

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 ἴρις 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.

Twenty-four Thrones (v.4)

VERSE 4 **Around the throne were twenty-four thrones** (καὶ κυκλόθεν τοῦ θρόνου θρόνους ἑἴκοσι τέσσαρες [*conj kai + prep kuklothen around + art.w/noun gen.m.s. thronos throne + noun acc.m.p. thronos throne + adj.acc.m.p. eikosi twenty + adj.acc.m.p. tessares four*]); **and upon the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting** [*conj kai + prep epi upon + art.w/noun acc.m.p. thronos throne + adj.acc.m.p. eikosi twenty + adj.acc.m.p. tessares four + adj.acc.m.p. presbuteros older; ancestor; elder + pres.dep.part.acc.m.p. kathemai sit*], **clothed in white garments, and golden crowns on their heads** [*περιβεβλημένους ἐν ἱματίοις λευκοῖς καὶ ἐπὶ τὰς κεφαλὰς αὐτῶν στεφάνους χρυσοῦς* [*perf.mid.part.acc.m.p. periballo clothe [midd.] + prep en + noun loc.nt.p. himation garment + adj.loc.nt.p. leukos white + conj kai + prep en + art.w/noun acc.f.p. kephale head + pro.gen.p. autos "their" + noun acc.m.p. stephanos crown, wreath + adj.acc.m.p. chrusous golden*]).

ANALYSIS: VERSE 4

1. John next observes twenty-four thrones position in a semi-circle around the throne.
2. These thrones are clearly subordinate to the throne around which they were arranged.
3. On each throne sat twenty-four individuals.
4. Each individual is clothed in white with a golden crown on his head.
5. They are designated “elders” and are the first category of created beings that come to John’s attention.
6. From ancient times “elders” denoted an official position but specific identification of this prominent group has fallen into two broad categories, one saying they are men and the other that they are angels.
7. Among those that assert that they are men we have representatives of Israel, representatives of the church, or representatives of both.
8. That these elders represent men finds its strongest support in the observation that “elders” is more easily applied to men than it is to angels (cf. Heb.11:2 where the translation “ancestors” is preferred).
9. A further support cited for referring “elders” to human beings is that white clothing in Revelation is the clothing of saints (Rev.3:4-5, 18; 6:11; 7:9,13-14; 19:14).
10. There are instances in the NT where angels appear wearing white garments (Jn.20:12; cf. Matt. 28:3; Mk.16:5; Acts 1:10).
11. Another evidence to prove that the elders are men and not angels is the golden crowns (literally “wreaths”) on their heads.
12. The wreath is used throughout the NT as a symbol of victory.
13. It is used of the ultimate Ph3 reward for those believers who finish their course (Ph2).
14. This is seen in 1Cor.9:25; Phil.4:1; 1Thess.2:19; 2Tim.4:8; Jam.1:12; 1Pet.5:4; Rev.2:10; 3:11 cp. Rev.4:4,10.
15. Otherwise a wreath is in view in Rev.6:2; 9:7; 12:1 and 14:14.
16. The only instance that seems to point to angels or demons is Rev.14:14.
17. A distinction should be made between a wreath (*stephanos*) and a crown (*diadyma*; cf. Rev.12:3; 13:1; 19:12 in NT).

18. In ancient times the wreath was a prize associated with some notable achievement.
19. In the NT the athletic wreath is connected with experiential achievement.
20. The items associated with the twenty-four elders are items promised to the overcomers in the churches: white garments (Rev.3:5; cp. 19:8), and wreaths (Rev.3:11).
21. OT saints of distinction need to be ruled out as they are not resurrected and rewarded until the 2nd Advent (7 yrs later; cf. Dan.12:11; cp. Heb.11:40).
22. Clearly the vision of John's future-look at the time just immediately following the Rapture points to the elders as members of the glorified and rewarded body of Christ.
23. The term "elder" is never used in the NT of angels.
24. In the OT the elder was a rather loosely defined term designating the religious and political leaders of Israel (cf. Isa.3:2-3).
25. Particularly important is the idea of the "seventy elders" (cf. Ex.24:1; Num.11:16).
26. In the NT three references are comparative designations of age (cf. Lk.15:25; Acts 2:17 ["old men"]; 1Tim.5:2).
27. In the first century AD, the office of elder was a regular feature of the synagogue.
28. In Jerusalem, the Sanhedrin, a council of seventy-one elders, acted as the supreme court for all Judaism (cf. Ezra 10:8; Lk. 9:22 cp. Jn.9:22; 12:42).
29. Of the 66 occurrences of *presbuteros* in the NT about half of them refer to an office in Judaism (cf. Matt. 15:2; 26:47; Mk. 8:31; 14:43; Acts 4:5; 25:15, et al).
30. The remaining references are to a position in the local church.
31. The office appears without explanation as to its origin for the first time in Acts 11:30.
32. The reference here is to the leadership in the Church of Judea for whom a collection had been taken in the Church at Antioch.
33. Later we are told that Paul "appointed" (participle *cheirotoneo* which means "to elect by raising hands) elders in every church (Acts 14:23).
34. We may assume that this appearance is parallel to the selection of the seven deacons in Acts 6.
35. In the pastoral epistles only two offices are referred to: overseers/pastors (1Tim.3:1-11) and deacons (1Tim.3:12-13).
36. In Titus 1:5-9 the elders Paul commissioned Titus to ordain in v.5 are defined in verse 7 as being in the category of overseer (*episkopos*), which is a synonym for pastor.
37. The structure of the synagogue is the pattern for what we find in a fully functional local church.
38. In the synagogue there was a "head of the synagogue" (*archisunagogos* Mk.5:22, 35-36, 38; Lk. 8:49; 13:14; Acts 13:15; 18:8, 17).
39. In 1Tim. 5:17 the term elder is clearly used of both pastors and deacons: "Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching."
40. Both Peter and John use the term in reference to their apostolic function (1Pet.5:1; 2Jn.1:1; 3Jn.1:1).
41. From the above evidence we see that the term was used in connection with the office of apostle, pastor/overseer, and deacon, immediate context determining which is in view.
42. In Revelation the term occurs 12x: 4:4, 10; 5:5-6, 8, 11, 14; 7:11, 13, 16; 14:2; 19:4 and each time it refers to the 24 elders positioned around the throne.
43. In 7:11 "elders" is used in a category by itself along with angels and the four living creatures.

44. The number twenty-four must have some significance in the present setting.
45. We know that the twenty-four elders represent a wider audience gathered around the throne at the outset and climax of the tribulation (cf. 19:4 where the timeframe is just before the 2nd Advent).
46. They represent the glorified and rewarded Body of Christ, that is, the Church triumphant.
47. We also know that the Church universal constitutes a kingdom of royal priests (cf. Rev.1:6; 5:10; 20:6; cp. 1Pet.2:9).
48. The priesthood of church age believers is patterned after the order of Christ's priesthood (Heb.7).
49. The Levitical priesthood of the age of Israel was organized into twenty-four courses/divisions (*ephemeria*, Lk.1:5,8), and in the day of Jesus each order performed the daily Temple sacrifice for a week, twice a year.
50. It was during the weekly course of Abia (8th) that Zechariah had been chosen by lot to offer incense in the Holy Place, when he had his encounter with the angel (Lk.8:8-23).
51. It appears then that these 24 men are heads of the 24 divisions of the royal priesthood in Ph3.
52. Clearly they represent the Church and not Israel.
53. At this juncture only the Royal Family is under full Ph3 sanctification.
54. Who might they be?
55. The 12 apostles are assigned thrones over the 12 tribes of Israel as a part of their millennial and Ph3 glory (Matt.19:28).
56. Perhaps these 24 individuals are pastor-teacher elders of the CA who distinguished themselves in Ph2.
57. Obviously only those who earned the wreath are qualified for this honor.
58. This would lead to the improbable, but not impossible conclusion that only 24 men who had the gift and held the office of pastor-teacher to the end are so honored.
59. Or, maybe it is individuals who excelled in the ministry over their peers that are so honored; meaning that there are more pastors who actually attain the highest award for Ph2 excellence.
60. In any case, these men are men who faithfully communicated the apostolic faith once for all delivered to the saints to the end.

Audio/Visual Phenomena Around the Throne

(vv. 5-6)

VERSE 5 **Out from the throne come flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder** (*καὶ ἐκ τοῦ θρόνου ἐκπορεύονται ἀστραπαὶ καὶ φωναὶ καὶ βρονταί [conj kai + prep ek + art.w/abl.m.s. thronos throne + pres.dep.ind.3p. ekporueomai proceed + noun nom.f.p. astrape lightning + conj kai + noun nom.f.p. phone voice, noise, sound + conj kai + noun nom.f.p. bronte thunder]*).

And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God (*conj kai + adj.nom.f.p. hepta seven + noun nom.f.p. lampas lamp, torch + noun gen.nt.s. pur fire + pres.pass.part.nom.f.p. kaio burn + prep enopion before,*

infront of + art.w/noun gen.m.s. thronos throne + pro.nom.nt.p. ho which + pres.act.ind.3p. eimi are + art.w/adj.nom.nt.p. hepta seven + noun nom.nt.p. pneuma seven + art.w/noun gen.m.s. theos God]);

VERSE 6 and before the throne there was something like a sea of glass, like crystal (*conj kai + prep enopion before + art.w/noun gen.m.s. thronos throne + adv hos as, like + noun nom.f.s. thalassa sea + adj.nom.f.s. healinos transparent; “glass” + adj.nom.f.s. homoios resembling + noun dat.m.s. krystallos crystal]); and in the center and around the throne, four living creatures full of eyes in front and behind* [*conj kai + prep en in + adj.loc.nt.s. mesos middle, center + noun gen.m.s. thronos throne + conj kai + prep kuklo in a circle, around + art.w/noun gen.m.s. thronos throne + adj.nom.nt.p. tessares four + noun nom.nt.p. zoon living creature + pres.act.part.nom.nt.p. gemo be full, contain + noun gen.m.p. ophthalmos eye + adv emprosthen in front + conj kai + adv opisthen behind*]).

ANALYSIS: VERSES 5 & 6

1. Beginning in v.5, several active aspects of the heavenly scene that confronted John are noted, including lightning flashes, rumbling thunder and voices/sounds, burning torches, and four living creatures.
2. The lightning and thunder is reminiscent of the theophany of Sinai when God descended in fire and smoke heralded by thunder and lightning (Ex. 19:16ff.).
3. These phenomena are symbolic of the awesome majesty and power of God.
4. Frequently in the OT God disclosed Himself in the dramatic activity of the natural world (cf. Ps. 18:12-15).
5. In Revelation the symbols of thunder and lightning are connected with a temple scene and mark an event of unusual import.
6. In 8:5 they follow the breaking of the 7th seal, in 11:19, the blowing of the 7th trumpet, and in 16:8, the pouring out of the 7th bowl of wrath.
7. This ominous display is designed to point to the impending judgments that are about to fall upon the nations.
8. The simplest meaning of the term “sounds/noises” refers to threatening noises that add of the audio effect.
9. The Hebrews made no distinction between “voices and “thunders.”
10. Although the “sounds” may refer to the roar and furious noise of the tempest that usually accompanies lightning and thunders.
11. Their close association can be seen in Ps. 77:18 and Job 37:4.
12. The origin of these phenomena was “out from the throne”.
13. This is a way of saying that the one who sits on the throne is responsible for these phenomena.
14. They all point to God the Father’s sovereignty, omnipotence, majesty and transcendence.
15. They are graphically depicted as emanating from His Person.
16. These manifestations all indicate His displeasure.

17. In each instance where they occur in Revelation, they are the harbingers of the settling of an old score.
18. These audio and visual displays are another reminder that the throne, which is the centerpiece of the heavenly scene, is a throne of wrath against all unrepentant evildoers.
19. It is also a throne of grace to those who approach it with a pure heart (Heb. 4:16).
20. For the incorrigible and wicked the time of patience has passed and there is no alternative but a display of wrath (cf. Ex. 34:6-7; Nah. 1:19).
21. This is a picture of the heavenly court poised to purify the creation.
22. John sees seven torches in close proximity to the throne (the preposition *enopion* emphasizes nearness).
23. These “lamps” should be distinguished from the “lampstands” of 1:12 and 20.
24. They were used outdoors rather than indoors.
25. They were used outdoors because they were less likely to be extinguished by gust of wind (cf. Jn. 18:3).
26. Coupled with the use of *kaiomenai* (“burning”) elsewhere in the book (cf. 8:8,10; 19:20; 21:8), indicates torches emitted “a blazing and fierce” light rather than a calm and soft light.
27. The text removes all doubt concerning the specific representation of the torches.
28. The words “which are the seven spirits of God” equate them with a Person already mentioned in Rev. 1:4, the Holy Spirit.
29. There He is the source of peace and grace to those to whom the prophecy is sent (7 churches).
30. The number 7 indicates the full or plenary ministry of God the HS (cf. Isa. 11:2; Zech.4:1-6,10).
31. This is an example of grammatical pleonasm, an idiomatic expression that uses a plural to express a single idea.
32. The 7 bright lamps also point to the illuminating ministry the 3rd Person of the Godhead (cf. 1Cor.2:10-12).
33. His close connection with the throne here and in 1:4 points to the doctrine of eternal procession.
34. As related to God the HS, it indicates that the HS is sent by the Father and the Son and does not follow His own agenda (cf. Jn.7:39; 14:16,26; 16:13).
35. In 5:6 we are told that these “seven spirits of God” are “sent into all the earth” suggesting that the number 7 represents the 7 continents to provide illumination to the positive volition around the world.
36. During the period of unprecedented wrath against humanity, God continues to provide a strong and steady light of witness to His plan of grace for all humanity.
37. The symbolism taken as a whole suggests the principle that in wrath God remembers mercy (cf. Hab. 3:2).
38. All unbelievers during the 7 years of tribulation will be given an equal opportunity to repent and be saved.
39. Stretching out before the throne was, as it were, a sea of glass.
40. Unlike the semi-opaque glass of antiquity, it was clear as crystal.
41. The text speaks only of what looked like a sea of glass.
42. This visual phenomenon adds to the awesome splendor of the throne-room scene.

43. Its crystal surface stretches out before the throne, reflecting the flashing multi-colored light from the throne, providing a surface for the activity around the throne, and creating for the prophet an unspeakably heightened sense of the transcendence and majesty of God.
44. If we are to find a source for this “sea of glass” we should probably turn to the great throne-chariot vision of Ezekiel chapter one (a primary source for Rev. 4-5).
45. Over the heads of the cherubim spread out “what looked like and expanse, sparkling crystal, and awesome” (Ezek.1:22).
46. Above this shining firmament (dome) was the throne.
47. One view pictures the sea of glass as the sanctifying power of the Word of God.
48. This draws upon the relationship of this part of the scene to the lavers in the Tabernacle (Ex.30:18-21; cf. 1Kgs. 7:23-27).
49. Both were for priestly purification.
50. Another view see the sea of glass as representing the stability of the plan of God as over against the turbulent sea on which the harlot sits (Rev.17:1,15).
51. The noun “crystal” (*krustallos*) enhances the emphasis on God’s purity.
52. It comes from *chryos* (“ice, frost”) and is used only here and in Rev.22:1.
53. Its cognate verb “be crystal-clear” (*krustallizo*) is found in Rev.22:11.
54. In addition to the 24 elders, “in the center, around the throne, were four living creatures,” which introduce a third activity connected with God’s throne.
55. These four creatures receive attention in vv. 6b-8.
56. The KJV translates “beasts” which is wrong in that *zoon* is used exclusively in Revelation for the four living creatures, while *therion* (“wild beast”) is depicts the evil figures of chapters 13 and 17.
57. “Living beings” is a noun related to the verb *zao* which means “to live.”
58. It is not derived from *kitzo* the verb meaning “to create.”
59. It should be translated “living beings” and not “living creatures.”
60. The exact location of the center (“in the midst”) is a bit unclear, but it apparently means “in the immediate vicinity.”
61. Thus they surround the throne as an inner circle.
62. This position is appropriate to their function as leaders of praise and worship (cf. 4:9-10; 5:14).
63. The four living creatures of John’s vision correspond to the cherubim of Ezekiel 1, although several differences should be noted, as well as the Seraphim of Isa. 6:2.
64. Their likeness to Ezekiel’s cherubim (Heb. *hayyot* Ezek.1:4-14; 10:1) is closer (cf. Ezek.9:3; 10:2ff., 20ff.).
65. Identification of the four living creatures has been a major subject of discussion.
66. One of the earliest proposals equated them with the four NT gospels.
67. Various combinations were advanced by the church fathers.
68. In modern times , it has been noted that Matthew, which presents Jesus as King, is represented by the Lion of the tribe of Judah, that Mark, which presents Jesus as the Servant of the Lord, is pictured by the ox, that Luke, which emphasizes Jesus’ humanity, is represented by the human-like third being, and that John, which features the deity of Christ, is connected with the eagle (Walvoord).
69. The unanimity of the early church regarding some acceptance of some combination of such symbolism is remarkable.
70. The four living beings are an exalted order of angels.

71. Though they are distinguished from angels in such places as 5:8, 11 and 7:11, the distinction can be explained by their exalted position in the angelic hierarchy.
72. They have something to do with the judicial authority of the throne.
73. The number four speaks of universality as in “the four winds of heaven.”
74. Their participation in the administration of divine justice is evident later in the book (e.g., 6:1,3,5,7).
75. The beings of Ezekiel symbolize worldwide power, which upholds and pervades while it transcends creation.
76. The same idea is present here.
77. They herald the divine immanence in creation in 5:13.
78. They are four in number as in Ezekiel (Ezek.1:5).
79. They represent the highest order of angelic beings.
80. They are full of eyes as are the cherubim of Ezek. 10:12.
81. Individually, they have the faces of the lion, the ox, a man, and the eagle, as in Ezek. 1:10.
82. Each has six wings as do the seraphim (Isa. 6:2).
83. Their ascription of praise to God (Rev. 5:8) is the same as that of the seraphim of Isaiah (Isa.6:2).
84. The name “living beings” is derived directly from Ezek.1:5, the name being used interchangeably with “cherubim” in Ezekiel (cf. Ezek. 9:3; 10:2, 20).
85. Certain differences between the living beings in Revelation and the OT cherubim and seraphim are obvious, but remarkable similarities between them necessitate assigning the four in Revelation to a comparable angelic order as the ones in the OT.
86. Differences between the four living beings of the Apocalypse and the OT cherubim and seraphim include the following: in Ezekiel, each has four faces (Ezek.1:6,10), whereas in Revelation, the four faces are distributed among the four, on face apiece.
87. In Ezekiel, the cherubim have only four wings instead of six in Revelation.
88. In Ezekiel, the cherubim are winged supporters of God’s throne, carrying Him as He moves throughout the world, but in Revelation, the beings attend the throne room of God’s glory, leading to adoration directed toward Him and the Lamb.
89. In Ezekiel, it is the wheels that are full of eyes (Ezek.1:18), though Ezekiel 10:12 appears to assign the same to the beings, but in Revelation, the beings themselves are full of eyes.
90. The Ezekiel beings have wheels (Ezek.1:10), but those of the Apocalypse have none.
91. The throne was above the beings but here they surround it.
92. Though closely akin to the cherubim of Ezekiel, these four living beings are not the same because of several differences.
93. Or, these beings have the capacity to morph based on the circumstances.
94. In this case, they are one and the same of the cherubim of the Ezekiel.
95. The first named characteristic of the four living beings is furnished in the words “full of eyes in front and back.”
96. This is similar to Ezekiel’s living beings who have eyes in “their whole body, and their backs, and their hands, and their wings (Ezek. 10;12), but Ezekiel first ascribes their eyes to their wheels instead of to the beings themselves (Ezek. 1:18).
97. This endowment of eyesight capacity is emphasized through words of completeness (“full”) of their coverage and the dual positions of the eyes (“in front and back”).
98. Both emphasize alertness and comprehensive knowledge of these beings.

99. Nothing relevant to their sphere of responsibility happens without their knowledge because of their “unsleeping watchfulness” (Scott).
100. This is not to attribute to them omniscience such as belongs to God alone, but rather to state that God has created them with super intelligence.

Further Description of the Living Beings (vv. 7-8)

VERSE 7 The first creature was like a lion (καὶ τὸ ζῶον τὸ πρῶτον ὅμοιον λέοντι [*conj kai + art.w/noun nom.nt.s. zoon living creature + art.w/adj.nom.nt.s. protos first (of several) + adj.nom.nt.s. homoiios resembling + noun dat.m.s. leon lion*]), **and the second creature like a calf** [*conj kai + art.w/adj.nom.nt.s. protos first + noun nom.nt.s. zoon living being + adj.nom.nt.s. homoiios resembling + noun dat.m.s. moschos calf; LXX regularly uses this word for a grown bull; cf. Ex.21:36; Lev.22:23*]), **and the third creature had a face like that of a man** [καὶ τὸ τρίτον ζῶον ἔχων τὸ πρόσωπον ὡς ἀνθρώπου [*conj kai + art.w/adj.nom.nt.s. tritos third + noun nom.nt.s. zoon living being + pres.act.part.nom.m.s. echo have + art.w/noun acc.nt.s. prosopon face + comp.adv. hos as + noun gen.m.s. anthropos man*]], **and the fourth creature was like a flying eagle** [καὶ τὸ τέταρτον ζῶον ὅμοιον ἀετῷ πετομένῳ [*conj kai + art.w/adj.nom.nt.s. tetartos fourth + noun nom.nt.s. zoon living being + adj.nom.nt.s. homoiios resembling + noun dat.m.s. aetos bird (large), eagle, vulture + pres.dep.part.dat.m.s. petomai fly*]]).

VERSE 8 And the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings (καὶ τὰ τέσσαρα ζῶα, ἓν καθ' ἓν αὐτῶν ἔχων ἀνά πτέρυγας ἕξ [*conj kai + art.w/adj.nom.nt.s. tessares four + noun nom.nt.p. zoon living being + adj.nom.nt.s. en one; + prep kata + adj.acc.nt.s. en one; string = “each one” + pro.gen.nt.p. autos him; “of them” + pres.act.part.nom.m.s. echo have + adv ana among + noun acc.f.p. pteruz wing + adj.acc.f.p. hex six*]), **are full of eyes around and within** [κυκλόθεν καὶ ἔσωθεν γέμουσιν ὀφθαλμῶν [*adv kuklothen on the outside + conj kai + adv esothern within + pres.act.ind.3p. gemo be full, contain + noun gen.m.p. ophthalmos eye*]]; **and day and night they do not cease to say** [καὶ ἀνάπαυσιν οὐκ ἔχουσιν ἡμέρας καὶ νυκτὸς λέγοντες [*conj kai + noun acc.f.s. anapausis interruption, stopping + neg ouk + pres.act.ind.3p. echo have + noun gen.f.s. hemera day + conj kai + noun gen.f.s. nux night + pres.act.part.nom.m.p. lego say*]], **" HOLY, HOLY, HOLY IS THE LORD GOD, THE ALMIGHTY, WHO WAS AND WHO IS AND WHO IS TO COME** [Ἁγιος ἅγιος ἅγιος κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὁ παντοκράτωρ, ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος [*adj.nom.m.s. hagios holy + adj.nom.m.s. hagios holy + adj.nom.m.s. hagios holy + noun nom.m.s. kurios lord + art.w/noun*

nom.m.s. theos God + art.w/noun nom.m.s. pantokrator almighty, all-powerful, omnipotent + art.nom.m.s. "who" + imperf.act.ind.3s. eimi "was" + conj kai + art.nom.m.s. "who" + pres.act.part.nom.m.s. eimi "is" + conj kai + art.nom.m.s. "who" + pres.dep.part.nom.m.s. erchomai come])."

ANALYSIS: VERSES 7 & 8

1. John next lists the facial features of the four living beings.
2. In contrast to Ezekiel's living beings, each one of whom had four facial appearances, each of these four has only one likeness.
3. Though John says in reference to the 3rd being that the similarity applies to the face, it most probably applies to all the four likenesses.
4. Ezekiel's beings resemble human beings in form more generally (cf. Ezek. 1:5).
5. Analogy would imply the same here.
6. The four living beings have already been identified as an exalted angelic order with special relationship to the animate creation.
7. The first "was like a lion".
8. Again, this probably relates to the Christological theme of Matthew's gospel in which Christ is presented as the King of the Jews (cf. Rev. 5:5).
9. The lion was the symbol for the ruling tribe of Judah of which Jesus was a member.
10. The second being was "like a calf" (or "ox") which relates to Mark's gospel which features Christ's servant-hood.
11. Regarding the 3rd of the living beings, his appearance is that of "having the face as [that] of a man."
12. The human aspect points to Luke's gospel written to a Greek audience which would have had a frame of reference for the perfect man, so idealized in Greek art and thought.
13. Here then, we have the quintessence of human perfection from the divine viewpoint.
14. The 4th living being is similar to an eagle which relates the gospel that features the deity of Christ, namely John's gospel.
15. The eagle in flight symbolizes the transcendence of deity.
16. These four living beings project the life of Christ on earth as seen from four aspects.
17. Four is the number of universality.
18. The six wings (three pairs) of the four recalls the seraphim of Isaiah's vision (cf. Isa. 6:2).
19. Because specific symbolism for the wings is not stated here, some have supposed that they depict swiftness and unfettered mobility in responding to God's commands (cf. Ps. 18:10; Ezek. 10:16).
20. In Isa. 6:2, two wings covered the face, denoting awe, because they dare not look at God, two covered the feet, denoting humility, because they stand in His presence; and with two they would fly, denoting obedience, because they are ready to carry out His commands.
21. After the parenthetical note about the wings, John continues his observation that "the four living beings...were full of eyes around and within."
22. This is a partial reiteration of v.6 which described the four as being "full of eyes in front and in back."
23. The many eyes signify alertness and intelligence.
24. "Around" and "within" are not precisely contrasting terms.

25. What the expression means is that the living beings had eyes all around their bodies and on the underside of their wings, as suggested by the cherubim of Ezekiel 10:12.
26. "Within" is a new detail added at this point.
27. The particular activity of the living beings is incessant praise before the throne of God.
28. Their continuous praise must be understood in light of their other functions.
29. It is not to be understood that they have no other duties.
30. For example, in Rev. 6:1, 3 5, 7 they are responsible for summoning the riders to advance in portrayal of future events against mankind.
31. This does not violate the statement about ceaseless praise, because "they do not cease" is qualified by the words "by day and night."
32. The manner of expression indicates that it is as type of time expressed rather than the extent of time.
33. It is analogous with Paul's statements to the Thessalonians regarding his own labors to support himself "by night and by day" (1Thess. 2:9; 2Thess. 3:8).
34. This does not mean that he worked around the clock at making a living, excluding ministry obligations, but that he did night labor and day labor to support himself.
35. So it is with the four living beings.
36. They do not cease from their assignment of offering praise to God.
37. This is their consuming practice whenever they are not otherwise engaged in carrying out other duties.
38. The praise of the four living beings focuses on three aspects of God's essence.
39. God's holiness is a combination of His absolute righteousness (+R) and justice.
40. These two attributes of His invisible essence form the "watchdog" of His other attributes.
41. The threefold ascription "HOLY, HOLY, HOLY" repeats Isa. 6:3.
42. The threefold ascription probably refers to the triune godhead.
43. God is inherently +R and J.
44. And so, He is set apart from His creation.
45. The 2nd aspect of God's essence comes to the fore in His title "LORD GOD THE ALMIGHTY."
46. This is a title by which the Father is known in Rev. 1:8.
47. It is a title applied to Him as a series of wrathful actions unfold against a negative and corrupt cosmos (cf. Rev. 11:17; 15:3; 16:7; 19:6, 15; 21:22).
48. The one seated upon the throne is omnipotent.
49. Omnipotence is the enforcer of His +R.
50. His omnipotence executes His overruling will against rebellious humanity, while at the same time delivering His people to a place of safety.
51. The living beings acknowledge Him as the sole possessor of this prerogative.
52. Thirdly, they sing about his eternity in the words: "WHO WAS AND WHO IS AND WHO IS TO COME."
53. This ascription of the attribute of eternal life was first seen in Rev. 1:4. (cf. 1:8; 11:17), but a shift of emphasis occurs here with the switch in position between "who was" and "who is."
54. Earlier uses of this title have emphasized His present existence by giving "who is" the first position but here giving "who was" the first position, giving His past existence more attention.
55. "WHO IS" refers to God's existence from eternity past to any point in time including the moment in prophetic future-look, that is the scene in heaven shortly after the Rapture.

56. "WHO IS" refers to any moment in time.
57. "WHO IS TO COME" is a prophetic statement related to future operations initiated by God the Father.
58. More specifically it refers to the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth and the fulfillment of the prayer petition "Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10).
59. E.L. is one of the attributes of divine essence that guarantees God's ability to advance His plan from eternity past to eternity future.