

“The Rapture & Church in Heaven”

(A verse-by-verse analysis)

This study covers the events of the Rapture and Church in Heaven during the “Seven Year Tribulation Period”.

Chapter 4 begins the prophetic future. Chapter one, verse 19 says, “Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter”. We now begin the hereafter part. It says, “after this”. After what? After the church age, depicted by the seven churches, the seven churches being the sum total, the complete program, for the church age. It’s not going to end the church, just this era of the church. This is a prophecy of the things which will take place after “the things which are” as described in chapters two and three of Revelation. We will once again, as in Revelation 2 and 3, analyze certain words and phrases that are golden keys that must be studied to understand what is being described.

Verse 1

After the church age John said a door was opened in heaven and he heard the trumpet-like voice of Jesus crying “Come up hither”. This is the rapture of the church. Some do not believe in the rapture. Because they cannot find the word rapture in the Bible. One cannot find the word Bible in the Bible either. But there is a Bible. And there will be a rapture. The word *rapture*, in English, comes from the Latin, “*rapio*,” which means “a snatching away”. All Christians, both living and dead, are going to be snatched away in the twinkling of an eye, in an event called the rapture.

The second coming of Jesus is mentioned about 318 times in the New Testament alone. One scripture says, His coming is a secret thing as a “*thief in the night*”. Another verse says, “*every eye shall see Him*”. One passage teaches that His second coming will be a time of joy and great blessing. Another tells us His coming will be a time of mourning. One scripture says His coming will be a meeting in the air. Another says He comes all the way down to the Mount of Olives, plants His feet on the mount and the mountain divides apart.

The way to correlate these teachings regarding Christ’s return to earth is to realize that His second coming is in two stages. Stage one is the rapture. Stage two is the glorious appearing. The time of the rapture is a secret. The glorious appearing is public. The rapture is a meeting in the air. The glorious appearing is to the ground. The rapture is going to be a glorious time for the church but a terribly sad and fearful event to those left behind. The rapture, which takes place in Rev. 4:1, removes believers preceding the judgments described in the seven year period, called the Tribulation. (Revelation, chapters 6-18.)

The glorious appearing, which begins with Rev. 19:11, follows the Tribulation period and restores the believer to his earthly sojourn. The Tribulation ends with the Battle of Armageddon, at which time the door of heaven is again opened in order for all believers to exit heaven with Christ for the return trip to earth. This is referred to as “*The Revelation*”. This glorious event is called “*The Revelation*,” because the Lord will reveal himself to the whole world.

Verses 2-3

We are now leaving earth to go with John up to the throne room to see what is going to be taking place there.

John is allowed to see the throne room of the heavenly palace and the first thing his eye falls on is, guess what, Jesus. John sees the most glorious vision of all time or eternity, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Most High, upon His throne.

Study Tip:

The second coming of Christ is in two stages (The Rapture & Glorious Appearing)

Jasper is an ancient word that depicts what we know as a diamond. Diamonds are translucent and are the most valuable, beautiful brilliant gems on earth. They are also the hardest material substance on earth.

The Sardine stone was a blood-red stone named after the city of Sardis near which it was mined. The red color depicted undoubtedly speaks of the saving blood of Christ and the righteous wrath of God and His judgment that is about to fall in Revelation, chapters 6-18.

When a light shines on a diamond many colors can be seen within it. No doubt the red color John saw was reflected from within Christ. When Ezekiel saw the glorified Christ in Ezek. 1:27, he could see the color amber, which is a golden color, within Christ. Both John and Ezekiel indicate color could be seen within the translucent Christ, just as color can be seen within a diamond. What a magnificent sight! *"And we shall behold him face to face"* (I Cor. 13:12).

Why was Jesus likened unto a jasper and a sardine stone? God is telling us some very significant truths here. Remember the Bible is its own interpreter. In the Old Testament twelve different precious stones were placed in the priest's ephod, or breastplate, so that when he went before God he represented all the twelve tribes of Israel before God. The jasper stone, which is the equivalent of a diamond, was the first stone in the breastplate, and represented the eldest son, Reuben. The name *Reuben* means, *"Behold a Son"*. John looked at the throne, saying *"Behold a Son"*.

The sardine stone was the last in the priest's ephod and represented Benjamin. The sardine stone is the equivalent of a ruby. The name Benjamin means, *"Son of my right hand"*. Now where is Jesus sitting? *"When he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high"* (Heb. 1:3b).

John also saw a rainbow like unto an emerald encircling the throne. Emeralds are green, the green symbolizing life that is well watered. The emerald was the fourth stone in the high priest's breastplate and represented the tribe of Judah. A rainbow symbolizes that the impending judgment will not come through a flood, because of God's promise to Noah in Genesis 9:13. This same rainbow was seen by Ezekiel (1:26-28). But Ezekiel didn't tell the color of the rainbow he saw. *"If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood...what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron?...For he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar. For it is evident, that our Lord sprang out of Judah; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood"* (Heb. 7:11,13-14). Hebrews 7:13 tells us that this priest didn't descend from Aaron. The emerald represented the high priest, Jesus Christ, from the tribe of Judah.

We understand that the jasper, ruby and emerald stones are symbols that say, *"Behold a Son, sitting on the right hand of the Majesty on high, born into the tribe of Judah"*.

Do you know how we get to the unknown? It's bridged by the known. He didn't leave us to despair. It's concealed in the Old and revealed in the New. If you don't know what's concealed, then you won't know what's revealed. How much you get out of Revelation will depend on how much you know about the previous 65 books of the Bible. He said this is the Revelation of Jesus Christ and I want my people to see me and know me and know where I am. You might say, "I can't see it". Oh yes you can! It is here in this book. You must know who Jesus really is before you can minister in priesthood.

If you want to know what heaven is really like you will have to learn what God told Moses. Everything He told Moses to make, served as an *"example and shadow of heavenly things"* Heb. 8:5. Understanding the earthly will reflect you right back to the original in heaven. We get discouraged because we don't know who He is. When Jesus met the two discouraged disciples on the road to Emmaus after His resurrection He began *"at Moses and all the prophets"* and *"expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself"* (Lk. 24:27). If we start at Moses and the prophets and get learned in who He is, it will unlock the things God has spoken in the Revelation.

The elder in the New Testament was a representative for the church. The word *elder* comes from the Greek word "*Presbyterian*" It means *an assembly of aged men and denotes a council or a senate among the Jews*. In Titus 1:5, 7 the words elder and bishop are used and in this passage. The term *elder* indicates position and the latter term, *bishop*, indicates the nature of their work. Both of these were appointed according to the maturity of their spiritual experience more than of age and according as they had given evidence of fulfilling the divine qualification. These elders are the redeemed in their resurrected bodies and they are clothed in white raiment. Remember, the church has already been raptured at this point.

We also read in verse four that they have been rewarded. These individuals are already wearing golden crowns. The word for *crown* here is the same that is used in 2 Tim. 4:8 and it *means a victor's crown*. It's not the word "*diadem*". The diadem description is used to describe a monarch's crown. That is only used for Jesus' crowns. So we see that the church is in heaven at this point and has already been through the judgment seat of Christ and is now positioned for the Millennium.

The church is more than just a parallel of a temple or a body. It is called a *royal priesthood*. To help us better understand, we can look at Israel. Israel was a priesthood. But they never came to the fruition of what God ordained them to be or what they could have been. But the church will reach full maturity. The purpose of God is not going to be defeated. "*Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light*" (1 Pet. 2:5,9). These twenty-four elders who ministered are referred to as the royal priesthood of God and are a symbol of the church.

God ordained the priests in the Old Testament to serve in courses of twenty-four. We find the beginning of the setting forth of the courses in 1 Chronicles 23-25. According to 1 Chronicles 23:6a, 13b, "*And David divided them into courses among the sons of Levi... and Aaron was separated, that he should sanctify the most holy things, he and his sons for ever, to burn incense before the Lord, to minister unto him, and to bless in his name for ever.*"

Lets look at the first chapter of Luke to show the validity of the courses during the New Testament. "*There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth. And it came to pass, that while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course, According to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord*" (Luke 1:5,8-9). He executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course, in courses of twenty-four. (These twenty-four elders are symbols that will be enlarged upon in chapter five.)

There were thousands of priests and many of them never got to serve inside the temple itself. But eternity is forever so there will be no shortage of opportunity to serve, in courses of twenty-four, in the presence of the high priest. Remember, in heaven, we will be rewarded according to our earthly labors, (See Mt. 16:27, 1 Cor. 3:8, and Rev. 2:23.) If you do not allow the Holy Spirit to take you to spiritual maturity you will be with the church in heaven but no doubt the twenty-four seats, or thrones, around the throne, are reserved only for those who come to fruition spiritually. Do you get the picture? Twenty-four is simply a symbol of the priesthood in which those who reach spiritual maturity will eternally serve in heaven. Seemingly this would be motivation to follow the Holy Spirit now, as He leads us in our everyday walk.

We see here in chapter 4 that the church has already been raptured. Where else would we be, but the nearest company around the throne, and even closer than the angels? We want to be one of those participants around the throne. That day and hour is coming very soon! Every day we learn more about God's purpose, the more we should be saying, "Lord mold us and make us into what you appointed and prepared us to be here on earth".

Study Tip:

The 24 Thrones are reserved for all who reach spiritual maturity on earth.

Verse 5

When He said from "out of the throne" it tells us that the Tribulation Period is not something that man does. During the Tribulation nothing happens on earth till first something takes place in heaven. For example: One of the seals broken, a trumpet sounds, or a vial poured out.

Rumblings resound through heaven as the saints are informed of what is about to occur on earth. What does lightning and thunder tell you? There's a storm on the way and it's going to come out of the throne.

This pictures the Holy Spirit in all of His perfection, for seven always denotes flawlessness in the Bible. The Bible is not saying that there are seven different Spirits but seven-fold characteristics of the One, Holy Spirit. The blessed Holy Ghost, the third person of the triune godhead, is also involved in the impending judgment. Each member of the Trinity is righteously indignant over the earth's inundation with wickedness and participate united in the twenty-one seal, trumpet, and bowl judgments which occur in chapters 6-18.

Verses 6-8

Although thunderous judgment is about to be released upon earth, perfect peace surrounds God's throne. The glassy sea pictures calmness, a sea of people, untroubled by winds and storms. This glassy sea of people is actually the church at rest in heaven as the storm of judgment is unleashed upon earth.

The Greek word for *beasts* is "zoo" and means "living ones". This is an entirely different word than what is used to describe the beast or antichrist. The Greek word used here to describe the antichrist is "therion". It means *beast* and is used in Revelation, chapters 11, 13 and 17. The four living creatures that are referred to here, interpreted as beasts, are actually six winged angels called seraphims. They have eyes before and behind to see all things clearly and accurately, past and present. "In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory" (Isa. 6:1-3). These beings are a picture of beauty. Within each species there is always a leader, the lion among beasts and the eagle among birds. This is the portrait set before us, the most beautiful angels, seraphims, in all of their magnificence, praising the Lord.

We can draw a parallel from the description of the four winged cheribims in Ezekiel, chapters 1 and 10. The cheribims in Ezekiel 1 and 10 are not stationary but are in constant motion with their faces continually toward the Lord as they move. Even though the cheribims have four wings, not six wings as seraphims, we can understand that the seraphims are no doubt also in continual motion with their faces toward God as they move.

Verses 9-11

Continue with the study by reading verses nine through eleven.

Verses 1-6

Notice that Chapter 5 begins with "and" which connects it to chapter four. There should not have been a break between chapters 4 and 5.

John's lament has to do with the fact that this scroll is the title deed to the earth. As long as it remains sealed, Satan will be in control of the earth. The search for a member of the human race, past or present, proves fruitless to open the book. None are worthy! He didn't call for an angel. He wanted a worthy man.

A horn is a symbol of power. Jesus is all-powerful (seven horns). *Eyes are a symbol of knowledge.* He is all-seeing (seven eyes). The Holy Spirit rests upon Him in all of His fullness, in a seven-fold way.

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In Genesis 1:26a, 27-28a God the Father said to God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, *"Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion...So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion..."* But the first Adam sold out to Satan and lost his dominion, his title deed to planet earth. Instead of man having dominion over everything, he gave dominion of earth to Satan. He sold his birthright just as Esau had also sold his birthright in Genesis 25:29-34. In both cases the ownership of the land and what was on it went to another.

In verse seven when the last Adam, Jesus Christ, walks over to the Father and takes the scroll, He is taking into His hands the title deed to earth. When He starts to break those seals, He starts to take back everything that the first Adam lost. *"For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together...even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for...redemption"* Rom. 8:22-23. (See also I Cor. 15:21-23.)

The law of the kinsman redeemer began in Leviticus, chapter 25 when God gave the law. *"The land shall not be sold for ever: for the land is mine; for ye are strangers and sojourners with me. And in all the land of your possession ye shall grant a redemption for the land. If thy brother be waxen poor, and hath sold away some of his possession, and if any of his kin come to redeem it, then shall he redeem that which his brother sold"* (Lev. 25:23-25). The Bible is packed full of information about this. One can trace this theme all the way through the Old Testament and see how the law of the kinsman redeemer was exercised.

When we read in the book of Ruth and see how Ruth was redeemed by Boaz we find that there were three things that could be redeemed. You could redeem a wife. You could redeem a servant, and you could redeem property. Think about that a minute. That is really vast and is exactly what Jesus is going to do.

There were three requirements for redeeming. You had to be the nearest kinsman. You had to be willing to do it. And you had to be able to purchase back what had been lost. Is He? Is the Lamb who was slain able? The elder said, "Don't cry John". We know a man. He is worthy. He is willing. And He is able. He purchased it with His own blood and He will take control of it again. When you really learn that He is worthy you won't have trouble relinquishing all of your authority to Him. Our God is worthy.

When the contract or document of the kinsman redeemer was written there was only one scroll or parchment that was used and the terms of the redemption of the mortgage were written on both sides. It was written *"within and without"* and was rolled up and sealed with seven seals. The inside of the document corresponded to the secret record and the outside contained the terms for the public to read what it would cost the kinsman redeemer to redeem who or what was being redeemed.

In Rev. 5:2 the angel said *we need a man to redeem earth*. We must learn, just as Jesus humbled Himself, so must we. He lay aside His glory and came to earth and walked as a man to redeem us back to God. He became Son of Man so that we could become sons of God.

The harps and golden vials full of incense represent priesthood. They sung, *"thou hast redeemed"* (purchased) *"us to God by thy blood"*. That makes us kindred. After we accept His blood sacrifice for our redemption our hearts spiritually, are as Adam and Eve's were in the beginning, made in the likeness of God.

Verses 7-9

Verse 10

We shall reign on the earth 1,000 years (Rev. 20:3-7). Many times Christians refer to themselves as kings and priests. Only Jesus bears the title of King. He is the high priest over the priesthood. We are the kingdom of priests that He rules over.

If it's a KINGDOM of priests in I Peter 2:5,9, and if it's a KINGDOM of priests in Revelation, chapter 1, then it's still a KINGDOM of priests in Revelation, chapter 5. The kingdom of priests is the church and there's more than just twenty-four in this priesthood. The number *twenty-four* is just a *symbol to let you know it's a royal priesthood* and the term elders is used to let you know that it is symbolic of the entire church.

Verse 11

John looked and Jesus was the center of our attention and adulation. *"And I heard the voice of many angels"*. Let's take a close look at a Greek dictionary where it describes the angels in Rev. 5:11. The definition says pastors, teachers and evangelists. We are not making the Bible say what we want. God told us not to do that, as is recorded in Rev. 22:19. We want to find out what He said. So church, there we are, shining *"as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever"* (Dan. 12:3), and not even one seal has been broken yet. The fact that the seal had not yet been broken is evidence that the rapture takes place before the Tribulation period.

Verses 12-14

This is the greatest worship service that has ever taken place in history and we don't want to miss it. And best of all, it is just the beginning. There will be an eternity to worship our loving Savior and God.

We continue with Chapter 6 of Revelation, where we will see the one found worthy, acting and beginning His attack against the devil.