

### INTRODUCTORY NOTES:

- The curtain drops on the church, and a new scene opens in heaven.
- The 7 churches, as well as the entire Church Age, was addressed in chapters 2 and 3. With chapter 4, the third section (“things which will take place after this”) begins.
- Chapter 4 acts as a sort of prelude, setting the scene, for the events of chapter 5.

<sup>1</sup> *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.”*

- **“After these things”** – *meta tauta*....there IS a chronology to Revelation! Another *meta tauta*...
- **“a door [standing] open in heaven”** 4X in Revelation. Door of opportunity (3:8), fellowship (3:20, 2X) access to heaven (here, 4:1)
- **“voice like a trumpet”** (see 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, Exodus 19)
- **“come up here”** (reality of heaven) Invitation? Calling of the Church? Some see this as the removal (rapture) of the Church.
- The church at Laodicea ends the church age. Then follow the Tribulation and the apostate church. Before that time, as these early chapters BEFORE the actual Tribulation begins in Revelation show, the removal of the Church may occur. We often refer to this as the Rapture. *The Church does not appear again until after the Tribulation*. This invitation to John may be one of many references in scripture to the pre-Tribulational Rapture of the church. However, this point is often debated.

<sup>2</sup> *Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne.* <sup>3</sup> *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.*

- **“Immediately”** – an interesting word here. The apostle Paul would have used the phrase “in the twinkling of an eye.”



- **“In the Spirit”** – that place of unique fellowship with God that transcends the physical plane. John is describing a vision. He is not physically in this place.
- **“Throne”** – This word appears 45X in Revelation, and in every chapter except 2, 8 and 9. God’s Throne is the center of all activity. **“A glorious high throne from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary.”** (Jeremiah 17:12)
- **“Jasper and a sardius stone”** – not like what we think today. Jasper most likely clear, diamond-like. Was last stone in the breastplate of high priest. (Exodus 28:20) Sardius is a blood (fiery) red. Both will be seen in wall and foundation of the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21).
- We have the colors of purity, and the blood here, combined with the emerald rainbow give us some very vivid “Christmas” colors! We know what each color represents in scripture: clear or white is purity, absolute holiness; red is the blood of the Lamb, green for life abundant (God is the giver and taker of life). **“Rainbow”** – iris in Greek, can mean “halo.”
- **The “One” sitting on the throne is beyond our comprehension,** and John’s ability to describe. He used what he knew, colors and shapes, but even these have symbolic meaning.

<sup>4</sup> ***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.***

- **“24 thrones and 24 elders”** – elders were highest officials in the church and represented the entire church when assembled (Titus 1:5, Acts 15:6, 20:28, 1 Peter 2:5 and 9) Some say these are angels, but would angels wear crowns of victory? Some say priests, as there were 24 courses of priests established by King David (1 Chronicles 24:5). In Revelation 5 they are singing the “song of the redeemed.” Who are the redeemed? The entire Church. They wore “crowns of gold”- crowns of victory (*stephanos*) not the crown of authority (*diadem*). The best interpretation of these entities is the **entire redeemed church**, represented by the 12 tribes (Israel, Jews) and the 12 disciples (the Church) combined into one redeemed group.
- **“Crowns”** – this is a crown of gold, victory. In scripture there are several crowns (*never promised to angels*): crown of life for those who have suffered for Him (James 1:12, Rev 2:10); crown of righteousness for those who loved His appearing (2 Timothy 4:8); crown of glory for those who fed the lambs, sheep, flock (1 Peter 5:4); crown incorruptible for those who press on steadfastly (1 Corinthians 9:25); crown of rejoicing for those who win souls (1 Thessalonians 2:19)

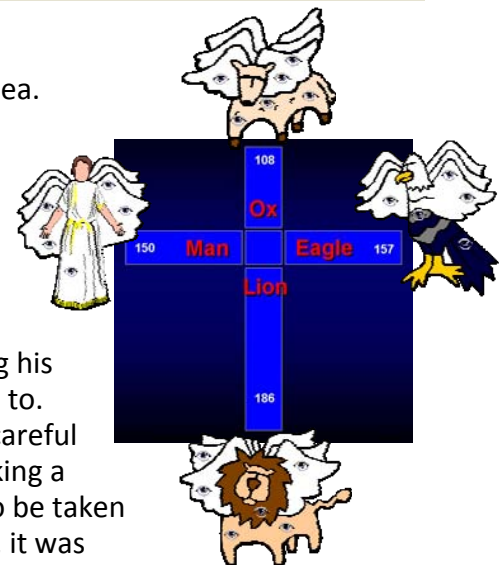


<sup>5</sup> *And from the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices. Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.*

- *“lightnings and thunderings and voices”* seen 4X in Revelation, once at Mt. Sinai (Exodus 19:16). These evidence the mighty presence of God, His total power and majesty.
- *“Seven lamps”* were previously seen in chapter 1 as the churches, now they are in heaven around the throne, but they are identified as the seven Spirits of God. May be a reference to seven aspects of the Holy Spirit from Isaiah 11:2-3

<sup>6</sup> *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.* <sup>7</sup> *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.* <sup>8</sup> *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!”*

- *“Sea of glass”* like crystal. Hard to picture, but has an OT reference in the laver, which was referenced as the molten sea. The laver was the place where the priests washed before entering the Tabernacle, and Solomon expanded this laver into a huge piece very prominent in the courtyard before the entrance to the Temple. In Revelation 15 this sea is “mingled with fire” and the “tribulation saints” are standing on it.
- *“like...”* – notice how often John uses this word. He is trying his best to describe what he sees, but he has little to compare it to. His visions are unlike anything he has ever seen before. Be careful to notice when the word “like” is used. It means John is making a comparison to help us understand what he sees. It is NOT to be taken literally. For example, the sea was not literal glass or crystal, it was (seemed) “like” that.
- *“living creatures”* – these are very unique beings. The literal translation is “living creature” not beast. There are four of them, a number representing the creation, earth (4 ordinal directions, etc.). Similar beings in Genesis 3:24, are identified as Cherubim, a rank of angels created by God, and also in Ezekiel 1. In Isaiah 6 we have a similar description, but with differences, of something called “seraphim.” These may also be angels, but in different appearance and function to those at the entrance to the garden of Eden, or those in Ezekiel’s vision. The living creatures here are not given a name or title, just a description. The four faces (lion, calf, man, eagle) are the same as the 4 standards of the tribes of Israel that camped in the desert around the Tabernacle (Numbers 2). You will also see these represented in stained glass windows as the 4 gospels (Matthew=lion, for the Lion of the Tribe of Judah; Mark=Ox, as he depicts Jesus as the servant, Luke=Man, as he captures the humanity of Jesus, and John=Eagle, as the eagle is a symbol of God’s provision in scripture, and John presents Jesus’ divinity.) Be careful to notice the word “like” in John’s descriptions. This is NOT a lion, man, ox, or eagle, but LIKE them. They each have six wings and are “full of eyes.”



*The layout of the encampment in the desert around the Tabernacle. Cartoon renditions of the 4 living creatures (above). Another artist rendition of the second living creature (left). The word for the face of this creature is translated both “calf” and “ox.”*

- It is difficult to imagine these creatures. It is also difficult to fully understand what or who they represent. Some have said they symbolically represent the creation, all created beings, because of the number 4. Others have said they are actual angelic creatures. We just don't know. But we DO know what they do: they praise God 24/7. ***“And they do not rest day or night, saying: holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!”*** It is the purpose of all created beings, whether earthly or heavenly, to praise God.
- ***“holy, holy, holy”*** – the three Gods in One, Trinity praise



***<sup>9</sup> Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever, <sup>10</sup> 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: <sup>11</sup> “ 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.”***

- The living creatures aren't the only ones constantly praising. ***“Whenever the living creatures give glory*** (Gr. doxa, lit to reveal the all of something) ***and honor*** (Gr. time, esteem of the highest degree) ***and thanks*** (eucharistia, to receive something as an expression of grace, as if it wasn't deserved) ***to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship*** (proskuneo, prostrated adoration) ***Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns*** (sign of complete submission before God, know they are not worthy, there is only ONE who is worthy) ***before the throne, saying: You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honor and power*** (dunamis, inherent power); ***for you created all things, and by Your will*** (literally for His pleasure, what God WANTED to do) ***they exist and were created.”***
- (this last verse is the answer to the questions of the ages: What is my purpose? Why was I created? Why am I here? To glorify (reveal, show), MAGNIFY (praise) and WORSHIP (adore) God! Understanding this can make life so much easier and less confusing.
- This chapter may not necessarily be a literal picture of heaven's throne room (*but it may also!*), but it places heaven and God in perspective to the creation. **He is the ruling center.**
- The stage is now set for the entrance of the hero, the star of this drama. All heaven is rejoicing and praising, but soon a problem will present itself, and so will the solution.

