

## Revelation Chapter 4 Handout

### The Real Throne Room

*Intro: The early Christians had begun to understand themselves as belonging to a very different kingdom. This kingdom had a new king (Jesus Christ). This kingdom was eternal (God was alpha and omega). This kingdom possessed power (God is the Almighty). So now in order to help these new kingdom people deepen their faith and confidence in God they are invited to see for themselves the very throne room of God. In this way they gain a perspective on who is it that they worship and on his glory and majesty that are greater than that of Rome.*

1 After this I looked, and there in heaven a door stood open! And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this."

**Looked up:** *this is in reference to the cosmological understanding of heaven and earth. Heaven existed above the earth on the other side of the sky. This was not metaphor, this was their way of viewing the universe.*

**Door stood open:** *there was a literal way into heaven. Just as there had been visions of angels ascending and descending ladders into heaven, now a door was opened.*

**First voice like a trumpet:** *loud voice which one could not miss that makes pronouncements.*

**Come up:** *again a spatial reference of going up into heaven.*

**What must soon take place:** *the plans for the great battle and eventual restoration of the world are kept in heaven. They have not been revealed yet.*

1. How do you understand what it means for a door to heaven to be open?
2. How do you understand the idea of "What is to soon take place"?

2 At once I was in the spirit, and there in heaven stood a throne, with one seated on the throne!  
3 And the one seated there looks like jasper and carnelian, and around the throne is a rainbow that looks like an emerald.

**In the spirit:** *heaven was not a place that mortals could go. It was a spiritual (though very real) realm. So in order for John to be there he had to be spiritually transported.*

**Stood a throne:** *a vivid and real (not metaphorical) image. This was where God dwelt and God would indeed be on a throne. Those in the First Century would certainly identify with the image.*

**One seated on the throne:** *God was in his temple and all was well. God is not gone, meaning out of touch. God is present and accounted for. God is ruling and reigning.*

**And the one seated there looks:** *even for people in the First Century it would be difficult to imagine anything more glorious. There is imagery in the stones: jasper - is a stone of various colors (much like a rainbow); carnelian (bright red, very luminous); emerald (green - again very luminous). The rainbow then would be of a greenish tint and would be glowing - the rainbow representing God's promise not to wipe out humanity. Green often represented faithfulness and mercy... which would correspond with the rainbow.*

1. Since we no longer have kings and queens, how ought we to understand the idea of the throne in heaven?
2. Why all the references to jewels?
3. How would you describe God?

4 Around the throne are twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones are twenty-four elders, dressed in white robes, with golden crowns on their heads. 5 Coming from the throne are flashes of lightning, and rumblings and peals of thunder, and in front of the throne burn seven flaming torches, which are the seven spirits of God; 6 and in front of the throne there is something like a sea of glass, like crystal. Around the throne, and on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind:

*Twenty-four thrones: in the Roman empire there were smaller kingdoms and kings each of which gave their allegiance to Rome. Herod was just such a king. Here we have an image of those other kings/elders (meaning they have given an oath of allegiance to God) surrounding God.*

*Twenty-four elders: There are at least 13 different interpretations of the elders: who they are or who they represent. By the nature of the title, elder, we can assume they represent wisdom... which was the role of the elder. By the fact there are twenty four... we can assume they represent to some extent the wisdom of both the Old Testament (twelve tribes) and the "New Testament" (twelve apostles).*

White robes: Purity at its deepest level

*Golden Crowns: this is to signify again the idea of kingship which had been given to them by God and now they are giving their allegiance to the Almighty*

*Lightening: this is a reference to a theophony which is what happens when God comes near.*

*Seven torches/spirits: this goes back a chapter to be the very spirit of God the torches representing the seven churches which represent all the other churches.*

*Sea of glass: Glass was common in the first century. It has been estimated that during the 700 years of Roman rule, more than 13 billion pieces of glassware were made. They were usually used by the middle and lower classes. The idea of crystal means that it is reflective; the glory of God is being reflected. Usually the sea represents chaos and evil The Red sea, the sea in which Leviathan lives; but in heaven the sea is tranquil, and is no longer a threat. In heaven God has tamed even chaos itself. Also there was a sea in the Temple in Jerusalem.*

*Four living creatures: these are more of the heavenly entourage. Here you have more of what would normally be frightening creatures who work for God. God employs angels, men and creatures. They do God's work and the eyes represent the ability to see in all directions... to know what is going on.*

1. What feelings are evoked by the description of the throne room?
2. What portion of the description is most meaningful to you?

7 the first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with a face like a human face, and the fourth living creature like a flying eagle. 8 And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and inside.

*Lion: the lion was power and royal authority... like David who was the lion of Judah.*

Ox: *This was great strength*

Human face: *this is wisdom and spirituality*

Eagle: *this is swiftness of action*

*Together they embody the totality of God's power and ability. They are capable of carrying out whatever God desires of them. Their wings give them the ability to go anywhere... move in all six directions. These creatures are at God's beck and call to do his bidding and to give God information.*

1. What images would you use today to describe God's authority, strength, wisdom and action?
2. What symbols are there in our lives which are used in this way...to describe attributes of a person or entity?

Day and night without ceasing they sing,

"Holy, holy, holy,  
the Lord God the Almighty,  
who was and is and is to come."

Day and night...they: *this refers to the four living creatures. In Genesis animals could talk...remember the snake...and so in heaven even the creatures (and thus creation) can sing and praise God. This is right out of the Psalms where all of God's creation praises him.*

Sing: *this is the first of several choruses in Revelation. The first two hymns are to God, the next two to the Lamb and last one to both. Also each chorus grows in size and numbers.*

Holy, holy, holy: *the use of a term three times is the highest form of the term. This means God is absolute holiness. God is god and no one else...including Caesar. God is not even to be compared to anyone else.*

1. How has this image been used by hymn writers over the centuries?
2. What is your favorite hymn and why?

9 And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to the one who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever, 10 the twenty-four elders fall before the one who is seated on the throne and worship the one who lives forever and ever; they cast their crowns before the throne, singing,

11 "You are worthy, our Lord and God,  
to receive glory and honor and power,  
for you created all things,  
and by your will they existed and were created."

Whenever...give glory: *if we are to believe the image then that is 24/7. These is not a time when God is not receiving praise, which would be appropriate for the creator of the universe.*

Fall down: *the elders who their allegiance to the king in such a way as they cannot stand in his presence. They fall in reverent praise.*

*Cast their crowns: this means they do not believe themselves worthy to even rule and reign with God. It is God alone who directs their actions.*

*Were created: this again returns to the very Jewish idea of God as creator and disposer of all things. All of creation is his, in heaven and on earth. Surely if God reigns in this way in heaven even more does he have power over the earth. In the end, all that exists only exists because of God's will.*

1. How do you give glory, honor and thanks to God?
2. Why is God the one who is worthy to be praised?
3. What are some other reasons to give God glory, honor and praise?