

The
Throne of
God

And His
Heavenly
Court



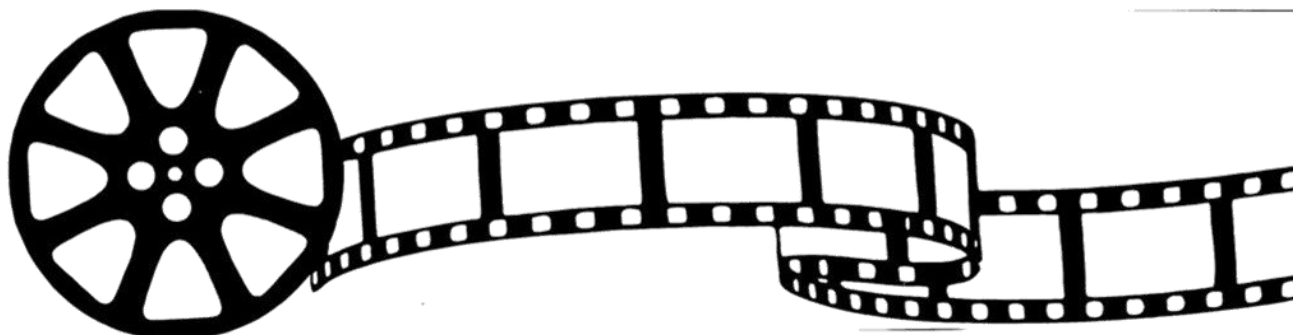
Revelation 4:1-11



Revelation Chapter 4 begins the second major section. We will now begin to view Heaven and Eternity from a heavenly perspective.

Since heaven and eternity are entirely outside of our experience, these things viewed from the heavenly perspective are even more difficult to understand.

Chapter 4, and 5, are the prelude to the rest of the book. We may call these two chapters “Reel 1” of history, in order to better understand their relationship to the rest of the book. The word “reel” is used here with reference to the old film reels. Each reel views different events with a unique focus and for a particular purpose. Reel 1 takes place in Heaven before the throne of God Who initiates the great final conflict with the forces of evil. The outcome, because His Son was already victorious at Calvary, is the final triumph of the Lamb.



REEL #1

Outline of Revelation 4

Chapter 4:

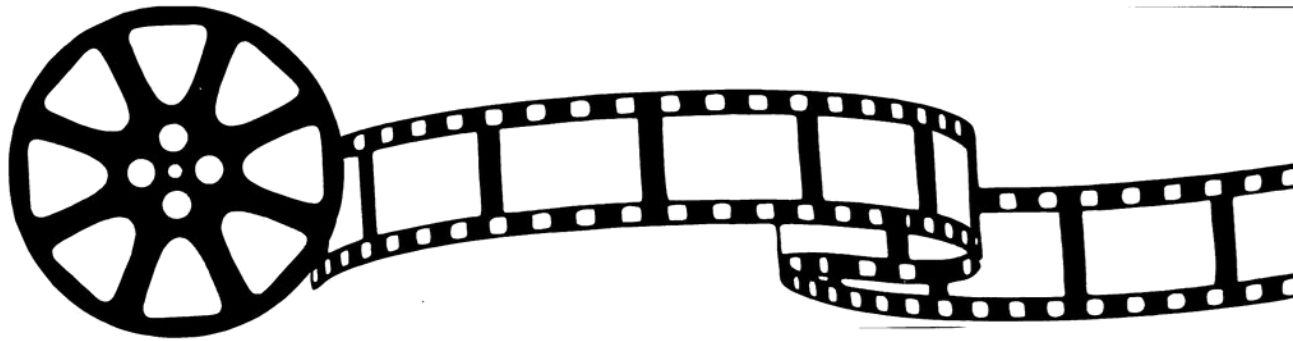
4:1-5

4:6-11

Reel One

The players

The setting




4:1 -- *“Voice...like the sound of a trumpet”* -- the voice is loud and clear, not just a “feeling” or an intuition.

“Come. . .” -- an invitation – an “out of this world” invite!

“up here” -- not in the sense as flying. We see very little of the created universe – we see very little of the light spectrum and hear only a tiny portion of the sound spectrum - and beyond the temporal is heavenly, which is as real and solid as the temporal.

“Take place after these things” -- By the end of the book of Revelation it is clear that these events John is about to see from heaven’s perspective will take place between the Sunday on which this vision took place and the end of this creation.



*And immediately
I was in the spirit:
and, behold,
a throne was set in heaven,
and one sat on the throne.*

Rev. 4:2

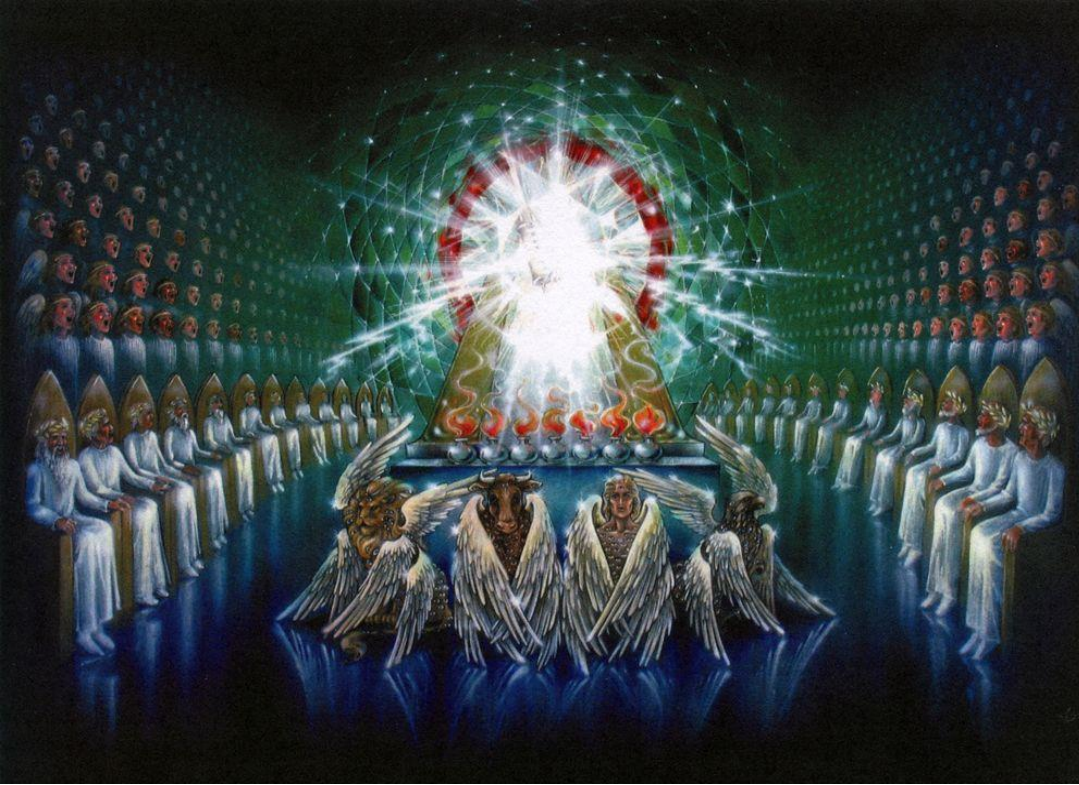
4:2 – “In the Spirit” -- John speaks not of a trance but He was “**in the Spirit**” in heaven. This is by God’s grace given to John to equip him for a unique purpose. Many claim to be “*in the Spirit*” today but a comparison of what they “learn” while “in the Spirit” with what the Spirit of God teaches in Scripture indicates that their spirit and the Holy Spirit are not the same!

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Rev. 4:2

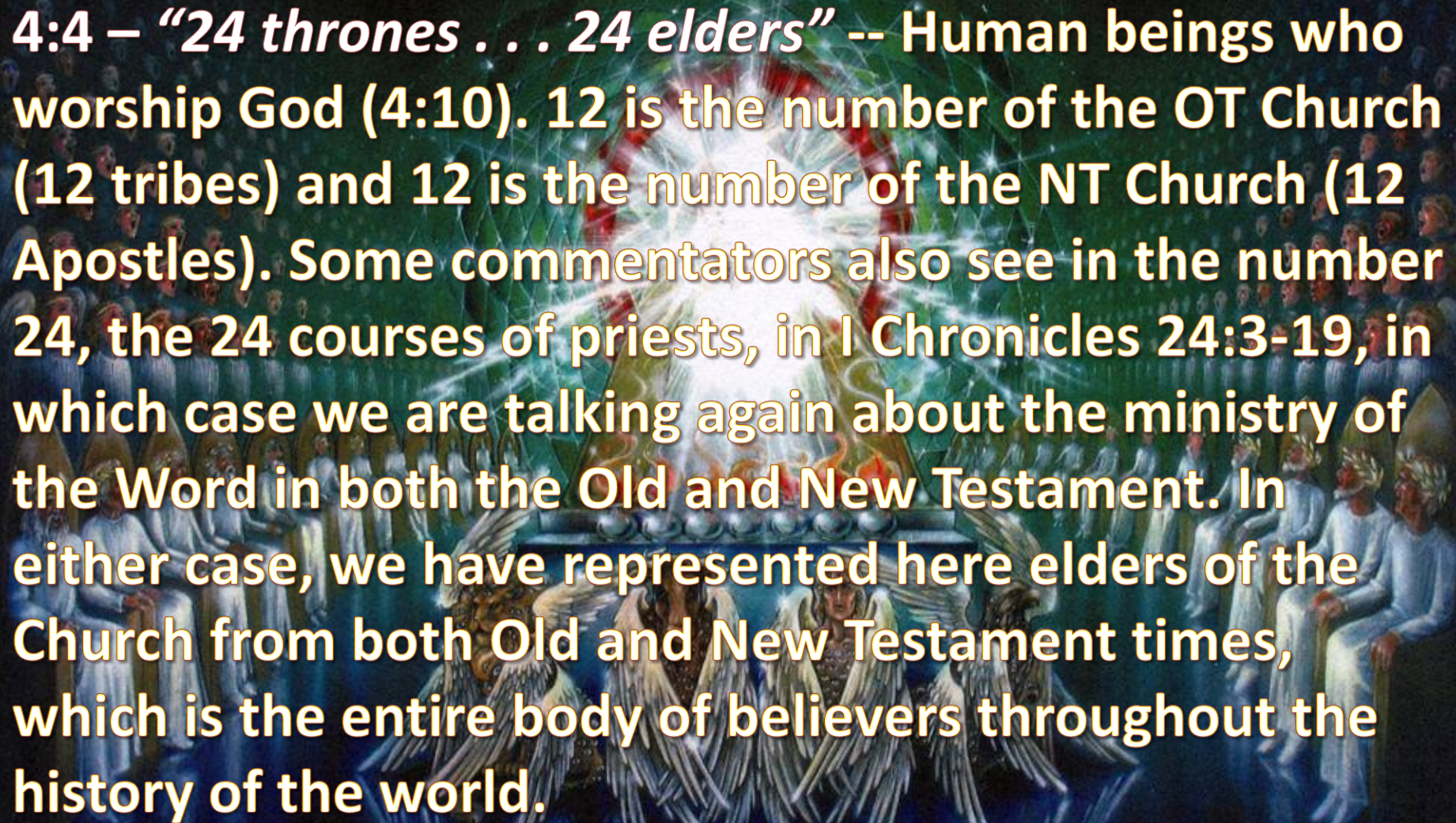


“A throne standing in heaven . . .” God in the seat of His glory. If you ask *“How does God who is a Spirit sit on a throne?”* Remember that when someone asked Luther what God was doing before Creation, Luther answered, “He was creating switches to use on people who ask foolish questions.” The Old Testament regularly features the image of God ruling from His throne.



4:3 – “He . . . was like a *Jasper*” - a diamond?; *Sardius* (sardine stone or carnelian) a dark red brilliant gem; a rainbow like an emerald, a brilliant deep green halo.

John sees God, who is the light that illumines heaven (Rev. 21:23) in all His Glory. We are reminded of a diamond...the brilliant hues it reflects. The Sardius with its deep red reminds us of majesty and judgment. Green is the color of comfort; presenting us with grace, hope and peace. Green is also the color of life. We must remember that John is using human words to describe that which defy human experience (compare this description with Ezek. 1:26-28).




4:4 – “*24 thrones . . . 24 elders*” -- Human beings who worship God (4:10). 12 is the number of the OT Church (12 tribes) and 12 is the number of the NT Church (12 Apostles). Some commentators also see in the number 24, the 24 courses of priests, in 1 Chronicles 24:3-19, in which case we are talking again about the ministry of the Word in both the Old and New Testament. In either case, we have represented here elders of the Church from both Old and New Testament times, which is the entire body of believers throughout the history of the world.

“...clothed with white garments, and on their heads were golden crowns.”



4:5 – “Lightning and voices and peals of thunder” --

A clear display of God’s Almighty authority – God, here, is ready to judge.



***“Seven Spirits of God”* -- The sevenfold gifts of the Holy Spirit (See Acts 2:3 and Rev 5:6). The Greek may also be translated “the sevenfold Spirit.” (cf. Is. 11:2)**

4:6b-8a - the Four Living Creatures



A step--by--step interpretation of this passage:

1. John, in the Spirit, says that they were *“in the middle of the throne and encircling the throne.”*

Though strange looking and awesome, these heavenly creatures are closer to God than any of the other angels and saints. In the middle or in the midst most likely means “in the immediate vicinity.” So they form an immediate and inner circle around the throne of God.



A step--by--step interpretation of this passage:

2. What are known Biblical points of which we can compare? The number four is biblically associated with the earth itself (Rev. 7:1, 20:8) and therefore represented here is an attribute of God (all things flow from Him) which deals with earth. *“Full of eyes in front and behind”* signifies omniscience and God’s care for His people.



A step--by--step interpretation of this passage:

3. Perhaps the simplest conclusion we can draw is that we have an image of God's providence as He guides earthly history and the four living creatures are God's heavenly attendants. They also lead the worship and praise of God, so they can also be seen as the heavenly choirmasters. They not only lead, but they maintain the constant praise of God.



4:8a – “Six wings” -- explained in Isaiah 6:2. Two wings to cover the face in reverence, two to cover the feet in modesty, and two for flying. Again, while the language is that of symbols, the reality of these special creatures is clear. Their physical appearance is the symbol.



4:8a – “Day and night” is more language of symbol, for we know that there is no day or night in heaven (Rev. 21:25, 22:25). This clearly signifies an unbroken and unending worship of God. Their praise is contained in verse 8b.



4:8b – “Holy, Holy, Holy” (a[giōV, a[giōV, a[giōV). Since these four winged creatures are the heavenly choirmasters, their constant refrain begins with the Triagion (Is. 6:3). This is the opening refrain of the Great Te Deum Laudamus. This great hymn of praise will be heard throughout Revelation (Chs. 4, 5, 7, 11, 15, 16 and 19).



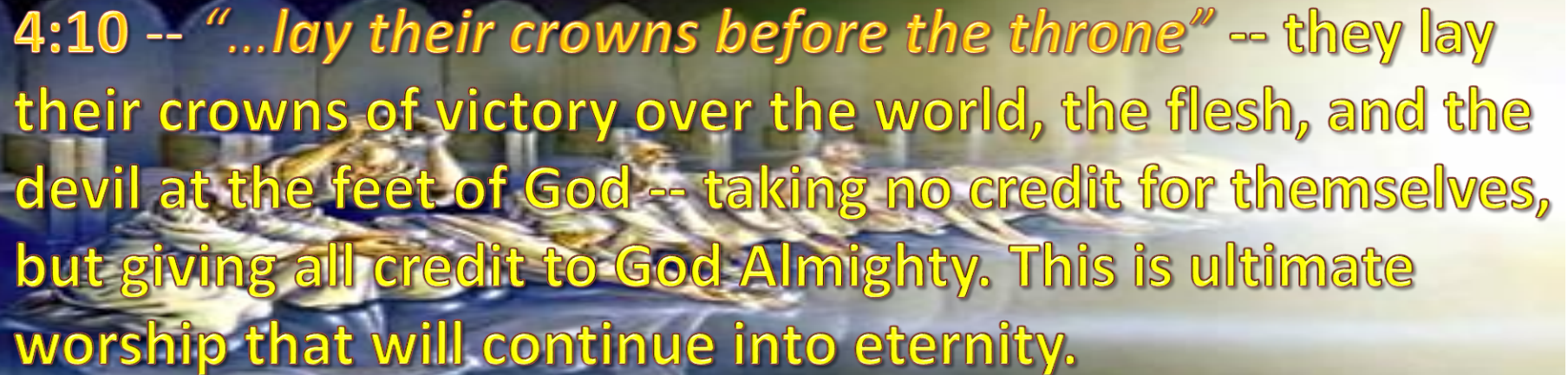
“Lord God Almighty” – this is how the One who is worshiped, the One, who sits on the throne, is identified. In other words, The Father, who is being worshiped is Yahweh, the Only God! Thus, He is the only Creator and therefore The Almighty, the All-Powerful One!



“Who was, and is, and is to come” – YHWH,
Whom we have discussed in chapter 1. This is
how we know that this chapter is about
worship of God the Father, the “*pantokrator*”
the Almighty, who has no equal in heaven;
on the earth; or under the earth.



4:9 -- The created Heavenly hosts, creatures as we are, also sing His praises out of joy and, even on their part, thankfulness to be alive by the Hand of God.



4:10 -- “...*lay their crowns before the throne*” -- they lay their crowns of victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil at the feet of God -- taking no credit for themselves, but giving all credit to God Almighty. This is ultimate worship that will continue into eternity.

4:11 – God the Father, as ever-living Creator of all, is worthy of all; since without Him we would have never existed. In this stanza of praise, they worship Him not only as their Creator, but also as the Creator of everything. And they can sing this hymn of praise because in Christ’s victory they have been restored before The Father’s holy presence.

In closing, let's open our SC to the First Article and recite, along with its meaning.

Now you know why Luther, and for that matter, the early church fathers were correct; that in confessing the faith they began with the First Article, which does confess God the Father and His work of creation.

Immediately following was the Second Article, thus our confession is Creation first, Redemption second.

So what John sees, hears, and reports is the praise of God the Father, the Creator and then, he relates this inaugural vision of God's heavenly glory (in Ch. 5) of the Redeemer's enthronement. And that will be the subject of our class...on August 1st!!!