A Trip to Heaven, Part 1

[Revelation 4:1-3](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Rev%204.1-3)

Pastor Bill Farrow

**4** After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. 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.”

2Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne. 3And He who sat there was like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, in appearance like an emerald.

# Intro

## Many Modern Visions Claimed

* Chapter 4 takes us on a trip to heaven.
* It should be a welcome visit for any of us. In fact, as I noted as I read several of the books I’ve read on the current Charismatic Chaos, there are a bevy of people who claim to have visited heaven.
* Dr. Percy Collett, for example, a Charismatic medical missionary devised an extensive series of detailed messages on heaven.
* They were all drawn from what he claims to have been his extraordinary person experience.
* Collett claimed that in 1982 he was transported to heaven for five and a half days.
* He says he saw Jesus who was supervising the building of mansions there and he claims he was able to speak face-to-face with the Holy Spirit.
* If I may add a parenthetical statement, it's very difficult to speak face to face with any spirit.
* Further a newsletter rhapsodically detailing Dr. Collett's journey to heaven began, incredibly, with these words, quoting him:

While Christianity abounds with accounts of glimpses of the "other" dimension from those who have had "out of body" experiences, Dr. Collett's is unlike these. Obviously he was "caught up in the third heaven" even as Paul was. The difference began, Paul was not allowed to utter the things he saw and heard, while Dr. Collett, almost 2000 years later, was commanded to do so.

* Collett offers videotapes detailing his sojourn in heaven, and his accounts are peculiar indeed. Quote:

"Everything God created upon the earth is in heaven--horses, cats, dogs. Everything that He created upon earth is in heaven--in the way of animals, only these are perfect. For example, the dogs do not bark...You don't need plumbing, You can go to the Banqueting House and eat all you want and no plumbing is needed,".

* Collett...Collett describes quote

"The Pity Department, the place where the souls of aborted babies go, and also some severely retarded babies, and it is here these little souls are trained for a period of time before they go before the Throne of God."

* He claims he also saw the Record Room,

"An immense area where all the `idle' words spoken by Christians are being retained until the Christians give an account of them or are judged, at which time these will be emptied into the Sea of Forgetfulness."

* Collett describes what he calls
* a "Garment Room" where angels are sewing our robes, a place where mansions under construction,
* a "Holy Ghost elevator," and
* many other astonishing sights. He adds one macabre detail,
* He goes on…

"While I was traveling back to earth, I saw two girls, one brunette and one a red-head. We stopped to talk to them--their soul bodies--on the way back. We asked them what had happened to them. They indicated they had gotten killed in a car accident on a California highway. Their bodies (physical) were in a funeral home. They said their mother was weeping over them, so would I please tell her."

* So, apparently, he was having conversations as he was moving back to earth.
* Another up-and-coming young leader in the Charismatic Movement is Roberts Liardon,
* says he took an extensive tour of heaven as an eight-year-old,
* supposedly with Jesus as his personal guide.
* He recalls,
* "Many people have asked me what Jesus looks like.
* He's five-feet-eleven to six-feet tall.
* He's got sandy-brown hair. It's not too long, it's not too short.
* He's a perfect man.
* Whatever you picture as a perfect man, that's what Jesus is.
* He's perfect in everything, the way He looks, talks, everything, that's the way I remember Him.
* "We walked a little farther.
* This is the most important part of my story. I saw three storage houses, 500 to 600 yards from the Throne Room of God.
* They're very long and very wide.
* We walked into the first, as Jesus shut the front door behind us I looked around the interior in shock.
* On one side of the building were arms, fingers and other exterior parts of the body.
* Legs hung from the wall, but the scene looked natural, not weird.
* On the other side of the building were shelves filled with neat little packages of eyes...green ones, brown ones, blue ones, etc.
* "This building contained all the parts of the human body that people on earth need.
* But they haven't realized these blessings are waiting for them in heaven and they're for saints and sinners alike.
* Jesus said to me,
* These are the unclaimed blessings.
* This building should not be full,
* it should be emptied every single day.
* You could come in here with faith and get the needed parts for you and the people you'll come in contact with that day,'"
* Liardon describes many other incredible sights he witnessed in heaven,
* the river of life,
* a stadium full of people who he says were the cloud of witnesses spoken of in [Hebrews 12:1](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Heb%2012.1),
* and a medicine cabinet with pill bottles labeled "Peace and overdose of the Holy Ghost."
* Here is Liardon's description of what took place at the River of Life, quote:
* "Jesus and I visited a branch of the River of Life.
* This river was knee deep and crystal clear.
* We took off our shoes and got in.
* And do you know the first thing Jesus did to me?
* He dunked me. I got back up and splashed Him and we had a water fight.
* We splashed each other and laughed.
* That meant something to me for the King of glory, the Son of God to take time out for a little eight-year-old Roberts and dunk him in the River of Life.
* "When I get back to heaven I'm going to put up a historical marker on that spot.
* It's going to say, `This is the spot where Jesus Christ because not only my Lord and Savior but my Friend.' Yes, He became my friend and now we walk and talk together.
* When I hear a good joke I can run to Jesus and listen to Him laugh at it.
* When He gets a good one He tells me."
* Liardon also claims that while in heaven he was ordained to the ministry by Jesus Himself.
* We walked a while and were quiet then Jesus turned around,
* took both my hands in one of His,
* placed His other hand on top of my head and said,
* "Roberts, I'm calling you to a great work.
* You'll have to run like no one else,
* preach like no one else,
* be different from everyone else,
* go, go, go like no one else has gone,
* go and do as I have done."
* Liardon's trip to heaven supposedly happened in 1972.
* He says he didn't tell anyone about it for eight years though.
* He Says Jesus appeared twice more to him.
* The second time, he says, it was too sacred, he can't talk about it.
* The third time, however, was a bit more mundane.
* Quote:
* "The third time I saw Jesus was when I was about eleven years old.
* Jesus walked in through the front door of my home while I was watching `Laverne and Shirley' on television.
* He came over and sat down beside me on the couch, kind of glanced at the TV and everything in this natural world clicked off.
* I couldn't hear the telephone or a television set, all I heard was Jesus and all I saw was His glory.
* He looked at me and said, `
* Roberts, I want you to study the lives of My generals in My great army throughout time.
* Know them like the back of your hand.
* Know why they were a success.
* Know why they failed and you'll want nothing in that area.'
* He got up, walked back out through the door, the TV clicked back on and I resumed watching `Laverne and Shirley.'"
* Liardon's account of heaven, of course, is bizarre to the point of silliness and it is utterly inconceivable that someone who saw Jesus face to face could go back to watching "Laverne and Shirley."
* But that's what he says.
* And then if you don't write those stories off as fanciful and absurd, you're probably going to write them off as blasphemous.
* Also, we have a Dr. Richard Eby who claims to have died, gone to heaven and come back again.
* He said he fell off a balcony, struck his head, supposedly died.
* Reportedly he experienced paradise.
* He was the first one that I ever heard.
* There are more, all these fanciful fabrications attempting to tell us what heaven is like.
* God did take Paul to heaven.
* It tells us that very clearly in 2 Corinthians.
* He was caught up into the third heaven and he saw things too wonderful to speak.
* But there was another who was taken to heaven and that is John.
* And we find that occasion right here in chapter 4 of Revelation, our text.
* And John not only was caught up into heaven but he was commanded to write it.
* In fact, all the way back in chapter 1 and verse 11, Jesus said,

"Write in a book what you see...write in a book what you see."

* That was the mandate to him, to put down his visions.

## The Second of His Great Visions

* Here is the second of his great visions.
* The first one was the apocalypse of Jesus Christ,
* or the revealing, or the unveiling of Jesus Christ,
* ministering in His church in the great vision of chapter 1.
* Now we have the second of his visions,
* it is a vision of heaven.
* And he, as in the case of the first vision, was to write it down.
* Now, as we come to this very important vision, we need to get it in hand.
* So let me read these eleven verses, you follow along.

"After these things I looked and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard, like the sound of a trumpet speaking with me said, `Come up here and I will show you what must take place after these things.' Immediately I was in the Spirit and behold a throne was standing in heaven and One sitting on the throne. And He who was sitting was like a jasper stone and a sardius in appearance. And there was a rainbow around the throne like an emerald in appearance. And around the throne were twenty-four thrones. And upon the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white garments and golden crowns on their heads. And from the throne proceed flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder. And there were seven lamps afire burning before the throne which are the seven Spirits of God. And before the throne there was, as it were, a sea of glass like crystal. And in the center and around the throne, four living creatures full of eyes in front and behind. And the first creature was like a lion and the second creature like a calf and the third creature had a face like that of a man. And the fourth creature was like a flying eagle. And the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings are full of eyes around and within and day and night they do not cease to say, `Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God, the Almighty who was and who is and who is to come.' And when the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, to Him who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders will fall down before Him who sits on the throne and will worship Him who lives forever and ever and will cast their crowns before the throne saying, `Worthy art Thou, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power, for Thou didst create all things and because of Thy will they existed and were created.'"

* That vision extends into chapter 5 which we will discuss after chapter 4.
* This is a personal visit to the divine Throne Room of heaven.
* It is John's second vision,
* his second unveiling,
* his second apocalypse.
* It is the second time now on the Isle of Patmos that he has been lifted beyond the human senses.
* And he is now experiencing a transcendent and divine experience.
* And we escorted by the beloved Apostle John are carried above, as it were, to the scenes of heaven.
* Now there may be a lot to see in heaven.
* But nothing compares to the throne of God.
* And nothing compares to the Lamb of God in chapter 5.
* And so, the focus of the trip to heaven is on the throne and the one who sits on it and on the Lamb of God.
* As the chapter begins we are drawn into the vision and suddenly we become face to face with the ineffable majesty Himself.

# The Precept (1a)

* Verse 1,

"After these things I looked and behold a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard like the sound of a trumpet speaking with me said, `Come up here and I will show you what must take place after these things.'"

## The Sequence of the Precept

* Now you will notice twice the phrase "after these things," once at the beginning of the verse and once at the end of the verse. "After these things," says John, "I looked." What things? After the things that he had just experienced. What did he just experience? The tremendous vision of Christ in chapter 1 and then the giving of the seven letters for the churches in chapters 2 and 3. After this experience of seeing Christ ministering to His church and getting the Word of Christ for His churches, after these things I looked. So he's simply giving us somewhat of a personal chronology and saying, "
* After having experienced the first three chapters, I now have experienced what I am about to write." The phrase "after these things" at the end of the verse is a bit different. "Come up here and I will show you what must take place after these things." In other words, you have here not John's chronology but God's chronology. John is telling us when he says "after these things" that after the things I just experienced then I experienced this. God is saying to him, or the voice is saying to him, "After the things you have just written about, then will come these things." That is a very important transition point.
* The phrase "after these things" is used throughout the book of Revelation to mark the beginning of a new vision. Frequently it is used, "after these things," with the word "I saw," or "I looked," chapter 7, chapter 15, chapter 18, chapter 19. In each case it introduces a new vision, or a new section of the book as the scene shifts.
* But what we have here is John saying, "After these things I looked, after the visions I just had I looked and there was another one." At the end of the verse the Lord is saying,

## Transition Out of Church Age

* “After what I just told you about, then this will happen”.
* And so now we have a transition because chapters 2 and 3 deal with the church age, the things which are...they're called in chapter 1 verse 19. Now we move into the things which shall be. We shift from the church age described in chapters 2 and 3 to that period of time that comes after that
* ...after these things
* ...after matters regarding the church
* ...after the instruction regarding the church on earth
* ...we now come to heaven.

## The Situation for the Precept (1)

* We're going to learn what is about to take place.
* So he says, "After these things I looked and behold," this is an exclamation...

"Behold!, I saw a door standing open."

* Note that he (John) didn't see it open, it was already opened when he saw it.

"I saw a door standing open in heaven."

* You will remember back in chapter 3 verse 20 there was a door closed on earth, remember that?

20Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. (Revelation 3:20)

* It was the door of the Laodicean church (and can be understood as the Door to every church and every needful individual generally speaking) and it was closed to Christ, wasn't it?
* That's why He was knocking and asking entrance.
* Here is the door to heaven and it isn't closed, it is open. The door on earth was closed to Christ. The door in heaven is open to John and us. It allows entrance into the very Throne Room of God. It is a door standing open by which John will take us into the heavenlies.
* Now note, please, a door standing open in heaven. The heaven being described is the abode of God. It is the place that Jesus Christ went after His resurrection. After, of course, He rose from the dead He ascended into heaven, [Acts 1:10](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Acts%201.10) and [11](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Acts%201.11) talks about that...[Acts 3:21](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Acts%203.21), [Acts 7:55](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Acts%207.55) and [56](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Acts%207.56), [Romans 10:6](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Rom%2010.6), [Colossians 3:1](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Col%203.1), [1 Thessalonians 4:16](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/1%20Thess%204.16), all of those things indicate to us that the Lord ascended into heaven. It is the abode of God.
* Furthermore, it is the heaven where the Lord has been preparing for us a place, John 14. He says, "If I go I will go and prepare a place for you that where I am there you may be also." So He has gone to the Father's house and He is there in heaven preparing a room for us. This is that heaven.
* Here's an interesting note. John says, "I saw a door open, standing open, and it was the door into heaven." The heaven where God dwells, the heaven where Christ is, having ascended and preparing a place for us.
* For the rest of the book of Revelation, John spends most of his time in heaven. There are times when his visions seem to be from the vantage point of earth. But predominantly they are heavenly visions. So John here, for the first time, is lifted up into heaven and for the rest of the book will spend the most of his visionary time in heaven.
* As he is fixing his enlightened transcendent spiritual eyes on the open door, he hears a voice. "And the first voice which I heard," because, as you will note, he will hear other voices, "the first voice I heard was like the sound of a trumpet speaking with me." That should sound familiar to us. Go back to chapter 1 verse 10...chapter 1 verse 10. In the first vision he says, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day," literally I was transcendent, I was in a spiritual state, I was conscious of spiritual and supernatural things, I had transcended the earth. "And I heard behind me a loud voice like the sound of a trumpet saying..." Whose voice was that? He turned around, verse 12, to see the voice and there he saw One like the Son of Man, none other than the Lord Jesus Christ.
* Here again it is the Lord Jesus Christ that speaks to him in chapter 4 with this loud trumpet-like clear voice. It is a commanding and authoritative voice, and that's why it's likened to the trumpet. The voice gives a command that is specific. "Come up here." And when the Almighty and exalted, ascended Lord says, "Come up here," you go up. "Come up here and I will show you what must take place after these things."
* Now I want you to understand that John was not carried mystically into some never-never land of fantasy. He was carried spiritually into the ever-ever land of heaven with only a slight foothold in time and space to see what human eyes could not see and hear what human ears could not hear. The Lord says, "I want you to come up here because I want to show you some things that must take place after these things." After the time of the church there are some things that are going to happen and I want to show you what they are.
* Now some have equated "come up here" with the Rapture of the church. They see in this some...some symbolic Rapture. I don't think this is the church going up, I think this is John going up. I don't think he's going up for the purpose of glorification, I think he's going up for the purpose of revelation. This is not a picture of the Rapture of the church, at least that I can see. It would be nice if it were because it would seal the pre-tribulation Rapture for those who so desperately want some Scripture to do that. But I don't see here a Rapture of the church to glorification, I see here the transcendent trip of one man for the purpose of revelation.
* He says, "Come up here," not because I want to glorify you, not because I want to give you your reward, just come up here because I want to show you some things that are going to happen after the things that are concerning the church age. And so, John is having this unique trip and he's taking us along with him.
* Now the things which are to happen shortly, or after these things, are the things that make up the final part of the book. Remember in chapter 1 verse 19 I alluded to that verse? Right there for the things you have seen, the things which are, the things which shall take place after these things. The things you have seen, that's the vision in chapter 1. The things which are, the letters to the churches that describe the church age. The things which shall take place after these things, same phrase, what's going to happen after the church age. That's the third element in the book. And from chapter 4 on to chapter 22 is all the discussion of what will happen after the church age...after the things described in chapters 2 and 3.
* Now the actual historical events start in chapter 6 and run all the way through chapter 22. What you have in chapters 4 and 5 is the prologue to those historical events, the activity around the throne of God as God begins to move into action. It is a curiosity and should be noted that from chapter 4 verse 1 on through the remainder of this book, the church is never mentioned. It is not mentioned. There is no mention of the church at all, which seems to fit the fact that the Lord is going to show John things that happen after matters concerning the church. And so, we can assume here that the church is out of the picture. And by assumption, therefore, many would say the Rapture must occur before these things begin to take place. But what is said here, "come up here," cannot be equated with a Rapture call.
* Remember back in chapter 3 verse 10 there was the promise from the Lord to the church that because you have kept the Word of My perseverance, I will also keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world to test those who dwell upon the earth. We talked about that in great detail, how it seems that the Lord is there saying, "I will deliver you from that coming hour of testing." And so we can assume that as the testing unfolds in chapter 6 and the prologue to it in chapter 4 and 5 and the church is not mentioned, that they have already been delivered. That's by implication, not in the explicit words "come up here" which are only for John.
* The time has come then for God to reveal the future. And in chapters 4 and 5 you have the scene in heaven from which the future judgment flows. Chapter 6 through 19, the judgment...chapter 20, the Millennium...chapter 21 and 22, the final eternal state. And that's how the rest of the book flows. But before we get into the unfolding of the judgment in chapter 6, we're going to have a wonderful time in heaven for a few weeks. The seal, the trumpet and the bowl judgments don't begin until chapter 6, but we see all the commotion that sets them off here in chapters 4 and 5.
* Now, the central theme here is the throne...the throne. In fact, you might be interested to note that in chapter 4 the word "throne" is used 13 times in 11 verses...11 times it speaks of the throne of God, twice it speaks of thrones occupied by the twenty-four elders. And the word "throne" in the book of Revelation from here on out is used nearly 40 times. But in chapter 4 the main..the main focus as John visits heaven is on the throne. We see that in verse 2, the throne.
* "Immediately I was in the Spirit and behold, a throne was standing in heaven." This is "behold" again which is "wow" in our vernacular. Amazing, astounding...first an open door and now a throne. Immediately after the voice that he heard, immediately after the summons from the Lord, he went into some transcendent kind of ecstatic state. He went into that condition where, as I said earlier, he lightly touches time and space and he is taken out of this world, as Paul was, in 2 Corinthians 12 he records that. Immediately I was in the Spirit. I was transferred. Same thing he said in chapter 1 verse 10, I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day.
* What he means is, "I was under the control of the Spirit and I was taken out of the time/space dimension." This is a kind of miraculous spiritual condition produced by the Holy Spirit that sensitizes all the faculties of John's mind and body to a spiritual level of reality that we don't know or experience normally. He is now about to have his second revelation.
* And so, there I was immediately in the Spirit, sensitive to spiritual reality that was transcendent. "And behold, a throne was standing in heaven." Perhaps [Psalm 103:19](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Ps%20103.19) flashed into his mind which says, "The Lord has prepared His throne in heaven and His Kingdom rules over all." Perhaps he remember [Isaiah 66:1](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Isa%2066.1) where it says, "Heaven is My throne." And here John sees the throne of God. This is the seat of universal sovereignty. This is to establish God in His rule. This is to say that from now on, John, all of future eschatological history which unfolds is coming out of the throne of the sovereign God. He is in charge.
* Please note, the throne John saw was not so much a piece of furniture but a symbol of sovereign rule and sovereign authority. It would have been not unlike the throne that Isaiah saw in chapter 6. You remember, Isaiah went into the temple and had a vision of God and you remember he saw the Lord high and lifted up and sitting on a throne. There was another ecstatic transcendent supernatural experience in which the eyes and hears of Isaiah were sensitized to the same kind of experience. And again, as even in Isaiah's case, John sees God in a sovereign position sitting on the throne running everything.
* The throne, by the way, is located not in a palace. The throne is not located in a palace. We might assume because it is a royal throne, a regal throne, a sovereign throne, a majestic throne, because God is the King of the universe that it was in a palace...not so. All throughout the book of Revelation we learn that the throne is in a temple. It is associated, therefore, with worship, not just with kingly sovereignty but with godly holiness. It is in a temple. It is the dwelling place of holy God who is not only to be obeyed, who is not only sovereign but is to be worshiped and adored.
* Look at chapter 7, for a moment, verse 15, "For this reason they are before the throne of God," that is those who have been saved in the Tribulation. "They're before the throne of God and they serve Him day and night in His palace?....in His...what?...in His temple." Chapter 11 and verse 19, "And the temple of God which is in heaven was opened and the ark of His covenant appeared in His temple and there were flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder and earthquake and a great hail storm." That's very similar to the kind of lightnings and flashings that come out of the throne in chapter 4. So here you have the seat of that same kind of fiery judgment, only here it's not a throne it's a temple which then tells us the temple is the place where the throne is.
* Chapter 14 verse 15, again enriching our understanding it tells us about God and His wrath and His fury and again it is God...it is God who is on the throne. It says in verse 15, "Another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice," in other words, there is God on His throne in His temple dispatching angels to judgment. In chapter 15 and verse 6, "Seven angels who had the seven plagues came out of the temple." There again, God's throne must be in the temple from which He dispatches the angels that surround Him. Wherever He is the angels are surrounding Him. "And there we find the angels coming out of the temple, verse 8, the temple filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power and no one was able to enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were finished."
* We find in chapter 16 verses 17 and 18, "The seventh angel poured out his bowl on the air. The loud voice came out of the temple from the throne," there it is. Out of the temple from the throne. The throne is in the temple. Again verse 18, "The flashes of lightning, sounds and peals of thunder, great earthquake," and so forth.
* So again, the heavenly throne is in the heavenly temple, the dwelling place of God where He is not only a sovereign to be feared, but He is holy God to be worshiped. Please notice, a throne was standing in heaven. The idea of that is that this is not a portable chair. This is something set. We used to say when I was in South America, and of course it was true and still is, "If you can knock off the palace you can rule the country." And I've seen some of the palaces in Latin American countries that are simply ringed with guys holding machine guns, with bands of bullets over their chest and it's that simple. If you can come in with your gang and mow them down and take over the throne, you can be the king. Heaven is not like that. It is not a portable throne. You can pick up the throne and haul it off to somewhere else in our world, this is a fixed and set and permanent throne occupied by God. It is immovable. "I saw there a fixed, set, established place of divine rule, worship and judgment." That's very important to note because the way things are going to flow in this period of time to come and the way the prophecies are going to take place, somebody might think God had lost control, or somebody had knocked off the heavenly temple and stolen the throne.
* Isaiah had the same problem. When Isaiah went to the temple to check in and see if God was still on His throne, it was because everything in the nation was going to pieces. Everything was crumbling and falling apart. And the great king Azziah who had been king for 52 years, God killed him because he tried to act as a priest and invaded the priesthood which, of course, was a cause for death. He was the last vestige of blessing, as it were, on the apostate land. And so Isaiah rushes into the temple to check in with God and see if somebody has taken over the throne because everything is gone so badly. Before we get into the horrors and the trauma and the fearful things that happen in the end time, let it be known that the throne is set and fixed and God is on it and is immovable. So, we meet the throne.
* Now, as we unfold this chapter, and we'll do it tonight and next time, as we unfold this chapter everything relates to the throne. A very simple outline will take you through the whole chapter. It runs something like this, "On the throne, around the throne, from the throne, before the throne, in and around the throne, and toward the throne." That's all of it. Who's on the throne. What's going on around the throne. What's coming out from the throne. What is before the throne and what's going toward the throne. The throne is the center of everything.
* Let's start, at least, tonight with "on the throne." Verse 2 says, "One sitting on the throne." Someone is in charge, aren't you glad? History is not whimsical, history is not luck. There is a sovereign of the universe in charge, sitting, please, indicates the posture of reigning. Not to be confused, by the way, with the posture of rest in the book of Hebrews. You remember [Hebrews 1:3](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Heb%201.3), [10:12](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Hebrews%2010.12), [12:2](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Hebrews%2012.2) says Christ is seated, He rests. Well that has to do with resting because He's accomplished His atoning work. This is not resting because something is done. This is the posture of reigning because something is about to happen.
* John doesn't tell us the name of the One there. He doesn't say it's God. He doesn't say it's Jehovah. He doesn't say it's the Almighty. Maybe he has some respect having taken his trip into heaven, maybe his Jewish heritage comes back and he reveres the Tetragrammaton or the four Hebrew letters that identify the name of God and he doesn't want to speak them. We don't know why he doesn't mention the name of God, but it isn't really necessary because it's obvious immediately who is on the throne. We know who it is. Isaiah in his vision when he saw the very same throne went into the very same situation and the very same scene. He simply says this, "In the year of King Uzziah's death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted with the train of His robe filling the temple." It is indeed the same Lord that is on the throne that was there when Isaiah got his vision. It is the same throne set, established, fixed and immovable and sitting on it is the same Almighty sovereign God of the universe. Micaiah, 1 Kings 22, the prophet, verse 19 said, "Therefore hear the word of the Lord, I saw the Lord sitting on His throne and all the host of heaven standing by Him on His right and on His left." Now that is a true vision of heaven. Micaiah said, "I saw the Lord and He was up there in heaven and He was sitting on a throne and all His angels were around Him." Isaiah said, "I saw the Lord and He was sitting on a throne and all around Him, you remember, the Seraphim were crying back and forth, `Holy, holy, holy.'" In Psalm 47 and verse 8, again we read similarly, "God reigns over the nations, God sits on His holy throne." It is God.
* I'm reminded also of Ezekiel's amazing prophecy. In Ezekiel chapter 1 of that great prophecy he sees God and listen to how he describes Him. "Now above the expanse that was over their heads, there was something resembling a throne, like lapis lazuli, which is a kind of stone, in appearance. And on that which resembled a throne high up was a figure with the appearance of a man. And then I noticed from the appearance of His loins and upward something like glowing metal that looked like fire all around within it. And from the appearance of His loins and downward I saw something like fire. And there was radiance around Him as the appearance of the rainbow in the clouds on a...on a rainy day, so was the appearance of the surrounding radiance." And you want to say, "Well who is it? Who is it?" So he says, "Such was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord. And when I saw it, I fell on my face." Ezekiel had the same reaction Isaiah did and no doubt John had a similar one, though he doesn't tell us that.
* So the one on the throne is the Lord, the Lord of hosts, the Lord God Himself. And John doesn't need to give us a name because it is obvious. Furthermore the description tells us all we need to know. Verse 3, "And He who was sitting on the throne was like a jasper stone and a sardius in appearance, and there was a rainbow around the throne like an emerald in appearance."
* Before he goes to around the throne, he says on the throne was one sitting like a jasper stone and a sardius in appearance. Now that takes us back to what I just read you in Ezekiel chapter 1 where he said it was like blazing light, it was like fire coming out of the throne. Here you have the eternal God. Here you have the enthroned King, described in flashing, flaming light and color. This is the glory, the splendor, the beauty and the fiery wrath of His character. Jasper stone is mentioned here and to get a little further definition of what that is you need only to look at the end of the book of Revelation, chapter 21 verse 11. It says, "The brilliance of the holy city Jerusalem is the brilliance of the glory of God, her brilliance was like a very costly stone, as a stone of crystal-clear jasper." So what we learn about jasper is that it is crystal clear. It is best to see this as a term that describes a diamond. The most precious, the most magnificent, a crystal-clear flawless diamond, refracting all the colors of the spectrum in unbelievable brilliance. And he sees the shining flashing facets of the glory of God bouncing off of the throne.
* And then he says in chapter 4, "The One sitting was not only like a jasper stone but like a sardius." By the way, the church in Sardis in the city of Sardis reminds us to note that Sardis was named for the stone. Apparently they were found in that vicinity. The stone itself was a blood red ruby stone, fiery bright. It speaks of the blazing, fiery nature of God's wrath and fury. And so, here is John and he sees the throne and it is not a peaceful vision, it is not a comforting vision, it is a flashing, brilliant, glorious, splendorous, magnificent, wrathful kind of frightening experience as it must have been for Ezekiel when he fell on his face, as it must have been for Isaiah when he fell on his face. The appearance of the Almighty God was clear and brilliant and blazing and fiery.
* Go back to Daniel chapter 7. It says in verse 9, Daniel writing, "I kept looking until thrones were set up and the Ancient of Days, a title for God, took His seat. His vesture was like white snow and the hair of His head like pure wool...here it comes...His throne was ablaze with flames, its wheels were a burning fire, a river of fire was flowing and coming out from before Him." And then he goes on to talk about thousands and thousands and myriads and myriads of angels. But you'll notice the same thing...whiteness, clarity, purity and then blazing fire and flames.
* You can go all the way back in to the Pentateuch, in the book of Deuteronomy and remember these words, [Deuteronomy 4:24](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Deut%204.24), "For the Lord your God is a consuming fire," words repeated in [Hebrews 12:29](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Heb%2012.29). And I already read you the amazing description of the brilliance and the glory and the fiery light that came from what Ezekiel saw.
* So what does it picture? Beauty, as I said, splendor and wrath. God is about to fire out the lasers of His judgment.
* Because I don't want to miss anything the Lord may have intended with these two stones, I just give you a footnote. The jasper and the sardius were the first and last stones on the breastplate of the high priest. You can find that in Exodus 28. They represent the first and the last of the tribes of Israel, namely Reuben, the firstborn, represented by the sardius; and Benjamin, the last born, represented by jasper. And so it may be that in these stones God is seen in covenant relationship to Israel, that even though He is going to fire out the wrath and the fury and the blazing laser flames of judgment, it will not consume the covenant people. As we well know, during the time of the Tribulation Israel is going to be...what?...saved. And He will fulfill His covenant with them. God is not through with them yet.
* And so it may be that those two stones also speak of the fact that God in His covenant has not forgotten His promise to Israel. And He will, first of all, call out twelve thousand from each of those twelve tribes to be His witnesses and seal them so they can evangelize. And as a result of their effort the nation will look on the One whom they have pierced, mourn for Him as an only Son and be saved.
* There's another interesting note. Reuben represented by the sardius means in Hebrew, "behold a son." Benjamin represented by the jasper in Hebrew means, "son of my right hand." Could those names also speak of the greatest Jew, the true Son, the Son sitting at His right hand, even Jesus Christ? Maybe all that is intended in the reference to the jasper and the sardius. And so we see the One who is on the throne.
* Thirdly, first the throne, then on the throne...around the throne, and we're just going to begin to see this. Around the throne...verse 3, "There was a rainbow around the throne, like an emerald in appearance." I've seen a lot of rainbows, I have never seen one that looked like an emerald, have you? An emerald is what color? Green. A rainbow is made up of the seven colors of the spectrum. This is a special kind of rainbow. Maybe...maybe the green just dominated and stood out, or maybe it was a very special green rainbow, or maybe even a green emerald can flash off all kinds of colors when it refracts also the spectrum of light. We don't know. But we do know what a rainbow means. I read for you earlier from Ezekiel that when Ezekiel saw the same thing John saw, heaven hasn't changed, by the way, he said in [Ezekiel 1:28](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Ezek%201.28), "There was a radiance around Him and it had the appearance of the rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day." It looked to Ezekiel like just a...just a multicolored rainbow. It looked to John like a rainbow that had the appearance of an emerald. Maybe the green was dominant and the other colors sparkling off of it.
* This is something wonderful because if you look just at the throne, it is pouring out fury in the flashing, brilliant, glowing, white and red flames. And all of a sudden the coolness of green seems to capture John. And a rainbow, what does that mean? Go back to [Genesis 9:13](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Gen%209.13), God said, "Just to prove to you that I will be faithful in My covenant, Noah, and never again drown the world, I'll put My...what?...My rainbow in the sky." And every time you see a rainbow it is God's way of saying to you He will never again destroy the world by water. The rainbow is a sign of God's faithfulness. God is faithful to His Word, faithful to His promise, faithful to His covenant.
* And so at the center of the throne you see this holy wrath, but surrounding it you see this beautiful green hue of faithfulness. Listen, wrath is never at the expense of faithfulness. Judgment never overrules promise. God is powerful enough to crush everyone with a thought, and that would cause us to live in fear were it not for His faithful mercy. You remember in the day of Malachi when they were afraid they were going to get caught in judgment, He said, "They shall be Mine in the day when I make up My jewels." [Romans 8:1](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Rom%208.1), "There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ." God will be faithful. God will be merciful to His own. God will be gracious. God will keep His promise. And so, John sees an unbelievable vision.
* The throne and on the throne, Almighty God. And around the throne, a rainbow. There's a lot more around the throne, it even gets more fascinating. We have to reserve that for next time.
* Father, how thankful we are for the consistency of Your precious Word. We hear the testimony of the old prophet Micaiah and the testimony of Ezekiel and the testimony of Isaiah and the testimony of John, and their descriptions are all the same. Even though they range across millennial of history, You are the unchanging God. When John opened the door and You called him to come and when You allowed him to write it so we could take the visit with him, we found You to be the same God that Ezekiel saw and Isaiah saw and Micaiah saw. And you're still in charge and you're still in control and you're still bringing to pass Your will.
* But, Lord, as we looked at this vision we know that it symbolizes the initiation of the unfolding of final wrath, that what is there on that throne is not primarily for our comfort but it is that we might warn the world of what is to come. You've given us this vision of the unfolding of Your judgment on this world, Your vengeance, that we like Paul knowing the terror of the Lord may persuade men, that we like the writer of Hebrews understanding that our God is a consuming fire may say, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of an angry God." We thank You for the vision but we will not bask in its glory, we must take responsibility to proclaim its fury. If we're going to go back to this book and therefore forward to the future and we're going to be responsible for what we know is to come, then we must plead with those who shall endure these great tragedies and call them to the salvation that is in Christ...the One who delivers us from that wrath to come. We thank You, O God, that You're on Your throne, we thank You that You're in charge. We thank You that You're going to judge iniquity and wickedness and create a world in which it doesn't exist. We see Your fury and we're in awe of it. We also thank You for the rainbow of Your mercy that gives us peace and calm, even though the vision is frightening. We know You'll never forget Your promise to those who love You.
* Make us faithful, Lord, as we know now and as it unfolds week in and week out what is to come, to warn those around us. And give us hearing ears and responsive hearts for Christ's sake. Amen.