

Hymns: 43 Holy, Holy, Holy Thou Art Worthy (solo)
 Psalm 148 Isaiah 6

Have you heard the news about Michael Jordan? Just yesterday, in Palm Beach, Florida, he married the model Yvette Prieto. In a related development, he also recently completed building a 38,000 square foot home in Jupiter, Florida.

In his heyday, Michael Jordan had fanatic fans everywhere. People wanted to “Be like Mike.” They would cheer and go wild as they watched in awe as he eluded defenders, frustrated opponents, **flew through the air**, and won games and even championships with his signature buzzer beaters. His skill, drive, and enthusiasm were unmatched for his time.

Today, we're again going to move from the realm of mere mortals and return our focus to heaven and eternity.

Review

Let's recap what we've learned thus far about heaven. You may recall the word heaven, even in the Bible source languages of Hebrew and Greek, is non-specific and requires us to use the context of the word to determine its meaning.

Where is heaven?

1. Air / Atmosphere (where the birds fly)
2. Outer Space (where the planets and stars are)
3. Abode of God (third heaven)

Now, speaking of the third heaven or the place where God's throne is.

Who is there or will be there ?

- God
- Jesus Christ
- Departed Saints
- Angels
- Thousands of ministers
- Millions

What is there?

- God's throne
- A temple (or palace where God is king)
- A fiery stream (coming out from before God)
- Books

What is done there?

- Praising of God
- Ministering to God
- Judgment

- Rewards given

Apostle John's Story

The Apostle John gives us **the most extensive picture** of heaven. This is where we left off last time. Today we want to look at John's eyewitness report.

Revelation 1:10; 13-18

[10] I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet,

John had to be transported into a spiritual state even to witness these things. First we have a description of the glorified Christ. How appropriate it is that He has the preeminence even in the order given in this description of heaven. Notice how similar His description is to that of the "Ancient of Days" in Daniel that we saw last time:

[13] And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps [His chest] with a golden girdle [or sash].

[14] His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire;

[15] And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters.

[16] And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.

You've heard the joke, "He's so bright, they call him Sonny." Well the Lord's face is so bright it shines as the sun. We'll learn more about this light as we move along in this study.

*[17] And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, **Fear not**; I am the first and the last:*

I love the image of Jesus Christ saying in scripture, "Fear not." Over and over again He said it during His earthly ministry. Here He is again, this time in heaven, saying it to the Apostle John. We need to take it to heart and appropriate it to our lives every moment of every day. Those who know Him can trust that He is with them, and that they have **nothing** to fear.

*[18] I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, **behold**, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.*

Jesus Christ conquered the curse of sin and death on the cross and demonstrated **that** victory through his resurrection. (I Corinthians 15:3-4)

Revelation 4:1-11

*[1] After this I looked, and, **behold**, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, **Come up hither**, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter.*

What is about to be described in chapters 4 through 19 is a series of 19 judgments that encompass the "time of Jacob's trouble" usually referred to as the Tribulation period. This is a seven-year period of

time also known as Daniel's seventieth week when God judges the nations of the earth inflicting waves of calamity that reach to the very foundations of the planet. That time period ends with the Battle of Armageddon (Revelation 16:16; 19:19-20).

We do not want to delve into that detail today but do wish to just set the context. We believe the "Come up hither" phrase speaks of the rapture of the church where the saints who have died as well as those alive at that time will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air.

I Thessalonians 4:16-17 describes this event:

*[16] For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and **the dead in Christ shall rise first:***

*[17] Then we which are alive and remain shall be **caught up together with them** in the clouds, to **meet the Lord in the air:** and so shall we ever be with the Lord.*

Returning to Revelation 4

*[2] And **immediately I was in the spirit:** and, **behold, a throne** was set in heaven, and **one sat on the throne.***

*[3] And he that sat was to look upon **like a jasper** [transliteration believed by many to refer to a diamond] **and a sardine stone** [semi-precious, usually opaque]: and there was **a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.***

*[4] And round about the throne were **four and twenty seats:** and upon the seats I saw **four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment;** and they had **on their heads crowns of gold.***

The common fundamentalist view is that these elders represent the saints of the church. That could very well be the case. However, Revelation 19:4-7 presents a bit of a problem for me with that view as it seems they would be changing hats in midstream. I prefer to view their origin as unknown since they're origin is never really given directly in scripture.

*[5] And **out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices:** and there were **seven lamps of fire burning** before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.*

*[6] And before the throne there was **a sea of glass like unto crystal:** and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were **four beasts full of eyes** before and behind.*

*[7] And the **first beast was like a lion,** and the **second beast like a calf,** and the **third beast had a face as a man,** and the **fourth beast was like a flying eagle.***

*[8] And the four beasts had **each of them six wings about him;** and they were **full of eyes within:** and **they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.***

We sang the hymn *Holy, Holy, Holy* just a few minutes ago. This is the first of thirteen expressions of praise recorded in Revelation. But haven't we heard this phrase before? Yes, we have. It appears in the Old Testament in Isaiah 6:1-3. In case you forgot, here it is again:

*[1] In the year that king Uzziah died **I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple.***

[2] Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and

with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly.

[3] And one cried unto another, and said, *Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.*

Returning to Revelation 4:

[9] And when those beasts *give glory and honour and thanks* to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever,

[10] The *four and twenty elders fall down before him* that sat on the throne, and *worship him* that liveth for ever and ever, and *cast their crowns before the throne*, saying,

[11] *Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.*

David sang this hymn for us today also. This is the second hymn we find in the book of Revelation.

Revelation 6: 9-11

[9] And when he had opened the fifth seal, *I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held:*

[10] And they *cried with a loud voice*, saying, *How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and **avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?***

[11] And *white robes* were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should *rest* yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.

Revelation 7:9-17

[9] After this I beheld, and, lo, *a great multitude, which no man could number*, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues,

These are Jews and Gentiles martyred in the Tribulation period.

stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;

[10] And *cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.*

[11] And all the *angels* stood round about the throne, and about the *elders* and the *four beasts*, and *fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God*,

[12] Saying, Amen: *Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.*

Here we have another outburst of praise to God.

[13] And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, *What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?*

[14] And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, *These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.*

*[15] Therefore are **they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.***

[16] They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.

*[17] For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne **shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.***

Revelation 19:1-10 and read of more praises to God.

*[1] And after these things I heard a **great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God:***

*[2] For **true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand.***

This great whore of Revelation is likely a religious opponent to the Lord. In scripture adultery often refers to not physical, but spiritual adultery associated with the worship of other gods. That is the case here.

*[3] And again they said, **Alleluia.** And her smoke rose up for ever and ever.*

*[4] And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and **worshipped God** that sat on the throne, saying, **Amen; Alleluia.***

*[5] And a voice came out of the throne, saying, **Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great.***

*[6] And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, **Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.***

[7] Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.

[8] And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.

This bride of Christ is the church, those who have trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior. This is that great mystery described in Ephesians 5.

Revelation 19:11-16

*[11] And I saw heaven opened, and **behold** a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.*

*[12] His **eyes were as a flame of fire**, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself.*

*[13] And he was clothed with a vesture **dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God.***

*[14] And the **armies which were in heaven** followed him **upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.***

[15] And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of

Almighty God.

*[16] And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, **KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.***

Again we must stop our study here for today. Next time, we'll complete our look into heaven, exploring the appearance of the new heaven and new earth and the magnificent city called the New Jerusalem.

We started our study today noting the wedding of a sports hero to a beautiful young bride. His signature brand "Air Jordan" recalls his uncanny ability to launch his body into the air (the first heaven) for about four seconds before succumbing to the forces of gravity. His new bride may bear him children who will become *heirs* to his profitable legacy business empire.

In contrast, we worship not just a man, but the God-man Himself, who is in the **real heaven** and whose **glory never fades** but shines **brighter than the sun**. He is **heir of all things** and we who know Him are joint-heirs with Him. His kingdom is **eternal**, and we will rule and reign with Him. The cheers of excitement for Michael Jordan are already long gone. We will praise our Lord forever and ever.

In our world, men worship the accomplishments of other men with great enthusiasm. In heaven, this form of worship will pale in comparison to the spontaneous and thankful eternal praise that will flow from the lips of all who gather around the throne of God. What a joyous time that will be.

Benediction

Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.