

Vision of God

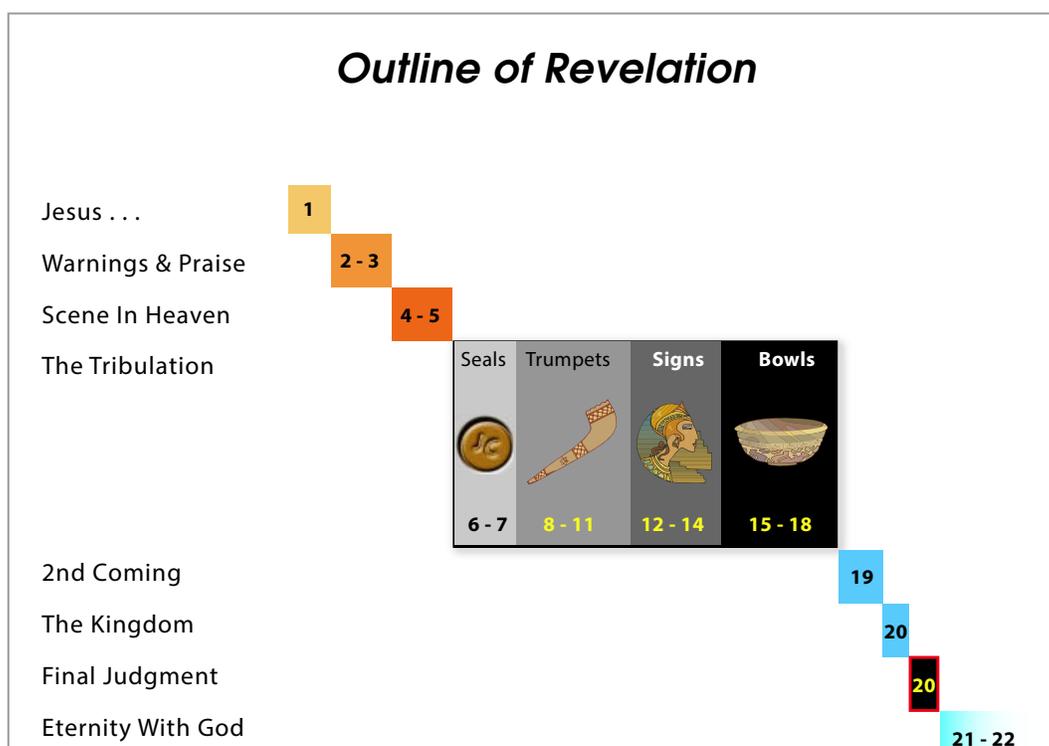
Have you ever heard someone say, “While I was dead I saw a great light, and then came back to life”? Have you ever wondered if this can be true? What does it mean? Why did it happen? One man, an agnostic, has written a book about his near death experience (NDE). In his book, we discover that he died when his pickup fell on him, flattened his chest, and killed him. He was “dead” for about 15 minutes. Yet, he returned to life. He said 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 everyone that God loves without any conditions. He wrote about seeing Jesus and asking God many questions. Eventually, he revealed that the “Jesus” he talked with was not the Jesus who walked this earth. He believes that we are a part of god, and yet we are all god. This is revealing because Jesus did not teach that we are a part of god, nor did He teach that we are god. He did not teach that we all went to heaven either. This man did not see God. He saw something else.

HEAVENLY VISION. The Apostle John saw God too, but John was alive - not dead. He did not have a NDE. The apostle had a different experience. He saw God in a vision.

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. (NASB) Rev. 4:1-2

After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven, and the first voice which I had heard, like the sound of a trumpet speaking with me, 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. We will discover soon that the One sitting on the throne is God. We will also read that



there were others around the throne too!

Revelation 2-3 are about the past. In our last study, we saw that since the rapture will occur before the Tribulation, it must occur between Revelation 3 and 4. Revelation 4 takes us to the start of the Tribulation, and we are able to see into this future event through the apostle's vision. What we are about to see are the events which will occur in heaven before the Tribulation starts.

THRONE ROOM. In the vision, the apostle saw the One sitting on the throne, twenty-four elders, and four creatures sitting around 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. (NASB) Rev. 4:3-4

The One sitting on the throne is God the Father. He is the first person of the Trinity. The apostle does not describe Him as simply light. Yes, God is light; but He is more than that. He is like a jasper and sardius stone with an emerald bow 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 make a wonderful color combination on a bracelet or necklace. Just imagine how God must look with the emerald bow. Why did we say emerald bow and not rainbow? The answer is found in the Greek word translated as "rainbow." The Greek word actually means "bow." So, God is surrounded by an emerald bow and flashes of lightning and sounds of thunder.

And from the throne proceed flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder. . . (NASB) Rev. 4:5



What an amazing vision of God!

TWENTY-FOUR ELDERS. 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

garments. 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 garments are believers.

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. (NASB) Rev. 4:4

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 disappear from the heavenly scene because Jesus' kingdom is established on 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 Jesus has given to us (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 LAMPS. Before God are seven lamps. These lamps represent the Holy Spirit (Rev. 1:4),

And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God . . . (NASB) Rev. 4:5

Where is Christ? So far, we have seen God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. So far, we have seen two members of the Trinity. Is the Holy Spirit God? Acts 5:3-4 gives us the answer when we read,

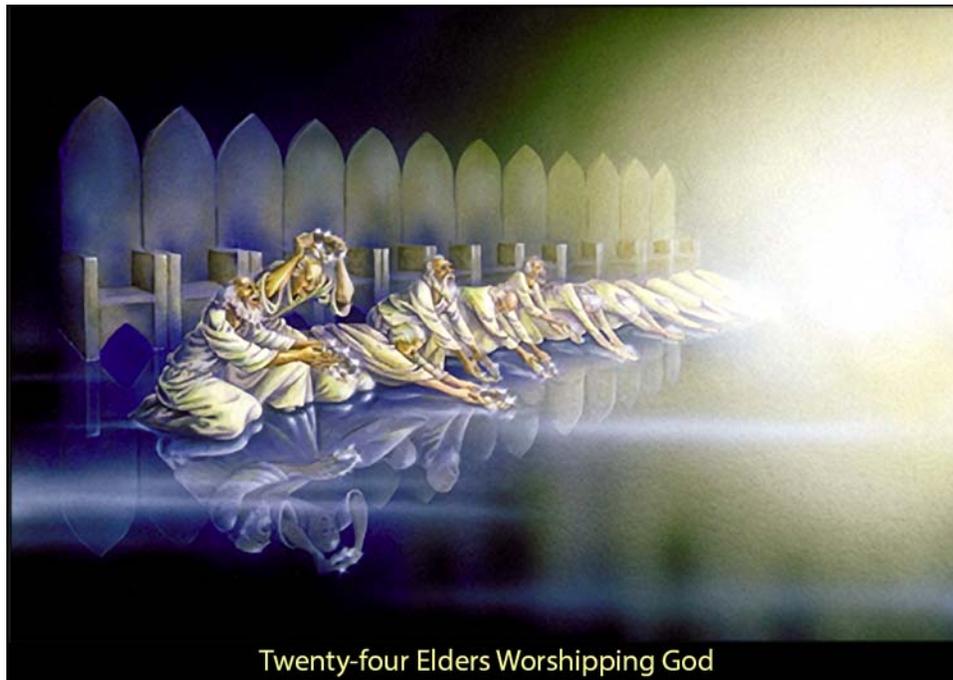
But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit, and to keep back some of the price of the land? While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not under your control? Why is it that you have conceived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men, but to God." (NASB) Acts 5:3-4

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.

. . . 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." (NASB) Rev. 4:6-8



Twenty-four Elders Worshipping God

We know very little about these four living creatures - 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 similar to 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 appear to be described.

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 did not try to help us understand that we are part of god and 'yet all God.' He did not say that God was some mysterious force. No! He described two beings in their glory. He saw God the Father and God the Holy Spirit.

In response the four living creatures repeated and repeated,

Holy, Holy, Holy, Is The Lord God, The Almighty, Who Was And Who Is And Who Is To Come.” (NASB) Rev. 4:8

And the twenty-four elders worshipped too!

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.” (NASB) Rev. 4:9-11

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 give them away.

CONCLUSION. Some day when we come before God, we will finally understand that God greatly loves us. I look forward to seeing Him, to understand His love, and to experience Him. Some day that will occur.

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

Augustine of Hippo