

## Revelation Chapter 4 – Verse by Verse

### Revelation 4:1-11

- **Vs 1** – This verse should trigger our memory as we read that John would write of “the things which shall be hereafter” in **Rev 1:19**. Now that we’ve read the seven letters to the churches and the messages that Jesus Christ has spread to the believers of the Tribulation period, we will now get the chronological account of the Tribulation period. The scene has changed now to that of a heavenly voice calling John up to Heaven to show him the events of the Tribulation.
  - This has nothing to do with the catching away of the Church, the Body of Christ (**1 Thess 4:13-18**). That event has already taken place at the time of **Rev 4:1**. This is a vision John is shown to know what will happen in the prophesied time of Jacob’s Trouble (**Jer 30:7**)
- **Vs 2** – After hearing the voice, John is “in the spirit”. Spirit beings are the real “supers” of life, as they can grant great strength, go through physical barriers, and travel great distances seemingly instantaneously (**Judges 13:25-14:6, John 20:19, 26, Acts 8:38-40**). What does John see first? A throne in Heaven and who sat on it. This whole chapter is dedicated to the throne room scene.
- **Vs 3** – The description of the one who sits on the throne reminds us of Ezekiel’s vision in **Eze 1:1-28**. The precious stones mentioned in the Ezekiel passage are sapphire and amber while the stones mentioned in **Revelation 4:3** are jasper, sardine, and emerald. Even so, Ezekiel and John were attempting to describe the magnificence of the throne of God, using things we would understand for color and brilliance. Reading through **Revelation 4** and seeing the four creatures mentioned in **verse 7** should lead us to conclude what Ezekiel and John saw are the same, or at least similar vision of the throne of God.
- **Vs 4** – Now we are introduced to these twenty four elders and their seats around the throne of God. These “elders” are described as wearing “white raiment” and “crowns of gold”. Who are these elders? It is the Greek “prebuteros”, which is rightly translated “elder”, but again, who are these elders?
  - There is much debate and disagreement among commentators, but let us search the scriptures to determine the matter. Can these be part of saved Israel under the Law? Are they saints of the dispensation of Law? No, they cannot be, because scripture shows that the salvation of the Jew is *after* the Tribulation period. **Dan 9:24-27** says that this last “week,” or period of seven years will “finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and **to bring in everlasting righteousness.**” The Jew was always told to “endure to the end”, because the salvation and resurrection of the Jew happens after the Tribulation period prior to the inauguration of the Millennial Kingdom (**Matt 8:10-12, Rev 19:11-14, 20:1-6**). God never prophesied of these special “elders,” so I have a hard time accepting that these are glorified Jewish saints.
    - Some point to the 12 apostles and 12 patriarchs to make up the 24 elders. While the numbers work out, the theology doesn’t. The 12 were told they would sit on 12 thrones judging the 12 tribes of Israel (**Matt 19:28**). The twelve patriarchs were not told they would sit on thrones at any time.
  - Are these elders saints from the Body of Christ? Again, I have a hard time believing that. While it is true that the Body of Christ will obtain the resurrection and glorified body before the Tribulation period (**1 Thess 4:13-5:11**), there is no mention in Paul’s epistles about 24 of us to be in the throne room of God and wearing golden crowns. I would think something that important would be mentioned in God’s word.

- If these are not saints of Israel nor saints of the Body of Christ, then who are they? I would propose that these are spirit beings, or spirit angels, who are defined in [Heb 1:14](#) as “ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation.”
- Consider this: the spiritual world is real according to the bible, though we cannot see it with our physical eyes. There is violence in the heavens right now and a spiritual battle is taking place ([Dan 10:1-21](#), [Eph 6:10-12](#)). There are things in Heaven and a life existing right now that parallels ours on earth, which is why God told Moses to make the tabernacle according to the pattern He gave ([Heb 8:4-5](#), [Ex 25:40](#)). We also learn of different offices in [Col 1:16](#), where God mentions there are *invisible* thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers. Those things mentioned in [Col 1:16](#) are both in Heaven and on earth. From the passage in [Eph 6:10-12](#), we understand there is spiritual wickedness in heavenly places currently, but the wickedness will be cast out ([Rev 12:7-9](#)). All of this to point out that the spiritual realm is real and has offices for spiritual beings. Also, spirit angels are said to be clothed in white ([John 20:11-12](#), [Acts 1:10-11](#)) These 24 spirit beings, called elders, hold this office to worship God, and as we’ll see, to make intercession for the saints on earth in [Rev 5:8-10](#)
  - Just what is this office held by the 24? Recall that the things in the Law of Israel they were to keep, at least some of those things were a shadow of things to come, as we’ve seen in some of the passages above and also in [Col 2:16-17](#). The significance of the 24 elders may be understood by scripture. King David was witnessed by God as “a man after His own heart” in [1 Sam 13:14](#). David also was filled with the Holy Spirit when he was anointed and never lost it like Saul did ([1 Sam 16:13-14](#)). David was inspired to set the Levites in courses to oversee the temple duty ([1 Chron 24:1-19](#)). Of note is the course of Abijah ([1 Chron 24:10](#)), which we learn is where Zachariah serves in [Luke 1:5-9](#). It could be that those 24 courses for Levites are a representation of these 24 elders in the throne room of God. If the Levites were a representation of these “elders”, then the golden crown would make sense as the high priest wore gold on his mitre ([Ex 28:1-5](#), [36-38](#), [29:6](#)). As the 24 elders sing in [Rev 5:8-10](#), it could also be a representation of the 24 courses of musicians in [1 Chron 25:1-31](#). The musicians were also clad in white in [2 Chron 5:11-14](#). I would say these are more plausible explanations of the 24 elders than saints of Israel or the Body of Christ. However, if God wanted us to know this exact detail, He would have made it clear, so we shouldn’t dwell too much on it. Suffice it to say that these are 24 spirit beings in the throne room of God.
- **Vs 5** – There is immense power in the throne room of God, signified by the thunderings and lightning, but note this, voices. First, a brief look at thunder in the bible seems to be sometimes associated with judgment ([Ex 9:23-29](#), [1 Sam 2:1-10](#), [1 Sam 7-7-11](#), [12:6-25](#), [Isa 29:1-7](#)), but also when God speaks or wants to get people’s attention ([Ex 19:10-16](#), [Job 40:6-9](#), [Ps 77:14-18](#), [107:1-10](#)). Lightning is typically used to describe brilliance and brightness in the bible, but also consider the power that is contained in a single bolt of lightning ([Job 28:26](#), [37:3](#), [38:25](#), [Ps 144:6](#), [Eze 1:13](#)). We don’t need to spend a lot of time on these two aspects of verse 5, suffice to acknowledge that thunderings, lightnings, and voices (plural) are coming out of the throne. There is a lot of power behind the words being said.
  - John has already recorded that the voice of Jesus sounded like “many waters” ([Rev 1:15](#)), and the prophet Ezekiel confirms God’s voice may sound like “the noise of great waters”, and the noise of an host” ([Eze 1:24](#)). In [Eze 1:24](#), consider that these creatures’ wings are making the noise described as “great waters” and “of an host”. Also note that

these creatures are described in the same way in [Rev 4:6-8](#). These could very well be other voices coming “out of the throne”.

- Now the last part of [vs 5](#) says there are “seven lamps of fire burning before the throne.” We need not guess as to what this means, as the verse concludes saying these “are the seven spirits of God.” This should trigger our memories back to [Rev 1:4](#) and [Rev 3:1](#). There are seven spirit beings before the throne, ready to minister to them that shall be heirs of salvation ([Heb 1:14](#)). This is an example of the “things which are” mentioned in [Rev 1:19](#). The seven lamps represent (or are) the seven spirits of God. Note how they are not God, because they are not *on* the throne, but *before* it. This is an instance where I believe the KJV errs in capitalizing the “S” on “Spirits of God” intending this to correlate with [Isa 11:2](#), which are characteristics of God’s Spirit. Let the reader be convinced in his/her own mind.
- [Vs 6](#) – This sea of glass like unto crystal appears to also be mentioned in [Eze 1:22](#). This is where the throne of God sits. This verse also describes the four beasts mentioned in [Eze 1](#), and that they surround the throne, supporting it upon their heads ([Eze 1:15-22](#)). It’s a bit difficult to imagine just what this looks like, but we will find out some day.
- [Vs 7-8](#) – These are what the four beasts (Greek “zoa”, meaning “living things”) look like. Once again, we can see the similarity in [Eze 1](#). When scripture says that they “rest not day and night” with their song, we can understand it to mean they are constantly praising God. We are told to “pray without ceasing” in [1 Thess 5:17](#), but understand it to mean that we pray as we go about daily life, not that we are on our knees and praying 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. This verse has similar meaning as the beasts say, “Come and see” in chapter 6, so they must occasionally break from saying “Holy, holy, holy...”
- [Vs 9-11](#) – The vision includes the 24 elders that they constantly worship “him that sat on the throne” as well. Every time the four beasts would worship, so would the 24 elders. These elders cast their crowns before the throne, showing that they submit to the authority of God, though they hold some sort of office near Him.
  - These elders acknowledge that the one on the throne has created all things. From [John 1:1-3, 18](#) and [Col 1:12-18](#), we can safely conclude that this is Jesus Christ on the throne. Some would say this is God the Father on the throne, but keep in mind that Jesus is God ([Phil 2:5-8](#)), and He and the Father are one ([John 17:5-23, 1 John 5:7](#)).
  - We also have a succinct answer to the question, “Why are we here?” or “What is the meaning of life?” here in [vs 11](#). We are here for God’s pleasure. It delighted our creator God to share life with us. His love for us truly is amazing, thinking that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us ([Rom 5:8](#)). Praise the Lord!