

REVELATION 4

I. BACKGROUND

A. Refer back to **Rev. 1:19** : 3-fold division of the book.

- “*What you have seen...*” - the Risen and Glorified Lord, Ch. 1
- “*What is now...*” - letters to the 7 churches, chs. 2 & 3
- “*What will take place later*” – from ch. 4 on is futuristic; events at the end of the world.

B. Rev. 3:22 is the last time we see the Church as being physically present on the earth till we see them returning TO the earth in Rev. 19:14 (see!); cf. Rev. 19:6-8 “white linen.”

C. Chs. 4 & 5 constitute an introduction to the judgments of chs. 6–19;

II. TEXT:

A. Read vv. 1-6a

v. 1: “**After this....after this**” (*meta tauta*, lit. “after these things”) – after what things? After the Church age. Note: the Church has been the main theme of Revelation until chapter 4. Starting with this chapter the Church isn’t seen again until Chapter 19 where we see it returning to the earth with Christ (19:11-16; esp. v.14).

Question? How did the Church get up there? And where are they during the Judgment of chapters 6-19? Paul gives us the answer to this “mystery” –

- 1 Cor. 15:51ff “*Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed--in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the **trumpet** will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.*” A sign that is often seen over the church nursery...
- 1 Thess. 4:15-17 “*According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the **trumpet** call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words.*”
- Note the occurrence of **trumpets** in all 3 passages . . .

Paul predicted a time coming when Jesus would instantly change bodies and snatch them off the face of the earth = RAPTURE (Latin, *rapare*, “take away”, “snatch out” or “seize”). Why? Because the judgment is for a Christ-rejecting world, not believers!

Jesus had comforted His disciples with these words: “*Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God ; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.*”

Question? Will the Church go through the Tribulation? In a word, “NO!!!” And here’s WHY:

1. Source of great debate....persecution promised, and experienced (Smyrna); not the same as the Great Tribulation. Jesus promised us tribulation in this world: John 16:33.
2. Promise of Rev. 3:10 “*Kept from*” (lit., “out of” –*ek*) the time of trial...”, not safe through....
3. Part of the confusion is from failure to distinguish between the two stages of Jesus’ second coming:

- a. One passage says “in the air....in secret”; “Thief in the night”
- b. Another passage describes Christ coming in power to the **earth** with every eye seeing Him!

*Both can only be true if there are 2 phases, separate and distinct. John's being caught up to Heaven **after** the close of the Church era in chapter 3 and **before** the Tribulation starting in chapter 6 strongly pictures the same catching up of the Church in the Rapture.*

4. The Church mentioned **19x's** in Rev. 1-3 and isn't mentioned **once** as being on earth from chapters 4 - 19! It's conspicuous by its absence!

5. In chapters 2 and 3 the phrase “let him hear what the Spirit says **TO THE CHURCHES**” repeated **7x's** (!) while in 13:9 says only “he who has an ear, let him hear.” Same warning except the Church left out -- unthinkable if Church still on earth during those horrible days of judgment!

6. Rev. 6-19 outlines the 7-year period known as the Great Tribulation. It is the time of the outpouring of God's **wrath** (Greek, *orge*): the word occurs 10 x's in Rev. starting in 6:16 and continuing through 19:15, the same chapters that cover the three series of God's judgments upon an unbelieving and Christ-rejecting world. The word is NOT mentioned anywhere in the seven letters to the Churches, which tells us we are in an age of GRACE! Elsewhere in the NT “wrath:”

- John 3:36 “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's **wrath** remains on him.”
- Rom. 5:9f “Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's **wrath** through him! For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!”
- 1 Thess. 1:10 “...wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead--Jesus, who rescues us from the coming **wrath**.”
- 1 Thess. 5:9 “For God did not appoint us to suffer **wrath** but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

7. Best authority of Jesus' return is Jesus himself. When asked “What will be the signs of His coming and of the end of the age?”, Jesus gave His answer in a parable and a historical allegory (Mt. 24:32-44). We can deduce WHEN....

- a. Fig tree's first leaves = summer coming; so certain signs on the earth and heavens would signal the soon arrival of God's judgment. No day or hour, but “**generation**.”
- b. Jesus illustrated point with historical allegory - the Flood of Noah's day - said His coming would be **exactly like that!** Prophetic warning > chosen removed > JUDGMENT!
- c. Luke tells us (Lk. 17:20-36) of the sign of Sodom. WARNING > LOT **LED OUT** > JUDGMENT!
Life as normal, consistent pattern; prophetic warning **NOW** > Rapture imminent > JUDGMENT.
- d. IS THE RAPTURE NEAR? “YES!!!”. Major signs include:
 1. Return of Jews, nation, 1948;
 2. Recapture of old city, 1967 Arab-Israeli War;
 3. Rise of Russian military power and their historic military alliance with “Persia” (renamed Iran in 1935).
 4. Arab coalition vs. Israel;
 5. Rise of military power in China (200 million-man army and militia bragged on in the Nixon years [1969-1974]!);
 6. Revival of Roman Empire in the form of a European multi-nation confederacy;
 7. Revival of occultic practices of ancient Babylon (drugs; sorcery; witchcraft);
 8. Increase in international revolution, esp. in The Middle East, wars, earthquakes, tsunamis, famines, incurable new diseases (HIV/AIDS, Ebola, polio, lupus, “bird flu”, more than 100 known cancers today, etc) and pollution;

9. Apostasy, move toward a one-world religion, government, economy;
10. Decline in U.S. as a major world power;
11. Increase in lawlessness, crime, decline of the family unit;
12. Proliferation of N-B-C warfare agents.

Our Hope: Mt. 24:40-44 - Two men working in field; one taken, one left. Two women; one taken, one left. Larry Norman, "I wish we'd all been ready." An event described in 1 Thess 4:17ff.

v. 1a "These things" refers to the Church age; John then shown things which must happen **AFTER** the Rapture, both in Heaven and on earth. What is the first sight in Heaven? God's presence on His throne!

"Door open" – to receive guests! That's what we do at my house – not the garage door, or the back porch screen door. Do we invite guests to climb in through a window! NO! An open door speaks of an open invitation to "Come in!"

v. 1b "the voice" – cf. 1:10-13 the voice of the glorified Christ!

"Trumpet" – (*salpinx*) – seen in 1 Cor. 15:51ff; 1 Thess. 4:17.

v. 2 "Throne" – cf. Jesus' promise to the churches that they would rule and reign with Him – 2:10; 2:26f; 3:21. Promise given to the disciples they would rule and reign with Christ!

Matthew 19:28 "*Jesus said to them, 'I tell you the truth, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.'*"

v. 3 "Jasper" = some say it's a diamond (holiness and flawless perfection). The encyclopedia says: JASPER is opaque, crypto-crystalline variety of quartz. The mineral takes a high polish and is used as a gemstone. The jasper mentioned in the Bible as one of the stones in the breastplate of the high priest (see Exo. 28:20) and as the foundation of the wall of the New Jerusalem (see Rev. 21:18) is believed to have been a dark green, opalescent stone.

"Carnelian" (*Sardis* in KJV) – an reddish agate used as a gemstone in the M.E. -- speaks of the tremendous value of the shed blood of Jesus! Both have many facets, as does the manifestation of these attributes: LOVE/GRACE/MERCY! Encyclopedia says: "CARNELIAN is a translucent form of the silica (SiO₂) mineral chalcedony, itself a variety of quartz. It has a hardness of 7 (diamond is a 10) and ranges in color from yellow to a deep red. The finest specimens come from Brazil, India, and Arabia. Carnelian is cut and polished and used in jewelry. The blood-red varieties were greatly valued by the ancients, who produced beautiful engravings in carnelian and also used them for seals."

"Rainbow" - cf. Noah: Gen. 9:11-17 - promise of mercy; God will remember His promise even during the Great Tribulation. "GREEN" symbolizes LIFE, offered even to those going through the Tribulation.

v. 4 "24 thrones...elders" - special angels? NO! Number 24 associated with priestly service; speaks to the role of the Church and Israel in priestly service: 12 tribes and 12 Apostles = 24 OT/NT saints?

WHAT ARE THEY DRESSED IN?! **"Clothed in white"**

- Rev. 3:4-5 Sardis;
- Rev. 3:18 Laodicea;
- Trib. saints: Rev. 6:11; 7:9,13f; 15:6 All the Trib. saints ON EARTH!
- Rev. 19:6-8,11,14 "White linen"

And **"wearing gold crowns"** – here, *stephanos* (victor's crown or wreath), not *diadem* (king's crown) -- nowhere do angels wear crowns; angels don't rule! In fact we will judge the angels (1 Cor. 6:3)! **"White"** = Jesus' righteousness given us; **"crowns"** = rule and reign with Him.

Various “Crowns”: of life, Rev. 2:10; James 1:12 (martyrs)
of glory, 1 Pet. 5:4 (faithful ministers)
of righteousness, 2 Tim. 4:8 (these eagerly awaiting Jesus' return)
of soul-winners, Phil. 4:1; 1 Thess. 2:19 (Paul's converts).

v. 5a “Lightning and thunder” – cf. Exo. 19:16-19.

v. 5b Who moved the lamps? In Chapter 1 they're on earth, symbolizes the Church and Christ walking among them; here they're in Heaven and 7-fold Spirit's characteristics/attributes (1:4; 3:1 and Isa. 11:2; Zec. 4:2-6).

Also the Abrahamic Covenant in Gen. 15, esp. v. 17 “smoking pot.”

v. 6a “Sea” often pictures the restless masses of mankind (Rev., also Isa. 57:20). Here the sea is calm, peaceful. Isa. = compares nations to a troubled sea in a storm; here, placid.

v. 6b-7: “Four living beings” (Greek” ζων- cf. Ezek. 1:4-14 and 10:1. Cherubim, possibly representing manifestations of Christ in the Gospels:

- Matt: Jesus as LION of tribe of Judah;
- Mark: Calf, a beast of burden picturing Jesus as Suffering Servant carrying our load of sin;
- Luke: Son of Man;
- John: Son of God; eagle representing power, divinity.

v. 8 Some angels have wings, though sometimes they appear like men in white raiment. **“Saying”** (*lego*, not singing) **“who was...and is...and is to come”** (Exo. 3:14f).

v. 10 Responsive worship! (Greek: *proskuneo*; *kuon* is a dog; here, licking the hand of his Master!) – God alone is worthy of ultimate praise and worship!

“Crowns” – ruling and reigning was promised the Disciples (Mt. 19:28) and the faithful Church in the Seven Letters (2:26f Thyatira; 3:11 Philadelphia “crown”; 3:21 Laodicea “sit with Me on my throne...”).

v. 11 A description of Jesus, God's agent of Creation (John 1:1-4, 10; Col. 1:15-20)

- John 1:1 *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men.”*
- Col. 1:15-20 *“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.”*

III. SUMMARY / APPLICATION / RESPONSE

- Chapter 4 - a glimpse into Heaven. Paul had one but couldn't relay it (2 Cor. 12) -- here we see it!!!
- THINK ON IT! Dwell on it! Don't want to act like a dumb tourist when you get there, do you? (“What's that?”)
- “To submit, or not to submit; that is the question...”
- “Without faith, it is impossible to please God -- a rewarder of these who diligently seek Him.” (Heb. 11:6)