

Revelation of Jesus Christ

Study 24

A Worship in Heaven

Rev 4:1-5:14

¹ 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."

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

³ 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.

⁴ 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.

⁵ 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.

⁶ 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.

⁷ 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.

⁸ 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!"

⁹ Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever,

¹⁰ 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:

¹¹ "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."

¹ And I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a scroll written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals.

² Then I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?"

³ And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll, or to look at it.

⁴ So I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open and read the scroll, or to look at it.

⁵ But one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals."

⁶ And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth.

⁷ Then He came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne.

⁸ Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of

incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

9 And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,

10 And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth."

11 Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands,

12 saying with a loud voice: "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain To receive power and riches and wisdom, And strength and honor and glory and blessing!"

13 And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: "Blessing and honor and glory and power Be to Him who sits on the throne, And to the Lamb, forever and ever!"

14 Then the four living creatures said, "Amen!" And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever.

According to the outline given in (V-1:19) this chapter begins the third and final section of the book of Revelation.

This is the second vision that John has and has written about in Revelation. The first was the vision of the glorified Lord Jesus Christ;

Rev 1:12-17

12 Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands,

13 and in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band.

14 His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire;

15 His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters;

16 He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength.

17 And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, "Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last.

Now there is an unprecedented fascination these days among both Christians and non-Christians with the afterlife. Books on supposed after or near death experiences and angels top the best seller lists. TV programs explore the mysterious realm of the supernatural, often focusing on angels and their alleged interaction with humans.

Many people, both those who profess to be Christians and those who do not, claim to have visited heaven and returned to tell of their experiences.

In contrast to fanciful, bizarre, often silly fabrications of those who falsely claim to have visited heaven, the Bible records the accounts of two people who actually were taken there in visions.

2 Cor 12:1-4

1 It is doubtless not profitable for me to boast. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord:

2 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.

³ *And I know such a man--whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows--*
⁴ *how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.*

Here Paul saw and heard things that he was not allowed share with anyone here on earth.

The other was John, who also had the inestimable privilege of visiting heaven. Unlike Paul, John was permitted to give a detailed description of his vision, which he did in chapters 4 and 5 of Revelation.

In these two chapters John recorded the second vision he saw.

The Bible refers to heaven more than five hundred times, and others, such as Paul and Ezekiel, wrote descriptions of it.

Yet John's description in chapters 4 and 5 is the most complete and informative in all of Scripture.

Escorted by the beloved apostle, readers are carried far beyond the mundane features of this temporal realm to behold the realities of eternal heaven.

Through John's vision, believers have the privilege of previewing the place where they will live forever.

The first occurrence of the phrase "*after these things*" *Rev 4:1*, relates to John's personal chronology.

It notes that this second vision followed immediately after John's vision of the risen glorified Christ (*Rev 1:9-20*), and the letters to the seven churches (*Rev 2:1-3:22*).

The phrase **after these things** is used throughout Revelation to mark the beginning of a new vision (*7:9; 15:5; 18:1; 19:1*).

the second occurrence of **after these things** relates to God's chronology.

Its use marks an important transition in the book of Revelation from the church age (the "things which are" *1:19*), describe in chapters 2-3, to the third great division of the book (the "things which will take place", *1:19*) found in chapters 4 - 22.

The scene shifts from matters concerning the church on earth to a dramatic scene in heaven. That scene centers on the throne of God and forms the prologue to the future historical events (the tribulation, millennial kingdom, and eternal state) that unfold in chapters 6-22.

John writes that after these things he **looked**, and to his astonishment (indicated by the exclamation **behold**) he saw a **door standing open in heaven**

Ezek 1:1

¹ *Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, on the fifth day of the month, as I was among the captives by the River Chebar, that the heavens were opened and I saw visions of God.*

Acts 7:56

⁵⁶ *and said, "Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!"*

That already open door admitted John into the third **heaven**, (the first being the earth's atmosphere, the second being interplanetary and interstellar space), to the very throne room of God.

It was **heaven** to which Christ ascended after His resurrection and where He has since been seated at the right hand of God.

John 14:2-3

2 In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.

Acts 1:9-11

9 Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.

10 And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel,

11 who also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven."

Acts 3:20-21

20 and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before,

21 whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.

Heaven became John's vantage point for most of the remainder of the book of Revelation.

After noticing the open door, the **first voice** John heard was the familiar voice **like the sound of a trumpet** that had spoken to him in his first vision (*Rev 1:10*)

As we noticed then the voice is the voice of the risen, exalted Lord Jesus Christ.

His voice is likened to **the sound of a trumpet** because of its commanding, authoritative quality.

The Lord specifically ordered John to **come up here**, that is to heaven.

John was not swept away into some mystical fantasyland, but transported spiritually into the reality of heaven.

Some see in this command a reference to the Rapture of the church, however, the verse does not describe the church ascending to heaven in resurrected glorification, but John going to heaven to receive revelation.

The central theme of John's vision is the throne of God, mentioned eleven times in this chapter.

All the features of the chapter can be outlined based on how they relate to that throne of divine glory.

After describing the throne, John tells us;

Who is on the throne

What is going on around the throne

What comes from the throne

Who stands before the throne

Who is in the center and around the throne

And what is directed toward the throne

WHO IS ON THE THRONE?

Rev 4:2-3

Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne.

³ 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.

In these words **and behold** reveals John's amazement at what he saw. A throne, not a piece of furniture but a symbol of God's sovereign rule and authority.

Psa 11:4

⁴ The LORD is in His holy temple, The LORD'S throne is in heaven; His eyes behold, His eyelids test the sons of men.

Psa 103:19

¹⁹ The LORD has established His throne in heaven, And His kingdom rules over all.

Isa 66:1

¹ Thus says the LORD: "Heaven is My throne, And earth is My footstool. Where is the house that you will build Me? And where is the place of My rest?"

Located in heaven.

The heavenly temple is not an actual building, but "*the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb*" are the temple

When the heavenly Jerusalem ascends from heaven, the dwelling place of God it is said;

Rev 21:22

²² But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.

The throne is said to be standing, because God's sovereign rule is fixed, permanent, and unchanging, and in complete control of the universe.

This is a comforting realization in light of the horror and trauma of the end-time events about to be revealed.

In much the same way, Isaiah was comforted during a traumatic time in Israel's history by his vision of God's glory (*Isa 6*)

Rev 4:2b-3a

"and One sitting on the throne. And He who was sitting was like a jasper stone and a sardius in appearance"

Now listen, the whimsical, mindless, purposeless forces of random chance do not, as many foolishly believe, govern the universe.

Instead, the sovereign, omnipotent Creator of the universe is **sitting on His throne** as its ruler.

Unlike its use in *Hebrews 1:3; 10:12; 12:2*, where it depicts Christ's posture of rest, the term **sitting** here indicates the posture of reigning.

The thought is not resting because the work of redemption has been accomplished, but reigning because judgment is about to take place.

Though John does not name the One sitting on the throne, it is obvious who He is.

He is the One Isaiah saw in his vision;

Isa 6:1

¹ In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple.

The Prophet Micaiah also saw Him on His glorious throne;

1 Kings 22:19

¹⁹ Then Micaiah said, "Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing by, on His right hand and on His left.

God reigns over the nations declares the psalmist;

Psa 47:8

⁹ The princes of the people have gathered together, The people of the God of Abraham. For the shields of the earth belong to God; He is greatly exalted.

Dan 7:9-10

⁹ "I watched till thrones were put in place, And the Ancient of Days was seated; His garment was white as snow, And the hair of His head was like pure wool. His throne was a fiery flame, Its wheels a burning fire;

¹⁰ A fiery stream issued And came forth from before Him. A thousand thousands ministered to Him; Ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. The court was seated, And the books were opened.

But perhaps the most detailed look at God on His heavenly throne outside of Revelation is that given by Ezekiel:

Ezek 1:26-28

²⁶ And above the firmament over their heads was the likeness of a throne, in appearance like a sapphire stone; on the likeness of the throne was a likeness with the appearance of a man high above it.

²⁷ Also from the appearance of His waist and upward I saw, as it were, the color of amber with the appearance of fire all around within it; and from the appearance of His waist and downward I saw, as

it were, the appearance of fire with brightness all around.

28 Like the appearance of a rainbow in a cloud on a rainy day, so was the appearance of the brightness all around it. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. So when I saw it, I fell on my face, and I heard a voice of One speaking.

John describes Him on the throne as *"like a jasper stone and a sardius in appearance."*

Rev 21:11 describes **jasper** as crystal-clear; therefore it is best to identify this stone as a diamond.

All the shining, flashing facets of the glory of God are compared to a diamond, brilliantly refracting all the colors of the spectrum.

The **sardius**, from which the city of Sardis got its name, is a fiery, blooded ruby.

It too expresses the shining beauty of God's glory, and may also symbolize God's blazing wrath about to be poured out on the sinful, rebellious world.

There is a possible further symbolism in the choice of these two stones.

The sardius and the jasper were the first and last stones on the High Priest's breastplate (Exodus 28:17-20 "ruby", "jasper")

These stones represented the firstborn (**Reuben**) and lastborn (**Benjamin**) of the twelve sons of Jacob. Their names, **Reuben** means behold a son, and **Benjamin** means son of my right hand.

These names represented by these stones picture the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, sitting at His Father's right hand in glory.

John's vision of God's throne is not one of peace and comfort. Its flashing, glorious, splendid magnificence reveals the terrors of God's judgment. Truly, *"our God is a consuming fire"*

Heb 12:29

29 For our God is a consuming fire.

Deut 4:24

24 For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.