

Hymns: 43 Holy, Holy, Holy 9 His Eye Is on the Sparrow
I Can't Be at Home in This World Anymore

Scripture: Psalm 8

Big idea: Come Up Here

Have you noticed? Cameras are everywhere. It used to be news teams would rely on helicopters and vans to race to the scene to get the latest breaking story or traffic conditions. Today, from cameras in banks, stores, street corners, on everyone's smartphone, and even in your home, cameras see it all. In our house alone we have twelve plus Betsy has four in her car. The Central Broadcasting Network (CBS) has used an **eye** symbol for their logo for over seven decades. Today, we're going to encounter many more **eyes** in a very different place.

For seven weeks we traveled to cities in what is now western Turkey to visit the seven churches of Revelation chapters 2 and 3. Today, we will travel to heaven and get a glimpse of the place where God appears before His own. Let's get started.

We've arrived at Revelation chapter four. This is an important transition point. To understand that, we need to drop back and review the verse that gives the basic outline of the book of Revelation. Revelation 1 Jesus speaking to John says:

[19] Write the things which [y]ou ha[ve] seen,

Past

and the things which are,

Present

*and the things which shall be **hereafter**;*

Future

You may recall, John saw the glorified Christ in chapter one. That was his recent **past**. Next, he saw the **present** state of the church in his day **represented** by letters to seven churches in chapters 2 and 3. And finally, John now transitions to writing about events that from his vantage point (as well as ours today) that describe **future** events.

The term *hereafter* in chapter 1 comes from the Greek phrase *meta tauta* – which means *after these things*. That phrase is important because we shall see it used twice in Revelation 4:1. But before we look into the details of the chapter, let's sit back and experience the words as they are. The chapter consists of just eleven verses that contain a wealth of imagery. Notice particularly the nouns that color this text.

Revelation 4

[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 sh[o]w [you] things which must be **hereafter**.

[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** and **a sardine stone**: 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**.

[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.

[9] And when those **beasts** give

glory
and honour
and thanks

to him that sat on the **throne**,
who live[s] for ever and ever,

[10] The four and twenty elders

f[ell] down before him that sat on the **throne**,

*and worship him that live[s] 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.*

Did you notice all of those references to the the word *throne*? It appears nine times in this short passage. Now, let's break this down and understand what we just read.

[1] After this (meta tauta)

After what?

Recall we just finished our study of Revelation chapters 2 and 3. Those two chapters contained the letters of Jesus to the seven churches. These were real churches at the time John penned this book.

*I looked, and, behold, **a door** was opened **in heaven**:*

Where is heaven?

The Bible speaks of three heavens:

1. The atmosphere – where the birds fly.
2. Outer space – where the stars and planets are.
3. Third heaven -- where the **throne** of God is.

As we shall see in the next verse, this verse refers to the third heaven – the place where God makes His presence known.

What's the point of the door? The door symbolizes access. John has received an invitation to enter into the third heaven – the place we normally think of when we hear the word *heaven*.

*and the first **voice** which I heard was as it were of **a trumpet** talking with me;*

You may recall this voice like a trumpet before in Revelation 1.

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

of a trumpet,

We learned that this voice came from the LORD Jesus Christ. He speaks to John and says:

*which said, **Come up hither,***

What is about to be described in chapters 6 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. Many Bible scholars who espouse the pre-Tribulation rapture believe this “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.

The claim is that this call and John's response symbolize the rapture or catching up of the church to heaven. They argue that the word *church* appears 19 times in the first three chapters of Revelation but is nowhere to be found until the last chapter of the book (Revelation 22:16). It is also referenced as the bride of Christ when it reappears at the marriage supper of the Lamb right before the second coming of Christ (Revelation 19:7-9), in the description of the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:2, 9), and finally at the end (Revelation 22:16).

Regardless of the merit of this observation, this scripture does not explicitly make that link. Therefore, we need not rely on this **speculation** to support our belief of the pre-Tribulation rapture. Instead, we use clear, explicit statements in scripture:

Jacobs trouble	(Jeremiah 30:7)
Not appointed to wrath	(1 Thessalonians 1:10; 5:9; Revelation 3:10; 6:17)
Will be caught up	(1 Thessalonians 4:16-17)
Will be changed	(1 Corinthians 15:51-52)
Comfort one another	(1 Thessalonians 4:18)

1 Thessalonians 4

[13] But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.

[14] For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

[15] For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.

[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.

[18] Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

Finally, the other point to keep in mind regarding the rapture of the church is that it can happen at any moment. Nothing needs to be fulfilled before the rapture. With that interlude, let's return to our scripture.

and I will sh[o]w [you] things which must be **hereafter** (*meta tauta*).

Note the second reference to *hereafter* in the same verse. The text makes it crystal clear that the words that follow speak of the future from John's perspective.

[2] And **immediately I was in the spirit**:

What does John mean here when he says he was *in the spirit*? This phrase occurs four times in the book of Revelation. We saw it in the first chapter (Revelation 1:10), we see it here, and in Revelation 17:3 and Revelation 21:10. The references refer to actions that cannot be done in a physical body. He must not be limited by the flesh to proceed.

Further insight comes from the apostle Paul's account where he also was transported into the third heaven. In his case, he said he couldn't tell whether he was in the body or out of the body (in the spirit) (2 Corinthians 12:2-3).

and, **behold, a throne** was set in heaven, and one sat on the **throne**.

Who is this one sitting on the throne? Is it Jesus Christ, God the Father, or an angel? We learned in Revelation 1:4-5 this is God the Father.

[3] And he that sat was to look upon like **a jasper** and **a sardine stone**: 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** [**thrones**]: and upon the seats [**thrones**] I saw **four and twenty elders sitting**, clothed in **white raiment** [given to overcomers (Revelation 3:5)]; and they had on their heads [victor] **crowns of gold**.

[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**.

We learned previously, the seven Spirits of God refers to (or **represents**) the Holy Spirit in all of His fullness.

[6] *And before the **throne** there was **a sea of glass** like unto crystal:*

Some Bible expositors speculate here that since elsewhere in scripture and later in this book of Revelation the word *sea* refers to the *sea of humanity*, that we should make that connection here.

Rather than speculate, our hermeneutic tells us:

When plain sense makes sense, seek no other sense.

Does it really make more sense to say before the throne is a sea of humanity that is glass that looks like crystal or just to take the words as they are given? We will opt to just take the words as they we see them.

*and in the midst of the **throne**,
and round about the **throne**,
were **four beasts full of eyes** before and behind.*

The word *beast* here is *zo'-on* in the Greek. It means *animal* or *living being*. (<https://www.blbclassic.org/lang/lexicon/Lexicon.cfm?Strongs=G2226&t=KJV> accessed July 31, 2025)

Notice the similarity to our word *zoo*. Note too that they were *full of eyes before and behind*. These eyes likely symbolize the ability of these creatures to see everywhere as God or for God.

[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**.*

These four beings appear to **represent** all creation as we shall see in the next chapter: wild animals, domestic animals, mankind, and flying or swimming creatures.

[8] *And the four beasts
had each of them **six wings** about him;
and they were **full of eyes** within:*

Here are more eyes – now on the top and bottom of these creature's wings.

and they **rest not** day and night,
saying,

Here comes the first poem or song of praise recorded in Revelation:

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty,
which
was,
past
and is,
present
and is to come.
future

We sang the hymn *Holy, Holy, Holy* just a few minutes ago. This is the first of many 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;

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

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

We need to pause and mention here a vision recorded in Ezekiel 1. He saw very similar creatures also with **lots of eyes** around the throne (Ezekiel 1:26) of God. He too saw a rainbow there (Ezekiel 1:28). These creatures had four faces so they had no need to turn (Ezekiel 1:12) to see in any direction. They moved on “wheels” that did not turn (Ezekiel 1:17). We learn that the calf is actually an ox (Ezekiel 1:10). Ezekiel 10:20 tells us that these creatures were cherubim – a type of angel.

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

What follows is the second poem or song of praise recorded in Revelation:

*[11] Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive
glory
and honour
and power:*

Why?

*for thou
hast created all things,
and for thy pleasure they are
and were created.*

But wait a minute. Exactly who are these twenty-four elders. We will learn in Revelation chapter five that they **represent** raptured New Testament saints. These 24 symbolize the millions that will be raptured. They are in a bit of an odd state since these saints have not fully received their position as the Bride which will happen in Revelation 19.

Application

So before we go, let's stop and ponder where we've just been. We've been to heaven! We saw more **representative** images – just as we saw the seven churches of chapters 2 and 3 represent churches as they are even today. We saw:

1. Seven lamps of fire representing the Holy Spirit.
2. Four angels representing God's creatures.
3. Twenty-Four elders representing raptured saints.

All of this plays out in a setting of glory, spectacular beauty, and grandeur before Almighty God. How thrilling is that. We have glimpsed into the place we who know Him will be for eternity.

Benediction

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen (Revelation 22:21).