

Heaven: The Throne Room of the Universe

# **WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE WORSHIP: THE SOUNDS & SIGHTS AROUND THE THRONE OF OUR AWESOME GOD**

Revelation 4/Ezekiel 1

Most of our lives are dominated by the physical world: our health, the weather, our family, our car, our job, etc. The Holy Scriptures each of us hold, were designed to **transport our minds away from** our physically-dominated-world that is easiest for us to see and feel; and to **transport our minds onto** the spiritually-dominated world of God's Throne.

Paul explained this process that God uses to the Colossians when he taught them to: "Set your affections on things above" (Col. 3:1). Paul was telling them that they still had to live out their life in the Roman Empire (most of them were stuck for life as slaves). But, they could live life on earth in a transformed way when they learned to focus their mind and heart on "things above".

We are actually spending our time together learning about the "things above" in Heaven: The Throne Room of the Universe. God's Throne is central to all things above. The more we understand about what is going on this very moment at The Throne of God, the more we stay in step with God's plans for us while we live in this world.

God's Word explains for us in great detail: The Sounds and Sightings around the Throne of our Awesome God. Today, that Throne Room of God is the place:

## **Where our Worship Arrives**

While we are gathered here with the songs of worship to our God in Heaven still reverberating in our hearts from the first part of our gathering: something is happening up there, in the place we have directed our worship.

What we are doing.

What we sang and all of our thoughts.

Each word of our prayers, and the gifts we just gave in the offering:

Each of those actions, that originated in our redeemed hearts and minds, rises above us, rises out of this place on South Drake Road: and arrives before The Throne of God's presence.

Do you realize how much of what you do today, on the Lord's Day, matters to the Lord God Almighty, seated on The Throne?

To help us understand more about the impact of our lives, look with me at:

## **What Happens in Heaven**

As we just sang, as we gave, and while we worshipped: what was happening at that very moment in Heaven?

Often we think of **Heaven in the past** (*when Christ left for earth and the angels came to announce His birth*).

Or we think of **Heaven in the future** (*when Jesus comes breaking through the clouds at the front of all the saints and armies of Heaven as King of Kings*).

But do we often enough stop and focus upon **Heaven Now**: what is happening at this very moment?

While we are gathered here, above us at the epicenter of the Universe, at the Throne Room of God: it is literally pulsating with activity. So what is going on right now up there?

God's Word can take us by angel wings to see the very center of the Universe, to the Throne of God in Heaven. A few moments there will get us in touch with what God is doing right now; and how we can: TODAY, be in tune with Heaven.

God must have wanted us to notice what He is doing because of the way He describes it:

## **Heaven is Always Presented in Glorious Technicolor & Surround-Sound**

For some reason God decided to include not a black & white picture of Heaven: rather He has given us several full color video clips. This is our third clip we will watch today, the others were the Job 1 Throne Clip and the Isaiah 6 Throne Clip.

The colors of Heaven are vibrant. Everything seems to be alive with texture, depth: and shades of colors we can only imagine.

The size of the sights and sounds are immense: beyond what we can figure out how to fully understand them. But to help us get started, God uses colors and materials from our world to paint in our minds eye: the world to come.

Some of the most frequent descriptions of Heaven would be: the sight of fire, and the sound of thunder, flashes of lightning, and the sparkle of gold, crystal, and precious stones.

God is really into celestial beauty, and He shares it with us. First notice that our primary source, Revelation 4, describes for us:

## The Scenes of Heaven Around the Throne

First we need to base every bit of our study of Heaven: to the text that God wrote in the Scriptures. If we just work with His Word it astounds us, even with no additions, it is beyond our wildest imaginations.

Note with me in Rev. 4, that there are five prepositional phrases used to capture the sights around the Throne. But we must examine Revelation 4 closely, to see these five.

The five descriptive, prepositional phrases we will find are:

On The Throne, around the Throne, from the Throne, before the Throne, and in the midst of the Throne.

Every possible word is used to help transport us to this place of wonder. Please stand with me, and read along with me as we see these phrases. Rev. 4:1-6 (NKJV):

Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat **on the throne**. 3 And 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. 4 **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. 5 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. 6 **Before the throne** there was a sea of glass, like crystal. And **in the midst of the throne**, and around the throne, were four living creatures full of eyes in front and in back.

Pray

1. **We see The One on the Throne. v. 2-3 "ON the Throne"**: (epi) v. 9; 5:1. The Throne/God on the Throne (Dan. 7; Exod. 24; Ezk. 1)
2. **We are shown our special representatives Around the Throne. v.4 "AROUND the Throne"**: (kuklothen; 4x only in Rev.) 24 Elders are around the Throne in v.10-11; and in 5:14 they are falling down before the Throne.
3. **We witness some very mysterious happenings From the Throne. v.5a "From the Throne"**: (ek) from the Throne are "lightnings, thunderings, and voices".

4. **We are reminded of the Scene Before the Throne. v.5b-6a “BEFORE the Throne”:** (enopion) before the Throne are the seven flames and the Sea of Glass.
5. **We are introduced to the Ones In the MIDST of the Throne. v.6b-9 “IN the MIDST of the Throne”:** (en mesos) are the four cherubim (Gen. 4; Ezekiel 1,10) and the Lamb (also 5:6).

Now, for a special, even closer look at the sights and sounds of Heaven, around God’s Throne we need to turn back to Ezekiel chapter 1.

In the early sixth century before Christ's birth<sup>1</sup> an exiled Jewish priest, living in Iraq (ancient Babylon), named Ezekiel, wrote the words of chapter 1:1-28 (NKJV), which we call:

## Ezekiel’s Vision of Heaven

***Ezekiel gets to see through the Door, that Stands open in Heaven only five times.*** Look with me at what he saw and heard:

Ezekiel 1:1 Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth *month*, on the fifth *day* of the month, as I *was* among the captives by the River Chebar, *that the heavens were opened* and I saw visions of God.

***That is exactly what we find in:*** Rev. 4:1 “Door of Heaven standing open”: God wanted us to see His glory as the people of Earth were facing great judgment (Ezk. 1; Rev. 4). The New Testament only records four other times that the Heavens opened:

- 1). At Christ's baptism (Mt. 3, Mk. 1, Lk. 3) to show God’s delight in Christ's earthly life;
- 2). At Stephen’s death as Christ stood (Acts 7) to shows God’s tender concern at the death of His saints;
- 3). When the sheet was sent down for Peter (Acts 10) to show God’s desire to open the way for the Gentiles coming to Christ; and
- 4). Finally here in Rev 4:1 to show God’s Glory even at a time when sin is being judged.

***God’s Throne is First Seen by Ezekiel as Surrounded by Clouds of Raging Fires.*** Look with me at what he saw and heard:

Ezekiel 1:4-6 <sup>4</sup> Then I looked, and behold, a ***whirlwind*** was coming out of the north, ***a great cloud with raging fire engulfing itself; and brightness was all around it and radiating out of its midst like the color of amber, out of the midst of the fire.*** <sup>5</sup> Also from within it *came* the likeness of four living

<sup>1</sup> 592-570BC

creatures. And this *was* their appearance: they had the likeness of a man.<sup>6</sup> Each one had four faces, and each one had four wings.

***That is exactly what we find in:*** Rev. 1:7 “great cloud that every eye sees”, that is the same as the cloud in Ezekiel (Heb: ***awnan***). Theologians have defined this cloud as a “theophanic” cloud<sup>2</sup> which is a cloud that represents God’s presence. We always see a cloud surrounding God’s coming at: the Exodus, the Tabernacle, and the Temple. It is also often used when God comes in judgment.

**Amber:** describes the color of gold + silver (electrum), and speaks of a polished glow.

***The Ones that Ezekiel saw, that Surround God’s Throne: Sparkle with the Light of His Glory.*** Look with me at what he saw and heard:

Ezekiel 1:7-8 Their legs *were* straight, and the soles of their feet *were* like the soles of calves’ feet. ***They sparkled like the color of burnished bronze.***<sup>8</sup> The hands of a man *were* under their wings on their four sides; and each of the four had faces and wings.

***That is exactly what we find in:*** Rev. 1:15 “Christ’s feet sparkled like polished bronze”: in the Old Testament this word “sparkled” (Ezk. 1:7) speaks of the foaming up of a drink (Pr.23:31); and the bursting forth of a bloom (when used outside Bible).

***The Ones Ezekiel describes that Surround God’s Throne: Flash like Lightning.*** Look with me at what he saw and heard:

Ezekiel 1:13-17 As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance *was like burning coals of fire, like the appearance of torches going back and forth* among the living creatures. ***The fire was bright, and out of the fire went lightning.***<sup>14</sup> And the living creatures ran back and forth, in appearance ***like a flash of lightning.***<sup>15</sup> Now as I looked at the living creatures, behold, a wheel *was* on the earth beside each living creature with its four faces.<sup>16</sup> The appearance of the wheels and their workings *was like the color of beryl*, and all four had the same likeness. The appearance of their workings *was, as it were, a wheel in the middle of a wheel.*<sup>17</sup> When they moved, they went toward any one of four directions; they did not turn aside when they went.

***That is exactly what we find in:*** Rev. 4:5, 11:19 “lightnings proceeding from the Throne”, and those angels that minister there are also like “beryl” (Dan. 10).

**Beryl:** describes the ocean blue-green color and is the word for the #10 stone of the HP and the #8 foundation stone of Heaven’s city.

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<sup>2</sup> In 84 of the 88x this Hebrew word for cloud is used, it speaks of the Presence of God (the other 4 times are the rainbow at the flood). Ex. 13:21, 14:19 the cloud and pillar of fire; 14:24 the Lord is in the cloud and looks out; 19:16 cloud settles on Sinai as the Lord descends; 24:10-16 when elders invited to see God’s Throne they went up into a cloud; 33:9 when God talked to Moses in the Tabernacle, a cloud came down; Lev 16:2 the Lord is in the cloud hovering over the mercy seat; Ps 97:2 clouds surround the Lord.

**When Ezekiel saw God's Throne, it is Surrounded by Highly Intelligent Beings, covered with eyes.** Look with me at what he saw and heard:

Ezekiel 1:18-19 As for their rims, they were so high they were awesome; and their **rims were full of eyes**, all around the four of them. <sup>19</sup> When the living creatures went, the wheels went beside them; and when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up.

**That is exactly what we find in:** Rev. 4:8 as God is encircled by these angelic beings "full of eyes".

**The Throne of God is Surrounded by the Glistening of Crystal, Refracting the Light of His Glory.** Look with me at what he saw and heard:

Ezekiel 1:22 The likeness of the firmament above the heads of the living creatures was **like the color of an awesome crystal, stretched out over their heads**.

**That is exactly what we find in:** Rev. 4:6, 21:11 as God sits before what is like a sea of "crystal": Ex. 24:10. Job 37:22. The Hebrew **kerach**, which generally denotes *ice*, doubtless here signifies *crystal*, and seems to denote that which was well cut and polished, vividly refracting the rays of light.

**God's Throne is Surrounded by the Sounds of Mighty Waters.** Look with me at what he saw and heard:

Ezekiel 1:24 When they went, I heard the noise of their wings, **like the noise of many waters, like the voice of the Almighty, a tumult like the noise of an army**; and when they stood still, they let down their wings.

**That is exactly what we find in:** Rev. 1:15, 14:2; 19:4-6 as the atmosphere around God is like "the sound of many waters".

**The Throne of God Sparkles, Like a Burning Fire.** Look with me at what he saw and heard:

Ezekiel 1:26-27 And above the firmament over their heads was **the likeness of a throne, in appearance like a sapphire stone**; on the likeness of the throne was a likeness with the appearance of a man high above it. <sup>27</sup> Also from the appearance of His waist and upward I saw, as it were, **the color of amber with the appearance of fire all around within it**; and from the appearance of His waist and downward I saw, as it were, **the appearance of fire with brightness all around**.

**That is exactly what we find in:** Rev. 4:2 "throne" like jasper<sup>3</sup> and sapphire; and Daniel 7:9 adds that The Throne is also burning like a fire, with a river of fire that flows before it.

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<sup>3</sup> **Jasper:** this word 4x only in Revelation (*hiaspis*) and is described as "clear as crystal" (21:11); the #1 foundation stone of Heaven (21:19); and the #12 stone of the HP (Ex.28:20); is also what the walls of the city of New Jerusalem/Heaven are made of (Rev. 21:18) the city is made of gold that is "clear as glass", but the walls are of jasper. Jasper can be often red, also green, yellow, or brown.

**Sapphire:** in Ezk. 1:26 is dark blue like lapis lazuli with gold flecks (Job 28:6); in Ezekiel 1:26 and 10:1 this is what the Throne looks like; this is the color seen in Ex. 24:10 before the Throne of God. It is also the color of the #5 stone of the HP (Ex. 28:18)

***God's Throne is Surrounded by the Beauty of a Rainbow.*** Look with me at what he saw and heard:

Ezekiel 1:28 <sup>28</sup> Like the appearance of a rainbow in a cloud on a rainy day, so was the appearance of the brightness all around it. ***This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD.*** So when I saw *it*, I fell on my face, and I heard a voice of One speaking.

***That is exactly what we find in:*** Rev. 4:3 with an emerald green “rainbow” that encircles the One on The Throne.

God's Word explains for us in great detail: The Sounds and Sights around the Throne of our Awesome God. Today, that Throne Room of God is the place:

## **Where our Worship Arrives**

God inhabits our praises, and our worship: and each time we offer Him worship, it rises before The Throne.

Do you realize how much of what you do today, on the Lord's Day, matters to the Lord God Almighty, seated on The Throne?