

Revelation Chapter Four

Post-Rapture Throne Scene (vv. 1-11)

The Rapture Portrayed (v.1)

VERSE 1 **After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven**

(Μετὰ ταῦτα εἶδον, καὶ ἰδοὺ θύρα ἠνεωγμένη ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ [*prep meta; after w/acc. + pro.acc.nt.p. houtos, this; "these things + aor.act.ind.1s. eidon see; "I looked" + conj kai and + part idou ; strictly aor.mid.imper of eidon; behold, pay attention + noun nom.f.s. thura door, gate, passage way + perf.pass.part.nom.f.s anoigon open; literally: "having been opened" + prep en + art.w/noun loc.m.s. ouranos heaven, sky; literally, "in the sky"]], **and the first voice which I had heard, like the sound of a trumpet speaking with me, said** [καὶ ἡ φωνὴ ἡ πρώτη ἦν ἤκουσα ὡς σάλπιγγος λαλοῦσης μετ' ἐμοῦ λέγων [*conj kai + art.w/noun f.s. phone voice + art.w/adj.f.s. protos first + pro.acc.f.s. hos which + aor.act.ind.1s. akouo hear + comparative adv hos as + noun gen.f.s. salpigz trumpet + pres.act.part.gen.f.s. laleo speak + prep meta with + pro.gen.s. ego "me" + pres.act.part.nom.m.s. lego say)], **"Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after these things** [Ἀνάβα ὦδε, καὶ δείξω σοι ἃ δεῖ γενέσθαι μετὰ ταῦτα [*aor.act.imper.2s. anabaino go up + adv hode here + conj kai and + fut.act.ind.1s. deiknumi point out, show + pro.dat.s. su you + rel.pro.acc.nt.p. hos what + pres.act.ind.3s. dei must; expressing compulsion, necessity, or inevitability + aor.dep.inf. ginomai become; "take place" + prep meta after + pro.demon.acc.nt.p. houtos this)]."***

ANALYSIS: VERSE 1

1. Chapter one (specifically vv. 10-20) records John's past impressions of his vision of the glorified Christ.
2. In chapters two and three is recorded the present conditions of the church as illustrated by the seven messages of Christ to the seven churches of Asia Minor.
3. John now turns in chapter four to future anticipations arising from a series of prophetic visions that he receives.
4. Thus begins the principal prophetic portion of the Apocalypse.
5. This all accords with the inspired outline of the book given by Christ in 1:19: "Therefore write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after these things."
6. So here begins the 3rd section of the Revelation.
7. This section is further divided into three parts: the coming 7 year tribulation (chps. 6-19), the Millennial kingdom (chp. 20), and the new heavens and new earth (chps. 21-22).

8. The flow of the book to the end follows a general chronological pattern but not a rigidly strict one.
9. Chapters four and five presents a view of things as seen in heaven while chapters 6-19 focuses primarily on events on the earth.
10. The divine wrath that falls on the inhabitants on earth is the direct product of the opening of the seven-sealed scroll of chapter five.
11. Chapter four focuses on God the Father as Creator who delivers the seven-sealed scroll in chapter five to God the Son (i.e., as Redeemer), who alone is worthy to open the seals.
12. The phrase “After these things” (*Meta tauta*) marks a beginning of a new vision as it does a number of times in the book (7:9; 15:5; 18:1; 19:1; cp. “after this” in 7:1).
13. This phrase was first used of the 3rd section of the Apocalypse in 1:19.
14. In this instance, it introduces a new section of the book as the scene now changes from the glorified Christ walking among the churches on earth to that of God the Father in the court of heaven.
15. Some uses of *meta tauta* in Revelation denote the sequence of fulfillment of events prophesied within a vision (cf. 1:19; 4:1 [2nd occurrence]; 9:12; 20:3), but this is not the primary force of the phrase here.
16. This use marks a change in scene from Christ in authority over the churches and their messengers to a vision of the court of heaven as it will be at the Rapture.
17. Whenever “after these things” is followed by *eidon* (“I looked,” “I saw”), John’s primary reference is to the beginning of a new vision.
18. Some argue that 4:1 is simply a transition from one part of the first vision to another.
19. Support for this comes from the observation that nowhere else in the book does *meta tauta* indicate a break in John’s visionary trance and that *meta* means “immediately after” in contrast to *eita* (“next”), which allows for an intervening event in the sequence.
20. The view says that the first vision ended in 3:22, and a period of time elapsed before the beginning of the vision in 4:1.
21. This is generally associated with the rationale that John needed time to write down what he had seen and heard.
22. The probable perspective is to allow for a break in John’s ecstatic state after 3:22, and that a new visionary sequence began soon after.
23. This position is further supported by the repetition of the words “I was in the Spirit” in v. 2 as seen in 1:10.
24. Immediately, or soon after Christ’s completion of the messages to the seven churches, the majestic figure that dominated John’s attention (cf. 1:12-18) faces him no more, and he moves into a new phase of revelatory experience: “I looked, and behold a door opened in heaven.”
25. John in a resumed state of visionary experience simply came to recognize an object before him.
26. This was not accomplished with sight from the physical eye.
27. Rather is sight with the eye of the soul as in a dream-state.
28. All of what follows came to John in the theatre of his mind/soul while his body was asleep.
29. The particle “behold” calls the reader to special attention as noted throughout the book.
30. John saw something like a door (simile), which permitted him access to the heavenly realm.
31. It was like a door set in the sky.
32. It is similar to the usual symbol of “heaven opened” (cf. Matt. 3:16; Acts 7:56; 10:11; 11:5).

33. This is a special door opened to admit John to heaven.
34. John did not see the door opened.
35. The participle “having been opened” indicates that the door had been previously opened and left that way for John’s admittance.
36. The door’s location is fixed by the words “in heaven.”
37. Chapters four and five indicate this to be the dwelling-place of God (cf. Rev. 3:12).
38. This is where Christ ascended following His resurrection (cf. Acts 1:10-11; 3:21; 7:55-56; Rom. 10:6; Col. 3:1; 1Thess. 4:16).
39. The door standing open suggests something prophetically.
40. It is suggestive of the Rapture.
41. This is also supported by the view that the seven churches represents seven eras of the church age.
42. This is further proven by the presence of the 24 elders wearing golden crowns/wreaths (noted in 4:4, 10 and 5:5,8,11, 14) already in heaven upon John’s arrival.
43. Only believers are awarded the crown.
44. So if they are already there (in John’s visionary appearance in heaven), then we can assume that the Rapture has taken place in John’s prophetic future-look.
45. Back to the door-like opening into the throne room.
46. The perfect passive participle “*standing open*” illustrates that access has been made available.
47. In this 2nd part of his vision, John was transported into the future, specifically to a time just after the glorified body of Christ has ascended into heaven.
48. But we are ahead of ourselves.
49. This passage way to heaven was viewed by John from the vantage point of his being on earth (again see Matt. 3:16; Acts 7:56; 10:11; 11:5).
50. We could translate “heaven” here as “sky.”
51. “I looked, and behold, a passage-way having been opened in the sky.”
52. As John contemplated this “door” or passage-way, he received immediate instructions to enter heaven.
53. The summons is described as “the first voice which I heard” pointing to the voice John heard in 1:10 where it is described as “loud,” and as here, like that of a “trumpet (cf. 1:15).”
54. This voice is the voice of the Christ coming from heaven proper to John.
55. Christ does not actually appear here.
56. Only His voice is heard.
57. The words “the first” point back to the voice that spoke first (cf. 1:10), and then the person behind the voice was revealed to John as he turned and saw the speaker “in the midst of seven golden lampstands” (cf. 1:11-13).
58. There can be little doubt that it is the voice of Christ that summoned John upward.
59. Loudness marks the sound of the voice John heard and recognized from 1:10.
60. Its comparison to a trumpet is identical with the comparison in 1:10.
61. This sounds a note of authority.
62. The participle “speaking” (*laleo*) replaces “saying” (*lego*) in 1:11.
63. The summons “Come up here” is similar to the one given Moses at Mount Sinai (cf. Ex. 19:20, 24-25).
64. This was simply a summons to John and not in anticipation of the rapture.

65. The rapture is anticipated by what follows in the chapter, specifically in the mention and identification of the 24 elders.
66. John's body and soul remained on Patmos during this vision.
67. His experience was like that of a dream.
68. Much of the prophetic drama revealed to Daniel was via dreams (cf. Dan.2:19; 7:1; 8:1-2; cp. 9:21).
69. Following the summons to enter heaven, the Speaker informs John of the purpose of his visit to the throne room in the words "and I will show you what must take place after these things."
70. The phrase "after these things" refers to the course and consummation of the church age as seen in the seven eras of the present dispensation.
71. The promise "I will show you" is God the Father granting Christ the responsibility of transmitting end-time prophecy to the churches.
72. The caption for the promised revelation, "the things which must happen after these things," is familiar because of its earlier disclosure in Rev. 1:1,19.
73. This caption is as fundamental prophetic expression originating in Daniel's prophecy (Dan.2:28, 29, and 45).
74. The words "take place after these things" recall the last part of the three-part outline of 1:19.
75. The moment has arrived to deal with what God has destined for the future.
76. The events to be predicted are not just probable.
77. They are fixed and certain because they are the outworking of the Plan of God from eternity past (e.g. "must").
78. The second occurrence of *meta tauta* ("after these things") in this verse differs from the first one in its function.
79. It places the fulfillment of matters about to be prophesied subsequent to the conditions described in chapters 2 & 3, and does not refer to the sequence in which John received his visions.
80. The prophecies will describe what will happen *after* the period of the churches has run its course.

The Heavenly Throne (v.2)

VERSE 2 Immediately I was in the Spirit (εὐθέως ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι [*adv eutheos immediately, right away + aor.dep.ind.1s. ginomai become; "I was" + prep en + noun loc.nt.s. pneuma spirit*]); **and behold, a throne was standing in heaven** [καὶ ἰδοὺ θρόνος ἔκειτο ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ [*conj kai + interj idou behold + noun m.s. thronos throne + impf.pass.ind.3s. keimai set; "was standing" + prep en + art.w/noun loc.m.s. ouranos heaven*], **and One sitting on the throne** [καὶ ἐπὶ τὸν θρόνον καθήμενος [*conj kai + prep epi upon + art.w/noun acc.m.s. thronos throne + pres.dep.nom.m.s. kathemai sit (down)*]]).

ANALYSIS: VERSE 2

1. Instantly after the summons and promise of additional revelation, John entered another ecstatic state.
2. The adverb *eutheos* ("immediately") without a conjunction to connect the clause with verse 1, intensely describes John's translation into heaven.

3. As already noted in the interpretation of 1:10, “in the spirit” is descriptive of the prophetic trance into which the prophet’s spirit entered.
4. This miraculous ecstatic state wrought by the Spirit of God was, a kind of translation from Patmos to heaven apart from the actual removal of the prophet from the earth.
5. What we have heard and in Rev.1:10 are the same phenomenon.
6. A change of some sort occurred, one marked by suddenness.
7. It is best to conclude that John had returned to his normal state after which the vision ended in 3:22 and now returns to the same state in which he had been to receive the 2nd part of the Revelation.
8. Another instance of “behold” marks a new divine intervention at the beginning of John’s new vision: “and behold a throne was standing in heaven.”
9. This “throne” constituted the focal point of a huge room of indescribable beauty with God the Father as the central figure.
10. In the OT God’s throne is mentioned (Ps. 9:4).
11. The OT pictures heaven as the place of God’s throne (cf. Isa. 66:1) and sees Him enthroned in heaven (cf. 1Kgs. 22:19; Pss. 11:4; 47:8; Isa. 6:1; Ezek. 1:26; Dan. 7:9).
12. This is the symbolism required in chapters four and five, though the picture of the throne room also merges with that of a heavenly temple (Rev.16:17; cf. Ps.18:6; Mi.1:2; Hab.2:20).
13. The temple and the throne are interrelated throughout the book (cf. 7;15; 11:19).
14. The heavenly throne was a part of the heavenly temple as seen by the presence of the golden altar of incense and the Ark of the Covenant (cf. 8:3; 11:19).
15. The throne room of heaven corresponds to the Most Holy Place of the tabernacle and temple.
16. In Revelation 15 heaven is seen as a temple without an explicit reference to the throne.
17. The throne of God is mentioned in every chapter except chapters 2, 9, 10, 15, and 18.
18. Throne is used 13x in the eleven verses of this chapter (cf. 4:2 [2x], 3, 4 [3x], 5, 6, 9, and 10 [2x each], eleven of the occurrences referring to the throne of God and the remaining two to the thrones of the 24 elders (cf. 4:4).
19. It is used 37x in the whole book.
20. From this point comes the source of the outworking of God’s wrath described in the body of the Apocalypse (cf. 6:10, 16-17; 14:7; 15:1; 16:5; 18:20; 19:2, 11).
21. Though evil operates as a part of the permissive will of God for a time on the earth, God’s policies will ultimately prevail on earth as it is in heaven.
22. John did not see the throne being put in place.
23. According to the connotation of the verb “stood”, he merely observed it standing in its place.
24. The fact that John has now in his prophetic apprehension “arrived” in heaven where he saw the throne is seen by the words “in heaven.”
25. “And upon the throne was One sitting” introduces John’s initial look into the throne room.
26. The person is undoubtedly God the Father, because He is distinguished from the Lamb in 5:5, 7; 6:16; 7:10 and from the Spirit in 4:5 (cf. 19:4).
27. John did not intend an anthropomorphic representation.
28. Portraying the glory of God was the objective, not a detailed description of the Father’s appearance.
29. The combination “sitting” and the preposition “upon” frequently designates God throughout the book.

30. The sitting posture denotes the activity of reigning, not resting or a cessation of priestly function as in Heb. 1:3; 10:12 and 12:2.

Glory of the Father (v.3)

VERSE 3 And He who was sitting was like a jasper stone and a sardius in

appearance (καὶ ὁ καθήμενος ὅμοιος ὁράσει λίθῳ ἰάσπιδι καὶ σαρδίῳ [*conj kai + art.w/pres.dep.part.nom.m.s. kathemai sit + compar.adj.nom.m.s. homoios resembling, like + noun loc.f.s. horasis in appearance + noun dat.m.s. lithos stone + noun dat.f.s. iaspis jasper + conj kai + noun dat.nt.s. sardion sardius, carnelian*]; **and there was a rainbow around the throne, like an emerald in appearance** [*καὶ ἶρις κυκλόθεν τοῦ θρόνου ὅμοιος ὁράσει σμαραγδίνῳ [*conj kai + noun nom.f.s. iris rainbow, halo, circle of radiance; cp. Rev. 10:1 + prep kuklothen on all sides, round about + art.w/noun gen.m.s. thronos throne + adj.nom.m.s. homoios resembling + noun loc.f.s. horasis in appearance + adj.dat.m.s. smaragdinos emerald*]*).

ANALYSIS: VERSE 3

1. The description of this central figure is literally, “the One who was sitting *there* was similar in appearance to a jasper and a sardius stone.”
2. How is the expression “similar in appearance” (*homoios horasei*) to be understood?
3. Modern ignorance of ancient terminology makes identification tentative.
4. The modern jasper stone is dull and opaque which is hardly a costly stone as the context implies.
5. The key to the probable identification of this stone is Rev. 21:11 where it represents a clear crystalline brightness.
6. The modern jasper is opaque, but the ancient stone must have been translucent rock crystal, possibly a diamond.
7. There is basic agreement regarding the sardius.
8. It was a fiery, deep red stone, most likely as carnelian.
9. It is the stone after which Sardis was named.
10. The proposed symbolism is the purity of God (i.e., +R) as noted in the brightness and clarity of the diamond.
11. The ruby red sardius stone would symbolize the Father’s severity in judgment.
12. Hence the ruby color suggests fire which pervades biblical symbolism (cf. Ezek.1:4; 8:2; Dan.7:9; cf. Rev.1:14; 10:1).
13. The significance then of this visual manifestation of God the Father is apropos against a setting of unprecedented evil upon the earth that is ripe for judgment.
14. The impression of impending judgment because of the disparity between God’s perfect righteousness and man’s sinfulness is tempered by the next part of the description: “and a rainbow [was] around the throne similar in appearance to a emerald.”
15. The adverbial preposition “around” (*kuklothen*) found only here and in verse 4 and 8 in combination with the noun “rainbow” indicates a complete circle encompassing God’s throne.

16. The circular shape is probably the reason for the choice of noun *iris* here, rather than *toxon* which means “bow” (cf. Rev.6:2).
17. The Greek noun rainbow occurs in one other place in the NT (Rev. 10:1).
18. The rainbow is reminiscence of the covenant God made with Noah (Gen.15:1).
19. This emerald green rainbow is a reminder of God’s mercy.
20. There is no triumph of God’s judgment upon humanity at the expense of mercy/grace.
21. This rainbow is to be distinguished from other rainbows in that it is green in color “similar in appearance to an emerald.”
22. A strong consensus exists that *smaragdinós* corresponds to what is called emerald in modern times.
23. The beautiful green color of the emerald signifies eternal life.
24. Coupled with the rainbow configuration it demonstrates God’s faithfulness (e.g. rainbow) with respect to the plan of salvation even in times of unprecedented judgment.
25. The gospel will be spread to the entire world via different agencies throughout the 7 years of wrath.
26. So this particular manifestation of God on His throne fits perfectly with the prophetic setting of the onset of the tribulation on the earth.