

Revelation 4 – I Am Coming Quickly

Vision of God

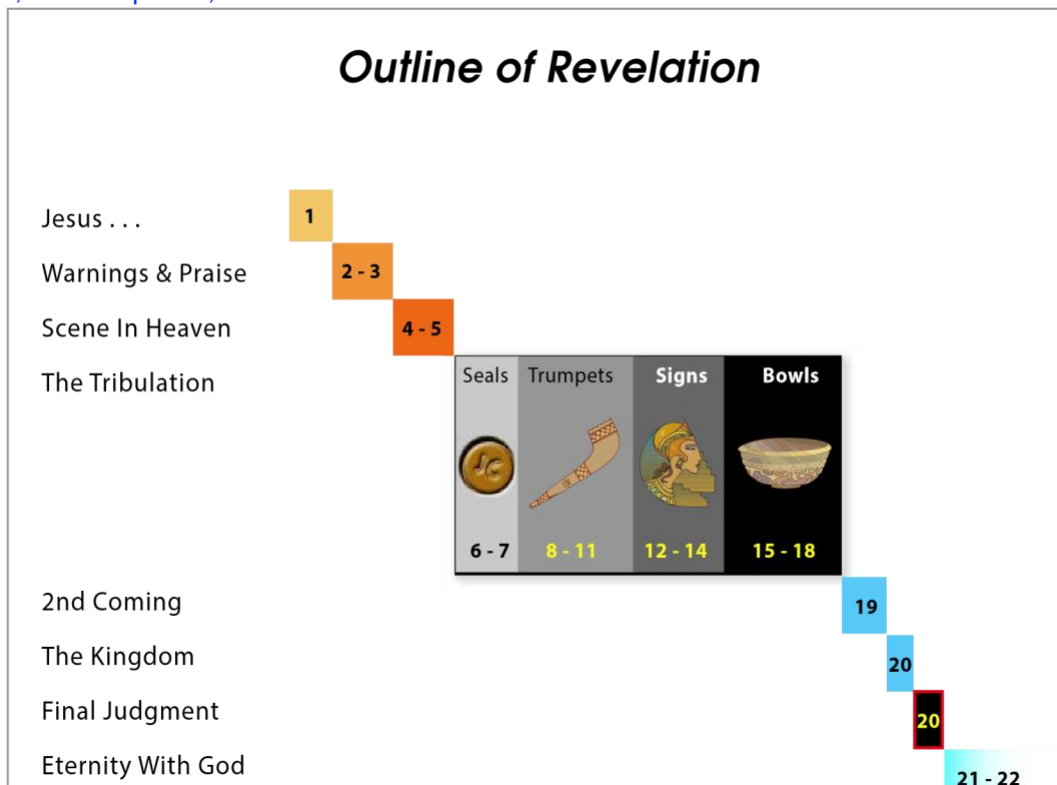
Have you ever heard someone say, “I died and saw a great light, and then came back to life”? Have you ever wondered if this is actually true? If so, what does it mean? Why did it happen? There is a man who has written a book about his near-death experience (NDE). In the book the author writes that he died when his pickup fell on him off a jack. He was crushed to death. He claims he was “dead” for about 15 minutes before returning to life. He says that while he was “dead” he traveled through a tunnel and saw the “Light of God.” He said that God sent him back to tell humanity that God loves and accepts everyone without any conditions. His claim is that he saw Jesus and was able to ask Him many questions. However, it soon becomes obvious that the “Jesus” he supposedly talked with **was not the Jesus** of the Bible. His “Jesus” says that we are all a part of God, and therefore we are all gods. Let’s be clear, Jesus did not teach that everyone is a part of God, nor did He teach that we are gods. Jesus never said that everyone would go to heaven, in fact Jesus said the opposite. This man did not see God. He saw something else. **(What does the Bible say about NDEs?)**

Heavenly Vision. The Apostle John actually does see God, but John was alive - not dead. He did not have an NDE. The apostle had a different experience. He saw God in a vision.

you what must take place after this." ² Immediately I was in the Spirit, and there was a throne in heaven, and someone was seated on it. (Rev. 4:1-2 CSB)

After this I looked, and there in heaven was an open door. The first voice that I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, "Come up here, and I will show

The Holy Spirit gave the apostle a vision of heaven, a throne, and of One sitting on the throne. The One sitting on the throne is none other than God. There are also others around the throne.



Revelation 2-3 are about the past. Most evangelical scholars believe that the rapture will occur before the Tribulation. Based upon the timeline of Revelation it must then occur between Revelation 3 and 4 because Revelation 4 is the start of the Tribulation period and is a **PATTERN FOR WORSHIP**. What we are seeing here Rev. 4 and 5 are the events which will **OCCUR IN HEAVEN** before the **TRIBULATION** starts.

Throne Room. In his vision, the apostle sees the One sitting on the throne, twenty-four elders, and four creatures sitting around the throne.

³ The one seated there had the appearance of jasper and sardius stone. A rainbow that had the appearance of an emerald surrounded the throne.

⁴ Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones sat twenty-four elders dressed in white clothes, with golden crowns on their heads. (Rev. 4:3-4 CSB)

The One sitting on the throne is God the Father—the first person of the Trinity. The apostle does not describe Him as merely light. (Yes, God is light; but He is more than that.) He is like a jasper and sardius stone with an emerald rainbow surrounding Him.

Revelation 21:11 says that a jasper stone was a crystal-clear stone. We are not sure, but it sounds like a diamond. The sardius stone was named after the city of Sardius and was

ruby red in color. A diamond and red ruby— Just imagine how God must look with the emerald rainbow. God is surrounded by an emerald rainbow with flashes of lightning and sounds of thunder. [These 3 stones jasper/diamond, sardius, and emerald were on the breastplate of the high priest (Ex. 28:17-19).

⁵ Flashes of lightning and rumblings and peals of thunder came from the throne. (CSB) ... Rev. 4:5

What an amazing vision of God! This centrality of everything around God emphasizes that this is



SANCTUARY WORSHIP in heaven. The **Twenty-four Elders** surrounding God are **CHRISTIANS** from the New Testament church. We do not know who they are, but we do know that they are saints or “holy ones” because they are clothed in white

clothes. God had promised those who attended two of the seven churches (Sardius and Laodicea) that if they responded to His warnings they would be clothed in white (Rev. 3:5, 18). Later in our study (Rev. 7:9, 13 and Rev. 19:14), we will discover that the ones who are clothed in white robes are believers.

⁴ Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones sat twenty-four elders dressed in white clothes, with golden crowns on their heads. (Rev. 4:4 CSB)

The crowns indicate that God has given these twenty-four elders **AUTHORITY**. These elders appear in the book of Revelation throughout the Tribulation. When the Tribulation ends, they will disappear from the heavenly scene because Jesus' kingdom will now be established on the earth. When the earthly kingdom is established, all Christians will reign with Christ (Rev. 20:6) for 1,000 years. This is the promise that Paul tells us about (2 Tim. 2:12). This is a wonderful reminder that we are joint-heirs or fellow heirs with Christ (Rom. 8:17).

We will share in Jesus' inheritance.

Seven fiery torches before God represent the **HOLY SPIRIT** (Rev. 1:4).

Seven fiery torches were burning before the throne, which are the seven spirits of God. (Rev. 4:5 CSB)

Where is Christ? So far, we have seen God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. Just two members of the Trinity.

Is the Holy Spirit God? Acts 5:3-4 gives us the answer when we read,

But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit, and to keep back some of the price of the land? While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not under your control? Why is it that you have

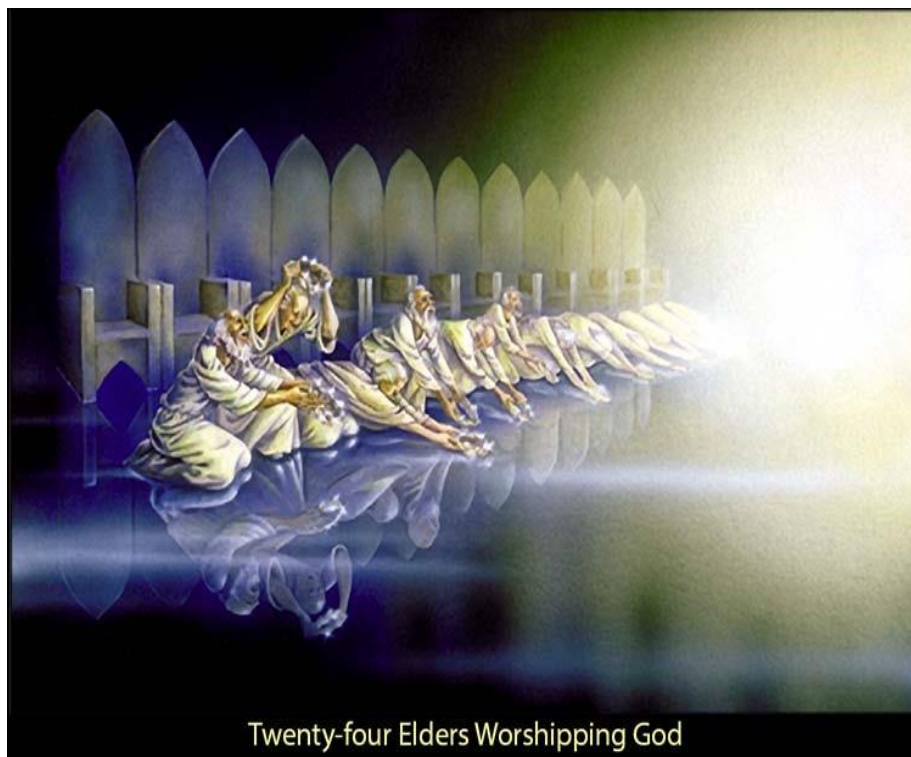
conceived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men, but to God." (Acts 5:3-4 CSB)

The Apostle Peter says that Ananias lied to the Holy Spirit and then later added that Ananias lied to God. He lied to the Holy Spirit who is God. So, we have seen two members of the Trinity. **Jesus will arrive in the next chapter.**

Four Creatures. Next, we discover that there are four very special beings before the throne of God.

⁶ Something like a sea of glass, similar to crystal, was also before the throne. Four living creatures covered with eyes in front and in back were around the throne on each side. ⁷ The first living creature was like a lion; the second living creature was like an ox; the third living creature had a face like a man; and the fourth

living creature was like a flying eagle. ⁸ Each of the four living creatures had six wings; they were covered with eyes around and inside. Day and night they never stop, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God, the Almighty, who was, who is, and who is to come. (Rev. 4:6-8 CSB)



Twenty-four Elders Worshipping God

The four living creatures are

ANGELS. Cherubim are described in Ezekiel 1:5-25 and in Ezekiel 10:1-22. **Cherubim** have four wings (Ezekiel 10:8, 20-21) and **Seraphim** have six wings (Isa. 6:2-3). **The faces of the four creatures are like the faces of the cherubim and their wings are like the wings of the seraphim.** This is the only place in scripture where the four living creatures are described.

Compare Ezekiel 1:26-28 to see that John is in the **TRUE TEMPLE** in heaven, the pattern for Moses' tabernacle (**Ex. 25:40.**) The throne/mercy-seat, 7 fiery torches/7 branched lamp, 4 living creature/4 Cherubim, Sea of Glass/Bronze Sea.

Glory To God. I wonder how the apostle responded to what he saw. The apostle does not describe a tunnel of light or a great light. He does not describe a human being with great powers as some have us believe. He does not say that we are part of god and 'yet all Gods.'" He did not say that God is some mysterious force. No! John describes two Persons of the Trinity – God the Father and God the Holy Spirit.

In response the four living creatures repeated and repeated,

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God, the Almighty, who was, who is, and who is to come. (Rev. 4:8 CSB)

And the twenty-four elders worshipped too! Interestingly we read in 1 Chron. 24 that in Old Testament worship there were 24 divisions of **priests** and in 1 Chron. 25 there were 24 divisions of **singers**. This had been a feature in Jewish worship for a thousand years.

⁹ Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor, and thanks to the one seated on the throne, the one who lives forever and ever, ¹⁰ the twenty-four elders fall down before the one seated on the throne and worship the one who lives forever and ever. They cast their crowns before the throne and say, (Rev. 4:9-10 CSB) ¹¹ Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created. (Rev. 4:11 KJV)

They fell down before Him and gave away their crowns to the One who is worthy to be crowned. This is the response of a loving, grateful heart to a loving, forgiving, and glorious God! These elders have no pride and are not seeking glory. Now they really understand who deserves the glory. None of them are hanging on to their crowns. They cast them at the feet of God.

Conclusion. Some day when we come before God, we will finally and fully understand that God greatly loves us infinitely and without restraint.

God loves each one of us as if there were only one of us to love! - Augustine of Hippo

1. Does the Bible say anything about NDE? Yes: John 3:13 & John 1:18.
2. The Bible tells of Lazarus, widow's son in 1 Kings 17:17-24, and Eutychus in Acts 20:9-12. None of these recounted an NDE.
3. Revelation 4 is a _____ .
4. Rev. 4 and 5 occur _____ in heaven before the _____ starts.
5. Scriptures that teach about the rapture.
 - 1 Thess. 4:13-18
 - 1 Cor. 15:51-52
 - Matt. 24:36-42
 - Luke 17:20-37
6. The centrality of everything around God emphasizes that this is _____ in heaven.
7. The 24 elders surrounding God are _____.
8. The crowns indicate that God has given the 24 elders _____.
9. The 7 fiery torches represent the _____.
10. The 4 living creatures are _____.
11. John is in the _____ in heaven.