

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** [Ἅγιος 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.