Entering the Throne Room of God
Revelation 4:1-11

The apostle John had an experience given to only a few—an open door to heaven; prior to John was Isaiah who said he saw, “The Lord sitting on His throne, high and lifted up…” (6:1); Ezekiel writes that “The heavens were opened and I saw visions of God” (1:1); when Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist, Scripture says, “the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him…” (Matthew 3:16); the Apostle Paul speaks of a man, undoubtedly speaking of himself, “who was caught up into the third heaven and heard inexpressible words that was not lawful for him to utter” (2 Corinthians 12:1-4).

In chapter 4, following the Church ages, John is transported to heaven in a symbolic rapture; this is not the rapture, but it does help us to know when the rapture takes place; Revelation begins with the seven churches of Asia Minor depicting seven ages of Church history; this is followed by John being transported into heaven where he learns about the events of the Great Tribulation followed by the return of Christ to the earth, His millennial reign, the final judgment of the unbelievers, and the New Jerusalem when eternity begins; the point is: the Great Tribulation follows the Church age which seems to suggest that the Church will escape the Tribulation.

The Way to Heaven (4:1-2)

*The door to heaven*... “After these things I looked and behold a door standing open in heaven... (4:1a); After the messages to the seven churches a door that leads from heaven to earth was opened.

*The direction from Christ*... “And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, ‘Come up here and I will show you things which must take place after this’” (4:1b).
What John is going to see is God preparing for judgment on an unredeemed world that has rejected His Son and persecuted His covenant people—not only His Church but the nation of Israel; this judgment scene begins in chapter six through nineteen.

*The deliverance of John before God’s throne*... “Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne” (4:2).

In the Greek text there is no definite article before the word “Spirit”; it should read “Immediately I was in spirit”; therefore the word “spirit” most likely should not be capitalized; rather John is having an out-of-the-body experience; in his spirit he left his body and immediately entered the throne room of God; death is described as the spirit separated from the body (James 2:26).

“Immediately,” referring to the “twinkling of an eye” (1 Corinthians 15:52); the rapture of the Church is depicted in this way; it will happen so quickly it cannot be seen.

**The Wonder of the Throne Room of God (4:2-7)**

We now come to a series of prepositions that speak of the throne in heaven; “throne” is mentioned 45 times in Revelation and only 15 times in the rest of the NT.

*On the throne*... “One sat on the throne...” (4:2b); that is God the Father (5:6-7); He was “like a jasper and sardius stone in appearance...” (4:3a).

This is a picture of the glory of God; jasper is a clear stone like a diamond; it was the last stone on the breastplate of the high priest (Exodus 28:20); it represented the tribe of Benjamin, meaning “the son of My right hand”; that would be a reference to Christ, who as God’s Son, sits at the right hand of God (Matthew 25:31; Acts 7:56; Romans 8:34).

The sardian stone is blood red and depicts God’s sacrificial act by His Son to save mankind from sin; it was the first stone on the breastplate of the high priest (Exodus 28:17) and it represented the tribe of Reuben meaning “behold a Son”; the first and last stone could refer the Christ as the beginning and the end of all things (1:8); while God the Father is on the throne, His relationship with His Son is so close they cannot be separated; the Father emanates the glory of His Son; this is evidence of His deity.


Around the throne... “There was a rainbow around the throne, in appearance like an emerald. Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads” (4:3b-4).

1. The presence of 24 elders... There is a rainbow of emerald around the throne; a unique rainbow; not multicolored; a symbol of God’s mercy and faithfulness to His covenant people.

Also, around the throne are twenty-four thrones and sitting on them are twenty-four elders clothed in garments of white with crowns on their heads; white garment are the garments of the saints (Revelation 19:8); the number 24 could represent the 24 courses of priests that served at the temple (1 Chronicles 24:5-19); this number could represent the whole church in heaven as elders were representatives of the local congregations (Titus 1:5; Acts 15:6; 20:28; 1 Peter 2:5, 9); OT and NT saints in heaven.

2. The purpose of the crowns..... The elders had crowns on their heads; the crowns are rewards for service well done; let’s see if we can understand what John sees; there is a passage which has caused great concern to many Christians; it is 2 Corinthians 5:10 where Paul writes: “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each may receive what is due for the things done while in the body whether good or bad”; the immediate picture most of us have in hearing that is that we are going to stand before Jesus and we are going to see a video of our life flash before us—the good as well as the bad; or if not a video, Jesus will talk to me about the good things I have done and then remind me of all the sin that was in my life; and those sins will be paraded before the world.

The good news is, that is not what the text is teaching; there are several words in the Greek that can be translated “bad”; some of those refer to what is morally bad or sinful; the word used in the text (kakos) refers to something that is worthless; it would be like saying, “The fruit I bought was bad”; that doesn’t mean the fruit was morally bad, but rather it was worthless.

That is what Paul is teaching in 2 Corinthians 5:10; we as believers are going to stand before the judgment seat of Christ—called the bema seat: it is where we will be judged, not for our sins, but for the works we have done for Jesus; some will receive rewards for having done works that were of value to the cause of Christ; then there are works that we have done that were worthless and those works will be burned up.
The reason the bema seat is not a time when Jesus will remind us of our sins is because in Christ we are beyond any condemnation; hear Paul, “There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit” (Romans 8:1); Christ took all our sin upon Himself on the cross and that sin is gone forever!

At the bema seat rewards will be given according to the value of one’s works; if one’s works were worthless—had no value, his “work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet as through fire” (1 Corinthians 3:15); this is not a reference to purgatory as Catholics teach; rather it is a way of saying that such a one barely makes it into heaven; such a one can be likened to a burning stick snatched from the fire.

So there will be reward given to those who have faithfully served the Lord; those who have done nothing, yet just barely made it will go without reward; I suppose there will be a lot of embarrassed people in heaven.

3. The problem over rewards...The subject of rewards is much misunderstood; someone does a sweet and thoughtful deed for another and someone will say to them, “Well, the Lord is going to reward you for that”; and that person will say, “Oh, no, no, no, I’m not doing this for reward. I don’t want any reward.”

I’ve heard people say, “All I want to do is get to heaven. I don’t care about the rewards.” Others think that God offers rewards as His way of motivating us to live a holy life and do good works for Him.

4. The particulars about the rewards... What are the rewards? Scripture speaks of them in terms of crowns; whether they are literal crowns or not, I don’t know; the point is God wants to reward you for being a faithful servant; when John is taken into the throne room of God he sees 24 elders representing the Church in heaven each with a crown; and they are worshipping Him who sits on the throne; then they cast their crowns before the throne, saying: “You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory honor and power: for you created all thing...” (4:11).

Some people get the idea that the rewards are temporary; they cast their crowns before the Lord and that is all there is to it; I do not believe that is the case; if you look at verse 9 it begins “whenever”; it says whenever the 24 elders worship God, they cast their crowns before His throne; that does not indicate a once for all action;
instead, it indicates that they put their crowns at God’s feet each time they worship Him.

Peter tells us that the crown of glory will never fade away (1 Peter 5:4); if these crowns are temporary, how can Peter say their glory will never fade; I believe every time we approach the throne to worship our God we will be wearing our crowns and we will be casting them at the feet of Him who sits on the throne; it is all part of heavenly worship!

Don’t be one of those people who just want to get to heaven and don’t care about the rewards; we will worship the Lord in heaven; we will demonstrate how much we appreciate Him saving us; if you have no reward to cast before, what will you offer Him?

5. The prize of the crowns… What are these crowns? There are five different crowns mentioned in Scripture; each crown is a reward for a specific work or service done for Christ.

- The crown of life… James speaks of that crown in James 1:12: “Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love Him”; this was a promise from the Risen Lord to the church at Smyrna: “Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life” (2:10b); it is a crown given to those who endure trials for the Lord and remain faithful to Him; Jesus spoke of reward for those persecuted for their faith: “Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you” (Matthew 5:11-12).

- The crown of righteousness… This is a crown for those who long for the appearance of the Lord; Paul wrote to Timothy: “I fought the good fight, I finished the race, I’ve kept the faith, and now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge will award to me on that day; but not to me only, but to all those who have longed for His appearing” (2 Timothy 4:8); Paul wrote those words near the end of his life when he knew he would die a martyr; many believers don’t even recognize the Second Coming of Christ, so obviously they are not longing for His appearance.

- The crown of glory… This is the shepherd’s crown given to faithful pastors and elders who have served the Lord by overseeing the flock; Peter says of
them: “... and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away” (1 Peter 5:4).

- The crown incorruptible... This crown is for those who have demonstrated self discipline in their service for the Lord; it is the person who has lived their life saying, “Not my will Lord, but Yours be done”; Paul spoke of this reward in terms of the disciple required in seeking victory while running a race; Paul put it like this: “Do you know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? So, run to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; we do it to get a crown that will last forever” (1 Corinthians 9:24-25). This crown is also called “the victor’s crown.”

- The crown of rejoicing... This is the soul winner’s crown; in 1 Thessalonians 2:19 Paul writes: “What is our hope? What is our joy? What is the crown in which we will glory in the presence of the Lord when He comes? Is it not you?” He is speaking of the people he brought to the Lord; this is a crown given to all who have won a soul to Christ and have prayed specifically for lost souls; Daniel spoke of a reward for those who win souls to Christ: “Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever” (Daniel 12:3).

There is also a reward given to those who are charitable toward those in need and do not trumpet their generosity to others; as Jesus said: “…that your charitable deeds may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly” (Matthew 6:4; see 6:1-4); this reward is never spoken of in terms of a crown.

As you look over these crowns, which ones do you expect the Lord to give to you? Don’t think that a selfish question; remember, you will use that crown or crowns in your eternal worship of God and His Son, Jesus Christ!

*From the throne*... “And from the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices. Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God” (4:5).

The lightnings, thunderings and voices speak of judgment that will fall on the earth during the Tribulation; the seven lamps depict the sevenfold ministry of the Holy Spirit; this is identified in Isaiah 11:2-3: rest, wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, knowledge, fear of the LORD; the LXX eliminates “rest” and adds “piety”.
**Before the throne...** “Before the throne there was a sea of glass, like crystal...” (4:6a). The sea of glass reflected the glory of God, but also became a separation barrier between God and the rest of His creation; God is so holy that even in heaven there is separation between God and His creation; He is too brilliant in light and glory to get close to; yet we will see Him; when Moses received the Ten Commandments the second time he came down from Mount Sinai and his face did shine from being in the presence of God’s glory (Exodus 34:29-35).

**In and around the throne...** “…and in the midst of the throne, and a round the throne were four living creatures full of eyes in front and in back. The first living creature was like a lion, the second living creature like a calf or ox (NIV), the third living creature had the face like a man, and the fourth living creature was like a flying eagle. The four living creatures each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within...” (4:6b-8a);

These creatures are in and around the throne; they seem to be in motion; they are very much like Ezekiel’s description of cherubs moving around the throne of God (Ezekiel 1).

These angels depict different aspects necessary to minister to the saints of God and to serve Him; the lion demonstrates strength and majesty (Amos 3:8), the calf or ox demonstrates patience and labor (Proverbs 14:4), the man, intelligence (Genesis 1:26-27), the eagle, speed, sovereignty and supremacy (Psalm 91:4); each one has eyes all around and within demonstrating scrutiny, knowledge, awareness.

Christ, in the four gospels, has been depicted in these animals: Matthew has Jesus as the lion of Judah, King of beasts; Mark has Jesus as the ox or the servant of man; Luke has Jesus as Man who dwelt among us in the flesh; John has Jesus as the eagle depicting His deity.

These angels are going to assist God in bringing judgment; in Matthew 13 Jesus tells the parable of the wheat and tares; the tares will grow alongside the wheat until the time of harvest; at that time there is separation, the wheat is gathered and put in the barn, the tares are bundled and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the day of judgment as the righteous are separated from the lawless and they will be cast into the furnace of fire; then Jesus says: “The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth” (Matthew 13:41-42).
In Matthew 25:31-32 you have the coming of the Lord; the text says: “When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on His throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another; as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats”; the angels are very involved in judgment; in Matthew 24:30-31, we read that when “the Son of Man comes in the clouds with power and great glory, He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.” Here the angels are involved in rescuing the saved at the time of His coming!

The Worship Toward the Throne (4:8-11)

*The praise of the four living creatures toward the throne...* “The four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they did not rest day or night, saying: ‘“Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come!” Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever...” (4:8-9).

The Father is the One on the throne, yet there is praise for Him as the One “who is to come”; how does the Father come to earth but in the Person of Jesus Christ; remember, Jesus said, “I and My Father are one” (John 10:30).

These angels are continuously praising, glorifying and honoring God; each one has six wings; Isaiah tells us that the cherub he saw praising God covered their faces with two of their wings because they could not look on the fullness of God’s holiness without being consumed; with two they covered their feet for the ground on which they stood was holy; with two they hover ready to serve (Isaiah 6:2); yet worship was their primary duty—non-stop day and night.

This brings us to one more incredible feature: we have seen the One who is on the throne, those around the throne, what comes from the throne, what is before the throne, what is in and around the throne, now we come to the final preposition: *toward the throne*

Toward the throne is worship; the worship begins with the words “holy, holy, holy” and moves to an oratorio of praise that goes all the way to the end of chapter five; all together there are five hymns of praise that speak of the holiness of God and the redemption of man.
The first chorus of praise emphasizes the holiness of God—there is none like Him; He is supremely different than His creation and for that reason He is worthy of worship.

The participation of the twenty-four elders... “...the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne saying: ‘You are worthy, O Lord to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created’” (4:10-11).

The four living creatures are now joined by the 24 elders; twenty-eight voices lifted in praise as the elders “cast their crowns before the throne” as they continue singing about God’s worthiness, glory, honor and power as demonstrated in His creation of all things.

The crowns are symbolic of rewards given for faithful service, but the elders do not feel right in holding on to their rewards when they fall before the throne; his picture may come from the ancient world as one of complete surrender; when one king surrendered to another king, he cast his crown at the victor’s feet; the scene is a picture of God as the conqueror of the souls of men, and the Church as a body of people who have surrendered to God and have accepted Him as their Master and Lord; it is a picture of all the angels along with the Old Testament saints and the complete Church of the Lord Jesus Christ offering praise to the one who sits on the throne; this praise begins by acknowledging God’s holiness; then His omnipotence, then His worthiness, then His honor, and finally His everlastingness! This all culminates in falling before Him in total surrender! Heaven is a place of endless praise. Amen!