

From the Rapture to the Second Coming

Revelation 4: “The Throne of God”



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Let's Get Started

Here in Chapter 4, we come to a major turning point. Chapters 1–3 revealed John's vision of Jesus and the Church Age. Most of this is now past and the Church Age will soon be over. Now every chapter beginning with Chapter 4 reveals what is to come in the future.

Revelation is one of the most sequence-oriented books in the Bible. We must understand this before going any further. Revelation 4:1 reveals the **Rapture**, Revelation 6:2 reveals the appearance of the **Antichrist**, and Revelation 6:17 reveals the beginning of the **Tribulation Period**.

Notice that this sequence of events indicates a period of time between Revelation 4:1 (the **Rapture**) and Revelation 6:17 (the **Tribulation Period**). The Bible does not tell us how long that period of time will be. We only know that the Antichrist must have enough time to rise to power in Europe, take over the world government, and negotiate a covenant to protect Israel (more on these events later). It is also important to note that there are three

different theories regarding the sequence of these events. They are called:

Pre-Tribulation Rapture—The Church is raptured before the Tribulation Period:

See "[Pre-Tribulation rapture table](#)."

Mid-Tribulation Rapture—The Church is raptured during the Tribulation Period (at its mid-point):

See "[Mid-Tribulation rapture table](#)."

Post-Tribulation Rapture—The Church is raptured after the Tribulation Period:

See "[Post-Tribulation rapture table](#)"

What Others are Saying:

The New King James Version Prophecy Bible: Sometime after the Rapture, a seven-year period will begin which is called the Tribulation. It is nowhere specified that the Tribulation will immediately follow the Rapture, so there may be some interval between the two events. ⁴¹

Hal Lindsey: The Roman Antichrist must have time to be revealed, take over the ten-nation European Confederacy (Daniel 2:41-43; 8:23-25; 9:26) and establish himself as a world leader before he can have a power base from which to make the covenant (Daniel 9:27) with the Israeli leader. ⁴²

David Hocking: We may be in heaven for many years until the Tribulation actually starts. The Rapture could happen many years ahead of that. From my perspective, the Rapture could happen tonight and it still may be 20 years until the Tribulation. ⁴³

David Reagan: The pre-Tribulation concept of the Rapture has often been condemned as "escapism." I think this criticism is unjustified. The Bible itself says that Christians are to *comfort one another* with the concept of the Rapture (1 Thessalonians 4:18). ⁴⁴

Something to Ponder

The 7,000 Year Theory of Mankind

As we draw closer to the 21st Century and a new millennium, there is a sense of change in the air with mounting anticipation about the Rapture and the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Today, Messianic expectations are rampant among Jews in Israel, predictions of the Rapture and the Second Coming are widespread among Christians, and doomsday prophecies are flourishing among cults.

The 7,000 Year Theory is one of the oldest theories dating from the earliest days of the Church. It begins with God creating the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1:1-2:3) in six days and resting on the seventh. It rationalizes that God will deal with mankind for six days and rest on the seventh. It also assumes that all the days of the week are of equal length. Knowing three other Scripture verses will help in understanding: 1) 2 Peter 3:8 teaches one day with the Lord is 1,000 years, 2) Hebrews 4:4–11 presents the Millennium

as a day of rest, and 3) Revelation 20:1–9 gives us the idea of a 1,000 year Millennium.

The theory states that God will deal with mankind for six of his days (6,000 of our years) and rest on the seventh day (the 1,000 year Millennium). According to the Jewish calendar, 3,760 years after Creation the Christian Era began (1 a.d. on our calendar). That is almost four of God's days. Since its beginning, the Christian Era has lasted almost 2,000 years or two more of God's days. This means mankind is approaching the seventh God-day (the Millennium). But before the Millennium occurs two things must take place—the Rapture and the **Tribulation Period**.

Come In

Revelation 4:1 After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven. And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this.

John first saw a door opening to heaven. He then heard a voice, that sounded like a trumpet, inviting him to come in and see the things that will take place *after this* (the Church Age). John *looked* and *heard*. What we see with our own eyes and hear with our own ears is real to us, but what John saw was a world that the natural eye cannot see and the natural ear cannot hear. The voice John heard was like a trumpet. It was the same kind of voice the Bible says will **rapture the Church** (1 Thessalonians 4:16; 1 Corinthians 15:52). For that and other reasons, many prophecy experts believe John represents the whole Church, and his ascending into heaven is symbolic of the Rapture. When the Rapture occurs, the Church will ascend into heaven at the sound of a trumpet just as John did.

Confusion over whether or not there will be a Rapture does exist. One reason for this is that the word *rapture* is not in the Bible. This is correct, but only to a point. The word rapture is not in English translations of the Bible. It is an English version of a word that appears in Latin translations. Keep in mind that most of the New Testament was written in Greek which was then translated into Latin and then to English. Saint Jerome completed most of the Latin translation in 405 A.D. His translation eventually was translated into the English Bible we know today. Several verses of the Bible in the Latin translation contain the word *rapere* or one of its derivations. It means to be *caught up*, *plucked up*, or *taken by force*. Christians translate this Latin word to mean Rapture. Christians will be both *called up* and *caught up* to heaven just as John was.

Key Point:

The Bible was translated from Greek to Latin and English

What Others are Saying:

Grant R. Jeffrey: The early Christian writer and poet, Ephraem the Syrian, (who lived from 306 to 373 A.D.) was a major theologian of the early Byzantine Eastern Church. Ephraem's fascinating teaching on the Antichrist has never been published

in English until now. This critically important prophecy manuscript from the fourth century of the Church era reveals a literal method of interpretation and a teaching of the pre-millennial return of Christ. More importantly, Ephraems text revealed a very clear statement about the pre-tribulation return of Christ to take his elect saints home to heaven to escape the coming **Tribulation**.^{4,5}

Remember This...

Examples of the Rapture

- ✓ Enoch (Genesis 5:24) Enoch went to heaven without first dying. *Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death* (Hebrews 11:5).
- ✓ Elijah (2 Kings 2:11) Elijah was walking on earth when he was suddenly taken up into heaven.
- ✓ Jesus (Acts 1:9) Jesus was taken up into the clouds to heaven.
- ✓ Philip (Acts 8:39) Philip was taken away, but then reappeared in another location.
- ✓ Paul (2 Corinthians 12:14) Paul was caught up into heaven, and then later returned to earth.
- ✓ Two Witnesses (Revelation 11:312) After being killed, they will rise from the dead and ascend into heaven.

Something to Ponder

The Four Doors of Revelation

- ✓ The Door of Opportunity for evangelism and missionary activity (Revelation 3:8).
- ✓ The Door of Ones Heart for salvation (Revelation 3:20).
- ✓ The Door of Heaven for the Rapture (Revelation 4:1).
- ✓ The Door of Heaven for the Second Coming (Revelation 19:11).

In The Spirit

Revelation 4:2 At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it.

John saw the door, heard the voice, and suddenly he was in the Spirit. In the Spirit means his spirit left his body. It was changed by the Holy Spirit into a sort of spiritual rocket ship. His body could not enter heaven because it had not yet been glorified (Philippians 3:21). However, his spirit could enter because of the righteousness of Christ (Romans 8:10) and the cleansing or purifying (John 1:7) of his sins.

Jasper and Carnelian

Revelation 4:3 And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian. A rainbow, resembling an emerald, encircled the throne.

The one on the throne, Jesus, had the appearance of white and red light flashing off of two precious stones, jasper and carnelian. These are the first and the last stones in the breastplate of the High Priest (Exodus 28:15-20). They remind us that the one on the

throne is our High Priest forever and ever. Jasper (the white flashing light) is opaque or translucent like a diamond and represents the purity or holiness of Jesus. Carnelian (the red flashing light) is fiery red like the blood Jesus shed on the cross.

In the Old Testament God promised Noah (Genesis 9:8-17) he would never destroy the earth with a flood again. He placed a rainbow in the sky as a reminder of that promise. When the Church enters heaven, there will be a rainbow surrounding God's throne promising he will not destroy the earth during the Tribulation Period. The rainbow is a reminder that God is a God of grace, a God who keeps his promises. Where Jesus had the appearance of jasper and carnelian, the throne has the appearance of emerald green. Green is the color of life, the *eternal life* (1 John 5:11, 12) which comes from God as a result of the shed blood of Jesus and the grace of God.

Remember This...

Human words cannot describe what John saw so he used symbols to help us understand. Notice how he uses the following phrases to tell us everything about what he saw: *on the throne* (vs. 2); *surrounding the throne* (vs. 3, 4, 6); *from the throne* (vs. 5); and *before the throne* (vs. 5, 6). We will see these same things when the Church is raptured into heaven.

The Twenty-four Elders

Revelation 4:4 Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders. They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads.

The number twenty-four occurs six times in the Old Testament. In every case, it is associated with the priests of Israel. On one occasion, the entire nation of Israel was represented by twenty-four special priests. Just as these priests represented all of Israel, twenty-four elders will one day represent all believers from Pentecost to the Rapture. They will surround the throne of God as representatives of a nation of kings and priests. They will stand in for all overcomers.

Just as these elders were dressed in white (Revelation 3:5), in heaven we will all be clothed in white representing the righteousness of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:21). We will wear golden crowns (Revelation 2:10), rewards for our earthly deeds. These elders will stand in for all those who love the Lord. It is very important to note that the Church will receive its robes and crowns, and it will begin its reign with Jesus in heaven before the Tribulation Period begins. There can be no doubt that God is showing us the *pre-tribulation* Rapture.

A Storm Is Approaching

Revelation 4:5 From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings, and peals of thunder. Before the throne, seven lamps were blazing. These are the seven spirits of God.

Think of the last time you saw lightning and heard thunder in the distance. You turn on the television and the weatherman says a storm is approaching. He obviously appears to be right. In the same way the lightning and thunder from the throne of God is also a signal

that a storm is coming. God's patience with those on earth is wearing thin. The Tribulation Period is approaching.

We learned in Revelation 1:4 that the Holy Spirit has a *sevenfold* nature, and that the *seven spirits of God* are the *seven virtues of the Holy Spirit*. Following the Rapture, the Holy Spirit will occupy a place in the presence of God.

Key Symbols:

Seven Lamps

seven spirits of God

seven virtues of the Holy Spirit

Key Point:

The Holy Spirit is everywhere, even in the presence of God.

A Glassy Sea

Revelation 4:6 Also before the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal. In the center, around the throne, were four living creatures, and they were covered with eyes, in front and in back.

In front of the throne was something that was so calm that it looked like a beautiful, crystal, glassy sea. Prophecy experts suggest this sea of glass is:

- ✓ the Church because the sea is a Biblical symbol (Revelation 17:15) for the masses of humanity,
- ✓ the water of the Word (Ephesians 5:26), and
- ✓ the water of baptism.

Whatever it is, it indicates that all is calm in front of the throne of God. Nothing is present that could cause turbulence or unrest. The Church will be at peace with God when it goes before him.

Around the throne were four unusual creatures (Ezekiel 1:5-13; 19-20; 10:20) with many eyes in front and in back. These creatures are some type of angelic beings who possess characteristics of the *seraphim* (Isaiah 6:1-3) and the cherubim. Their many eyes indicate they can see all that is happening in every direction. They could be the highest and greatest of all heavenly beings.

Remember This...

The Water of Baptism

Jesus was baptized with water (Matthew 3:13-17) and he told his disciples to baptize others (Matthew 28:19,20) in the same way. For that reason, the Church uses *water baptism* as an outward sign or symbol that a change has taken place in the believer's heart. Upon being baptized, a new believer is

added to the list of members of his church.

Water baptism by immersion symbolizes the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. Being put under water (immersed or buried in water) symbolizes the death and burial of Jesus. Being brought up out of the water symbolizes his resurrection. When a new believer is baptized by immersion he is also announcing that his old self has died, his old ways have been buried, and he has been raised to live a new life in Christ.

Some churches pour water over the new believer as a form of baptism. This may symbolize the **baptism of the Holy Spirit** (Acts 1:5; 2:16, 17) or the pouring out of the Holy Spirit. Other churches sprinkle water over the new believer. This symbolizes the cleansing work of God (Ezekiel 36:25, 26) in our hearts and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus (Hebrews 12:24).

The Four Gospels

Revelation 4:7 The first living creature was like a lion, the second was like an ox, the third had a face like a man, the fourth was like a flying eagle.

The first angelic being is like a lion—Jesus is the **Lion of the Tribe of Judah** (Revelation 5:5). The lion is the king of beasts and Jesus is the King of Kings. The Apostle Matthew describes Jesus as the **King of the Jews** (Matthew 2:2; 21:5; 27:11).

The second angelic being is like an ox, Jesus came as a servant (Mark 10:45). Just like the ox, a beast that carries its burden, Jesus carried our sins. The Apostle Mark describes Jesus as a servant.

The third angelic being is like a man—Jesus was human. The Apostle Luke describes Jesus as the **Son of Man** (Luke 5:24; 6:5; 7:34).

The fourth angelic being is like an eagle—Jesus is God. Just as the eagle rules the skies, Jesus rules the heavens and reigns over all things. The Apostle John describes Jesus as the **creator** (John 1:3) of all things.

These four living creatures remind us of the qualities of Jesus that are found in the Four Gospels: Matthew (King of kings), Mark (servant), Luke (Son of Man), and John (Son of God).

Remember This...

The Four Living Creatures

- ✓ **Lion (king of beasts)**—The Gospel of Matthew calls Jesus the King of the Jews.
- ✓ **Ox (beast of burden)**—The Gospel of Mark calls Jesus a Servant.
- ✓ **Man (human)**—The Gospel of Luke calls Jesus the Son of Man.
- ✓ **Eagle (rules the skies)**—The Gospel of John calls Jesus God.

Holy, Holy, Holy

Revelation 4:8 Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under his wings. Day and night they never stop saying: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come."

Their six wings (Isaiah 6:2) are characteristic of the seraphim. Their eyes are like the eyes of the Lord (2 Chronicles 16:9): they are everywhere, beholding everything. Their stamina is like the stamina of the Lord: they never stop singing, and they never sleep (Psalm 121:4). They are there to exalt the name of Jesus (Isaiah 24:14, 15), the one *who was, and is, and is to come* (Revelation 1:8).

Glory, Honor, and Thanks

Revelation 4:9 Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor, and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives for ever and ever,

The purpose of the four living creatures is to worship and give glory, honor, and thanks to the one on the throne. In doing so, they acknowledge that he is eternal and almighty. But each time they glorify the Lord, something else happens.

Fall On Your Knees

Revelation 4:10 the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne, and worship him who lives for ever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and say:

The twenty-four elders always follow the lead of the four living creatures. Whenever the four living creatures worship the one on the throne, the twenty-four elders also worship him by **falling down** (1 Corinthians 14:25) and exalting him. This falling down is a deliberate act of humility. The elders remove their crowns and place them before the throne. Even these kings, high priests and leaders recognize that he is their power and their source.

What Others are Saying:

David Hocking: When they *fall down before him* (Revelation 4:10) they give recognition to his authority and position. It is a lesson to all believers; we need to submit to his authority as a daily principle in our lives. That's why it is a good thing to kneel when we pray to indicate our submission to the Lord. ⁴⁶

Revelation 4:11 "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being."

This has been called the *song of creation*. The twenty-four elders proclaim his worthiness and acknowledge him as the creator of all things (Isaiah 40:28), the one who holds all things together. *By your will* expresses the desire of Jesus to create all things. We may not understand a great deal about his marvelous creation, but we can understand that it was brought into existence because Jesus wanted it to exist. And it continues to exist because it is his will.

What Others are Saying:

David Hocking: God the Father is worthy of praise and worship because of two basic things we should always remember: It was *his power* that created all things, and it is *his purpose* (will) that brought everything into existence and gives meaning to it all. ⁴⁷

Study Questions

- ✓ What did the trumpet voice say to John?
- ✓ What stones describe the appearance of the one on the throne?
- ✓ What will the twenty-four elders wear in heaven?
- ✓ What do the blazing lamps before the throne represent?
- ✓ Following the symbolic act of the twenty-four elders, what crowns should we lay before the throne?

[Go to Answers](#)

Chapter Wrap-up

- ✓ When John goes to heaven in the spirit it is symbolic of the Rapture of the Church. ([Revelation 4:1, 2](#))
- ✓ God's throne is surrounded by a rainbow, the twenty-four elders, seven lamps, a sea of glass, and the four living creatures. ([Revelation 4:2-6](#))
- ✓ The flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder coming from the throne of God are symbolic of the approaching storm known as the Tribulation Period. ([Revelation 4:5](#))
- ✓ The four living creatures have six wings and are covered with eyes. Each creature resembles a different animal: lion, ox, man, and eagle. ([Revelation 4:7, 8](#))
- ✓ When the four living creatures glorify God, the twenty-four elders will lay their crowns before the throne and proclaim God's worthiness. ([Revelation 4:9-11](#))

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