

Apocalypse Now (Revelation Revisited)

Session 5 / Wednesday.

THE GLORIOUS RAPTURE - HEAVEN AT LAST!

1 Tonight's study is based on the 4th chapter of Revelation, doubtless one of the most
2 spectacular chapters in all of God's Word - and THAT'S saying something!

3
4 In chapter 1 of Revelation, the old Apostle John informed us he was incarcerated on the
5 Island of Patmos (in the Aegean Sea between Greece and Turkey) because of his service
6 to God. The infamous Emperor Domitian had the grand old man placed there to die.
7 But the emperor died first and John was freed to return to Ephesus. But before he
8 returned he had an encounter with the risen Jesus Christ. Rev. 1:12-17 [NAS] **And I**
9 **turned to see the voice that was speaking with me. And having turned I saw seven**
10 **golden lampstands; [13] and in the middle of the lampstands one like a son of man,**
11 **clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His breast with a golden**
12 **sash. [14] And His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow; and His**
13 **eyes were like a flame of fire; [15] and His feet were like burnished bronze, when it**
14 **has been caused to glow in a furnace, and His voice was like the sound of many**
15 **waters. [16] And in His right hand He held seven stars; and out of His mouth came a**
16 **sharp two-edged sword; and His face was like the sun shining in its strength. [17]**
17 **And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as a dead man. And He laid His right hand**
18 **upon me, saying, "Do not be afraid..."** Jesus prepared John to write down everything
19 he would see in this encounter.

20
21 In chapters 2 and 3 Jesus gave the seven churches of Asia Minor (Turkey) individual
22 messages - churches and messages that would compare to the coming seven church ages
23 from then til now.

- 24
- 25 1. Ephesus
- 26 2. Smyrna (Izmir, Turkey)
- 27 3. Pergamum
- 28 4. Thyatira (Lydia of Thyatira, a textile executive, was the first Christian convert in
- 29 Europe)
- 30 5. Sardis
- 31 6. Philadelphia
- 32 7. Laodicea - the lukewarm church that Jesus threatened to "spew from His mouth" - and
- 33 the church corresponding to THE CURRENT CHURCH AGE.
- 34

35 Note that very carefully: The Laodicean church was the last of the church ages. Now

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2 something incredibly dramatic would occur, which we find in chapter 4 - the Rapture of
3 the Church. Let this be clear: If we are truly living near the end of the final church
4 period, how close to the Rapture must we be?

5 The student of Scripture must keep clearly in mind: **THERE IS A DIFFERENCE**
6 **BETWEEN THE RAPTURE AND CHRIST'S SECOND COMING.** The Rapture is the
7 next event in Biblical prophecy yet to happen. It will be instant! The second coming of
8 Christ, when "every eye shall see Him," could not possibly happen then for another seven
9 years. This event is referred to 318 times in the Scriptures. Our study tonight will make
10 that very clear.

11
12 So...let's begin this epic chapter: Rev. 4:1-2

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

16 We remember from Rev. 1:10 that John was "in the Spirit" on a Saturday - the Lord's
17 Day, Sabbath or Shabbat. Christ has appeared to him with the dramatic messages for
18 each of those seven churches (John pastored the church in Ephesus and was probably the
19 "bishop" or superintendent for the other six). Now John is translated "in the spirit" to
20 Heaven itself.

21
22 There are quite a few books on today's market by people who claim to have gone to
23 heaven and back. I don't personally put much stock in them. I know of only two men
24 who ever saw Heaven and came back, one was Paul: 2 Cor. 12:2-4 [The Message]
25 **For instance, I know a man who, fourteen years ago, was seized by Christ and swept**
26 **in ecstasy to the heights of heaven. I really don't know if this took place in the body**
27 **or out of it; only God knows. [3] I also know that this man was hijacked into**
28 **paradise—again, whether in or out of the body, I don't know; God knows. There he**
29 **heard the unspeakable spoken, but was forbidden to tell what he heard.**

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It is very interesting that Paul was given a vision of Heaven but was forbidden to write about it. John, on the other hand, was commanded to write it in a book (Revelation). I find veracity in the accounts of those two men of God; however, I have severe questions about the other accounts now so popular.

32
33 **HOW DO WE KNOW JOHN WAS WRITING ABOUT THE RAPTURE IN THIS**
34 **CHAPTER?**

35
36 1. Note the placement of this chapter in history:

John has written in chapters 2 and 3 of the seven church ages. In chapter 6 he will write

of the beginning of the TRIBULATION. Something separates the church ages and the Tribulation. What is it? THE RAPTURE.

2. In these first three chapters we have read a lot about CHRIST'S CHURCH. It has a vital role and place in earthly history. However, in chapters 6 - 18, which give us thorough details of THE TRIBULATION, there is not one mention of the Church in them.

Why now? It has disappeared from the earth! It is gone! Raptured!

3. The references primarily in those chapters indicate ISRAEL, not the Church. The Church Age was a time for Gentiles; while the Tribulation is a time of Jacob's troubles: Jeremiah 30:7 **Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it.** Bible scholars understand the reference to Jacob to in reality be a reference to the offspring, the family, of Jacob - Israel!

4. Let me point out a New Testament reference that is very similar to the one in Revelation 4:1-2: 1 Thes. 4:13-18 **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.**

So in these first 2 verses of Revelation 4, John represents the Church and the "door opening in Heaven" represents the invitation of Christ Himself to "come home!"

THE THESSALONIANS ACCOUNT

In northern Greece is the second largest city in the country, Thessalonica (Athens is first). Paul ministered in this city only briefly but was there long enough to establish a strong Christian church. He had taught the people there that Jesus would "rapture" the saints one day. After he left, these young believers were perplexed when a number of their congregation passed away. So....had they missed this "rapture?" Paul answered them



1 in this letter we call First Thessalonians:1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 [NAS] But we do not
2 want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep (have died), that
3 you may not grieve, as do the rest who have no hope. [14] For if we believe that
4 Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen
5 asleep (died) in Jesus. [15] For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we
6 who are alive, and remain until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who
7 have fallen asleep (died). [16] For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a
8 shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in
9 Christ shall rise first. [17] Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up
10 together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall
11 always be with the Lord. [18] Therefore comfort one another with these words.
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13 WHERE YOU WILL BE ONE SPLIT SECOND AFTER THE RAPTURE

14
15 Rev. 4:2-4 And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in
16 heaven, and one sat on the throne. [3] And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper
17 and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like
18 unto an emerald. [4] And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and
19 upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and
20 they had on their heads crowns of gold.

21 What a trip John has made in the spirit, from Patmós to Heaven! Let's define Heaven
22 before we go on because scripturally there are actually three places one might call heaven.
23
24

- 25 1. The atmosphere above us - the air we breathe. That's a very thin layer, by the way.
26 This is why planes should not fly for long above 12-14 thousand feet with being
27 pressurized (oxygen supplied).
28
- 29 2. The stellar heaven, the universe, the stars, constellations, suns, moons, etc.
30
- 31 3. This "third heaven" that Paul related to in 2 Corinthians 12:2-4 is the heaven of God,
32 the place of His throne. Job referred to it perhaps in Job 26:7: He stretcheth out the
33 north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing. Is this "empty"
34 place the location of God's throne? We don't know.
35

36 God On His Throne In Glory

37
38 There, seated on the Throne is the divine Godhead: God the Father, God the Son and God
39 the Holy Ghost. "And He that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine
40 stone..."



1
2 *The jasper of the Revelation is not the opaque stone we know by that name. It is later*
3 *described as a crystal (Rev. 21:11 **Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto***
4 *a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal;). This is probably the*
5 *diamond, the most brilliant of all the precious jewels. The other stone is blood red, and*
6 *may really be the ruby. The two together give the idea of glory and sacrifice.*
7 *Remembering that many of the first readers of the Revelation were converted Jews, we*
8 *might ask, what would these stones suggest to them? Surely every instructed Hebrew*
9 *would instantly recall that they were the first and last stones in the breastplate of the*
10 *High Priest (Exodus 28:17-20 **And thou shalt set in it settings of stones, even four rows***
11 *of stones: the first row shall be a sardius, a topaz, and a carbuncle: this shall be the*
12 *first row. [18] **And the second row shall be an emerald, a sapphire, and a diamond. [19]***
13 *And the third row a ligure, an agate, and an amethyst. [20] **And the fourth row a beryl,***
14 *and an onyx, and a jasper: they shall be set in gold in their inclosings.) As these stones*
15 *bore the names of the tribes of Israel, arranged according to the births of the 12*
16 *patriarchs, the one would suggest at once the name of Reuben and the other Benjamin.*
17 **LECTURES ON THE BOOK OF REVELATION / HARRY A. IRONSIDE / 12TH EDITION / LOIZEAUX BROS.**

18 So these stones certainly represent the function of God the Son, especially as Redeemer
19 and Priest of the saints of the most high God.
20

21 The Rainbow

22 Revelation 4:3 informs us that we see a rainbow over God's throne. The rainbow is the
23 sign of God's mercy, going 'way back to Genesis 9:13-17: **I do set my bow in the**
24 **cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth. [14] And it**
25 **shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in**
26 **the cloud: [15] And I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and**
27 **every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to**
28 **destroy all flesh. [16] And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that**
29 **I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of**
30 **all flesh that is upon the earth. [17] And God said unto Noah, This is the token of the**
31 **covenant, which I have established between me and all flesh that is upon the earth.**
32

33
34 So what do we see immediately upon our arrival in Heaven? The rainbow - symbolizing
35 the fact that we are only there because of the mercy and grace of Almighty God, that
36 salvation - our salvation - was a gift, not something we had earned.
37

38 In Revelation 20 we learn of the sinners' arrival at basically this same location, only there
39 is a major difference: Rev. 20:11-15 **And I saw a great white throne, and him that**
40 **sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found**
41 **no place for them. [12] And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and**

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1 the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and
2 the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according
3 to their works. [13] And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and
4 hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man
5 according to their works. [14] And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This
6 is the second death. [15] And whosoever was not found written in the book of life
7 was cast into the lake of fire. Did you notice what was missing? THE RAINBOW!
8 No mercy here. No grace here. Any thoughts of redemption are now too late.

9 *And, oh, what a weeping and wailing, as the lost were told of their fate;*

10 *They cried for the rocks and the mountains;*

11 *They prayed, but their prayers were too late.*

12
13 Every person here will one day appear before God - either at the Rapture or the Great
14 White Throne Judgment. Let it be clear - you will be there. When you arrive, look for
15 the rainbow! If it's there, eternity with God has begun; if it is not, all the fury of an
16 eternity without God will get underway.

17 18 The Twenty-Four Elders

19
20 Rev. 4:4

21 **And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw**
22 **four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads**
23 **crowns of gold.**

24
25 For this fascinating segment of chapter 4, I yield the floor to Dr. Dwight David Pentecost
26 whose commentary is eye-opening:

27
28 *After describing the seven-fold condition of the visible church in chapters 2 and 3, John*
29 *writes, 'And round the throne were four and twenty seats (or thrones); and upon the seats*
30 *I saw twenty four elders sitting clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads*
31 *crowns of gold.'* *These elders are significant because they are SEATED, they are*
32 *ROBED, and they are CROWNED. These significant things suggest that these twenty*
33 *four are the symbolic representation of the Church. In Ephesians 2:6 we read that God*
34 *'has made us SIT together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.'* *In Revelation 19:8 it is*
35 *stated, 'And to her was granted that she should be ARRAYED IN FINE LINEN, clean and*
36 *white, which is the righteousness of saints.'* *Again Paul testifies in 2 Timothy 4:8,*
37 *'Henceforth there is laid up for me a CROWN of righteousness, which the Lord the*
38 *righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that*
39 *love His appearing.'* *These considerations seem to identify the twenty-four elders as the*
40 *Church. Now when are they seen in Heaven in their glorified position? At the very*



1 *outset of the Tribulation, to be described by John in Revelation 4 through 19 - seated,*
2 *robed and crowned. Thus the Rapture must precede the Tribulation.*

3
4 *The same truth is taught in Revelation 3:10. The Lord is addressing a letter to the*
5 *church in Philadelphia, the true church of the last days. He says to these true believers,*
6 *Rev. 3:10 Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the*
7 *hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the*
8 *earth. The phrase, "hour of temptation," can be translated HOUR OF TESTING and is*
9 *certainly a reference to the Tribulation. Here is a promise of deliverance from this time*
10 *of testing.*

11 PROPHECY FOR TODAY / D D PENTECOST / PAGES 48 AND 49 / ZONDERVAN

12 We Stand In Awe Before The Throne

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15 Rev. 4:5-6

16 **And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and there**
17 **were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of**
18 **God. [6] And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the**
19 **midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before**
20 **and behind.**

21
22 I have often heard speakers (who apparently had a very juvenile concept of God) say that
23 when they get to Heaven they plan to jump into God's lap and shower His face with their
24 kisses of joy. Uh- no, they're not! There is lightning coming out of that throne! You
25 would be fried to a crisp!

26
27 Also you would have to negotiate through the Holy Spirit Who is manifested there in
28 seven distinct ways: Isaiah 11:2 **And the (1) spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him,**
29 **the (2)spirit of wisdom and (3)understanding, the (4)spirit of counsel and (5) might,**
30 **the (6) spirit of knowledge and of the (7) fear of the Lord; [3] And shall make him of**
31 **quick understanding in the fear of the Lord: and he shall not judge after the sight of**
32 **his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears:**

33
34 There is also a "sea of glass like unto crystal" before the throne. Some scholars believe
35 that "sea" is a "sea of people who have been martyred for their faith in Christ."
36 However, it is not possible to be dogmatic on this feature of the throne.

37
38 "And around the throne were four beasts full of eyes before and behind." There is little
39 question of their identity: they are four mighty seraphim also described by Isaiah. In his
40 sorrow, following the death of good King Uzziah, who ruled Judah for over 50 years in
41 the 7th century B.C., Isaiah made his way to the great Temple in Jerusalem. Isaiah 6:1-3



2 In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and
3 lifted up, and his train filled the temple. [2] Above it stood the seraphims: each one
4 had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet,
5 and with twain he did fly. [3] And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy,
6 is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.

7 We know from Scripture there are several "orders" or types of angels. Among them are
8 the seraphim and they number but four. Note their description in Rev. 4:7 **And the first**
9 **beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face**
10 **as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle.** Strange description, is it not?
11 One commentator suggested:

- 12 • A lion - the leader of the kingdom of wild animals
- 13 • A calf - the leader of domestic animals
- 14 • A man - leader of the angelic hosts responsible for the human race
- 15 • A flying eagle - leader of the kingdom of the fowls of the air

16
17 I don't suggest that you buy into that description, necessarily. Of greater interest to me
18 is Isaiah's description of their six wings: They use two to cover their face as they hover
19 over the sacred throne of a very Holy God; With two wings they cover their feet in His
20 presence and with the last two wings they fly - they hover over the throne, perpetually
21 worshipping His Majesty

22
23 The sound coming from these massive creatures hits our ears:

24
25 Rev. 4:8

26 **Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.**

27
28 There is nothing frivolous about their worship of the Creator of all things. Holy, holy,
29 holy - that's their song. And they sing it to Him (who was), and (who is) and (who is to
30 come.) That signifies that God has always been....that He is now....and that He always
31 will be.

32
33 You and I struggle with this, for in our realm everything has a beginning, middle and end.
34 Not so in eternity. We cannot comprehend someone or something who just has
35 ALWAYS BEEN and ALWAYS WILL BE. In eternity there is no "time" so there
36 cannot be a terminus on either the alleged beginning or ending.

37
38 My friend, this is where the redeemed saints of God will find themselves at the Rapture.
39 In that instant of what remains of earthly time, Matthew 24:40-42 **Then shall two be in**
40 **the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. [41] Two women shall be**

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grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

[42] Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.

Vital to remember: This chapter falls on the heels of Jesus' admonitions to the 7 Church Ages - the last of which was the Laodicean Age. You and I are now in the autumn of that Age. As chapter 4 opened, we were caught up (raptured) as was John in the Spirit into the very presence of the living God.

Before you even reach your car tonight, Jesus could call His redeemed home - the Rapture. Or it could be on down the road. We do not know. We must do as our Lord suggested, WATCH THEREFORE...FOR YE KNOW NOT WHAT HOUR YOUR LORD DOTH COME.

Next week we delve into Revelation 5...WHEN CHRIST OPENS THE SCROLL OF TRIBULATIONAL JUDGMENT ON EARTH. It is a horror story!!

