

Revelation 4
Study ID#111D1297

Alright, let's open our Bibles this evening to the book of Revelation Chapter 4. Revelation 4, as we continue with our verse by verse study through this last book of the Bible that God gave to the apostle John towards the end of the first century while he was exiled by **Domitian** the emperor on the island of Patmos off the coast of both Greece and Turkey between the two, and he stayed there until Emperor **Nerva** took over in 96 AD and John was allowed to return to Ephesus where he was pastoring and where he probably finished the book. Now we've studied John's first vision which began in Chapter 1 verse 10, and carried us through the end of Chapter 3. It was a vision of the risen Lord in all of His glory. It just wiped John out, and then the Lord said, "I want you to write down what you've seen," and so he wrote in Chapter 1 of all that he saw, of Jesus in His glorious resurrected state. And then John is given the job of writing the messages from the Lord to these seven churches in Asia Minor that we have just finished.

In finishing Chapter 3 we finish two-thirds of the book. Okay, not by volume, but as far as Jesus' outline to John in Chapter 1 verse 19. He told John to write down the things that he had seen, which he did, then to write down the things that are, and so he had written about the Church Age, and then beginning tonight we will begin the third section of the book and John's vision starting in Chapter 4 verse 1 with the words, "After these things I looked." And Chapter 4 and 5 we will spend three weeks in, give to us the vision of the throne of God in heaven. The word "throne" I think is used 14 different times just in Chapter 4 alone. But it is a place that you gather with great awe to worship and to honor the One who sits on the throne. He is about to judge the world, but before judgment begins in Chapter 6, we get this glimpse of the heavenly scene and of the throne of God and of the church gathered to our Lord in glory. And it is a wonderful vision, and I've kiddingly said to you a few times, "Pay good attention so when you show up you don't look like you're lost." The Lord had written this out for you, and if you're lost, please tell them you went to Calvary Chapel La Habra, rather than Morningstar. (laughter in congregation) Just put it on **Lance**, don't put it on me. I'm going to hear from him now. Someone's going to tell him. It's alright.

To further help you with the outline as far as getting a view for things, Chapter 4 really focuses on the Father. And Chapter 5, all upon the Son. Tonight we will look at Chapter 4. We will then look at the first few verses of Chapter 5 next week. And Lord be willing we will finish Chapter 5 in three weeks. But it is a beautiful picture cause this is where we're headed. This is where we're going. You got a pass here, a ticket, your name is in the book. You're invited. And it is glorious even if it is maybe daunting a little bit in understanding. But I think we can work through most that's here by using the Scriptures.

Verse 1, "After these things I looked," John wrote, "and behold, a door was 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.'" You might think that after the inconsistent nature of the church as reflected in the letters of Jesus that He might be inclined to just give up altogether on the church. But that is not the case. I mean the Bible teaches us that God is preparing a place for His people and that each day that passes brings us one step closer to us being gathered together with Him, that our hope will one day become that reality. There is going to be one generation certainly that will go to be with the Lord without passing through the gates of death. I suspect every generation wants to be that generation. I'm pretty sure I want to be that generation. I'd like to just go with all of you. I hope the Lord comes in five minutes. It'd be pretty good wouldn't it? How good would that be?

Up to now the focus has been upon the church age, and Jesus' words to them and in every letter, "Hear what the Spirit is saying to the church." And the Lord speaks to the church in all different kinds of conditions, and we've gone carefully through each of them. But now we arrive at two chapters where the heavenly scene is in focus and the church is gathered around the throne of God, and following these two chapters come fourteen more which speak about the devastation that will be found upon the earth because God is now ready to judge, and in His wrath fully exercise it and clearly reveal it. They are daunting chapters, and just reading the book I would say would get you to go, "I want to be saved!" And the question has always been, "Well, where is the church during the time of this wrath?" And Paul gives the answer in 1 Corinthians Chapter 51 when he said, "Look, I'll show you a mystery: We shall not all sleep," or die, "but we shall all be changed--and 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 will be changed." So, Paul called it a mystery. But a mystery, at least in a New Testament use, is something that wasn't clearly revealed in the Old Testament. The revelation is there's a certain group who will not die to become immortal. The dead will be raised, Paul tells us, and we will be *allassō* (al-las'-so), transformed, or changed. Now Paul when he wrote to the Thessalonians amplified on that in Chapter 4 where he said in verse 15, "This we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we that are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, and the voice of the archangel, and the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first." They'll get a six-foot head start. "And then we who are alive and remain will 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." Where the words "caught up" is the word *harpazō* (har-pad'-zo) and it comes from the Latin word "*raptus*" and it where we get our word "rapture" from. The word means to be caught away violently or to be caught away suddenly. Why do we need a rapture? Well, because as God is about to deal with unbelievers in His judgment, He first removes His own from the scene. The church age. John, write what you see. Write what is. And then write what shall be after these things. After what things? After this church age.

The interesting thing about the great tribulation is that the punishment and the judgment come from the throne of God. God pouring out His wrath. And yet you and I as Christians have been saved from the wrath of God. 1 Thessalonians 5:9, "God has not appointed us to wrath. But He has appointed us to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ." Much more than Romans 5:9, same numbers, different book. "Much more than having been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him." So, even as God promised the Philadelphian believers there in Chapter 3 verse 10, we will in Jesus be delivered from the wrath of God. Taken out. And then our blessed hope is just that, the rapture of the church.

Now, so often when you read the Scriptures, folks tend to confuse the rapture of the church with the Second Coming of Christ, and really they're two totally different events separated by seven years and lots of trouble. The rapture is in the air. It is out of sight. It is hidden. It comes upon the lost as a thief in the night, very unexpectedly, very unannounced. Where the Second Coming of the Lord will be to the earth, very public, every eye shall see Him, and eventually as we continue through Revelation I think you'll be clearly able to see that you'll be able to tell the exact day the Lord is coming again, Second Coming. At the exact day. From the time of the building of the temple and all, so you'll have an exact time. In Matthew 24 when Jesus was speaking about the last days, He used the days of Noah to illustrate the suddenness of the judgment. He said there in verse 37 of Matthew 24, "As in the days of Noah, so also will be the coming of the Son of Man. As in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, they were marrying, giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and didn't know until the flood came and took them away, so also will be the coming of the Son of Man."

Very sudden, no one's prepared. The rapture of the church, the coming of the Lord for you and for me. Jesus had written His letters to the church, He had made them promises about the future and the glory and the hope of ruling and reigning with Him, and being accepted and clothed and named and wrapped up and taken care of, but after these things, we will then taken out by the Lord into heaven. And before the judgment of God in Chapter 6 comes forward, there are these glorious pictures and insights into we sitting around the throne of God. But that day that the Lord comes to take the church is one that we want to watch for and be ready for. It could come at any time. It could come tonight, which would be just fine with me. The point that Jesus made there in Matthew was even though **Moses (Noah)** had been preaching for a hundred twenty years about a rain to come, no one listened. And no one repented. And Jesus saying in much the same way it will be like that when He comes. The answer, of course, is that the flood brought judgment for rejecting God's call through Noah to repent. People were daily about their business. We say to people, "Repent, man, the Lord's coming." They go, "Oh yeah, whatever. The Lord's coming. You nutty Christians."

If the rapture would occur at the end of the tribulation, as some would like to teach, then there's a couple of things that would change in your outlook. Number one, your daily business would be what you will read from Revelation 6 through 18 and that's not daily business. That's terrifying. Everyone would know something was wrong. And second of all, you wouldn't be looking for Jesus Christ, you'd be looking for the Antichrist, because he would have to appear long before the Lord would come for His own. Yet this judgment comes without warning. In fact, when Jesus wrote or spoke about that time at the end there in Luke Chapter 17, He said about Sodom, they were eating and drinking, they were marrying wives, given in marriage until the time that the Lord came, and they didn't remember. They weren't ready. They didn't know. Remember Lot's wife, He said. Whoever would seek to save his life will lose it. There'll be two men in one bed, the one will be taken, the other will be left. And two women grinding together and one taken and the other left. And two in the field, one taken, and the other left. They weren't ready. Judgment just came without warning. And so the rapture of the church unannounced, no date, no ability to know more than the times and the seasons in which that would come. We had a fella while we were, were we in Israel? Oh, I guess we were in Israel when the fella told us he thought we were going to get raptured from Israel, which is a shorter trip I heard than from here. But, unfortunately, he didn't have it right.

But it's unannounced. And yet the Second Coming of the Lord will be clearly seen, and identified to the very day. So, God warned His people. God removes His people. And then His judgment falls upon man. I think Paul said it in 1 Thessalonians 5:3, "when they begin to say, 'Peace and safety!' then sudden destruction will come upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape." So the judgment is coming unexpectedly. The wrath of God upon the earth after the church age is coming without really much expectation on the part of the world. And Jesus speaks to the church about the rapture, He says, "Look, that day shouldn't overtake you like a thief. You should be ready and praying and prepared and your eyes up and awake and alert." The Lord might come. The watchman of the house, if he knew the hour in which the Lord would come, he'd be ready. But if He comes in the middle of the night, he's not ready. And he suffers. He should be ready. We should be ready.

So here in Chapter 4 verse 1 we come to that very point in God's plan. The rapture of the church. "After these things." It's the same prepositional phrase you find in Chapter 1 verse 19, the Greek words are **meta tauta**, "after this." And John wants to be sure we follow the outline Jesus gave us, the things which are, the things, the church age 2 and 3, have run their course. And notice in Chapter 4 verse 1, the trumpet sounds. And the rapture takes place as the heaven's doors are opened and the church is removed into glory and the judgment of those upon the earth will ensue. In fact, notice in verse 1 that

the words "after these things," and then "after this" down at the end, are spoken twice in one verse. Now the word "church" *ekklēsia* (ek-klay-see'-ah), "the called out ones" is found constantly in Chapter 2 and 3. "May the church hear what the Spirit is saying." You read it, "and to the church in Philadelphia," written to the church in Sardis, and to the church in Laodicea, write. Chapter 2 and 3, the called out ones, the church, you find them constantly. But if you continue to read now in your Bible, you will not find the church again until the summary chapter in Chapter 19 of the book of Revelation. You will read, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear," but it won't read, "what the Spirit is saying to the church." So you go to Chapter, I think it's Chapter 13 verse 9 and they'll say, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." But it isn't directed again to the church because the church, the people of God, have been taken out. From the beginning of Chapter 4 you will only find the church in heaven with Jesus. No longer a part of the scene upon the earth. And the pre-tribulation rapture position of the church I think is the only position that you can Biblically take.

And notice that John looks up and he sees a door standing open in heaven and unfortunately Saint Peter doesn't appear to be standing there, but the door is open which is a good thing. We only see it open one other time in the book of Revelation. It's in Chapter 19 verse 11 where we read of the Lord's Second Coming and the door is open so that He and we with Him might come forth. "Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse," John will write, "And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He comes to judge and make war." So that's the next time you see the door of heaven open. But here, "after these things," after the age of the church, John looks and he hears the trumpet and he hears the voice of God, "Come up here." And the doors of heaven are open and he is invited to come and to see for all of us what will then take place "after these things." After the church age.

And imagine a door into the very presence of heaven and before the throne of God. And John heard the voice of God, and He sounded like a trumpet to him. He had used that simile before back in Chapter 1 verse 10, and then it was Jesus. And you remember the 1 Thessalonians 4:16 verse about the Lord descending from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and the trumpet of God. So, it all goes together well doesn't it? And the Lord is coming then for the church, and we will be gathered together with Him. And so shall we ever be with the Lord. So all believers, true saints of God, will be caught up to heaven before judgment is poured out.

So, tonight with John we enter the heavenly scene, and like I said, pay particular attention so you'll act accordingly.

Verse 2. "Immediately," John said, "I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne was set in heaven, and One sat upon the throne." Now when you read this little phrase, "in the Spirit," or "I was in the Spirit," John will use that a couple of times to tell us that he has been taken by the Lord into the spirit realm, if you will, to be given a vision. He said it in Chapter 1 verse 10, he says it again here. We'll run into it every so often. But it sets apart some of the visions that John is given. He begins with the words, "I was in the Spirit; and behold." Now I think I've told you plenty of times over the years, the word "behold" in Greek is a great word because it really means, "check this out." Not just "look," like "Yeah, I see it." "NO, LOOK! You gotta check this out! Take a look at this!" A throne sitting in heaven. And the first thing that attracts John's eye and captures his attention is the throne in heaven and the One who is sitting upon it. It must have been quite a sight. Paul, when he was taken to heaven there in 2 Corinthians 12, in writing about it said, "I really can't even tell you what I saw because I just feel like I would sin if I tried to put it into words." He felt like there was no adequate way to express it. For John, he had a problem. The Lord said to John, "You write down what you see. Put it in a book," back in Chapter 1. So John is

kind of responsible to write these things out. I think verse 19 of Chapter 1. So John looks and he sees the throne, and everything around it, and it just kind of attracts his attention because it's very strange. They're kind of unexpected things. You almost feel out of your depth. When you think about Jesus, I'm sure you imagine a person, with arms and legs, and He's about this tall, and good-looking, or whatever, and we are attracted to what we kind of can do in our mind's eye. But even the similes of the Lord we can live with. The Lord is like a lion. Oh, I like that. Or the Lord is such as a light. Oh, that's good. But you get here, and you feel like you're in a foreign country a little bit. We read John saying in verse 2, "I saw One that sat on the throne." The Father sat there according to Chapter 5 verse 7. And it is the Father that is in view here. Jesus sits at His right hand. But I just point out a couple of things, there are five prepositional phrases that speak about the throne. In verse 2 He sits "upon" the throne, or "on" the throne. In verse 3 and 4 and 6 we're told about what's going on "around" the throne. In verse 5 what comes "from" the throne. In verse 5 and 6 what is "before" and in the "midst" of the throne. So God gives us a great kind of insight into the throne of God in heaven that John sees as the church is called up. Now there are only two other portions in the Bible that speak in vision about the throne of God with any clarity that you should be familiar with. One of them is in Isaiah Chapter 6. And the other two, because there's two chapters actually in Ezekiel, Chapter 1 and Chapter 10, give to us a detailed description of the throne of God. Both will help you if you want to spend some time there with this portion of Revelation as they add clarity and they verify, they add some insights into the heavenly scene and we'll kind of refer to them as we go. But anyway, John's attention is just, "There's the throne and One who sat upon it." There's lots of other things going on, but that's where his attention is drawn first.

He says in verse 3, "He who sat there was like," now remember that's that comparative simile or metaphoric word which doesn't mean He was a jasper, "he saw the color of jasper and a sardius stone in appearance;" that's what it looked like. "And there was a rainbow around the throne, with the appearance of emerald." So when you see the word "like," a simile or comparison, and those are all used in the Scriptures to compare spiritual things that we don't necessarily haven't seen with physical things that we have. God gives to us things that we can make by comparison. So John was taken as he comes into the throne room of God with the glorious colors that he saw. And he compared them to what he knew, what he understood. He said, "I looked at the throne and I saw jasper." Now jasper is clear. It's like a crystal, you read about it in Revelation Chapter 21. John said, "Yeah, I got carried away in the Spirit and God showed me the great city, Jerusalem, descending from the heavens from God, having the glory of God, her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal." So John looked and there was a color but it was like a clarity that just stood out to him.

He mentions that he saw in the throne of God sardius. Like a sardius stone. Sardius is a blood red ruby color in appearance. So that impressed John right away. Interestingly, if you go back to the Old Testament, in the breastplate of the high priest, he wore twelve stones when he came to serve before the Lord. And the twelve stones represented the twelve tribes of Israel as they were brought before the Lord by the representative. He represented God for the whole nation. According to Exodus Chapter 28, the sardius was the first stone in that breastplate, and the jasper was the last one. And between them were all twelve of the sons of Israel. But the first one, the jasper one, stood for Reuben, the oldest. The last one, the sardius, represented Benjamin, the youngest. So, the first and the last of all of Israel or all inclusively the children of God, if you will. And interestingly enough Reuben means "Behold a Son." And Benjamin means, "Son of my right hand." So both those boys represented by these colors are kind of veiled references to Jesus, His birth as a Son, and yet His existence as God, His place at the right hand of the Father. So John is just, there are things that are sticking out in John's mind that he just wants to write down.

He saw a rainbow that had a greenish tint to it. We know that the rainbow was the visible sign of God's covenant with Noah that He would never again destroy the earth with a flood, Genesis Chapter 9. But here it encircles the throne with an emerald hue. Maybe speaking of the fact that the covenant is complete. Now we know from 2 Peter Chapter 3 that the Lord will indeed judge the world again, but this time by fire. Usually a rainbow comes after the storm. But here interestingly enough it is found in God's presence before judgment falls because with God's wrath there is always mercy isn't there. Habakkuk, I think it's Chapter 3 verse 2, "in wrath remember Your mercy." So John, he sees color, we know that they represent some things from the Old Testament. He sees the rainbow.

And then he says in verse 24 (should be verse 4), "And around the throne there were twenty-four other thrones, and on those thrones I saw twenty-four elders. They were sitting clothed in white robes; they had crowns of gold upon their heads." Now if you read it just in and of itself, what is the first thing that it brings to mind? Folks wearing white robes with crowns upon their heads in God's presence. And you say to yourself, "Well that looks like the church, like they're representative of the church." And I think certainly that's the case. In both Jewish and Christian history, elders were the spiritual leaders of a congregation or of a people. In the Old Testament some of the elders functioned as priests, they brought the people together to worship God and then they brought the word of God to the people. In the New Testament, the believers are all called priests by God's word, while the elders or the pastors or the overseers are those who are called upon to shepherd God's flock by feeding them and caring for them and leading them and whatever. In Revelation Chapter 7, verses 13 and 14, one of the elders speaks to John about the tribulation saints, those who were called out of the great tribulation who died for their faith that came to know the Lord, and so we know that these twenty-four elders cannot represent the tribulation saints. In Revelation Chapter 7 verse 11 the angels themselves stand separate from the elders. So they aren't really represented by these twenty-four elders either. Nor can these elders represent Israel as a nation being persecuted. They are represented in Chapter 7 and in Chapter 12 by the 144,000. So everyone seems to have a representation even as the Old Testament prophets had first told. The only group that can be represented by these twenty-four elders are the children of God. And there's a lot of support for that. They are no longer found on the earth. They are there because Jesus' promise was to deliver them from the wrath that was to come, Chapter 3, and that they would sit with Him one day upon His throne, Chapter 3 verse 21.

Now you say to yourself, "Well, why twenty-four?" And I'll give you a couple of things to think about. There are many commentators who speak about the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve apostles upon whose testimony the church was built. We find their names in the pillars of the walls of the New Jerusalem a long time from now when we get towards the end of the book. And so they add those together and say, "You know, the number twenty-four could **entirely?** represent the church of believers, Jew and Gentile, Old Testament and New." And then if you add to that thought the Revelation Chapter 21 passage which says, "She had a great and a high wall. There were twelve gates, twelve angels at the gates, names written on them, the names of the twelve tribes of Israel were on them, three gates to the east, three to the north, three to the south, three to the west. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations. The names of the twelve apostles were written on those." You can put that together with this verse and say, "Well, that makes good logical sense."

The Bible does use the number twenty-four from time to time to represent a complete set. I've always been a proponent of the fact that if God wants us to know something, especially when it comes to metaphors or simile, or symbolism, that the Bible itself ought to define for us what we would and would not believe. And the best source of formulating any kind of understanding is always looking to the Bible for interpretation and context, not isolating verses, but looking in context.

If you have a chance some time to go back to 1 Chronicles 24, you will be given there by the Lord in a very long bunch of lists a list of the division of priests who came from the line of Aaron. Eleazar, one of his sons, had sixteen heads of the priestly family as descendants, and then his other son, Ithamar, had eight. And the total of them was twenty-four. So in 1 Chronicles 24 you are given the names of the twenty-four divisions who would come out to serve the Lord at a given time every year in a given order. They were assigned weeks, if you will, and then in the next chapter, in Chapter 25, the musicians were organized in a similar fashion, these highly skilled musicians. They came out to 288 that would serve the Lord. And so there were too many to serve at once, and they divided them up into twenty-four divisions of both musicians and singers that would accompany the twenty-four divisions of priests. So, Division 8 showed up of priests to serve that week, then Division 8 of musicians would come with them. Every priest or every group had its own worship band. Yet when you find the Lord referring to those groups, the twenty-four priests and the twenty-four musicians, and the twenty-four singers and they gathered them together, they just said it was time for the twenty-four to come. Well there were actually twenty-four and twenty-four, but they just saw them together as just one group, and so it could very well be that these twenty-four elders represent the whole church--the tribes, the apostles, the body of saints, both Jew and Gentile.

Additionally, we have a couple of extra little helps in the book itself to help us come to that conclusion. If you look for a minute at Chapter 5, verse 8, just turn your page maybe one page, we read these words, "Now when He," Jesus, John is talking about, "had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, and they each had a harp, and they had golden bowls full of incense, which was the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song." And this is what they sang, "You are worthy to take the scroll, to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us," us, "to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and You have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign upon the earth."

Now there is literally no one in heaven but the church that can sing that song. That's for you and I. In Daniel Chapter 12, verses 1, 2 and 3, you will read that the Old Testament saints will receive their new bodies, their glorified bodies, at the end of the tribulation. But you and I will be given them on the day of the rapture. The dead in Christ shall rise first, but we shall all be changed. So the bodies of those who have died and gone before us, they'll be glorified. You'll get a new body. You'll be changed in the twinkling of an eye. I will get hair (laughter) immediately, big, full, thick, overgrowing, curly, looking good hair! Don't laugh, it's going to happen.

But notice that here the twenty-four are already clothed. They have their bodies, if you will. The church age is unique. They receive their bodies, their glorified bodies at the rapture. They stand apart. And one other thing. In the vision of Isaiah and in the vision of Ezekiel, back in Chapter 6 and then Chapter 1 and 10 of Ezekiel, in the vision from heaven everything that you find here, they see except for the twenty-four elders. And the reason would be simple--until Jesus died and rose, there was no entrance into heaven and the church hadn't been born yet. And so they saw a vision of heaven in an Old Testament sense, but they weren't able to see what John is allowed to see, basically these white robes, the righteousness that God gives to us by faith in His Son. I'll make you white as snow. The crowns of gold. In fact, the twenty-four representing us are wearing crowns of gold. And there's only two words, basic words in Greek for "crowns." One of them is *diadem*. And the diadem was a crown of governing. You'd put that on if you were the king. And the other crown is the word *stephanos (stef'-an-os)*, which is a garland or a laurel crown of victory that was given to Olympic winners. Well that's the word that's used here, a crown of victory, not a crown of rulership, but a crown of victory. And isn't it interesting

that these very things we see here sitting on the throne, clothed in white robes, wearing victory crowns, were all promised in Jesus' letter to the seven churches, Chapter 3 verse 21, Chapter 3 verse 5, Chapter 2 verse 10, you can go back and read them yourself. The very things that God promised the overcomers in the church we now find amongst these twenty-four elders. Paul will say to the Corinthians that, "Don't you know that the saints will judge the world. And if the world is going to be judged by you, why don't you handle things since, you're going to judge angels." There's going to be that place of oversight. So, it is our conclusion these twenty-four elders represent the church, that they're all believers, Jew and Gentile, from the day of Pentecost to the rapture of the church, Chapter 4 verse 1. And we will find them to be consistently so throughout our study of the book of Revelation. And they represent certainly only the saints could sing, "You've redeemed us by Your blood." And certainly that's what we will be singing with them.

Okay, so that's what John sees, twenty-four elders, clothed in white, crowns of gold on their heads, and we will read in a little while that we will throw our crowns to the Lord to honor Him and say, "You're worthy Lord to be honored." I think it's in verse 10 of this chapter. (It's in verse 11.)

Okay, verse 5, "And from the throne proceed lightnings, and thunder, and voices. Seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God." Now notice the words "lightnings," "thunder," "voices." All of them speak of the mighty display of God's presence and power. This case He's going to pour out His wrath. If you go back to the Old Testament, Exodus 19, children of Israel arrive at Mount Sinai, they're going to meet with God at the giving of the Law, and they look up. This is exactly what they see there. As God is going to call them to Himself. On the third day thunder and lightning, a thick cloud, the sound of the trumpet, the people came and they trembled, the place was covered in smoke, God came down, and the fire, and the people said to Moses, "We don't like talking to Him. You talk to Him. And whatever He says, you just tell us, we'll go ahead and do it, but we don't want to meet with Him ourselves anymore." Psalm 18, the psalmist writes, "The LORD thundered from heaven,...hailstones and coals of fire....Lightnings in abundance." It's just an outward representation of the power and holiness of God. And John sees that around the throne. Fitting here for the storm clouds are about to break forth on an unbelieving world as the wrath of God overflows the cup.

The seven lamps of fire, we've talked about before. The Holy Spirit was mentioned, I think Chapter 1 verse 4, at work in the church, seven is the number of completeness or fullness. We discussed that in great detail in Chapter 3 verse 1 when we started looking at the letters. So the Father is on the throne, the Son is to His right hand, and the Holy Spirit in His fullness surrounds the throne. In both Exodus 25 and Hebrews 9, the Lord gives us some description of the tabernacle that Moses built, but he built it with the words from the Lord, "Be sure you build it exactly like I tell you because it will be a replica and minister of what heaven will be like." And interestingly enough, as the priests went to worship and to serve before the Holy of Holies, which was behind the veil, the only light in the Holy Place was this seven-pronged candlestick that represented really the light of God's Spirit, and the oil needed to be filled constantly lit and it was a picture again of that heavenly scene where the Holy Spirit's presence would be burning around the throne. I think it's in Isaiah Chapter 11, he speaks about the seven Spirits of the Lord, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding and counsel and might and knowledge and fear of the Lord, these seven Spirits of God. But really the fullness, if you will, of God's Spirit. And John saw the seven lamps on fire.

Then he says, "And before the throne there was a sea of glass, like crystal. And in the midst of the throne, and around the throne, four living creatures full of eyes in the front and in the back." Now, referred to again in Chapter 15 I think verse 2 where it is mingled with fire and the tribulation saints are

standing upon it, this place before God's throne is very analogous to what Moses and Aaron saw when they had a vision of heaven in Exodus 24. But there it was a glass of brass. Now brass in the Bible is a metal of judgment. And so when Moses and Aaron came to bring people into the presence of God they had to be judged for their sin. But notice here before the throne of God it is absolutely clear. Forgiveness has come and your sins have been washed and the basin is clear. Great portrait. Moses came before God's presence, everything had to do with brass lavers and brass altar and brass basins where you would wash before God's presence. Everything had to be judged. But now in heaven, oh it's all done. Your sins are remembered no more. And before the throne you get this beautiful clear vast, if you will, sea of glass that looks to him like crystal.

Notice he says here in verse 6 towards the end, "around the throne, in the midst of the throne, there were these four living creatures with their eyes filled in front and in back. The first living creature looked like a lion, the second like a calf, the third living creature had the face like a man, and the fourth living creature was like a flying eagle. And the four living creatures each had six wings, they had full of eyes around within. And they didn't rest day or night. They just said, 'Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!'"

Now these are pretty weird looking deals right? You read this and go, "Yeah, that's a little strange. Eyes everywhere, flying around." Four living creatures. Now, these four are mentioned several times in these chapters. Mentioned in Chapter 5, as well as Chapter 4, three times later in Chapter 6, I think they're the ones who invited John to come see the first seal judgment go forth. Their description is very unique and you have it here in verse 6, 7, and 8. Full of eyes in the front and in the back. They looked like, notice there is a simile there again. They looked like. However, even if they're not exactly to be taken literally, it's a pretty creepy ?view?. Now, the description of these four living creatures is similar to Ezekiel's vision of the throne of God. That's found Ezekiel Chapter 1 and 10. And there they are called cherubim. It seems to be a highly ranked angelic group. Cherubim. But, they only have four wings there. So they're not quite the same guys. In Isaiah's vision they are called seraphim, and they have six wings, so maybe there are two classes of these highly exalted angelic beings around God's throne. Isaiah's guys were stationary. Ezekiel's guys tended to move. So maybe if you had four wings you're on the move, six you just kind of stay put. I don't know. But from all of the verses as you put them together, you gather that the cherubim and the seraphim are high ranking angels in God's administration that were gifted in worship and praise and like all the angels they served the Lord. They showed up first, by the way, in your Bibles keeping Adam and Eve out of the garden after they were expelled so they wouldn't go in their sinful state and eat of the tree of life and be doomed. And so God positioned some cherubim there.

I don't doubt that the eyes to and fro and all speak of their insight and that they're always able to know all that is going on and their work is the same. It's constant, praising the Lord. That's what they do. Now what do the faces mean? I'll tell you what, I can only guess out loud. Because the Bible doesn't clearly say, and when the Bible doesn't clearly say or give you any leg to stand on, we're ultimately just going to have to leave it with Him. But, let me give you something to chew on, and this is just Jack's talking okay? This isn't like, I'm not telling you this is in the Bible, cause it's not all there. In Ezekiel's account, that's in there, there are four faces and most commentators believe that the four faces in Ezekiel 10 portray Jesus as seen in the gospels. When Moses came down from the mountain in Exodus his face was glowing, right? Because he had been in the presence of the Lord, and so their argument is these angels, these entities always in God's presence reflect the Lord whom they serve night and day. And after all Matthew portrays Jesus to the Jews as the Lion of the tribe of Judah. And Mark portrays Jesus as the Servant, as the calf, or as the ox, if you will. Luke then turns and he presents Jesus to man

as the Son of Man, and as truly man. And then John, Son of God, which speaks about divinity with the eagle. Great. That's fine. You do with that as you like.

There are others who see these four faces in Israel's encampment around the tabernacle. And I think this has some merit because the tents were pitched in order at God's direction when the children of Israel, when the tabernacle is built, they were put on every side. And they were divided so that three tribes were on each side of the tabernacle, if you will. The tents were ordered by the Lord, and the first of the three tribes on one side was Judah the Lion. And the first of three tribes on the next side was Ephraim the Ox. And the first guy on the third side was Reuben who was represented by Man. And Dan is the Eagle on the fourth side. So, interesting things to think about. I will just leave that with you, your guess is as good as mine. I do know from Ezekiel 28 that one of the cherubim that was in glorious position before his fall was Satan, then called Lucifer. And that his fall from this position came because he wasn't willing to bow his knee before the Lord, and like you're given a choice, apparently the angels were as well. And he chose, along with about a third of the angels according to Revelation, to fight against God's kingdom. And obviously they lost. So, we do also know that in the tabernacle that Moses built there was the Holy of Holies and in the Holy of Holies was a mercy seat all of gold on top of the Ark of the Covenant, and on the ends of it were two pure gold cherubs with covering wings. And on the Day of Atonement the blood of the sacrifice, Exodus 25, was placed between these angels with the six wings who were on either side of that place of sacrifice as they attended, if you will, to the work of God, to the presence of God, just as you find them here in the book of Revelation.

Inside the ark was the Law that man had broken, and yet it's the mercy seat above it where the blood of the lamb would be poured out to cover the transgression. And in heaven the cherubs and seraphim, they seem to still be in the same place, worshiping God and God has some faithful angels who do nothing but spend their day worshiping Him. We'll see them in heaven one day for ourselves, but that's about all that we can learn from them from the Scriptures. So what do the four faces mean? I don't know. It's either Jesus and the gospels, it's the tribes gathered around the Lord, maybe it's both. If you can't find it in the Bible, just leave it be. No sense reading a guy's ideas.

Verse 8, "The four living creatures, each had six wings, they were full of eyes, they didn't rest day or night, they said: 'Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was, who is, and who is to come!'" Speaking to our God who gave His life for us. Continual worship. "Holy" emphasizes how separate the Lord is. "Almighty," eternal. And by the way, in Chapter 1 verse 8 those are the exact words that were applied to Jesus, who was, and is and is to come.

Verse 9, "And whenever the living creatures began to give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders," the church, "would fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and they cast their crowns before the throne. And they said, 'You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and they were created.'" So I guess the angels up front, the worship leaders, they're kind of the cue for you. So you get to heaven, you see these four eyeballs with faces singing, you hit the deck! Don't look around, "What do we do?! What's going on?!" No, no, join right away. You're worthy Lord. Right? And then you take your crowns and you throw them to the Lord acknowledging that by His grace you've gained any fruit at all. It's God in you right? He gets the credit.

So their worship, verse 11 and again in Chapter 5 verse 9 and 10, recognize the Lordship of Jesus that He's behind all things, that He's the Redeemer of all things. Apparently in verse 11 here there aren't any

evolutionists in heaven. "For You created all things." That pretty much solves that problem. But everyone kneels down and they fall on their faces and their position of their bodies I guess displays the position of the heart and they throw their crowns to say, "This isn't we that did these things, this is You that did them, You alone are worthy to receive glory." It's going to be a good time when we get there don't you think?

So, next week, how did we do for time? I guess we did alright. We will take a look at the first maybe five verses because there's an awful lot to learn there. But look, why are we here? And what should we be doing in light of knowing what heaven is like, and what's going on around God's throne? Our Creator, our Father, our Savior, our Lord, He needs to be worshiped. And to Him great things He has done, to Him be the glory. And I'll tell you, every time we do worship you're just practicing for that day aren't you? You're getting tuned up. You're getting used to just worshiping God. It's so hard because you got so many things on your mind don't you? You come running in here and you haven't eaten, and oh work and ohhhhhh, "Praise the Lord," yeah whatever, and then I got to cut the lawn, and yeah I gotta do that thing. You get to practice, right? You practice. And then one day you don't have anything else to do but worship the Lord. Ahhhhhh. That's going to be a good day, that day.

End of message