

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

CHAPTER 4, VERSE 1

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Welcome back to our study of the Book of Revelation. As we continue to examine this Book, we will discuss the Rapture. We recommend that you read Chapter 4. (*Note: All Scriptures are KJV unless otherwise noted.*)

THREE MAIN DIVISIONS OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION

To understand where we arrived in our study of Revelation, we must go back to examine how Jesus divided this Book. He set it forth in three divisions, as defined in **Revelation 1:19 (KJV)**:

19 *"Write (1) the things which thou hast seen, and (2) the things which are, and (3) the things which shall be hereafter;"*

Things Which Thou Hast Seen

This is Revelation Chapter 1, the vision of the exalted Jesus. John faithfully revealed to us Jesus, the exalted and glorified Christ.

Things Which Are

This was the revelation of the seven churches in Chapters 2 and 3. These seven churches represented the seven periods of the Church Age. John wrote "the things which are." This is the history of the Church from its founding on the Day of Pentecost to the end of the Church Age.

Church 1: Ephesus - The Church of the First Century

Church 2: Smyrna - The Persecuted Church of the Second and Third Centuries

Church 3: Pergamos - The Church from about 312 A.D. to 500 A.D.

Church 4: Thyatira - The Church of the Dark Ages

Church 5: Sardis - The Church of the Renaissance and the Reformation

Church 6: Philadelphia - The Church of the Open Door for Evangelism and Missions

Church 7: Laodicea - The End-time Church of Apostasy

Things Which Shall Be Hereafter

Now, we have come to the third division, "the things which shall be hereafter." This is what happens after the Church Age, the Dispensation of Grace. John is instructed to write the things that will transpire after the Church Age is no more.

THE FINAL CONSUMMATION OF THE CHURCH AGE

We have now arrived at the final consummation of the Church Age! All the preaching, the church planting, the missions and evangelizing, and even all the five-fold ministries have been consummated. This has now passed.

We are about to enter the great period of the judgments of God upon Earth after the Church has been safely positioned in Heaven. Heretofore, the churches have occupied the central place as God reveals history. This Church dispensation covered over 2,000 years.

As Chapter 3 ends and Chapter 4 begins, the Church is taken to Heaven and is not mentioned again until the very end of the Book of Revelation. In Chapter 19, the Church returns with Christ at His Second Coming. Then, in Chapter 22, the actual word “church” (ecclesia) is used again.

HOW DID THE CHURCH GET UP INTO HEAVEN?

Paul calls it a “mustérion,” a mystery that man could not learn by himself. God had to reveal and explain it.

51 “Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. 53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54 So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. 55 O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? 56 The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

I Corinthians 15:51-57

The mystery can be summarized like this:

- We are not all going to die.
- The dead will be resurrected.
- The living Christians will be translated like Enoch.
- We will be immortalized.
- We will be glorified.
- We will be changed.
- A trumpet will sound that activates the change.
- It will be instantaneous, in the twinkling of an eye.

Notice the same “mustérion” in **I Thessalonians 4:16-17**:

16 “For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: 17 Then we

which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

This mystery was kept secret by God from the foundation of the earth until it was revealed to the Apostle Paul.

THE RAPTURE

The word "rapture" does not appear anywhere in Scripture. The Greek word for "caught up" is "harpazó," which means to take by force, to catch away, and to transport.

Our English word "rapture" derives from the Latin word "rapiemur," which means to catch up, to take away swiftly, and to snatch away. The Church will be caught up/snatched away, all the Christians from their graves and all the living Christians.

REVELATION 4:1

Now let's look at **Revelation 4:1**:

1 "After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter."

Note the following in this verse:

- "After this" - After the Church Age
- "A voice... as it were of a trumpet"
- "Come up hither"
- "I will show you things which must be hereafter"

The Apostle John is now safely in Heaven, and clearly unveils the End as the Tribulation comes into view. He gives a blow-by-blow account of what will happen in Heaven and on Earth.

REASONS FOR A PRETRIBULATIONAL RAPTURE

The Pretribulation Rapture is an important subject for which we need answers. I want to give us some important things to consider regarding this Rapture. There are several views regarding when the Rapture will occur on the prophetic timeline.

Pretribulation View

In the Pretribulation view, the Rapture happens before the seven-year Tribulation. The Rapture is imminent. Nothing needs to happen on the prophetic calendar for this event to occur. It could happen at any time.

Midtribulation View

This Rapture happens in the middle of the seven-year Tribulation. There is no imminence to this Rapture, but signs will let you know that the Tribulation has begun, and the Rapture will happen in the middle of the Tribulation.

Postribulation View

In this final view, the Rapture happens at the end of the seven-year Tribulation. The Second Coming and the Rapture occur simultaneously, a single event. There is no imminence to this Rapture.

WILL CHRISTIANS GO THROUGH THE GREAT TRIBULATION?

My unequivocal answer is, “No.” Let’s explore the reasons for this conclusion.

Reason One: Tribulations Are Not the Great Tribulation

The troubles one faces in life are often called trials, tribulations, and satanic attacks, but these tribulations are not the Great Tribulation.

33 “These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”

John 16:33

22 “Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.”

Acts 14:22

3 “And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience;”

Romans 5:3

4 “Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.”

II Corinthians 1:4

Wrath of God

What is being unleashed in the Tribulation Period is the Wrath of God. It does not make sense for God to cause His people to endure His wrath. Jesus took our wrath and judgment on the Cross.

God's pattern has always been to not pour wrath on the righteous with the wicked. Lot and his family were rescued from God's wrath on Sodom. Enoch was raptured into Heaven before the flood of Noah's day. Noah and his family were safe on an ark.

After the Church Age is over and the Church has been taken up, God's attitude toward mankind dramatically changes. The Tribulation is a seven-year period of God's wrath upon the wicked and wickedness. God Himself plans these judgments against a rebellious world. Let's look at some passages in the Book of Revelation.

17 "For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?"

Revelation 6:17

8 "And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication. 9 And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, 10 The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb."

Revelation 14:8-10

19 "And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God."

Revelation 15:7

7 "And one of the four beasts gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever."

Revelation 15:7

1 "And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth.

Revelation 16:1

19 "And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath."

Revelation 16:19

15 "And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the wine press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God."

Revelation 19:15

His wrath begins in Revelation Chapter 6 and ends in Revelation Chapter 19.

You cannot convince me whatsoever that God will leave the Church on the earth during the Tribulation, pouring out His wrath on His righteous saints.

Reason Two: Paul's Teaching in Thessalonians

Look at the wording Paul uses in the Book of Thessalonians:

9 "For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; **10** And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come."

I Thessalonians 1:9-10

Paul says the saints are exempt from God's wrath. Christ's coming saves us!

Also, notice how Paul deals with the Rapture in **I Thessalonians 4:13-18**:

13 "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. **14** For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. **15** For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. **16** For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: **17** Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. **18** Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

Then, in sequence, Paul mentions in **1 Thessalonians 5:1-9** destruction and God's wrath:

1 "But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. **2** For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. **3** For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. **4** But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. **5** Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. **6** Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. **7** For they that sleep, sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. **8** But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. **9** For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,"

The Tribulation is mentioned as separate and subsequent to the Rapture.

Look at the pronouns in 1 Thessalonians 5:3, compared to Verse 4:

3 "For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. **4** But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief."

I Thessalonians 5:3-4

In Verse 3, note the pronouns “they” and “them.” Then, note the pronouns “ye” and “you” in Verse 4.

Now, look at **I Thessalonians 5:9 NASB**:

9 “For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,”

There is no wrath for the saints of God. We obtain salvation.

Also, look at **Revelation 3:10-11 NKJV**:

10 “*Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.*
11 *Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.*”

Reason Three: The Rapture Will Change Everything.

We will be gathered together, taken, and snatched away. The Church, as the salt and light, will be withdrawn.

When the Church is Taken, Everything Dramatically Changes.

Only unsaved people will rule governments and hold office. Satan and his antichrist will take center stage. Evil will erupt like a volcano and expand unchecked beyond anything known in man’s history on Earth. It will be like the bursting of a massive dam. The world will be inundated with unimaginable evil, and all goodness will decay. Finally, all truth will unravel, and the demonic will run wild, like cages at a zoo have been suddenly opened. The Restrainer, the Church, has been taken up and out of the way.

The Spirit will go up with the Church. This is not a complete withdrawal but a reverse from Pentecost in the Book of Acts. The Age and Work of Grace has expired. God will still move on Earth, but it will not be as it is today. He will use 144,000; however, there will be so much evil that humans cannot preach or minister like they can today. They will not have the same freedoms and abilities we have in the Dispensation of Grace, the Church Age.

1 “*And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father’s name written in their foreheads.* **2** *And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps:* **3** *And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.* **4** *These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the first fruits unto God and to the Lamb.* **5** *And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.* **6** *And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and*

people, 7 Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.”

Revelation 14:1-7

Reason Four: The Greeting “Maranatha!”

In the Early Church, they adopted a salutation greeting.

“MARANATHA!”

This is a one-word prayer meaning, *“Our Lord, come!”*

The Early Church lived expecting the Lord’s imminent return! It just was not in their lifetime.

“Maranatha” was used in **1 Corinthians 16:22 NASB:**

22 “If anyone does not love the Lord, he is to be accursed. Maranatha!”

The Early Church had a mindset that Jesus was imminently coming. It was an hourly hope, an eager expectation, and a great anticipation of the Rapture.

Think of how our lives and the Church would change if we adopted that mindset today! After Paul wrote the mystery of the Rapture, he concluded by saying:

18 “Wherefore comfort one another with these words.”

I Thessalonians 4:18

THE RAPTURE

To summarize, the Rapture is a blessed hope, an uplifting encouragement, and a consolation for God’s people. If Paul preached a Midtribulational or Posttribulational Rapture, the Church would be filled with anxiety and worry anticipating the Antichrist, the Tribulation, and the wrath of God.

Paul used the teaching of the Rapture to encourage people to have hope. When the Church disappears from Earth in Revelation 4:1, we are in Heaven until we return with Jesus at His Second Coming.