

Rev. 4:1 After this I looked, and, behold, a door *was* opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard *was* as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter.

After this—denoting a chronological time change--after taking down the letters to the churches regarding things present. John looks up and sees a door open in the heaven (an entrance). The first voice He hears coming through the door is the same one he described in chapter one—one of Divine nature (cf **Rev 1:10**). He is told to come up to where the voice is, and He will show John the things that will happen in the future (without denoting a specific time in the future)—“the things which shall be hereafter” (cf 1:19).

The voice giving the command is compared to a trumpet, and since Paul tells us in Thessalonians that we will be taken home to be with Jesus at the sound of the “trump of God...”

1 Thessalonians 4:16–17 *For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.*

...many people assume that this means that John is a picture of the rapture of the church at this point. I just don't think that understanding is a good fit in the prophetic puzzle as you consider the context of the scripture surrounding it. The verses in Thessalonians detail the voice of the archangel and the trump of God. They also detail Jesus coming to get us—not just calling out for us.

It makes more sense within the context to represent a change in perspective—from earthly to heavenly.

This does not preclude belief in the pre-tribulation rapture. I still believe strongly in the pre-tribulation rapture and the following foundational scriptures.

1. I believe the antichrist will not be revealed until the Holy Spirit (who indwells believers) is removed. **2Thessalonians 2:7-8** *For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.*
2. We, believers, aren't appointed to wrath. **1Thessalonians 5:9** *For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.*
3. In Revelation 3, the church at Philadelphia was told that they would be kept from (out of) the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world....This letter is not only to Philadelphia, but to all the churches, all believers.

4. The example of Lot in the Old Testament when God exercised judgment on the wicked provides an example of the unchanging heart of God. He delivers the righteous from judgment.
5. The 70th week is determined upon Israel—not the church.
***Daniel 9:24** Seventy weeks are determined upon thy (Daniel's) people and upon thy holy city (Jerusalem).*

The majority of the Revelation John is yet to receive is still future, but I believe a foundation is being laid at this point from which those events will proceed. The same can be said for the first half of chapter 12.

Rev. 4:2 *And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne.*

Immediately (at once) – makes me think of **I Corinthians 15** “but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.”

John was in the spirit—his spiritual, not his physical being. The first thing he sees in heaven is a throne and someone sitting on it. This vision of John compares to that of Isaiah and Ezekiel.

***Isaiah 6:1** In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple.*

***Ezekiel 1:26** And above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone: and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it.*

I liked this quote from David Guzik. “The bottom line of atheism or materialism is that there is no throne, there is no seat of authority or power that the entire universe must answer to. The bottom line of humanism is that there is a throne, but man sits upon it. Essentially, man cannot live without the concept of a throne, a supreme ruler. So if man de-thrones God, he will inescapably place himself or some other man upon the throne....”

Rev. 4:3 *And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.*

The appearance of God on His throne was like looking at the beauty of a valuable gemstone. The throne has a beautiful emerald green rainbow encircling it (representing His mercy; like the bow in the sky to Noah).

Note from Dixie—“The rainbow is also a reminder that God is a covenant keeper.”

Pastor Bob had an interesting insight regarding the jasper and sardine stone. The high priest wore a breastplate that had four rows of three gemstones each that represented the tribes of Israel. The sardine and jasper stones are the first and

last stones respectively. Assuming that the stones were arranged in the order of birth, the sardine would have represented the tribe of Reuben and the jasper the tribe of Benjamin. The meaning of the name Reuben is “behold a son,” and Benjamin means “son of my right hand.” The throne represented the seat of the “first and the last” who is in position to honor “the son of His right hand,” Jesus, the Lamb.

Warren Wiersbe:	Jasper	clear stone	God’s purity
	Sardine	red	wrath and judgment
	Emerald	green	grace and mercy

Rev. 4:4 And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold.

Around the throne are 24 elders sitting on 24 “thronos” in the Greek defined as “a stately seat (“throne”)” that are clothed in white raiment and wearing crowns of gold. Because scripture says that we will rule with Christ and that we can earn crowns of reward, many assume that this has to picture the body of believers. The Greek for “crowns” is the word “stephanos,” and is defined as “a chaplet (as a badge of royalty, a prize in the public games or a symbol of honor generally). I think they are trying to force a puzzle piece to fit that doesn’t.

No one is allowed in heaven without the proper clothing; the white raiment is indicative of purity and righteousness.

I have heard and read many thoughts about the 24 elders. One thought that comes to mind is that if John is representative of the “raptured” church, these elders must all come from a time before the church; they are in position upon his arrival. Also, it couldn’t include the 12 apostles since John is one of the apostles. Another thought is that when you think of an elder, you think of one who is much older and wiser and experienced.

When reading E.W. Bullinger’s The Apocalypse, I was reminded that both Moses and David were given blueprints as to the building of the tabernacle and temple respectively. It makes sense that the 24 men appointed by David to head the divisions of the priesthood to serve at the “house of the Lord” were patterned after this council of 24 angels occupying similar positions in heaven.

1 Chronicles 28:11–13 “Then David gave to Solomon his son the pattern of the porch, and of the houses thereof, and of the treasuries thereof, and of the upper chambers thereof, and of the inner parlours thereof, and of the place of the mercy seat, And the pattern of all that he had by the spirit, of the courts of the house of the LORD, and of all the chambers round about, of the treasuries of the house of God, and of the treasuries of the dedicated things: Also for the courses of the priests and the Levites, and for all the work of the service of the house of the LORD, and for all the vessels of service in the house of the LORD.”

1 Chronicles 24:1–4 *“Now these are the divisions of the sons of Aaron. The sons of Aaron; Nadab, and Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. But Nadab and Abihu died before their father, and had no children: therefore Eleazar and Ithamar executed the priest’s office. And David distributed them, both Zadok of the sons of Eleazar, and Ahimelech of the sons of Ithamar, according to their offices in their service. And there were more chief men found of the sons of Eleazar than of the sons of Ithamar; and thus were they divided. Among the sons of Eleazar there were sixteen chief men of the house of their fathers, and eight among the sons of Ithamar according to the house of their fathers.”* (16 + 8 = 24 ---- coincidence? I think not.)

I am also reminded that Daniel records a vision of thrones of authority being positioned in judgment.

Daniel 7:9–10 *I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened.*

Earlier in Daniel we are told of judgment that is declared against Nebuchadnezzar by decree of the “watchers...the holy ones.”

Daniel 4:13–17 *I saw in the visions of my head upon my bed, and, behold, a watcher and an holy one came down from heaven; He cried aloud, and said thus, Hew down the tree, and cut off his branches, shake off his leaves, and scatter his fruit: let the beasts get away from under it, and the fowls from his branches: Nevertheless leave the stump of his roots in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field; and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts in the grass of the earth: Let his heart be changed from man’s, and let a beast’s heart be given unto him; and let seven times pass over him. **This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones:** to the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men.*

It makes sense to me that just as with government on earth, there is a hierarchy among the angels in heaven. Evidently, some have been chosen to serve as part of God’s heavenly supreme court. This is supported by the Greek for the word “elders” that includes reference to “member of the celestial council” in its definition.

In light of this scriptural foundation from the Old Testament, I would also like to point out some other facts. Other beings identified by John at this time include “seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God” and four beasts that seem to mirror the cherubim described in Ezekiel 10. As we continue reading in chapter 5, we learn that there are so many angels around the throne that John can only describe it as “ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands.” The picture is one of a multitude of the heavenly hosts.

Another important observation—Where is Jesus? We are told in scripture that once He returned to heaven, He was seated at the right hand of the Father where He is ever interceding for us.

***Romans 8:33–34** Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.*

***Hebrews 1:1–3** God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high....*

***Hebrews 7:22&25** By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament....Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.*

***Hebrews 8:1** Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens....*

***1 Peter 3:21–22** The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ: Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.*

Rev. 4:5 **And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.**

Out of the throne come lightnings (bright flashing light), thunderings (roaring) and voices (utterances). (Makes you think of the description regarding the events at Mount Sinai when God met with Moses on the mountain—See Exodus 19.) In front of the throne are seven lamps of fire that are the seven Spirits of God (cf **Rev. 1:4** and **Isaiah 11:2**).

Rev. 4:6 **And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind.**

Also in front of the throne is a sea of glass (calm, transparent) like unto crystal (icy looking). Surrounding the throne are four beasts (living creatures) full of eyes in front and back (ability to see all things clearly). This matches the description of the cherubim given in Ezekiel.

***Ezekiel 10:12** And their whole body, and their backs, and their hands, and their wings, and the wheels, were full of eyes round about, even the wheels that they four had.*

Wiersbe—Comparison between the heavenly and Old Testament temple:
7 lamps 7 branched lampstand
sea of glass laver
throne ark of covenant
both had altars for sacrifice and incense
24 elders priesthood

John Schultz again had a thought-provoking observation: “Our own two eyes allow us to see our world three-dimensionally. This determines the awareness of the surrounding in which we live and also our inner consciousness and the dimensions of our spirit. An increase in our number of eyes (suppose that our brain could handle such a thing) would then mean an expansion of our consciousness. These living creatures must live in a multi-dimensional state of awareness. This enables them to surround the throne of God and to praise Him. Their condition is a prerequisite for their praise.”

Rev. 4:7 And the first beast *was* like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast *was* like a flying eagle.

The first living creature around the throne looked *like* (this word denotes symbolism) a lion; the second like a calf; the third had a face like a man; and the fourth looked like a flying eagle.

I have always heard these taught as representative of the way Christ was presented in the gospels—in Matthew as the Messiah / King (the lion is the king of beasts); in Mark as a servant (the calf / ox was a work animal); in Luke as the Son of Man (emphasizing the humanity of Jesus); and in John as the divine Son of God (the eagle is used in the Old Testament to represent God’s provision).

Deuteronomy 32:9-12 For the LORD’S portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance. He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye. As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: So the LORD alone did lead him....

I see no reason to disagree.

Rev. 4:8 And the four beasts had each of them six wings about *him*; and *they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.*

These creatures have things in common with both the seraphim (six wings) in Isaiah 6 and the cherubim (who each have 4 faces similar to the separate beasts named here in Revelation) in Ezekiel 10. Their purpose is to worship and honor—continually, without rest the “Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.” It is interesting that the phrase is “holy, holy, holy” in reference to a triune God. The Bible emphasizes over and over again that God occupies eternity (past, present, and future).

Rev. 4:9 And when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever,

Rev. 4:10 The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying,

Rev. 4:11 Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

This verse starts off with “when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks,” and we have just been told in the verse before that is continual. Statement is also made that the One on the throne lives for eternity. We are next told that the 24 elders fall down in worship before God—who lives in eternity—and cast their crowns before the throne in conjunction with the worship of the living creatures. Their praise reflects God’s worthiness to receive glory (of good opinion and reputation, praise) and honor (considered of great value, esteemed highly, deserving great respect) and power (strength, miraculous power).

Then we are told that the One on the throne is the Creator of all things. Why does/did He create? For His own pleasure (choice, desire, will). Isaiah also supports this truth:

***Isaiah 43:7** Even every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him.*

This verse in Revelation emphasizes that all things were created for His good pleasure. In Isaiah the emphasis is on the fact that those called by His name are created for His glory. Is there a difference in *glory* and *pleasure*? In looking at the definitions from the original languages and Webster, I think there is a distinct difference. All things were created according to the pleasure/choice/will/desire of God, but not all things give Him glory. Those who are called by His name have been created with the express purpose of glorifying/honoring God; we are to reflect Him in our lives—by how we act, speak, and think.

Dixie had a thought-provoking question—“I wonder how much pleasure I give Him?” In light of my distinction regarding pleasure and glory, I’m sure Dixie won’t mind if I change her question to “I wonder how much I glorify God?”

The wording in verse 11 emphasizes that He is still creating. (Good note from Mom: “There are no evolutionists in heaven.” At least none who still believe in evolution.)

I think the worship of the living creatures and the 24 elders is done in harmony and at appropriate times according to what else is happening at the throne; otherwise, it would be chaos if they continued while other things were happening. I think the term “rest not” means that they continue to offer this praise at all the appropriate times. God designates that we worship Him “decently and in order”; and since He is the same yesterday, today and forever, I believe that is how it is in heaven.

1Corinthians 14:40 *Let all things be done decently and in order.*

Malachi 3:6 *For I am the LORD, I change not.*