

The Book Of
REVELATION
THE THRONE OF GOD
Revelation 4:1-11

Revelation & The Rapture

Revelation 4:1

After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, "Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this."

The Division Of Revelation

The book of Revelation has three divisions

- This division is not man-made but divinely given

Revelation 1:19

<i>the things which you have seen</i>	-	1 st Division	-	Past	-	Rev 1
<i>the things which are</i>	-	2 nd Division	-	Present	-	Rev 2-3
<i>things which will take place after this</i>	-	3 rd Division	-	Future	-	Rev 4-22

With this division stated

- We begin the third and largest division
- *things which will take place after this*

The start of this last and major division is highlight in **Revelation 4:1**

- *After these things I looked*
- *I will show you things which must take place after this.*

The Order Of Revelation

The fact that the book of Revelation has three divisions

- Not only shows divine order and design
- But also shows the sequential nature of the events described in the book
- I.e. Revelation should be understood as occurring chronologically

1st Division

John, exiled to the isle of Patmos under the Roman Emperor Domitian

- Had a vision, "*on the Lord's Day*" of "*one like the Son of Man*"
- After this he was told to write "*the things which you have seen*"
- Namely this vision

2nd Division

He was then given a divine perspective of seven churches that existed in his day

- In the Roman region of Asia Minor (modern day west Turkey)
- These also are a picture of the church age (age of grace)
- The period of time from the birth of the church (Pentecost)
- The removal of the church (rapture)

3rd Division

Finally, John is given a third vision of the throne of heaven

- From there he sees the events that will be played out on the earth
- From the end of the church age (rapture of the church)
- Until the consummation of all of things and the eternal state begins
- These are the *things which will take place after this*

The Overview Of History

- Overview of World History (Seven Ages)

- Overview of Church History (Seven Churches)
- Overview of Tribulation (Seven Years)

Revelation 4:1-2

After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, "Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this. Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold a throne set in heaven, and one sat on the throne.

The Rapture Of The Church

John in effect was caught up to heaven – a picture of the rapture

The rapture is an event at the end of the church age

- When Jesus Christ comes for His bride
- The church (His Bride) are caught up or seized from the earth
- Meet Him in the air
- Then enter heaven while events play out on earth

The Word Rapture

- The Greek word is "harpazō"
- This is translated in the Latin Vulgate as "rapio" (hence rapture)

Velociraptor

- Meaning = "swift seizer"
- Velox = swift (velocity)
- Raptor = seize (rapture)

Raptor literally means "thief"

In at least five places in the new testament Jesus Christ is described as a, "thief"

- To seize his church from the earth
- To seize the wicked in judgement

John's Rapture

- The experience of John is similar to
- The description of the rapture given by Paul in **1 Thessalonians 4:15-17**

Paul's description

- There will be a voice - *with the voice of an archangel*
- There will be a trumpet - *and with the trumpet of God*
- Then the saints will be carried by God into heaven - *And thus we shall always be with the Lord.*

A door is opened in heaven

- John heard a voice - *the first voice which I heard*
- John the voice is like a trumpet - *was like a trumpet*
- John is carried by God into heaven - *behold a throne set in heaven*

John is not the only person in Scripture to experience a type of the rapture

1. Enoch - The rapture is for those who walk with God
2. Lot - The rapture delivers from a time of God's judgement
3. Elijah - The rapture comes without warning
4. John - The rapture happens at the end of the church age (timing of the rapture)

The Throne Room Of God

Behold A Throne

The first thing John sees is a throne

- This is the centrepiece of heaven
- All life and events are focussed on and derived from the throne
- The key-word of the chapter, used fourteen times

A helpful division between **Revelation 4 & 5**

- **Revelation 4** - The Father
- **Revelation 5** - The Son

John sees, "one sat on the throne"

- He is never described, because
- **John 4:24** *God is Spirit*
- **Exodus 33:20** *You cannot see My face*
- **1 Timothy 6:16** *[God] dwells in unapproachable light*

The Glory Of God

Revelation 4:3

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.

Despite the Almighty not being visible

- There is an impression made on John
- He uses a simile to describe what He sees

These three precious stones

- Speak of the glory of God which is emanating from the throne
- If God dwells in approachable light
- It's as if light is refracting in the same luminescence that it would through these three stones

Jasper

- Opaque in appearance (not transparent)
- Red, yellow, brown, green, blue
- If this is the case, John is seeing a rainbow type light coming from the throne

However, the New Jerusalem is described with the same light as the glory of God it is said

Revelation 21:11

Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal.

This is a clear jasper

- A bright dazzling white light is emanating from the throne
- Perhaps with refractions of colour

Sardius

- Opaque in appearance (not transparent)
- Brown, but red when light is shone through it
- Where the city Sardis derived its name
- **Revelation 3:1** *...you have a name you are alive, but you are dead.*
- Intense blaze of red emanating from the throne of God

Emerald

The throne is encircled by a rainbow

- Not an inverted bow, as we see after a storm
- But a complete circle round the throne

Rainbow is typically made of seven colours

- This is unique in that it is emerald in appearance (green)
- There is an fierce circle of green surrounding and pouring out from the throne

In **Genesis 9**, the Lord takes this rainbow from His throne

- Employs it a sign of the covenant He makes with mankind
- That He will never judge the world again with a worldwide flood

The Lord has a perpetual reminded before Him

- Of His covenant by which he is bound Himself to mankind
- God is not distant or comfortably removed from the affairs of man
- His mind and His heart is on us constantly

The Twenty-Four Elders

Revelation 4:4

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.

The Identity Of The Twenty-Four

Debates rage as to the identity of these twenty-four elders

- 12 Tribes of Israel / 12 Apostles
- Church of Jesus Christ
- Redeemed of God

Three other visions of the throne room of heaven are provided in scripture

- All in the Old Testament
- **Isaiah 6**
- **Ezekiel 1 & 10**

In none of these are the twenty-four elders described

- The only satisfying explanation of their earlier absence in description
- They weren't there!

Question: Did an event occur between Isaiah and Ezekiel's vision and John's vision that would create a new occupancy in heaven?

Answer: Yes! The resurrection of Jesus Christ

Prior to Jesus Christ's death and resurrection

- When old testament saints died, they went to Abraham's Bosom (a compartment in Hades)
- When Jesus Christ rose from the dead
- He "*led captivity captive*", emptied Abraham's Bosom and took the dead saints to heaven
- Now when a person dies in Christ they go directly to heaven

These twenty-four elders are a picture of both

- Redeemed Old Testament saints
- Redeemed New Testament saints
- Redeemed of God

The Raiment Of The Twenty-Four

The twenty-four elders are seen wearing two things

- White robes
- Golden crowns

White Robes

A picture of the righteousness of God

- That is not earned, bought or merited
- But is received by faith in Christ
- A symbol of their God-given acceptance by the Almighty

Golden Crowns

A picture of the reward for faithful service

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|---|---|
| 1. Crown of Incorruption | 1 Corinthians 9:24-25 | - | Those who persevere to maturity |
| 2. Crown of Rejoicing | 1 Thessalonians 2:19 | - | Those who share the gospel |
| 3. Crown Righteousness | 2 Timothy 4:8 | - | Those who are ready (<i>love His appearing</i>) |
| 4. Crown of Glory | 1 Peter 5:4 | - | Those who lead well |
| 5. Crown of Life | Revelation 2:10 | - | Those who endure suffering |

Revelation 4:5a

And from the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices.

This must have been a fearsome and formidable bombardment of the senses

- A throne shrouded in unapproachable light
- Projecting forth fractions of intense clear, red and green light
- Lightening, thunder and voices issuing forth from the throne

One can imagine John, shielding his eyes as one does

- From a car light shone in the face at night
- Or from the intense glare of the sun as it catches your gaze

This is a picture of the Shekinah glory of God

- It communicates the almighty power and presence of God
- It was also seen on top of Mount Sinai (during Israel's wilderness wanderings)

Exodus 19:16-19

Then it came to pass on the third day, in the morning, that there were thunderings and lightnings, and a thick cloud on the mountain; and the sound of the trumpet was very loud, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled. And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. Now Mount Sinai was completely in smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire. Its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked greatly. And when the blast of the trumpet sounded long and became louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him by voice.

Question: If the mountain quaked at the presence of God, how must John have felt?

Constituents Of The Throne Room

Features of the Throne Room

Revelation 4:5b-6a

And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven spirits of God. Before the throne there was a sea of glass, like crystal.

Perhaps as John shields his eyes, he then takes in two more features of the throne room of God

- Seven lamps of burning fire
- A crystal sea of glass

Sea Of Glass

- This is a symbol of purity – something crystal clear
- Only those who are clean and pure can approach the throne of God

Psalms 24:3-5

Who may ascend into the hill of the Lord? Or who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.

Seven Lamps

- Is probably a menorah – a candlestick with seven lamps
- This is a picture of the seven spirits of God (Holy Spirit)

It takes us back to

Revelation 1:4

Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before His throne.

- So we have the first and third person of the God head pictured
- The third person (the Lamb) will be seen in **Revelation 5**

Earthly Shadow

Hebrews 9:24

For Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, a mere copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us;

So we're told, the earthly temple is a shadow of the heavenly throne room

- Within the earthly temple there was a type of the glassy sea in the polished bronze of the brazen altar
- This is where priest washed themselves so they were ceremonially pure before the Lord
- A menorah stood in the holy place in the tabernacle
- Providing light as the Holy Spirit gives us light

Creatures of the Throne Room

Revelation 4:6b-8a

And in the midst of throne, and around the throne, were four living creatures full of eyes in front and behind. The first living creature was like a lion, the second living creature like a calf, the third living creature had a face like a man, and the fourth living creature was like a flying eagle. And the four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within.

If John didn't have reason to quake with fear before, he certainly does now

- These four living creatures are a startling image to fix in the mind
- Surely, this is in part the intention
- The four living creatures are the personal guard of the throne of God
- No one dare approach with this fourfold security service on duty

Earthly Guards

There were for entrances (or gates) to the temple

- Each had its own guard (gatekeeper)
- Korathites / Cherubim

- Cherubim - Guards (throne room, Eden)
- Seraphim - Angelic choir
- Archangel - Michael

We are told three things about the living creatures

- They are "full of eyes"
- They had distinct faces (lion, calf, man, eagle)
- They had, "six wings"

Full of Eyes

- On watch in all directions
- Full equipped to carry out their guard duty

Faces

In Ezekiel vision, all four living creatures had four faces

- The way they are facing John as he beholds them
- He can only see one of each distinct face looking at him

Different commentators have drawn different significance from these faces

They reflect the character of Jesus

- Lion - Lion of Judah
- Calf - Lamb of God
- Man - Son of Man
- Eagle - Soaring Authority

Six Wings

In Isaiah's vision of the throne room (**Isaiah 6:2**)

- We are told of the six wings

- *with two he covered his face* - In reverence, not presuming to look upon the One
- *and with two he covered his feet* - In humility, not worthy to stand in the presence of the One
- *and with two he flew* - In obedience, ready to respond to the command of the One

Liturgy of the Throne Room

The Living Creatures

Revelation 4:8b

And they do not rest day or night, saying, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!"

Earthly Mantras

In religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism

- It is commonplace to find adherents repeating a mantra

- This is a chant repeated over and over again
- It can send the participant into an altered state of consciousness
- Which can lead to a sensation of euphoria or emotional ecstasy

This is a dangerous practice, that is forbidden to Christians

Matthew 6:7

But when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words.

We are not repeat phrases over and over

- In the hope it will lead is to a place of heightened spirituality
- Closer proximity with the Lord
- Invoke a certain experience
- We are to pursue the Lord, not experience

There have been many movements, both old and new, within the history of Christendom that has fallen pray to this type of exercise:

- Chanting of Roman Catholic monks
- The repetition of church of England liturgy (so it is words without conviction)
- The conditioning of certain music and lyrics repeated ad-nauseum

Heavenly Worship

What we see being recited by the four living creatures

- Is not a mantra
- It's a response the majesty and presence of the almighty God
- When one sees the glory and splendour of the throne of God
- It would take an inordinate amount of will not speak out the praise of God

Worship is

- **Honour** A sacrifice, an offering given regardless of feeling in recognition of the worthy nature of God
- **Thanks** A reaction, to what God has done to or for you (thanksgiving)
- **Glory** A response, to who God is and how He manifested Himself to you
- It should be entered into with the heart and mind fully engaged

The Twenty-Four Elders

Revelation 4:9-11

Whenever the living creatures give glory and honour and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying: "You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour power; For you created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created."

Mexico '86

The 1986 Football World Cup was held in Mexico

- It was during this event that the Mexican wave first came to international sport
- Where people stand up and raise their hands
- Triggering the same response from the neighbour in a stadium
- Until the pattern has encircled the enter stadium
- The effect given is of a ripple or wave passing round

Here we have the reverse effect in the throne room of God

- The response triggered by the worship of the four living creatures
- Is not to stand up with hand raised in the air
- But to fall to the ground, prostrate in worship
- And then to cast their golden crowns before the throne

Physical Worship

Worship should be a physical thing

- The external act of bowing down prostrate
- Illustrates an internal act of humbling and submitting in the heart
- In the same way the external act raising of hands in worship

- Somehow has the internal act of helping to direct our hearts focus more intimately on the one we're worshipping

Selfless Worship

Our salvation is a sovereign work of God

- We have not earned, worked or in anyway been deserving of salvation
- The Lord has chosen, in His mercy, to pay the price for our sin
- To reach out to our hearts with His grace
- We have merely accepted, by faith, the offer He has given

We know this intrinsically within us

- At certain points in our walk this truth comes into sharp focus in our understanding
- But when we find ourselves face to face to with the Lord
- This truth will become so seared on our being
- We will have no options but to involuntarily bow before our Lord in worship

The presence of God is typified by holiness

- When we draw close to the holiness
- We know how unworthy we are of His goodness
- We know how worthy He is of glory, honour and power
- So much such that we cannot help repeat it in His presence

The crowns, which are a picture of our reward, we will cast before His throne

- Because we know we don't deserve anything of what we have received
- Nothing of any eternal worth or merit comes from ourselves
- It comes solely from God

When sin entered the world through Adam and Eve

- The immediate effect was self-awareness, "*they knew they were naked*"
- When we have been fully saved and all sin is expunged from our being
- The immediate effect will be God-awareness, "*we shall see Him as He is*"

Closing Thought

Revelation 4:1

After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven.

This door to heaven will open to the church of Jesus Christ

Who will be received into heaven by way of the rapture

This door will then remain closed until the seven years of tribulation pass

Revelation 19:11

And I saw heavens opened, and behold a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True,

This scene, shows the redeemed in heaven

- Next time the scene, will turn to the Lamb
- Who will open the scroll with the seven seals
- That will begin to unleash God's judgement on the earth
- Praise God we will be in the throne room of God
- And not in the footstool of God's wrath

Appendix

Parabolic Interpretation of the Seven Churches

Parable Of The Sower

Matthew 13:1-23

Sower sows the word of the kingdom

- The message is received in different measures depending on people's hearts
- Receives decreasing returns in yield hundredfold, sixtyfold, thirtyfold

This period of church history

- Saw the rapid spreading of the word of the kingdom
- It was received in different measures depending on people's hearts
- As time went on the yield reduced

Parable of the Wheat & The Tares

Matthew 13:24-30

- The enemy is seen to sow tares among the wheat
- The wheat has to endure living among the work of the enemy until the time of harvest

In this period of church history

- The enemy is actively at work in the church
- Bringing persecution and suffering
- The church has to endure until God's time of harvest (i.e. judgement)

Parable of the Mustard Seed

Matthew 13:31-32

A mustard seed experiences unnatural growth

- The birds of the air come to dwell in its branches
- Birds of the air are a picture of the wicked one

In this period of church history

- The church experiences unnatural growth when it becomes the state religion of Rome
- But wickedness begins to dwell within its branches
- As pagan practices begin to compromise to settle in

Parable of the Leaven

Matthew 13:33

- A woman hides leaven in three loaves of bread
- The leaven spreads throughout the entire batch

In this period of church history

- The leaven of pagan practices, sin and corruption
- Spreads throughout the church during the dark ages

Parable of the Hidden Treasure

Matthew 13:44

Treasure is found buried in a field

- The man who uncovers it rejoices
- He sells all to gain the treasure

This period of church history

- Saw the rediscovery of the hidden treasure of justification by faith alone
- The reformers sold all they had, sacrificing their lives
- That they may lay hold of this buried treasure

Parable of the Pearl of Great Price

Matthew 13:45-46

A merchant is seeking beautiful pearls

- He finds one of great price
- He sells all he has to obtain the pearl

This period of church history

- Saw the great missionary movement
- People went out seeking souls from all over the globe
- Many gave all they had, their very lives, in obtaining souls

Parable of the Dragnet

Matthew 13:47-52

A vast hoard of fish is gathered, "some of every kind"

- The fish were then sorted through
- The good kept, the bad thrown away

This period of church history

- Will see a mixture of people coming into the church
- Some good, some bad
- It will end with judgement – the good and bad being sifted