

“A Glimpse into Heaven’s Throne”

(Rev 4:1-4)



Truth Matters Church, Inc.

Contextual Overview



- ✧ Revelation was from The Father → The Son → The Angel → John → 7 churches
- ✧ Collectively, the testimony of Jesus Christ who is the Faithful Witness
- ✧ In chapters 1-3: John gave testimony focused on the glorified Son of Man and His assessment given to the 7 churches
 - ✧ What we learned is these 7 letters are both historical and prophetic
 - ✧ Dual audience, the angel over it and those in the church
 - ✧ Only the Lord Jesus can use actual historical churches as part of end times prophecy
 - ✧ Yet at the same time render judgments to the angels and those in the church
- ✧ After dictating and recording the 7 letters to the 7 churches, John is taken into heaven and we get a glimpse of the scene and throne in heaven
- ✧ In chapters 4-5: John gives testimony on activities in heaven focused on One sitting on the throne, the heavenly hosts, and the Lamb
- ✧ Hence, the title of our message “A Glimpse into Heaven’s Throne”

Scripture Reading



Revelation 4:1-4 (NASB)

1 After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven, and the first voice which I had heard, like the sound of a trumpet speaking with me, said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after these things." 2 Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne was standing in heaven, and One sitting on the throne. 3 And He who was sitting was like a jasper stone and a sardius in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, like an emerald in appearance. 4 Around the throne were twenty-four thrones; and upon the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white garments, and golden crowns on their heads.

Scripture Reading



5 Out from the throne come flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder. And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God; 6 and before the throne there was something like a sea of glass, like crystal; and in the center and around the throne, four living creatures full of eyes in front and behind. 7 The first creature was like a lion, and the second creature like a calf, and the third creature had a face like that of a man, and the fourth creature was like a flying eagle. 8 And the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings, are full of eyes around and within; and day and night they do not cease to say, "HOLY, HOLY, HOLY is THE LORD GOD, THE ALMIGHTY, WHO WAS AND WHO IS AND WHO IS TO COME."

Scripture Reading



9 And when the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, to Him who lives forever and ever, 10 the twenty-four elders will fall down before Him who sits on the throne, and will worship Him who lives forever and ever, and will cast their crowns before the throne, saying, 11 “Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created.”

Exposit Rev 4:1



1 After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven, and the first voice which I had heard, like the sound of a trumpet speaking with me, said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after these things."

We will break this verse into 4 parts:

- ❧ "After these things I looked"
- ❧ "a door standing open in heaven"
- ❧ "the first voice"
- ❧ "I will show you"



“After these things I looked”



Throughout this book are chronological markers:

- ☞ Rev 1:12: “Then I turned to see”
- ☞ Rev 4:1: “After these things I looked”
- ☞ Rev 4:11: “Then I looked”
- ☞ Rev 6:2: “Then I saw”
- ☞ Rev 7:1: “After this I saw”
- ☞ Rev 7:9: “After these things I looked”
- ☞ Rev 9:12 “after these things”
- ☞ Rev 8:13: “Then I looked”
- ☞ Rev 13:11: “Then I saw”
- ☞ Rev 14:1: “Then I looked”
- ☞ Rev 14:14: “Then I looked”



“After these things I looked”



- Rev 15:1: “Then I saw”
- Rev 15:5: “After these things I looked”
- Rev 16:1: “Then I heard”
- Rev 18:1: “After these things I saw”
- Rev 19:1: “After these things I heard”
- Rev 19:6: “Then I heard”
- Rev 19:17: “Then I saw”
- Rev 20:1: “Then I saw”
- Rev 20:3: “after these things”
- Rev 20:4: “Then I saw”
- Rev 20:11: “Then I saw”



“After these things I looked”



And last but not least:

☞ Rev 21:1: “Then I saw”

☞ A new heaven and a new earth”

CASE IN POINT: As we set out from the very beginning like John we too are taking this entire book chronologically



“a door standing open in heaven”



A few comments on this:

- ☞ Just as Hades has a door or gate
 - ☞ Upon Peter’s confession, our Lord told Peter, “upon this rock I will build My church; and **the gates (pulē) of Hades** will not overpower it” - Mt 16:18
- ☞ So too here heaven has a door or gate
 - ☞ “After these things I looked, and behold, **a door (thura) standing open in heaven**” - 4:1
- ☞ Pulē generally speaks of a large door or gate, such as the door or gate to a city
- ☞ Thura generally speaks of a small door, such as that of a house or room
- ☞ Hence wide vs. narrow gate parable



“a door standing open in heaven”



- ☞ As for both doors, our Lord Jesus has authority to open and no one can shut, and shut and no one can open proclaimed in letter to Philadelphia
 - ☞ The Key of David study (Rev 3:7)
- ☞ The Lord Jesus has authority to keep those in hades there
- ☞ The Lord Jesus has authority to allow/keep those in the kingdom of heaven safe
- ☞ At the time of this vision, the door in heaven is opened



“a door standing open in heaven”



✧ But as we learned previously from the Narrow and Wide Gates parable the time will come when the unbelieving Jews will be locked out of the kingdom

Luke 13:24-25

24 “Strive to enter through the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able. 25 Once the head of the house gets up and shuts the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock on the door, saying, ‘Lord, open up to us!’ then He will answer and say to you, ‘I do not know where you are from.’



“the first voice”



- ❧ The ESV red letter edition attributes the first voice to the Lord Jesus
 - ❧ It's plausible
- ❧ Back in chapter 1, verse 10 John said “I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day, and I heard behind me **a loud voice like the sound of a trumpet**”
 - ❧ That voice was none other than the Glorified Son of Man
- ❧ After dictating Jesus’s very Words to the 7 churches, it transitions smoothly to ch.4
- ❧ However, it could also very well be the angel sent who delivered this message to John to show what must soon take place



“I will show you”



1 After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven, and the first voice which I had heard, like the sound of a trumpet speaking with me, said, “**Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after these things.**”

- ❧ John was taken to heaven to be shown what must take place
- ❧ “after these things” – in context what has been revealed in chapters 1-3
 - ❧ Chronological



Exposit Rev 4:2



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

- ☞ Once the command was given to “Come up here” John was immediately transported to heaven “in the Spirit”
- ☞ Similar experience to what Paul had when he was taken to the 3rd heaven (2Cor 12)
 - ☞ The apostle Paul didn’t know if it was in the body or out of the body, God knows – regardless both were in the Spirit



Exposit Rev 4:2



A couple of things to note in Paul's vs. John's visit to heaven

- ☞ Paul was taken to Paradise and heard inexpressible words, but wasn't permitted to speak on them
- ☞ John here is taken to heaven where the throne of God is and was not only allowed to see, but commanded to write what he heard and saw
- ☞ And as he begins to tell us what he saw, he sees One sitting on the throne



Exposit Rev 4:3



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

A couple of things on this verse:

- ❧ We will look briefly at the 3 precious stones mentioned and what they were describing
 - ❧ Jasper + Sardius + Emerald
- ❧ Will touch briefly on rainbow reference



Jasper-Sardius-Emerald



- ❧ 3 of the stones listed in our key verse a “jasper”, “sardius” (ruby in Hebrew), and “emerald”
- ❧ Jasper+Sardius (ruby)+Emerald is grouped together 3x in the OT
- ❧ Since only mentioned 3x apart from Revelation, I’d like to briefly touch on them and their associations



Jasper-Sardius-Emerald



- 2 of 3 OT mentions of jasper+sardius (ruby)+emerald was in Exo 28, 39 and Ezk 28
- These were part of the stones that made up the 'Breastplate of Judgment' on the high priest's garments
- On this breastplate there were 4 rows of stones
 - 1st row: ruby (sardius), topaz, emerald
 - 2nd row: turquoise, sapphire, diamond
 - 3rd row: jacinth, agate, amethyst
 - 4th row: beryl, onyx, jasper
- 12 stones representing the 12 tribes



Jasper-Sardius-Emerald



☞ The reason behind the breastplate of judgment is explained in Exodus 28:
29 Aaron shall carry the names of the sons of Israel in the breastpiece of judgment over his heart when he enters the holy place, **for a memorial before the LORD continually**. 30 You shall put in the breastpiece of judgment the Urim and the Thummim, and they shall be over Aaron's heart when he goes in before the LORD; **and Aaron shall carry the judgment of the sons of Israel over his heart before the LORD continually**.



Jasper-Sardius-Emerald



- ✧ TRUTH: the Breastplate of Judgment was a perpetual reminder of the covenant God made with His people
- ✧ Thus, the high priest's garments is reflective of the One sitting on the throne and His view of His people



Jasper-Sardius-Emerald



The 3rd and final mention of these 3 stones as a group in the OT was in Ezk 28 who many attribute to describing Satan:

Ezekiel 28:11-19 (Lamentation and prophecy against the ancient king of Tyre)

11 Again the word of the LORD came to me saying, 12 “Son of man, take up a lamentation over the king of Tyre and say to him, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, “You had the seal of perfection,

Full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.

13 “You were in Eden, the garden of God; [presumably entered the serpent]

Every precious stone was your covering:

The **ruby [sardius]**, the topaz and the diamond;

The beryl, the onyx and the **jasper**;

The lapis lazuli [sapphire], the turquoise and the **emerald**;

Jasper-Sardius-Emerald



And the gold, the workmanship of your settings and sockets,
Was in you.

On the day that you were created
They were prepared.

14 “You were the anointed cherub who covers,
And I placed you there.

You were on the holy mountain of God;
You walked in the midst of the stones of fire.

15 “You were blameless in your ways
From the day you were created
Until unrighteousness was found in you.

Jasper-Sardius-Emerald



16 “By the abundance of your trade
You were internally filled with violence,
And you sinned;
Therefore I have cast you as profane
From the mountain of God.

And I have destroyed you, O covering cherub,
From the midst of the stones of fire.

17 “Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty;
You corrupted your wisdom by reason of your splendor.
I cast you to the ground;
I put you before kings,
That they may see you.

Jasper-Sardius-Emerald



18 “By the multitude of your iniquities,
In the unrighteousness of your trade
You profaned your sanctuaries.
Therefore I have brought fire from the midst of you;
It has consumed you,
And I have turned you to ashes on the earth
In the eyes of all who see you.
19 “All who know you among the peoples
Are appalled at you;
You have become terrified
And you will cease to be forever.””

Jasper-Sardius-Emerald



- ❧ If you ask me, I do believe Ezk 28 passage had a dual audience
 - ❧ The actual ancient king of Tyre
 - ❧ But also describing Satan or a high ranking angel who sinned in the angelic rebellion (the anointed cherub; covering cherub)
- ❧ But what I would like to take away from this passage is that this high ranking fallen angel was described as having the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty and that every precious stone was his covering, including the 3 stones listed in our key verse
- ❧ **KEY TAKE AWAY:** Jasper+Sardius(ruby)+Emerald are associated with seal of perfection, full of wisdom, perfect in beauty
- ❧ Back to our key verse...

Exposit Rev 4:3



When John wrote what he saw:

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

☞ John was describing using the same stones on the priestly garment and the the same stones on the anointed cherub attire to describe the One sitting on the throne



“rainbow”



Onto the rainbow reference:

- ☞ John sees “a rainbow around the throne, like an emerald in appearance”
- ☞ Ezekiel the priest too saw a rainbow when he was saw visions of God
- ☞ In fact, Rev 4 + Ezk 1 are similar accounts of the throne in heaven
 - ☞ Both saw 4 living creatures
 - ☞ More on this later in this chapter
- ☞ But for now would like to look at Ezekiel’s account of a rainbow in chapter 1...



Ezekiel's Vision



Ezekiel 1:26-28 (after describing the 4 living beings in detail we pick it up in)
26 Now above the expanse that was over their heads [4 living beings] there was something **resembling a throne**, like lapis lazuli [sapphire] in appearance; and on that which **resembled a throne**, high up, was a figure with the appearance of a man.



Ezekiel's Vision



27 Then I noticed from the appearance of His loins and upward something like glowing metal that looked like fire all around within it, and from the appearance of His loins and downward I saw something like fire; and there was a radiance around Him.

28 *As the appearance of the rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so was the appearance of the surrounding radiance.* Such was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. And when I saw it, I fell on my face and heard a voice speaking.



Ezekiel's Vision



KEY TAKE AWAY from Ezekiel's vision:

- ☞ The rainbow was used to describe the radiance that was emanating from the One sitting on the throne
- ☞ NUGGET: The One sitting on the throne had "a figure with the appearance of a man"
- ☞ Now let's pull verses 2-3 together and here is the translation of John's vision



Exposit Rev 4:2-3



When John wrote:

2 Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne was standing in heaven, and One sitting on the throne. 3 And He who was sitting was like a jasper stone and a sardius in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, like an emerald in appearance.

- ❧ John was using human language to describe the indescribable One sitting on the throne
 - ❧ Paul heard inexpressible words when he was caught up to the third heaven
 - ❧ John (and Ezekiel) heard, saw, and wrote some of those inexpressible words



Exposit Rev 4:2-3



- ✧ Using Scripture with Scripture
- ✧ When John saw One sitting on the throne and he described His appearance like a jasper and sardius stone
- ✧ And when John saw a rainbow around the throne like an emerald
- ✧ John is communicating that the One who is sitting on the throne is full of perfection, full of wisdom, perfect in beauty (and these precious stones capture the essence of that)



CONJECTURE



And when we looked to Scripture as to the rainbow reference:

- ❧ Definitely has allusions to the Flood and the Noahic covenant
- ❧ But I don't believe the rainbow was created
- ❧ I believe the rainbow always was emanating around the throne
- ❧ And when the One who sits on the throne made a covenant with Noah and his sons never to Flood the earth again, He made the radiance of His glory as the sign of that covenant



Exposit Rev 4:4



4 Around the throne were twenty-four thrones; and upon the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white garments, and golden crowns on their heads.

- ✧ We get some pretty interesting interpretations for this verse
- ✧ Some commentators say the 24 thrones + 24 Elders + white garments + golden crowns are all symbolic
 - ✧ The OT and NT
 - ✧ The 12 Patriarchs and the 12 Apostles
 - ✧ The Church consisting of Jews/Gentiles
 - ✧ The redeemed saints, etc.



Exposit Rev 4:4



- ❧ I won't spend too much time rebutting those assertions
- ❧ But I will say I'm thankful we've set ground rules (10 ROEs) before we endeavored to begin this study
- ❧ These helped us stay grounded
- ❧ As for teachings that suggest the 24 thrones or 24 elders or white robes or golden crowns are anything other than what it says, I respectfully disagree
- ❧ I believe when John saw 24 thrones, 24 Elders wearing white robes and golden crowns, this is precisely what and who he saw

Rules of Engagement



Who are the 24 Elders?



- ❧ Well for starters, I will tell you who is NOT among them
- ❧ The apostles
 - ❧ John saw 24 Elders and he himself was not part of the 24
 - ❧ The 12 apostles will instead be given 12 thrones judging the 12 tribes of Israel (Mt 19:28, and Lk 22:30)
- ❧ As far as who I think they are, I've mentioned this before and I'll mention it again
- ❧ So far I'm inclined to believe that the 24 Elders are the prophets of Scripture many (if not all) of whom were killed and stoned for their testimony and faithfulness!
- ❧ As far as when these could have potentially been raised and glorified I'd like to cross reference Matthew...

Who are the 24 Elders?



☞ After Jesus died on the cross, something remarkable and mysterious happened:

Matthew 27:50-53 (Jesus's last moments on the cross)

50 And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit. 51 And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth shook and the rocks were split. 52 The tombs were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; 53 and coming out of the tombs after His resurrection they entered the holy city and appeared to many.

☞ How many is many? Could it be 24? It's plausible

☞ It is very plausible that the 24 elders were part of a special group who were raised, glorified, then after appearing to many in Jerusalem, taken to heaven and were given white robes, golden crowns, and each a throne and allowed to sit around the throne in heaven!

In Closing



- ❧ What did John see and hear in this vision
- ❧ He saw an open door in heaven; upon hearing the first voice (the Lord Jesus Himself or an arch angel) he was immediately escorted to heaven in the Spirit
- ❧ He saw One sitting on the throne adorned with precious stones and emanating His radiance, which in human words express that He is full of glory, full of wisdom, perfect in beauty
 - ❧ Through Ezekiel's account, the One sitting on the throne had a figure and appearance as a man
- ❧ He saw a rainbow around the throne like an emerald in appearance that I believe God used as the sign of the rainbow of the covenant God made with Noah and his sons

In Closing



- ❧ What else did John see and hear in this vision
- ❧ And he saw 24 literal thrones, 24 literal elders (likely raised and glorified) sitting on them clothed in literal white garments and wearing literal golden crowns on their heads
 - ❧ CONJECTURE: If you ask me, I believe the Lord Jesus clothed them in white garments and crowned them with golden crowns as these parallel the promises in the letter to Sardis, Smyrna and Laodicea
 - ❧ He who overcomes will be clothed in white – Rev 3:5
 - ❧ Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life – Rev 2:10
- ❧ John sees a whole lot more
- ❧ And we'll look more into what else he saw and heard in heaven in verses 5 and following for our next study