

**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.”*

Chapter 4 presents the reader with the throne of God and events taking place in Heaven. This begins a chain of events leading to the return of the Messiah, Jesus Christ, who, in Revelation 19 is pictured as a conquering King. From chapter 4, we see God’s throne and the events surrounding it. Chapter 5 continues from 4 and takes the reader to the throne itself and the opening of a scroll with seven seals. The opening of this scroll puts events into motion leading to the return of Christ in chapter 19.

Throughout Revelation, John is reporting to the reader what he sees and hears. John is told to write what he sees. It lets the reader see events through his eyes and ears. In Chapter 4, John is caught up to a scene taking place in heaven.

The setting for chapter 4 takes place after Jesus tells John to send the letters to the seven churches. Notice John says, *“after this I looked.”* Jesus also says that he will show John things which must be *“hereafter”* (in the future) This chapter begins a new phase in the book of Revelation. The church plays a prominent role in the first three chapters, mentioned over 18 times.

After chapter 3, the word church is not referred to again until chapter 22 verse 16, where it says churches. In chapter 4, John the Apostle, called up to heaven, reports to the reader what he sees and hears. John is the eyes and ears of the believer.

The definition of church is ekklēsia in Greek, meaning called out ones. We are called out by God into a new relationship. The Church is not a building. The Church is the believers, or the people that might meet in a building.

The position of many Bible scholars is that because the word “church” is not mentioned again is that it has been raptured at this point of scripture. Let us see what the Word says about the Mystery of God, which is speaking of Jesus as Messiah, and ultimately, the church. As Christians (followers of Christ) we are not Jew or gentile anymore.

We are one new man in Christ. No Jew, no gentile. (Eph 2:15) *“Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, [even] the law of commandments [contained] in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, [so] making peace; Romans 16:25 “Now to him that is of power to establish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began,*

Eph. 3:9 *“And to make all [men] see what [is] the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:”*

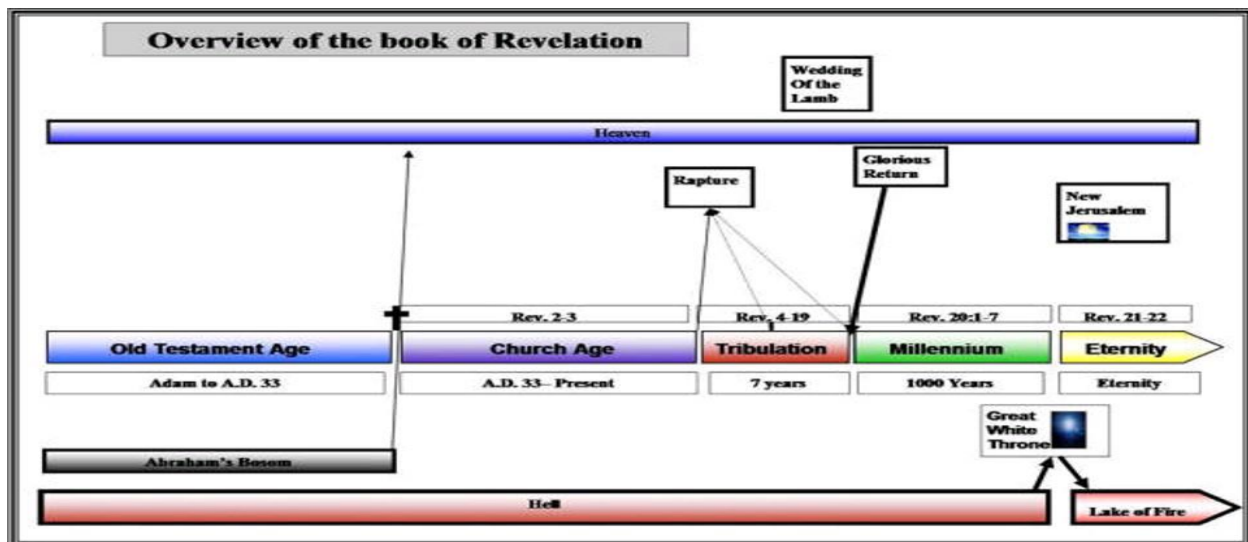
Rev. 10:7 *“But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets.”*

It is my understanding that the mystery refers to the Church, and that it is “finished” in Rev. 10:7. If that is the case, the Church goes through much of the tribulation. Needless to say, whether we believe it happens before, during, or after, we know that we as believers will be with Christ for eternity when He comes and gets us whenever it happens! Hallelujah!!

There are three main views on the timing of the event known as the rapture:

1. The pre-tribulation view understands the rapture to take place before the seven-year tribulation period.
2. The mid-tribulation view understands the rapture to take place at the middle part of the tribulation.
3. The post-tribulation view understands the rapture to take place at the end of the tribulation.

The tribulation is a seven-year period of God’s judgment and wrath on the earth. This period known as *Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week* (Daniel 9:27), *the time of Jacob’s trouble* (Jeremiah 30:7) and *the day of the Lord* (Isaiah 13:6-9, Jeremiah 46:10, Joel 2:1,11; Amos 5:18-20; Zechariah 14:1) is a period of testing (Rev. 3:10). This tribulation period coming on the earth is unparalleled. There was never a time like it, nor will there ever be a time like it again (Daniel 12:1, Jeremiah 30:7, Matthew 24:21). Jesus unveils (Revelation) events taking place in this tribulation period, in Revelation chapters 6 to 19.



**Rev 4:1 After these things...** *metav Meta* (Gr for After), John now begins to describe events following his letter to the seven churches. John was in the process of writing a letter to the seven churches in Asia. Jesus is standing in the middle of seven candlesticks is dictating the letter to John. Following the completion of the letters, chapter 4 takes place. In Revelation 1:19, Jesus establishes the structure of the book of Revelation. **"Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this."** (Rev. 1:19)

Christ established a three-fold time structure to the book - ***past, present, and future***. The ***things which you have seen***, is what took place in the beginning of the first chapter. ***The things which are***, is the present age the church age covered in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> chapters. The things which ***take place after this*** refer to the time of the future.

***I looked.*** One Greek word used throughout Revelation is *eidw Eido*, meaning to perceive with the eyes. John refers time and time again to what he "saw." John is not speaking in a metaphor but in reality. He is reporting to the reader what he actually sees. John actually saw a door standing open in heaven.

***Heaven.*** This is not outer space, or just the clouds but the place of God's presence. According to Paul, the believer who dies goes right to Heaven. (Phil 1:23) John is taken into Heaven to witness a future event.

At the time of ancient Israel they did not have as complete understanding of the universe as we do today. So, they wrote in terms with which they were familiar. The Jews spoke of **three heavens**.

- The ***first heaven*** consisted of the earth atmosphere where the clouds and birds were.

- The **second heaven** was where the sun, stars, and moon were.
- The **third heaven** was the dwelling place of God. When Paul said he was caught up to the third heaven (**2 Cor. 12:2**), he was referring to the very dwelling place of God.

The door John saw was a door into the **third Heaven** where God dwells.

As a note, the Mormons erringly teach that the three heavens consist of telestial, terrestrial, and celestial. They divide them into compartments dwelt by people after they die.

***Come up here.*** John now hears the voice like a trumpet calling him, this is the same voice which identified itself as “Alpha and Omega” (**Rev. 1:10- 13**). This is Jesus, telling John to come up into heaven.

***After this.*** Jesus calling John into Heaven explains to John the things ***“that must take place.”*** The words here are nearly identical to the words used in **Revelation 1:19**, establishing the three-part division in Revelation.

#### **REV 4:2**

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

***In the Spirit..*** John on the island of Patmos is taken to Heaven, in the Spirit. Paul explains a similar experience in his 2<sup>nd</sup> letter to the Corinthians. **2 Corinthians 12:2-4** ***“I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago (whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows) such a one was caught up to the third heaven. And I know such a man (whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows) how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.”***

Paul is not sure if his body was there or just his spirit. The word Paul uses for being ***“Caught Up”*** is the same word used to describe the rapture in **1 Thess. 4:13-18**. (*Caught up in Greek is harpazō which means to snatch out or away*). John, like Paul is ***caught up*** into the third heaven. The first heaven is the sky, the second heaven, space beyond the atmosphere and the third is the presence of the Lord. Ezekiel like Paul and John also experienced being “in the spirit” and seeing visions from God and writing about what he saw. (**Ezekiel 8:3, 37:1**)

**Throne set in heaven..** John is immediately ushered to the center of Heaven, and to the throne of God. John then describes the scene for his reader. John is literally taken to the throne of God in Heaven and describes what he sees. Daniel saw the “Ancient of days” on his throne and one like the “Son of man” approach the throne ( Daniel 7:9,13), Ezekiel saw the “Glory of the Lord” as a glorified man, seated on His throne (Ezekiel 1:26-27) and Isaiah also saw the Lord seated on his throne (Isaiah 6:1), in descriptions similar to John’s.

**One sat.** ... John sees a vision of God sitting on his throne. There is a debate whether this is Father or the Son sitting on the throne. The dilemma here is the one seated on the throne is described as Creator of all things which is the work ascribed to Christ. (John 1:1-3, Col. 1:16-17, Heb. 1:2-3,10-12, 3:3,4, Rev. 4:11). The one seated on the throne is distinguished from the Lamb in chapter 5, who is Christ, because he is the only one able to open the scroll. However, in Revelation 22:1,3 both the Lamb and God the Father are pictured as being on the throne of God.

### **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.”***

**Jasper..** The one who sits on the throne is described as having the appearance of Jasper. In the Old Testament, the High Priest would wear a breastplate with 12 stones. Each of the 12 stones represented one of the 12 tribes of Israel. The priest would bear Israel on his chest (figuratively by wearing the breastplate) as he ministered before God in the Temple. (Exodus 28:15-20) Jasper was the last stone of the 12 and took on shades of different color. The Jasper stone referenced here is clear like crystal. ( Rev 21:11) Jasper would represent the tribe of Benjamin. The crystal-clear stone represents the purity and holiness of God.

**Sardius..** Sardius or Sardine, was the first stone on the breastplate and represented the tribe of Reuben. Sardius was a red stone, like a ruby or carnelian. This would have represented the redemption of humanity by the blood of Christ. Here we see the last stone and the first stone of the Jewish Priesthood pictured on the throne of God.

In Revelation chapter 1, Christ is also described in terms reminiscent of Israel’s High Priest. Hebrews (Heb. 9:11,25 10:11,21) describes Christ as our High Priest, who is at the right hand of God the Father. Here we see Christ in the very role as High Priest seated on the throne.

**Rainbow....** The fourth stone on the breastplate was an Emerald, the emerald represented the fourth son, Judah. John describes a rainbow around the throne with the appearance of an emerald. Through Judah, the Messiah came and took away the sins of humanity. In Noah’s day, God established the rainbow as a symbol of his agreement to not destroy the earth with a

flood. Here the rainbow with an emerald appearance represents the peace between man and God, the result of Jesus, the Messiah's death, who came from the tribe of Judah.

## 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...** John who was caught up into heaven, now begins to describe the surrounding events taking place in Heaven. He describes something never described in heaven before this chapter, twenty-four thrones with people seated on them.

**Twenty-four thrones...** John describes 24 thrones surrounding the throne of God, the Greek word Thronos means, throne seat, a chair of state having a footstool. There has been debate about these 24 thrones. Some have argued they represent angelic authority over God's creation. While others argue they represent New Testament saints. To understand these twenty-four thrones, we need to ask who is sitting on them. What is their background? What do they say?



**Twenty-four elders** One of the arguments put forward is the 24 elders sitting on the throne are angels. The problem with this argument is in the description of the 24 elders. Five arguments against the elders being angels are:

1. The Greek word for elder is *presbuvtero*. Presbuteros means elder, of age. The reason this cannot apply to angels is all angels are the same age, there is no elder angel.
2. The term “elder” in the Bible is always used to apply to men, not angels.
3. Elders always represent people, in both Israel and the church.
4. There are no visions of elders in both Ezekiel’s vision of the throne (**Ezk.1-10**) and Isaiah’s vision of the throne (**Isaiah 6**). Christ had not yet paid for the sins of humanity.
5. These same elders sing the song of redemption in **Revelation 5:9-10**. Angels were never redeemed.

White robes. In addition to the above arguments, the clothing the elders wear, “white robes”, is the dress of “Overcomers” (**Revelation 3:4,5,18; 6:9, 7:9,13,14; 19:14**). White robes are promised to the **victorious saint**.

Crowns.... There are two types of crowns mentioned in the New Testament. One crown is a rulers’ crown a **Diadema**. The other is a victors crown known in the Greek as **stevfano**. Stephanos meaning victors crown or wreath. This crown was given to victors in the public games. The type of crown the 24 elders have is the “Stepanos” crown. It’s clear from the context, the 24 elders are not angels but redeemed saints. The next question is who are these 24 elder “Saints?” Since they are sitting on thrones they are in position of authority. Christ promised his saints positions of authority over his coming kingdom.

Jesus in fact promised the 12 apostles they would be sitting on 12 thrones ruling over the 12 tribes of Israel. **Matthew 19:28** *So Jesus said to them, "Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."*

The number 24 matches the 24 orders of priests in Israel (**I Chronicles 24:6-19**). The apostles are promised positions of authority ruling over Israel (**Matthew 19:28**), along with Old Testament saints, such as David, who are also promised positions of authority in the coming kingdom (**Ezekiel 34:24**). It is reasonable to assume the 24 elders are the 12 apostles representing the church and 12 elders from Israel representing Israel, people such as Adam, Noah, Abraham, Joseph, Daniel, David, Isaiah, etc.

The fact that they are clothed in white raiment with crowns on their heads also tells us they are men drawn from the earth. The white raiment and crowns are promises made to those that overcome as stated in the seven letters. Revelation concerns mankind in general. That there are 24 elders is indicative of the two complete covenants with mankind, because the number

twelve represents something complete, like 12 months complete a year. Since there are 24, the symbolism identifies or relates to the two covenants God has had with man.

The 24 elders were all seated on thrones, indicating that these righteous elders would be in authority, and perhaps indicates that they would be in a place of judgment along with Jehovah God. We are told in **Rev. 1:6 and Rev. 5:10** that we are Kings and Priests, and that we will reign on earth. Thus, the thrones of the 24 indicate **authority**.

#### **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 proceeded lightnings.** The Greek word "astrape" is used here. When astrape is used in the plural [as in **Rev 4: 5**] it means shining brightness. **"And thundering along with voices"** is here used to represent the power of his words. The Bible itself makes this language very clear:

1. **Job 40:9** ***"Hast thou an arm like God? Or canst thou thunder with a voice like Him?"***
2. **Job 26:14** ***"Lo, these are parts of his ways: but how little a portion is heard of him? But the thunder of his power who can understand?"***
3. **1 Samuel 2:10** ***"The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken to pieces; out of Heaven shall he thunder upon them: the LORD shall judge the ends of the earth; and he shall give strength unto his king, and exalt the horn of his anointed."***
4. **Psalms 77:18** ***"The voice of thy thunder was in the heaven: the lightnings lightened the world: the earth trembled and shook."***

Israel on the exodus journey also experienced the lightnings and thunder from top of Mt. Sinai when the presence of the Lord was on the mountain. (**Exodus 19:16**) The nation trembled before God and asked Moses to talk to them rather than God. The thunder and lightning from the throne also demonstrate the coming judgment about to fall on the earth in the coming chapters. There are more scriptures like the ones above, but the Bible has, as it does with all things, cleared up this point. It is using metaphors to describe God and His power.

**SEVEN LAMPS** are different from the seven lampstands which Jesus Christ stood in the midst of in chapter one. These seven *lamps of fire* represented the seven spirits of God or the seven- fold ministry of the Holy Spirit. **Isaiah 11:2** lists the sevenfold characteristics of the Holy Spirit:

1. **The Spirit of the Lord**
2. **The Spirit of wisdom**
3. **The Spirit of understanding**
4. **The Spirit of counsel**
5. **The Spirit of power**
6. **The Spirit of knowledge**
7. **The Spirit of the fear of the Lord**

Holy of Holies were a type of the reality in Heaven. (**Hebrews 9:23**) The whole tabernacle and Temple were a microcosm picture of God's throne and heaven.



The seven lamps of fire, which are the seven-fold ministry of the Holy Spirit that as we have discovered in our study earlier of **Rev 1: 4** represent God's Holy Spirit or power. All of which leaves absolutely no possibility that the one seated on the throne in front of John, and calling him up, is anyone but Jehovah Himself in symbolic form. It is evident John in the spirit is present at and witnessing the symbolic royal court of God in session.