven was open.

Why?

Well, first to let Jesus out so He could descended to somewhere just about the lower clouds of the earth and summoned the church to come up and meet Him there, and then to let **Jesus and the church** back in after He had escorted them back to heaven.

And so John in this vision from God is being shown what will happen just after the church arrives; and the reason is so he can write down what he sees and share it with us.

And all the things that John sees and hears right here, are similar to and probably also symbolic of what will happen to the church at the Rapture.

The church, just like John here in this passage of scripture, will be caught up and they too, will hear a great noise: whether it's a shout from Christ, and a shout from the archangel, along with a trumpet blast from God, or whether it's one great noise that sounds like all three. We don't really know for sure about that, but we do know that at least all believers will hear it, and recognize it for what it is and for what it means. And that's in

1 Thessalonians 4:16, For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

And of course, John heard something very similar. He says,

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."

Verse 2 also tells us that this happened suddenly. He says, **"Immediately I was in the Spirit"**. Immediately he was called up to heaven.

It also happened within the same time period as well. It happens after Jesus letters to the church in chapters 2 & 3, which is the point and time in Revelation, when the church disappears.

In the first 3 chapters, the word "church" is mentioned around twenty times, but from chapter 4 to chapter 22 and verse 5, it's not mentioned even one time. And so it's only logical that we conclude that throughout the seven years of tribulation, which is about to occur, that the church will be in

heaven; looking down along with Jesus, on all the terrible things that are going to come upon the earth during that time.

And so when the Rapture of the church takes place, this is going to be the signal if you will, of the beginning of judgement on the earth.

And then in verse 2 he says;

2 Immediately, (and there's that suddenness again that I just mentioned) **Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne.**

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

Now, that word sat, it's not depicting a posture. He's not saying that God is sitting down like we would sit in a chair. He's not saying that the Lord's work is finished and He's at rest. What he means is that God is reigning. Just like we would refer to someone as a sitting judge. God is the sitting judge of the universe. And so He's not at rest! He's reigning, and judgement is about to take place.

Now, John doesn't tell us exactly who this is on the throne, and he doesn't tell us because that should be obvious. He's the same one Isaiah saw in his vision in Isaiah chapter 6 and verse 1.

Isaiah in 6:1 said, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple.

And He's the same one the prophet Micaiah saw in

1 Kings 22:19, He too said, I saw the Lord sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing by, on His right hand and on His left.

Psalm 47:8 tells us, that God reigns over the nations; and God sits on His holy throne.

And then Daniel saw Him in

Daniel 7:9, “I watched till thrones were put in place, And the Ancient of Days was seated; His garment was white as snow, And the hair of His head was like pure wool. His throne was a fiery flame, Its wheels a burning fire; 10 A fiery stream issued And came forth from before Him. A thousand thousands ministered to Him; Ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. The court was seated, And the books were opened.

And then lastly the prophet Ezekiel in:

Ezekiel 1:26, And above the firmament over their heads was the likeness of a throne, in appearance like a sapphire stone; on the likeness of the throne was a likeness with the appearance of a man high above it. 27 Also from the appearance of His waist and upward I saw, as it were, the color of amber with the appearance of fire all around within it; and from the appearance of His waist and downward I saw, as it were, the appearance of fire with brightness all around. 28 Like the appearance of a rainbow in a cloud on a rainy day, so was the appearance of the brightness all around it. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord. So when I saw it, I fell on my face, and I heard a voice of One speaking.

These were no doubt visions of God Himself on the throne. And unlike those who claim to have gone to heaven and seen God in recent years, these men who saw these visions were terrified at the sight of Him, and they were humbled by what they saw.

Next John uses the description of precious gems to symbolize the glory of the Father. And his description is very similar to what Ezekiel and some of the other prophets saw.

He first uses the stone jasper to describe Him. And jasper is crystal clear, which is probably describing a diamond, which brilliantly refracts all the colors of the spectrum. And so the jasper stone no doubt speaks of God's purity; while the sardius stone which is red, speaks of God's wrath and judgment; which by the way is about to be poured on the earth in chapters 6-19.

These two stones were also the first and last stones on the high priest's breastplate back in Exodus chapter 28 in verses 17–21. And there they represented the firstborn and the last born of the twelve sons of Jacob, which were Reuben and Benjamin. And it could be that these stones also symbolize the covenant relationship between God and Israel; and the fact that this judgement, which is about to take place will not negate that relationship, but rather be a means to confirm it and bring it to pass for eternity.

In fact, we're going to see going forward that through the efforts of 144,000 evangelists, that all of Israel will be saved. All who remain alive that is!

These two stones could also symbolize the fact that the Lord Jesus is sitting at the right hand of the Father, because the name Reuben means "Behold a son" and the name Benjamin means "the son of my right hand".

At any rate, this is not a vision of peace and comfort. This is a vision of the terror of God's judgment which is about to come upon the earth.

And then around the throne, John saw an emerald-colored rainbow. And from the book of Genesis we know that the rainbow is a symbol of

God's faithfulness and mercy and grace and His covenant with mankind and nature not to destroy the world again with water.

And the single color as opposed to the multi colored rainbow, could be symbolic of how sometimes a rainbow appears just before a storm occurs as opposed to how we see a rainbow after the sun comes back out.

Because even though the throne of God is about to send forth all these awful judgments on mankind, even in His wrath, all God's attributes still exist. He's still a loving and kind and merciful and gracious and long-suffering God.

It's also interesting to note that John saw the rainbow as a complete circle, rather than as an arc, like what Noah saw, and like what we see. And this is just a reminder that, what we now see of God's mercy and grace and even His judgment, we see through a dark glass.

Paul said in 1 Corinthians 13:12, For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.

In other words, not until we get to heaven, will we see and understand as the Lord sees and understands.

And then in verse 4, Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads.

And so here we have 24 elders sitting on 24 thrones who are evidently reigning with Christ. And so who are they, or who do they represent?

Well, we know first of all that these 24 elders can't be angels. And we know that for several reasons: (1) we never see angels on thrones; (2) we

never see angels with crowns; (3) in chapter 7:11, the elders are distinguished from the angels; so they can't be angels.

Revelation 7:11, All the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God,

(4) in Revelation chapter 5:8-9, the elders sing a hymn of praise, and we have no record anywhere that angels ever sing; (I'm not sure where that saying, she sings like an angel came from?) Nor where that Christmas song we sing came from (5) angels are never numbered. And (6) angels are never, ever referred to as elders. (7) Also it says they had crowns on their heads. And again, angels are never seen wearing crowns in the Bible, nor were they ever promised crowns. But several times in the scriptures Jesus promised to give believers a crown.

James 1:12, Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

1 Peter 5:4, and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.

2 Timothy 4:8, Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.

Revelation 2:10, Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

Revelation 3:11, Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.

So it's only believers that will have crowns to cast at Jesus feet in heaven.

Now, we also know that there were twenty-four priests which served in the OT temple; that's in **1 Chronicles 24**.

And we do know that the church has been promised to reign with Christ in many places in the Bible.

Matthew 19:28, So Jesus said to them, "Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, 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 Timothy 2:12, If we endure, we shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us.

Revelation 3:21, To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.

And so it seems that more than likely these twenty-four elders on these thrones represent the saints, which have been raptured, and will reign with Christ in glory.

5 And from the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices. Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.

Verse 5 describes, not a throne of grace, but a throne of judgment. Thunder and lightning are warnings! And what do they warn of? They warn us that a storm is coming! Just like God thundered at Mt. Sinai when He gave the Law.

And just like God warned Egypt in:

Exodus 9:23, And Moses stretched out his rod toward heaven; and the Lord sent thunder and hail, and fire darted to the ground. And the Lord rained hail on the land of Egypt. 24 So there was hail, and fire mingled with the hail, so very heavy that there was none like it in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation.

Psalms 77:18 says, The voice of Your thunder was in the whirlwind; The lightnings lit up the world; The earth trembled and shook.

And so the lightening and the thunder that John saw was just a preview of God's divine wrath which was about to come.

And then in the last part of verse 5 through verse 11, John saw several items before the throne.

First in verse 5 he saw Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.

These seven lamps of fire were different from the seven lamp stands he saw back in chapter 1. These were more like outside torches. They didn't give off the soft, gentle light of an indoor lamp; but rather the fierce, blazing light of a fiery torch. And John identifies these lamps as the seven Spirits of God, which we said earlier represent the Holy Spirit in all His fullness. And the seven Spirits refer back to the Book of Isaiah chapter 11:2.

Isaiah 11:2, The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, The Spirit of wisdom and understanding, The Spirit of counsel and might, The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.

It speaks of His wisdom and understanding and counsel and strength and knowledge and reverence and deity.

And then in verse 6

6 Before the throne there was a sea of glass, like crystal.

And since we know that elsewhere it says that there is no sea in heaven, we know that this a metaphor. What he saw was this vast pavement of glass that shined like a diamond and was just as clear as a diamond and therefore it looked like a sea. It's the same thing Moses and Aaron and the elders of Israel saw back in chapter 24 of Exodus.

Exodus 24:10, and they saw the God of Israel. And there was under His feet as it were, a paved work of sapphire stone, and it was like the very heavens in its clarity.

What John sees is something we can't even imagine in our minds because we have nothing with which to compare it.

And in the midst of the throne, and around the throne, were four living creatures full of eyes in front and in back.

And these four creatures are going to play a key role in the events that unfold as we go forward. And without going into great detail about them which we're given in the Book of Ezekiel in chapter 1:4-25, these are the four cherubim as mentioned also in Ezekiel 10:15. And they're an exalted order if you will of the angels of God. And many times in the Bible they're associated with the power of God.

After Adam and Eve were thrown out of the Garden of Eden, the cherubim were assigned to guard the garden and keep them from returning. Two carved cherubim were placed in the holy of holies to symbolically guard the holiness of God. Satan, before his fall was an anointed cherub who had been assigned to attend God's throne.

And then John tries to describe them.

He says they have eyes front and back, which speaks to their awareness and alertness and comprehension and knowledge. And then in verse 7

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

The lion represents the wild animals in the world. The calf represents the domestic animals. The eagle represents the flying creatures and the face of a man the highest level of creation which is human beings.

8 The four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within.

The four living creatures which represent the angels will be heavily involved in the judgement of the world. Their six wings denote their supreme responsibility and privilege to worship the Lord.

And in **Isaiah 6:1**, we're told how they used those 6 wings.

Isaiah said, 1, In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple. Above it stood seraphim; (which most believe is the same as the cherubim) and each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.

He covered his eyes, because no-one including the angels can look upon the unveiled glory of the Lord. And then he covered his feet because he stood on holy ground. And then he worshipped with the other two. And their worship is not only a privilege, it's a calling, and it's permanent.

And they do not rest day or night, saying: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!"

And then the curtain closes with everybody around the throne worshipping the Lord and casting their crowns at His feet.

9 Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever,

10 the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying:

11 “You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created.”