

SESSION 14 – REVELATION CHAPTER 4 – PART ONE

¹ *After this I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven! 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.” (Revelation 4:1 ESV)*

I. THE HEAVENLY THRONE ROOM AND DIVINE COUNCIL

- A. After viewing Jesus evaluation of the Church, exhorting and calling repentance, good works, and rewards for faithfulness to Him and the call, John sees a door standing open in heaven, and hears the *first voice* that spoke and sounded like a trumpet that said, “Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this.” And this begins John’s heavenly journey to the Throne Room and the Divine Council on Mount Zion. It is John’s ascension as he enters into the spirit realm through the open door.
- B. Aune comments on the idea of the heavenly court and divine council, The vision in Rev 4:1—6:17 is set in the heavenly throne room, and when it begins John is apparently on earth, or more specifically on Patmos. He sees an open door in heaven and hears an invitation to ascend to heaven (4:1): “Come up here, and I will reveal to you what must happen after this.” This vision, then, begins explicitly with the heavenly ascent of the seer... The focus of the throne vision is God enthroned in his heavenly court surrounded by a variety of angelic beings or lesser deities (angels, archangels, seraphim, cherubim) who function as courtiers. All such descriptions of God enthroned in the midst of his heavenly court are based on the ancient conception of the divine council or assembly found in Mesopotamia, Ugarit, and Phoenicia as well as in Israel. The members of this heavenly assembly are called “gods” (Exod 15:11; Pss 8:6; 29:1; 82:6[MT 5]), “sons of God” (Pss 29:1; 89:7 [MT 8]), “sons of the gods” (Job 1:6; 2:1), “sons of the Most High” (Ps 97:7), or “holy ones” (Deut 33:2–3; Ps 89:6, 7; Zech 14:5). The motif of the divine council is frequently associated with prophecy in the OT, for prophets were thought able to join the assembly, to hear the deliberations of the council, and then to announce God’s will upon the earth; according to Jer 23:18, “For who has stood in the council of the Lord so as to see and to hear his word?” (see Jer 23:22; Amos 3:7; 1 Kgs 22:19–22 = 2 Chr 18:18–22; Job 15:8; on Amos 7:15, “Yahweh took me [to the divine assembly] from following the flock.”¹)
- C. Heiser obviously agrees with Aune. Both look at the same source material (OT Texts, ANE Sources, 2TP Sources, etc.) and see the same language and draw the same conclusions. Heiser continues with the picture of the covenant lawsuit genre as also being present in the heavenly courtroom.

Scholars have long recognized that Revelation 4–5, along with other sections of the book, are arranged using an Old Testament genre known as the prophetic lawsuit (Hebrew: *rîb* (pronounced reeve, or reebe); “quarrel, dispute, lawsuit”).¹ This literary genre presents God as judge, prosecutor, and jury in the context of bringing an indictment against his people for covenant violations. These scenes are at times presented in a heavenly courtroom scene, where members of God’s council bear witness to the indictment, participate in deliberations, and assist in carrying out the sentence against

¹ Dr. David Aune. Revelation 1–5, Volume 52A (Kindle Locations 18062–18081). Zondervan Academic. Kindle Edition.

the guilty. A number of scholars have drawn attention to the elements of these heavenly lawsuit scenes. Once the elements are discerned it is not difficult to see how Revelation 4–5, set in God’s heavenly throne room, conforms to the genre.

A classic example of the *rîb*-pattern is found at Micah 6:1–8, where the prophet indicts Judah for social injustices and other wickedness. The first four verses have the word *rîb* several times, indicating that Yahweh is bringing Judah to trial... The major divine council scenes which are set as heavenly courtroom dramas, making use of the covenant lawsuit themes, include 1 Kings 22, Isaiah 6, Ezekiel 1–11, and Daniel 7. Meira Kensky writes in regard to these passages and others: Throughout the Hebrew Bible God is presented as judge both in the divine assembly and on more mundane human matters. In Psalm 82, God takes his place in the divine council and holds judgment “in the midst of the gods” (82:1). This vision also occurs in narrative form. One important instance is in regard to the prophet Micaiah bar Imlah (1 Kgs. 22)... The decision that Ahab is to fall at Ramoth-Gilead has already been decided, and the issue up for debate at the council is who will entice Ahab to do so. Different possibilities are entertained (intimated at verse 20), and God authorizes the lying spirit. Micaiah’s summary that “YHWH has decreed calamity upon you” carries with it the resonances of an official legal decision. Though it is not a trial per se—more like a sentencing hearing—God is presented here as an active judge, administering sentence with deliberation and authority...

One of the most important ways in which the divine courtroom appears in the Hebrew Bible is through its invocation in the so-called “prophetic lawsuit,” or “*rîb*-pattern” form of prophetic speech. Throughout the prophetic literature, the prophets indict the people of Israel for various crimes against God, all of which ultimately lead up to breach of covenant. For the prophets, this justifies God’s intention to punish the people for their misdeeds. This form of prophetic address, therefore, is an explanation of why God’s actions are just. The prophets use the legal language as a means of expressing God’s formal complaints and rights as a litigant, an injured party, and show through the mechanisms of human justice how God’s actions are themselves functions of divine justice, even though on the surface they may not seem so.³ (Kensky, 18, 28) R. Dean Davis observes that in all the major council scenes (1 Kgs. 22, Isa. 6, Ezek. 1–11; Dan. 7), all have the head of the council seated on a throne; God the king-judge is attended to by various members of the heavenly host; sometimes those members (at least some of them) are also seated. Isaiah and Ezekiel situate the throne inside the temple, so there is a temple setting implied for these judgment scenes.⁴

Alan Bandy argues for parallels in several places in Revelation. Of particular interest are his comments about Revelation 1–3 as a set-up to the divine council courtroom scene of Revelation 4–5. ... [T]he letters to the seven churches constitute lawsuit speeches whereby Jesus conducts a forensic examination of his covenant people. The form of the letters generally distinguishes them as prophetic oracles similar to the OT prophets, and more specifically as covenant lawsuit speeches. As such, the Book of Revelation follows the pattern of the OT prophetic lawsuit that begins with the people of God. The judgments and promises announced for the churches in the seven letters remain contingent upon what they do in response to these oracles. In this sense the remaining vision, especially the interludes, relates to how the churches respond (i.e., faithfully endure as witnesses) during the heightened state of persecution. Once the Lord deals with his people he turns his attention to the surrounding nations with oracles of judgment. This pattern is established by the Song of Moses in

Deuteronomy 32 in that once the covenant people repent and obey Yahweh promises to exact vengeance on Israel's pagan enemies (cf. Deut. 32:43). The Book of Revelation, likewise, sounds a note of judgment. pertaining to the churches but then the remaining contents of the vision pertains to the judgment of the nations. Significantly the judgment of the nations is closely tied to the theme of vengeance for their treatment of the saints.⁵ In essence, Revelation 1–3 is both a lawsuit dealing with followers of Jesus—and in some cases, indictment—it is also building a case against the nations, because some of the churches that are the recipients of the letters have been faithful and have suffered for it. ² (see 2 Thess. 1:5-10)

- D. As noted by Aune, Heiser, and Bandy, John's ascension places him and what is recorded in Revelation 4 and 5 with the Enochian tradition, Moses, Elijah, Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel, the last three giving great descriptions of the heavenly vision; in other words he fits within the OT Prophets. We will return to an error on reading the introduction to chapter four as pointing to a historical sequence and order of events that relate to history on the earth. In other words, the impact of this *after this I looked*, or *after these things* as relating to the *after the church is taken up*. ***"This is the sequential order in which John saw the visions, but not necessarily the historical order of the events they depict."***³

- E. Mounce bridges the gap on our approach of the *already-but-not-yet* saying,

The throne-room vision (chaps. 4 and 5) follows the earlier vision (1:12ff.) apparently without delay. There is no way of knowing for sure just when and how John recorded his visionary experiences. Since the vision moves on naturally to the breaking of the seals and ultimately to the unveiling of the close of history, it is best to understand chapters 4 and 5 as referring essentially to a time yet future. While God is eternally adored in heaven, the book of Revelation reveals those specific events with which history is brought to a close.⁴

Beale also frames the *already-but-not-yet*: We have already seen that the "*after these things*" allusion from Daniel in 1:19 and its equivalent "shortly/quickly" in 1:1 indicated that the fulfillment of the Daniel 2 prophecy concerning the establishment of God's kingdom has begun in Christ and the church. Rev. 4:1 introduces not only 4:1–5:14, but also the rest of the visions in the book (4:2–22:5). It becomes clear, therefore, that all the visions about to unfold concern events throughout the church age, past, present, and future. Some may have already unfolded, others await their fulfillment, and yet others have multiple fulfillments throughout the church age. In this connection, the NT is both consistent and clear in its view that the "last days" or "latter days" started already with the resurrection of Christ (Acts 2:17–21, citing Joel 2:28–32 as fulfilled; 1 Tim. 4:1; 1 Pet. 1:20; Heb. 1:2; Jas. 5:3; 1 John 2:18; Jude 18, etc.).⁵

² Heiser, Michael. John's Use of the Old Testament in the Book of Revelation: Notes from the Naked Bible Podcast (p. 81-85). Naked Bible Press. Kindle Edition.

³ G. K. Beale and David H. Campbell, Revelation: A Shorter Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2015), 99.

⁴ Robert H. Mounce, The Book of Revelation, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997), 117.

⁵ G. K. Beale and David H. Campbell, Revelation: A Shorter Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2015), 99–100.

- F. Before we go further, let's summarize what is being said and reestablish our framework for moving into Revelation 4:
1. John has a heavenly ascension into heaven through an open door. This is a *spirit-door* leading into the spirit-plane; the invisible and unseen realm where he appears before the Throne of God. This is the Mount Zion of Hebrews 12.
 2. The Throne Room is simultaneously also a Court Room with the Divine Council present which as overtones of judgment. Additionally, the Court scene brings forward the divine lawsuit genre and bridges Revelation 2 and 3 with what is about to take place next beginning in Chapter 6. Judgement has begun in the House of Yahweh (1 Peter 4:17), next it will extend to the nations opposed to Him. (**Is this happening now? **)
 3. These truths and corresponding events ebb and flow throughout both Church History and World History but will find the culmination at the end of this present age. They are presented against the backdrop of the Exodus of the Children of Israel from Egypt and Yahweh's judgment on both the Egyptians and *the gods of Egypt* (Ex. 12:12)
- G. *After this I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven! 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."* (Rev. 4:1 ESV)

John brings into the foreground the door imagery seen in the Church in Philadelphia where Jesus has the Key of the House of David and opens doors no one can shut. He has here opened a *door in heaven* for John to ascend through. It is also an invitation to enter into what otherwise would be a closed Council Session to humans. The Disciple that Jesus Loves was given the role of the court room recorder and participated in the unfolding decisions.

In the OT, the conception of a "door of heaven" occurs just twice (Gen 28:17; Ps 78:23), and only Gen 28:17 concerns an epiphanic revelation (on the motif of the "open heavens," which occurs just once in the OT, see Comment on 19:11). In 1 Enoch 14:14b–15, there is an exceptionally close verbal and conceptual parallel, "I saw in my vision, and behold another door was opened before me," and in vv 1-8ff., Enoch sees a throne upon which God is seated.⁶

^{14b}I looked again at my vision, ¹⁵ and, behold, **another door opened in front of me.** This was a great house and all was built with tongues of fire. ¹⁶ It was all worth more in glory and honor and greatness such that I am not able to point out to you its glory and its greatness... ¹⁸ **I looked and I saw a high throne and its appearance was like crystal, a wheel like the sun shining brightly and a mountain of cherubs...** ²⁰ **And the great glory was seated upon it, its covering like the appearance of the sun, brighter and whiter than all snow...** ²⁴ Until then I was cast upon my face and trembling. And **the Lord called me with his mouth and said to me, "Come here, Enoch, and hear my word."** (1 Enoch 14:14b-16, 18, 20, 24 LXX)

⁶ Dr. David Aune. Revelation 1-5, Volume 52A (Kindle Locations 18167-18171). Zondervan Academic. Kindle Edition.

The voice he hears is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. Revelation 1:10-16 “and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet saying” ... “Then I turned to see the voice...” and then we have the Son of Man displayed in His radiant glory.

- H. ²At once I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne. ³And he who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian, and around the throne was a rainbow that had the appearance of an emerald. (Rev. 4:2-3 ESV)

Aune notes the expression *in the Spirit* is better understood as *in the spirit* as opposed to *in the body* and points to the vision or trance as being *in the spirit realm*.⁷ Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 12:2 he is uncertain of the heavenly experience being *caught up into paradise* whether *in the body or out of the body* I do not know. There is in the mystery of ascension through prophetic experience the issue of what language to apply to the event. In any case, John is taken up through the Door. On the other side or through the Door he saw *a throne standing in heaven, with One seated on the throne*. This is without question Yahweh, the Father. As is customary, Jesus will make His appearance after the Court is set.

The OT has similar visual experiences from the Prophets:

¹In the year of King Uzziah's death I saw the Lord (Adonai) sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, with the train of His robe filling the temple. ²Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. ³And one called out to another and said, “Holy, Holy, Holy, is Yahweh of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory.” ⁴And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called out, while the house of God was filling with smoke. (Isa. 6:1-4 LSB)

¹⁹Then Micaiah said, “Therefore, hear the word of Yahweh. I saw Yahweh sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing by Him on His right and on His left. (1 Kings 22:19 LSB)

¹Now it happened in the thirtieth year⁸, on the fifth day of the fourth month, while I was by the river Chebar among the exiles, that the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God... ⁵And within it there were figures with the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance: they had the likeness of a man. ⁶And each of them had four faces and four wings. ⁶And their legs were straight, and their feet were like a calf's hoof, and they sparkled like the gleam of burnished bronze... ¹⁰And as for the likeness of their faces, each had the face of a man; all four had the face of a lion on the right and the face of a bull on the left, and all four had the face of an eagle...¹³As 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 lightning was flashing from the fire...²²Now over the heads of the living creatures there was something with the likeness of an expanse, like the awesome gleam of crystal, spread out over their heads above. ²³And underneath the expanse their wings were stretched out straight, one toward the other; each one also had two wings covering its body on the one side and on the other... ²⁶Now above the expanse that was over their heads there was something in the likeness of a throne, like sapphire stone in appearance; and upon the likeness of the throne, high up, was the

⁷ Dr. David Aune. Revelation 1-5, Volume 52A (Kindle Location 18264). Zondervan Academic. Kindle Edition.

⁸ The 30th year here is in reference to Ezekiel's age. There is no other referent.

likeness of one with the appearance of a man. ²⁷Then I saw from the appearance of His loins and upward something like the gleam of glowing metal with the appearance of fire all around within it, and from the appearance of His loins and downward I saw something with the appearance of fire; and there was a radiance all around Him. ²⁸As the appearance of the rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so was the appearance of the radiance all around. Such was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of Yahweh. And I saw this, and I fell on my face and heard a sound of a voice speaking. (Ezekiel 1:1-28 LSB)

Ezekiel identifies these four living creatures as Cherubim in Ezekiel 10.

¹⁵Then the cherubim rose up. They are the living creatures that I saw by the river Chebar. (Ezek. 10:15 LSB)

I. Concerning the Cherubim and Seraphim, Heiser writes in his book *Angels*:

cherubim and seraphim would be viewed as a blessing (protection) by those welcome in the sacred space they guarded, but as a terror to those unwelcome. These terms could be considered as describing the nature of heavenly beings, since cherubim and seraphim are divine creatures. Both are said to have wings, though the number varies (Exod 25:20; 37:9; Isa 6:2). Cherubim are at times assigned four faces and both human and bovine body parts (Ezek 1; 10). Seraphim is the plural form of śārāp, a Hebrew word also translated “snake” (Num 21:6, 8; Isa 14:29). These descriptions are reflected in iconography from the biblical period.⁷³ Neither is ever qualified with the term mal’āk, and so it is incorrect to think of cherubim and seraphim as angels.⁷⁴

In Alice Wood’s detailed treatment of the Hebrew term in her major study on cherubim,⁷⁵ she notes: Shades of meaning that are attributed to the cherubim in the biblical texts can be further accentuated by means of a comparison with the corresponding Semitic data. It is the form kuṛību, derived from the Akkadian karābu “to pray”, which provides us with the closest lexical parallel to the biblical כְּרֻבִּים. If the two words are etymologically related, then the Akkadian evidence highlights the apotropaic⁷⁶ qualities of the cherubim.... The cherubim are placed at the boundary between the sacred and the profane, to protect the holy from contamination.⁷⁷ Protecting the sanctity of God’s presence is obviously a functional role. While this meaning is elicited from comparative Akkadian material, it is Egyptian literature which informs us that seraphim perform the same function.⁷⁸ It is common for interpreters to presume the lemma behind seraphim is the verb śārāp, which means “to burn.”⁷⁹ As recent research has shown, this is only part of the picture. As I noted in *The Unseen Realm*, “It is more likely that seraphim derives from the Hebrew noun śārāp (“serpent”), which in turn is drawn from Egyptian throne guardian terminology and conceptions.”⁸⁰ As recent research demonstrates, the Egyptian Uraeus serpent, drawn from two species of Egyptian cobras, fits all the elements of the supernatural seraphim who attend Yahweh’s holy presence in Isaiah 6. The relevant cobra species spit “burning” venom, can expand wide flanges of skin on either side of their bodies—considered “wings” in antiquity—when threatened, and are (obviously) serpentine.⁸¹ As Joines notes, the

⁹ Heiser, Michael S.. *Angels: What the Bible Really Says About God’s Heavenly Host* (p. 41). Lexham Press. Kindle Edition

protective nature of the uraeus cobra is evident: “A function of the uraeus is to protect the pharaoh and sacred objects by breathing out fire on his enemies.”⁸²¹⁰

Seraphim are not *snakes*. It is a description of *function*. They are the *burning ones*.



Babylonian Cherub. Face of a man, hooves of a calf.

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 41-42



An impression from a cylinder seal shows two four-winged sphinxes supporting the winged disk of Ahuramazda. Between them is a crescent disk enclosing the upper part of a deity.

Ezekiel's vision combines much of the visual iconography of his day. Those who read would have had a clear idea of what he was talking about. Additionally, the Cherub were engraved on the doors of the Temple, and were shaped over the Mercy Seat on the Ark of the Covenant.

J. Beale writes concerning the throne,

According to the similar order of images in Daniel 7 and Ezekiel 1, the image of a divine being sitting on a throne would be suited to either OT context, though further references are made to Ezekiel 1 in the following verses. The divine throne is mentioned seventeen times in chs. 4 and 5 (and a further twenty-one times in chs. 6–22), the purpose being to emphasize the sovereignty of God over all human history. All heavenly beings find their significance in their placement around the throne, and all the earth's inhabitants are judged on the basis of their attitude to God's claim to rule over them from this throne.¹¹

K. *One upon the throne, with the appearance of jasper and carnelian, and around the throne was a rainbow that had the appearance of an emerald.* Unlike Ezekiel, John's attention is first to the *One* upon the throne. This is the Ancient of Days, the Lord God Almighty (Ezek. 10:5 specifically), *Yahweh El Shaddai*. The first mention of the name *El Shaddai* is Genesis 17:1 when He called Abram at ninety-nine to walk before Him blameless so He could confirm His covenant between Himself and Abram and to multiply him. The Name *El Shaddai* is not exactly correctly rendered *God Almighty*. The name Shaddai may have originated in Akkadian, meaning Mountain, but to a Hebrew audience that hears God introduces himself as El Shaddai,

¹¹ G. K. Beale and David H. Campbell, *Revelation: A Shorter Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2015), 100–101.

it must have meant My Destroyer, [Our] House Spirit, Self-Sufficient One, the Rain-Maker and Source of Food for Babies, all at once.¹² It is a perfectly encompassing Name as He is all of these; our Defense and Provider. David sang it this way:

³But You, O Yahweh, are a shield about me, My glory, and the One who lifts my head. ⁴I was calling to Yahweh with my voice, And He answered me from His holy mountain. Selah. ⁵I lay down and slept; I awoke, for Yahweh sustains me. ⁶I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people Who all around have set themselves against me. (Psalm 3)

¹He who abides in the shelter of the Most High Will abide in the shadow of the Almighty. ²I will say to Yahweh, “My refuge and my fortress, My God, in whom I trust!” (Psalm 91:1-2 LSB)

Here the Psalmist connect the Most High (El Elyon) with the Almighty (Shaddai) and attributes both names to Yahweh. This dwelling and abiding is a result of *ascending the Hill (or Mountain) of Yahweh* (see Psalms 15, 24).

Of interest the name El Shaddai (שֹׁדַי – shin, dalet, yod) is “thought to be an acronym for the phrase *Shomer dalot Yisrael – Guardian of the Doors of Israel* – abbreviated as the letter Shin on most mezuzot¹³



- L. The visual we see from Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, 1 Kings 19, and Revelation 4 gives a majestic and radiant view of the glory, power, creativity, light, color, sound, greatness, completeness, and above all Love. There are surrounding or within the foreground of Yahweh, El Shaddai:

- Seraphim
- Cherubim
- Seven Spirits/Angels/Archangels/Torches/Stones of Fire
- An uncountable number of angels
- The Divine Council; including the Holy Watchers (Dan. 4:17) and the Holy Ones (*kaddishim/hagioi*)
- Twenty-Four Elders
- Assembly of the Firstborn
- Spirits of the Righteous

¹² <https://www.abarim-publications.com/Meaning/Shaddai.html>

¹³ https://www.hebrew4christians.com/Scripture/Parashah/Summaries/Lekh_Lekha/El_Shaddai/el_shaddai.html A mezuzot is a kosher parchment scroll inscribed with Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and 11:13-21 on one side and the word Shaddai on the other side that is rolled up and inserted into a decorative case. The case is then affixed to a doorway in fulfillment of the commandment given in Deuteronomy 6:9, “And you shall write them upon the doorposts (mezuzot) of your house, and upon your gates.”

- Our Beloved Yeshua the Messiah
- Additional sights and sounds: *emerald rainbow, sapphire sea of glass, precious jewels, flashes of lightning, peals of thunder.*

M. Aune gives insight into the multi-faceted, multi-colored gemstones of the One seated on the Throne; El Elyon, the Almighty, YHWH:

These semiprecious stones suggest colors, and it is interesting to note that, of the OT prophets, only Ezekiel had visions in which colors are evident. Jasper is an opaque stone that tends to be red but is also found in yellow, green, and grayish blue. Since jasper is used as a simile for the appearance of God, it is used later in Revelation as an image for the overall appearance of the New Jerusalem, which manifests the glory of God (21:11), and is the material from which its walls are constructed (21:18), as well as the first of its twelve foundations (21:19). Throne scenes in Jewish apocalyptic literature do not usually use precious stones as metaphors for describing the throne of God (L. L. Thompson, Revelation, 86). However, the throne vision in Ezek 1 mentions several precious stones and metals (v 16, chrysolite; v 26, sapphire; v 27, gleaming bronze), and T. Abr. (Rec. A) 12:4–6 (tr. Sanders in Charlesworth, OTP 1:889) says: And between the two gates there stood a terrifying throne with the appearance of terrifying crystal, flashing like fire. And upon it sat a wondrous man, bright as the sun, like unto a son of God. Before him stood a table like crystal, all of gold and byssus. In some angelic epiphanies, precious stones can be used in the description (e.g., Dan 10:5–6, where gold, beryl, and burnished bronze are used to describe the girdle, body, and legs of the angel). To a certain extent John uses the precious stones drawn from the description of the heavenly Jerusalem in describing God and his throne.¹⁴

N. Mounce writes, “...God is portrayed as the brilliance of light reflected from precious stones. The Psalmist spoke of God as one who covered himself “in light as with a garment” (Ps 104:2), and Paul described the Lord as dwelling “in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see” (1 Tim 6:16). The source of the description is the vision of Ezekiel 1 in which the throne appears like sapphire surrounded by a rainbow (1:26–28).”¹⁵

Beale focuses on the *jasper stone* as it is mentioned first, “Of particular significance is the mention of jasper, the only stone mentioned later in the book in explicit connection with the glory of God (21:11). It is at the head of the list of the twelve foundation stones of the end-time city’s wall in 21:19. The stones intensify the light around the throne by reflecting the unapproachable brightness, and hence glory, surrounding God himself (cf. 1 Tim. 6:16; Ps. 104:2).”¹⁶

This scene, recorded by John, is not one of a remote place, somewhere far away, where God, Jesus, a handful of angels, and the departed saints, sit on clouds and play harps. This is the Majestic Glory; the

¹⁴ Dr. David Aune. Revelation 1-5, Volume 52A (Kindle Locations 18308-18319). Zondervan Academic. Kindle Edition.

¹⁵ Robert H. Mounce, The Book of Revelation, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997), 120.

¹⁶ G. K. Beale and David H. Campbell, Revelation: A Shorter Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2015), 101.

center and fount of all life, light, color, beauty, fragrance, sound, music, creativity, genius, wisdom, understanding, instruction (i.e., *torah*), power, authority, the divine family, kingship, dominion, and Love all find their source.

- O. ⁹Then **Moses** went up with **Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel**, ¹⁰and **they saw the God of Israel**; and **under His feet there appeared to be a pavement of sapphire, as clear as the sky itself**. ¹¹Yet He did not stretch out His hand against **the nobles of the sons of Israel**; **and they beheld God**, and **they ate and drank**. (Exodus 24:9-11 LSB)

This ascension experience in Exodus in the giving of Torah to Moses is first the *beholding of Yahweh* in His glory. This is more than simply *seeing Him*. Naum Sarna writes, “The general verb *r-’-h*, “to see,” is replaced by the stronger *h-z-h*, “to behold,” which connotes far greater intensity, belongs to the vocabulary of prophetic vision, and qualifies the earlier statement by taking the encounter outside the range of natural ocular experience.”¹⁷ Sarna took liberty to expand the word *yiru* (from *r’h* (*rah-av*) to see; understand; reveal; look at; examine; inspect) into its natural experience of *beholding*. The name *Ruben* is from the same lemma: *And Leah conceived and bore a son, and she called his name Rueben, for she said, “Because Yahweh has looked upon my affliction; for now my husband will love me. (Gen. 29:32 ESV)”* It means more than a passing glance. We know they continued *looking* and that became *beholding* as verse 11 says, “and **they beheld God**, and they ate and drank.”

The *pavement of sapphire* is also of interest because the word translated *pavement* is the Heb. *lebenah* meaning *sunbaked brick*, a word the elders of Israel were very familiar with:

⁷“You are no longer to give the people straw to make **brick** (*lebenah*) as previously; let them go and gather straw for themselves. (Ex. 5:7; and 5:8,16,18,19 LSB)

No longer Egyptian slaves making brick for their harsh taskmasters, they now beheld the craftsmanship of God Himself as He laid the translucent blue, sapphire bricks upon which they would fellowship with Him and eat and drink of the covenant meal.

Sarna observes, “More likely, it describes a formal element in the conclusion of the covenant...[see Ex. 18:12 as] evidence of such solemn covenant meals as an integral part of treaty-making. The meal would have consisted of the sacrifices mentioned in verse 5.”¹⁸

¹²Then **Jethro, Moses’ father-in-law, took a burnt offering and sacrifices for God, and Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to eat a meal with Moses’ father-in-law before God**. (Ex. 18:12 LSB)

Again, before the God of Israel, Yahweh, on the sapphire pavement, they ate the covenant meal. When we see this again in Revelation 4, the visionary experience of John should remind us of this day and bring into the forefront of our thoughts the day Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and the Seventy Elders of Israel ascended the Mountain of Yahweh, beheld His Glory, and ate the covenant meal with Him. And in Israel’s

¹⁷ Sarna, Nahum. The JPS Torah Commentary: Exodus. Philadelphia, Jewish Publication Society, 1991, p. 153.

¹⁸ Ibid.

future that same God they saw, whose feet were on the pavement, He would again have the covenant meal with His people, instituting the New Covenant. This time not in the blood of bulls and goats, but in Himself.

²⁶While they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." ²⁷Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you, ²⁸for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. (Matt. 26:26-28 ESV)