

NASB 1977 A Door to Heaven
Revelation 4:

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 And 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.

5 And from the throne proceed 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, as it were, 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 And 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. "

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 art Thou, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for Thou didst create all things, and because of Thy will

they existed, and were created."

This is an exciting passage of scripture! Here's why, just in case it wasn't patently obvious to you when we read it.

Hollywood has been making war of the worlds science fiction movies for well over 100 years at this point in 2026. We've all seen the little clip of a movie where a rocket ship lands on the moon. Man conquers all. 1911?

Well it turns out that in fact there is a battle going on beyond our gaze. Satan is at war with God. Satan has stated that he will displace God and be God. We have those statements in scripture. *I will be like the most High.*

Isaiah 14:14 Satan has thrown down and declared his war with God. That's real.

And Satan has captured this planet and rules here, by default, by forfeiture, because God gave the rule of this earth to Adam, and Adam, via his wife Eve, capitulated that rule to Satan when they sinned.

And worse still, Adam was the capital head, the first man of the family of man, and because of that sin, all of Adam's family is born into sin. We are born sinners. Born into a rebellion against God. War with God.

How far does that war reach? Jesus tells us, in the Lord's prayer. *Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.*

Apparently earth is the single source of rebellion. God's will is done in heaven. The request is for earth to come under God's reign and rule and that His will be done in this rebellious place, like it is done, in heaven. A return to an edenic paradise with a single Son who, unlike Adam, is obedient. Sidebar; Jesus didn't have a wife

Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. That single statement eliminates, at least for me, all flights of fancy about other beings out in space. Whoever and whatever else is out there is already

doing God's will. Earth is the war zone. The prayer is for earth to be like heaven as far as rebellion against God is concerned.

This chapter is the unveiling of Who Satan has decided to go to war against.

That's important! Satan has thrown down and declared war with God! Very well, Satan, for the record, and for our encouragement and faith, here is Who the opponent force IS. A battle for this world is coming, let's meet the opposing side.

The battle is going to ensue in chapter 6. Chapter 4 is an image that is inexplicable, incomprehensible, impossible to fathom, it falls far short of what was actually presented, but it's the best a human can do to describe what we have no vocabulary or comparative images to define and explain.

Ezekiel saw this same thing and does a better job capturing the uncapturable, I think, than John does. At least he gives the impossible bigger licks. Let's read a bit of Ezekiel, who doesn't give up on his stab at defining the inscrutable quite as quickly as John does.

Ezekiel 1:4 And as I looked, behold, a storm wind was coming from the north, a great cloud with fire flashing forth continually and a bright light around it, and in its midst something like glowing metal in the midst of the fire. 5 And within it there were figures resembling four living beings. And this was their appearance: they had human form. 6 Each of them had four faces and four wings. 7 And their legs were straight and their feet were like a calf's hoof, and they gleamed like burnished bronze. 8 Under their wings on their four sides were human hands. As for the faces and wings of the four of them, 9 their wings touched one another; their faces did not turn when they moved, each went straight forward. 10 As for the form of their faces, each had the face of a man, all four had the face of a lion on the right and the face of a bull on the left, and all four had the face of an eagle. 11 Such were their faces. Their wings were spread out above; each had two touching another being, and two covering their bodies. 12 And each went

straight forward; wherever the spirit was about to go, they would go, without turning as they went. 13 In the midst of the living beings there was something that looked like burning coals of fire, like torches darting back and forth among the living beings. The fire was bright, and lightning was flashing from the fire. 14 And the living beings ran to and fro like bolts of lightning.

15 Now as I looked at the living beings, behold, there was one wheel on the earth beside the living beings, for each of the four of them. 16 The appearance of the wheels and their workmanship was like sparkling beryl, and all four of them had the same form, their appearance and workmanship being as if one wheel were within another. 17 Whenever they moved, they moved in any of their four directions, without turning as they moved. 18 As for their rims they were lofty and awesome, and the rims of all four of them were full of eyes round about. 19 And whenever the living beings moved, the wheels moved with them. And whenever the living beings rose from the earth, the wheels rose also. 20 Wherever the spirit was about to go, they would go in that direction. And the wheels rose close beside them; for the spirit of the living beings was in the wheels. 21 Whenever those went, these went; and whenever those stood still, these stood still. And whenever those rose from the earth, the wheels rose close beside them; for the spirit of the living beings was in the wheels.

22 Now over the heads of the living beings there was something like an expanse, like the awesome gleam of crystal, extended over their heads. 23 And under the expanse their wings were stretched out straight, one toward the other; each one also had two wings covering their bodies on the one side and on the other. 24 I also heard the sound of their wings like the sound of abundant waters as they went, like the voice of the Almighty, a sound of tumult like the sound of an army camp; whenever they stood still, they dropped their wings. 25 And there came a voice from above the expanse that was over their heads; whenever they stood still, they dropped their wings.

26 Now above the expanse that was over their heads there was

something resembling a throne, like lapis lazuli in appearance; and on that which resembled a throne, high up, was a figure with the appearance of a man. 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.

Did you get all that? How do you describe the indescribable? Ezekiel didn't give up on the impossible quite as quickly as John does. I mean he really gave it big licks.

I've got really bad news for Satan. I'm sure he knows already. He's a smart fellow. The person on this throne in this impossible vision, is the Creator of all things. And really bad news, Satan, you're a created being owned by the Creator. Odds are against you sir. Pretty obvious.

So this world is contested real estate. There's going to be a battle for it's rightful owner to retake this stolen territory. The players are Satan and a whole world full of rebellious humans. And the opposing force is God, on His throne, who created all things and owns all things, and who, obtw, has two thirds of all of the angels, myriads of angels, and He has us. A remnant from all humans born. A fraction that are His chosen redeemed.

Millions upon millions of humans, called out of the rebellion who are joined with the forces of heaven. In Revelation 19, we're included in the forces that charge out of heaven on white horses along with our King, Jesus, who is robed in warrior attire, already stained by the blood of His conquests.

That's the reason for chapter 4. Meet the person who you're at war with, world. Look at your opponent, and ask for terms of peace now, while there

is open grace available. Don't follow Satan into war against this God!

OK. That's our introduction. Let's look at John's attempt to describe the rightful owner of this world who is coming to retake it.

Last week we made it to verse 2. Pitiful. Or glorious depending on how you look at things. I'm anxious to get to chapter 5! Let's see if the Lord will allow us to finish this chapter. These are some of the most glorious words ever written. We will thrill with however long the Lord keeps us in here. Let's spend some time in heaven.

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.

A throne. The seat of authority. In this case, it is the seat of the authority of the owner of all things. All creation belongs to this person on this throne. Every atomic particle of everything that is, belongs to Him. And every being, spirit and physical, was created and is owned by Him. Spirit beings that have no atoms, no molecules, no physicality of matter as we know and understand the science of physical things, spirit beings without physical matter belong to this King who is creator of everything. Things you can touch, and things you cannot. It's all His.

He set time and space in motion. He owns eternity and He owns time and matter. The person on this throne is sovereign over everything. It's all His.

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.

Jasper is a diamond. This person gleams and reflects light with the brilliance of a diamond. *like a jasper stone and a sardius in appearance*

Sardius was ruby red. So we have brilliant clear white and brilliant red sparkling appearance. And like diamonds and other stones, there is such purity that you can see through like glass. There is an idea of translucence

and there was a rainbow around the throne, like an emerald in appearance.

This is a bow that surrounds the throne. But it has a single brilliant color. Emerald. Maybe an orb. Ezekiel tells us the rainbow, or orb, is the glory emanating from the throne. That's helpful. Ezekiel also tells us that the throne is lapis in color.

Here's a little fun fwiw, I googled a color wheel, and if you mix lapis light with ruby light what comes out the other side is emerald. The bow is the visible glory emanating from God on His throne. *like an emerald in appearance.*

If we had a nickel for every time John uses the word *like*, we could make a house payment. He's using available words and ideas to try to somehow describe the indescribable. Like a diamond. Like a ruby. Like a rainbow. Like an emerald.

It's impossible, but he was told; write in a book what you see. He's obediently doing the best he can with what he's got. I wouldn't want this job. Write in a book what you see . . . but there's nothing anyone has ever seen so far that can be used to describe it.

And yet, with as little as he has to work with, we leave this image in jaw dropping awe. God is stunning in beauty, beyond words. I'm a black and white photographer. God uses colors in His glories! A black and white image of what John has just tried to describe would be a colossal fail.

Paul made the trip and saw these things, but Paul wasn't under compulsion to try to describe what he saw. Here's Paul's account. 2 Cor. 12:

2 I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of it I do not know, but God knows. 3 And I know that this man— whether in the body or out of it I do not know, but God knows— 4 was caught up to Paradise. The things he heard were too sacred for words, things that man is not permitted to tell....

Paul's version of: *I could tell you, but then I'd have to kill you.*

Actually, Paul got off easy. If he had been told to write in a book what you see, he'd be working for things to compare to that couldn't get the job done. Diamond brilliance, ruby red glory, lapis blue throne, emerald green rainbow orb of glory.

4 And 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.

OK, here's a notable departure from Ezekiel's attempt. Who are these elders? Where did they come from?

The word is presbyterous. It's the word that is common for overseers. Shepherds. It isn't unique to the church. Israel certainly had elders. But it is a word we understand and use, (and tragically mis-use) in the church.

I think the reason they are missing in Ezekiel's vision and present here is because these represent the church, triumphant, now in heaven. We're going to see Israel represented in a few verses, but these elders are the church.

I'll give you my arguments why I think these elders are representative of the church in heaven; They are on thrones. They are clothed in white garments. They have golden crowns on their heads. Do any of those things

sound at all familiar?

Those are promises given to the church. Let's take the time to see these promises that I believe are shown in fulfilment here with these 24 representative elders;

4 And 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.

First, thrones, authority, we co-reign with Jesus in His kingdom;

Thyatira Rev. 2:26 *'And he who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, TO HIM I WILL GIVE AUTHORITY OVER THE NATIONS; 27AND HE SHALL RULE THEM WITH A ROD OF IRON, AS THE VESSELS OF THE POTTER ARE BROKEN TO PIECES, as I also have received authority from My Father;*

Laodicea Rev. 3:21 *'He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.*

Matt. 19:27 *Then Peter answered and said to Him, "Behold, we have left everything and followed You; what then will there be for us?" 28 And Jesus said to them, "Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.*

Second, white garments;

Sardis Rev. 3:5 *'He who overcomes shall thus be clothed in white garments;*

This is the attire of every christian in heaven. The white garments of a righteousness, not our own. Jesus gives us His righteousness. He takes

away our sinful rags and clothes us in His perfect righteousness.

There is a parable, Matt. 22, where the King is at the wedding feast and some are in there without the proper attire. And they are removed and thrown into outer darkness.

We who are born again by faith in the completed work of Jesus on the cross, to forgive our sins, and the acceptance of that sacrifice by God witnessed by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, will be clothed in Jesus righteousness.

No such promise is given to Israel. This is for those who trust in Jesus. All Jews who are converted come in through that same narrow gate. Jesus says, no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me.

White garments are given to us by Jesus. These elders are clothed in His perfect righteousness.

Finally, golden crowns. And the word here is Stephanos. That's the word for the crown given to the winner of the Olympic games. This is a victor's crown. Not the king's crown. This crown represents victory.

Smyrna; Revelation 2:10 *'Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.'*

1 Corinthians 9:25 *Everyone who competes in the games trains with strict discipline. They do it for a crown that is perishable, but we do it for a crown that is imperishable.*

2 Timothy 4:8 *From now on there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but to all who long for His appearing.*

James 1:12 Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love Him.

Everything mentioned about these presbyterous, these elders, stems from and directs our minds back to promises given specifically to the church.

Chapters 2 and 3 are the church during the church dispensation or age, on earth, and these 24 elders, I believe, are an image of the church, with all that was promised to her, in heaven.

Caution: Good men disagree. I'm not dogmatic. Getting this right is not a salvation issue. But if you study to make your own conclusion, the evidence for my position is laid out for you here.

5 And from the throne proceed 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;

Flashes of lightning and peals of thunder. So much energy that it can hardly be contained. This is a God who is just crackling with the energy of war. Ever hear the phrase; He's spoiling for a fight. God has withheld His righteous wrath long enough. Time is up. He is spoiling for this righteous fight.

I've been listening to Al Mohler teaching verse by verse through the book of Joshua this week. [**And so should you!**] He takes a month long leave from doing the Briefing every July. So you miss your morning caffeine jolt of Al Mohler. So I decided to listen to his line by line teaching in Joshua.

Joshua chapter 10. Beware; If you're only wired for the man devised, squishy, impotent, loving grandfather type god who only ever has grace and acceptance for everything sinners can dream up to do, this scripture may blow out your circuits. The door is open back there.

Joshua 10:6 *Then the men of Gibeon sent word to Joshua to the camp at Gilgal, saying, "Do not abandon your servants; come up to us quickly and save us and help us, for all the kings of the Amorites that live in the hill country have assembled against us."* 7 *So Joshua went up from Gilgal, he and all the people of war with him and all the valiant warriors.* 8 *And the LORD said to Joshua, "Do not fear them, for I have given them into your hands; not one of them shall stand before you."* 9 *So Joshua came upon them suddenly by marching all night from Gilgal.* 10 *And the LORD confounded them before Israel, and He slew them with a great slaughter at Gibeon, and pursued them by the way of the ascent of Beth-horon, and struck them as far as Azekah and Makkedah.* 11 *And it came about as they fled from before Israel, while they were at the descent of Beth-horon, that the LORD threw large stones from heaven on them as far as Azekah, and they died; there were more who died from the hailstones than those whom the sons of Israel killed with the sword.*

Did you get that? Joshua and the armies of Israel are routing the kings of the amorites, with their armies, doing their best to kill all of them, and it wasn't getting done, and God finishes the job with hailstones. More died from God's hail stones than Joshua and Israel killed.

You don't want to mess with this God who is crackling with lightning and peels of thunder constantly around His throne. He's got stones, and He uses them! Beware! This isn't the mambly pambly god of the liberals.

He not only uses His hail stones, he discriminates who the hail hits. The israelites were persuing these folks and they don't get smashed, but the enemies do. God's version of smart bombs.

In Job 38:22, God is taunting Job, you and your friends are so smart Job; 22 *Have you entered the storehouses of snow or observed the storehouses of hail,* 23 *which I hold in reserve for times of trouble, for the day of war and battle?*

That event in Joshua 10 was just a little spitball of hail. God has

storehouses full of hail, and snow, reserved for the day of battle. Snow! Fools who dishonor and disregard the God of heaven are worried that the earth is getting too warm. You should be worried about snow. We'll see that in this book, if the Lord tarries and allows us to get there.

His throne is crackling with the energy of war about to be unleashed on this earth that hates Him. It's potential energy about to be kinetic energy.

5 And from the throne proceed 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;

This is the sevenfold spirit of God. The Holy Spirit. Seven fold as given in Isaiah 11

Isaiah 11:2, describes the Spirit resting on the Messiah in seven expressions:

- The Spirit of the LORD
- The Spirit of wisdom
- The Spirit of understanding
- The Spirit of counsel
- The Spirit of might (or power)
- The Spirit of knowledge
- The Spirit of the fear of the LORD

Now if you thought in your mind, too bad Jesus isn't in this scene, then we'd have the trinity together in one place. Hold that thought until chapter 5. I'm jumping the gun here, but the Lion / Lamb shows up and He has seven eyes which correspond to the sevenfold perfection of the Holy Spirit of God.

I think that's as far as we'll get this morning in chapter 4. Be patient with me. The Lord is pouring out such richness in this text. In 2012 we covered the whole chapter in one evening session. 14 years later we can't get it

done in 2 Sunday mornings.

What does it mean. For us, here, now, today. What is the take away for us

If you are at war, with this God, come to terms of peace with Him, today. He crushes His enemies. He has storehouses of stones. He has saved up His wrath during millenia of grace. He will destroy all of His enemies. All who hate Him will lose this war.

But, He has paid the ransom to purchase all who love Him and His appearing. He saves all who repent of their rebellion and cry out to Him for mercy. The writer of Hebrews was not being unnecessarily insensitive when he writes;

It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Heb. 10:31

OTOH, for those of us who have come out of this rebellion and crossed over into the Kingdom of God, who have been purchased by His blood, and who know Him intimately and personally by His Holy Spirit who is IN us, the downpayment of our future glory with Him;

We read these things and are filled with excitement and longing. We long for His appearing when He removes His church from this world about to be judged. We long for the day of war when our King retakes this world and dwells here in righteousness for a thousand years, in Jerusalem. Peace. Peace at last! 6,000 years of convoluted torment with Satan at the world's throne. We are on the threshold of a millenium of true world peace.

We long to see Him. We see the signposts that point towards the day. But as C. S. Lewis so beautifully said;

"But when we have found the road and are passing signposts every few miles, we shall not stop and stare. They will encourage us and we shall be grateful to the authority that set them up. But we shall not stop and stare, or not much; not on this road, though their pillars are of silver and their

lettering of gold. 'We would have Jerusalem.'"

C. S. Lewis: Surprised by Joy, Published 1955