

22. The Book of Revelation—4:1-3

(10/21/20)

As we come to chapter 4, we come to the final section of the Book of Revelation according to the outline of the book which Jesus Himself gave to us in chap.1 verse 19—

Revelation 1:19 (NKJV)

¹⁹ Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this.

- I. “Write the things which you have seen...”—the vision of Jesus in chap.1
- II. “...and the things which are...”—the things of the Church (ch.2 & 3)
- III. “...and the things which will take place after this (‘meta tauta’—“*after these things*”).” →

After what things? —after the things of chapters 2 and 3 which deal with the Church or—after the Church Age comes to a close.

The Bible teaches that the Church Age started on Pentecost (Acts 2) and will end at the rapture— which I believe is recorded in Revelation 4:1.

Revelation 4:1 (NKJV)

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 [‘after these things’]."

Verse 1 of chap. 4 opens and closes with the Greek phrase ‘meta tauta’ – “*after these things*” which connects 4:1 with 1:19 and tells us we have entered into the final section of the book which covers chapter 4 through chapter 22.

Since chap. 4 can’t begin until after the Church Age closes, and the Church Age doesn’t officially close until the rapture—can we see evidence of the rapture of the Church somewhere after the close of chap. 3 and the beginning of chap. 4?

Yes, absolutely!

First of all, we read in verse 1, “**After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven...**”

This takes us back to something Jesus promised the true and faithful church of Philadelphia—

Revelation 3:8, 10 (NKJV)

⁸ I know your works. See, I have set before you an **open door**, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name...

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.

Jesus promised His true last days Church (represented by the church of Philadelphia—the evangelical church) that He would keep her from (“deliver her out of”) the judgment (the Great Tribulation) that is coming upon the whole world to test (‘try’) those who dwell on the earth (militant unbelievers).

So, I believe this open door is—a door of deliverance!

There is an interesting passage in Isaiah that I believe could be speaking of the rapture:

Isaiah 26:19-21 (NKJV)

¹⁹ Your dead shall live; *Together with* my dead body they shall arise. Awake and sing, you who

dwell in dust; For your dew *is like* the dew of herbs, And the earth shall cast out the dead.

²⁰ Come, my people, enter your chambers, And shut your doors behind you; Hide yourself, as it were, for a little moment, Until the indignation is past. ²¹ For behold, the Lord comes out of His place To punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity...

And in John's gospel in the upper room on the night before His crucifixion Jesus promised His disciples (including all His disciples throughout the Church Age)—

John 14:2-3 (NKJV)

² In My Father's house are many mansions; if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself [the rapture]; that where I am, *there* you may be also.

So, first of all John sees “**a door standing open in heaven**”—which I believe is a ‘*door of deliverance*’ to evacuate His Church off of the earth (as He promised in Revelation 3:8, 10) before His divine judgments are poured out on the world.

Secondly John says—“**And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, ‘Come up here...’**”

That sounds like rapture language to me—

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 (NKJV)

¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be caught up (raptured) together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

1 Corinthians 15:51-53 (NKJV)

⁵¹ Behold, I tell 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 trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. ⁵³ For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality. [speaking of the rapture not the Second Coming—Explain]

Now look, the Church has been mentioned 19 times in the first 3 chapters of this book—but now suddenly she disappears from the earth.

She disappears and we will not see her again in the book until we see her as the Bride of Christ in chapter 19 returning with the Lord Jesus (her Bridegroom) to the earth to establish His Kingdom.

J. Vernon McGee—

“From here on you will not find the word church mentioned...But now the church goes off the air—there is no mention of it. It has gone off the air because it went up in the air; it was caught up in the air to meet the Lord in the air. The church has gone to heaven—that is what has happened to it.

When the church arrives at its destination in heaven, it loses the name by which it was known in the world and other terms are used to describe it...she is no longer a church; she is a bride—a bride adorned for her Husband.

The apostate organization, which bears the ecclesiastical terminology and continues on in the world, is not hereafter given the title of “church” either, but the frightful label of “the harlot.”

The late Dr. George Gill said years ago in a seminary class, ‘There are going to be some churches which will meet the next Sunday after the rapture, and they won’t be missing a [single] member—they will all be there.’ Why? Because it is the church of Laodicea—that is, it professes to be Christian but lacks reality.”

So, after the Church is removed from the earth at the rapture—the scene now shifts to heaven in Revelation chapter 4 where the Church, once seated with Christ in heavenly places *spiritually* (Eph. 2:6), is now seen safely seated with Christ in heaven *literally* before the judgment of God is poured out upon this Christ rejecting world.

In the Book of Revelation there are recorded numerous judgments of God which He releases on the inhabitants of earth during the Tribulation Period—they are, the 7 Seal Judgments; the 7 Trumpet Judgments; and the final 7 Bowl Judgments.

All of these judgments are called ‘**the wrath of God**’ which He pours out on the ‘*earth-dwellers*’ (absolute militant Christ rejectors)—and yet with regard to the Body of Christ—

1 Thessalonians 5:9 (NKJV)

⁹ For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,

This ‘salvation’ thru Jesus isn’t salvation from hell—this is talking about how He will save His Church from the ‘*wrath to come*’ by rapturing us off of the earth before the wrath of God (Tribulation Period) begins.

The First Seal (wrath or judgment of God) brings the Antichrist to power (6:1-2).

And therefore, if the Antichrist is the first judgment of God during the Tribulation Period, and God has not appointed His Church to judgment or wrath—then the Church won't see the Antichrist come to power.

Please understand—I believe he is alive on the earth right now.

But the Church Saints (true Christians belonging to the Body of Christ) won't see him rise to power as the leader of the one-world government—he won't be revealed nor come to power until *after* the Church is removed from the earth:

2 Thessalonians 2:7-8 (NKJV)

⁷ For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains *will do so* until He is taken out of the way [the Holy Spirit in the Church]. ⁸ And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming.

And so, I believe the Scriptures are teaching that the Antichrist won't be revealed and rise to power until the Church is removed from the earth at the rapture—which I believe Revelation 4:1 is teaching.

And so once again, the Church has been mentioned 19 times in the first 3 chapters of Revelation—but then is raptured to heaven at the beginning of Revelation 4.

And now, the scene shifts to heaven in chapter 4 where the Church—is now seen safely seated with Christ in heaven before the judgment of God is poured out upon this Christ rejecting world.

Revelation 4:1-2 (NKJV)

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."** ² **Immediately [might we paraphrase "in the twinkling of an eye"] I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and *One* sat on the throne...**

John was taken “**in the Spirit**” to heaven which means he is now in the *realm of the spirit*—this allowed John to have a ‘*balcony seat*’ in heaven from which to watch these events as they were literally unfolding before his eyes!

And remember from our study of chapter 1 that John tells us (in verse 10)—that all of the events he records in the Book of Revelation happened in a single day—on “*the Lord’s Day*” (Sunday)!

Some of you might be thinking to yourself—“*How could all of the events that John sees that make up the Book of Revelation including: the 7-Year Tribulation Period, the 1000-Year Millennial Kingdom and even the start of the Eternal State—all happen in one day—Sunday, the ‘Lord’s Day?’*”

It is because in the realm of the spirit—time is not a factor.

Time is a physical dimension—part of our 4-dimensional physical universe.

And therefore, when God took John out of the physical universe into the realm of the spirit—He took him outside the limits of time.

This allowed John to see all of the events he recorded happening all at once—like looking at a parade from a helicopter. (Explain)

I don’t think it’s possible for us to know exactly what John experienced on the Isle of Patmos that Sunday and exactly what ‘mechanism’ God used to transport him into the future—but it happened and God used it to give John (and all of us who read this book) a ‘balcony seat’ to events that, in a very short period of time, are going to take place on the earth in real time!

The key word in Revelation chapter 4 is ‘**throne**’ which is used fourteen times—in fact, this is a key word that is used throughout the entire book, appearing forty-six times.

Why did God make it a point to talk about His throne so much throughout this book?

I believe it was because there is coming upon this earth such horrendous things, such cataclysmic judgments and events—that if God didn't keep reminding us (primarily those Tribulation saints living thru these horrific events) throughout the book that He was on the throne—God's people would be prone to lose all hope...

This is a lesson we must remember right now when we face horrendous adversities and start to think that all is lost and all hope for the future is gone!

It's the Holy Spirit's way of telling us that no matter what may happen on earth—God is still on the throne and in complete control!

Please notice that John makes it a point to say he saw—“**One that sat on the throne...**” (v.2)

This is God the Father, since the Son approaches the throne in Revelation 5:6 as a “*lamb that had been slain*”, and the Spirit is pictured before the throne in Revelation 4:5.

So, this is the throne of God the Father, the only One on this throne—God the King!

Notice if you will—there is no ‘queen’!

And by that I mean—Mary isn't seen here as sitting on God's throne or on any throne as the ‘*queen of heaven*’ as the Roman Catholic Church has proclaimed her.

(Explain how Mary was a wonderful woman of God, used by Him to bring forth the Messiah—but not to be worshipped or venerated)

Revelation 4:2-3 (NKJV)

² Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and *One sat on the throne.* 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.*

Please understand when you read this that you're trying to see heaven thru the eyes of a first century man.

Now us who have been given the benefit of “Star Wars” and all of the special effects that we have come to take for granted in movies—if we had been there, maybe we could have done a better job relating what John saw.

So, be patient with John, he's trying his best (in a primitive way) to describe things that go beyond his ability to comprehend and communicate—in particular what he's seeing here in Revelation 4 and 5 with regard to heaven itself.

Later we'll see him trying to describe 21st century weaponry using primitive first century language—that will be fun!

I want you to notice that in describing God sitting on His throne—John sees no form only brilliant multi-colored lights which he likens to precious stones.

And please note, that John didn't say that God Himself was made of precious stones—he said that God was “**like**” a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance. (v.3)

He is trying to describe God, the God of light, in a primitive way using the imagery of various colored gemstones.

You remember that Jesus said “*God is Spirit*” in John 4 (a spirit has no form) and that Paul said in 1Timothy 6:16—that God “*dwells in unapproachable light!*”

The fact that God is Spirit and has no form was something He incorporated into the Ten Commandments when He forbid His people from making an image of Him to worship—

Exodus 20:4-5a (NKJV)

⁴ "You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness *of anything* that *is* in heaven above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the water under the earth; ⁵ you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, *am* a jealous God...

The question is—why is God so adamant about us not making anything to represent Him.

Why?—Because God is an omnipresent Spirit—He is without form as we know it and is not confined to any one place at any given moment in time!

Isaiah 40:18-22, 25-26 (NLT2)

¹⁸ To whom can you compare God? What image can you find to resemble him? ¹⁹ Can he be compared to an idol formed in a mold, overlaid with gold, and decorated with silver chains? ²⁰ Or if people are too poor for that, they might at least choose wood that won't decay and a skilled craftsman to carve an image that won't fall down! ²¹ Haven't you heard? Don't you understand? Are you deaf to the words of God—the words he gave before the world began? Are you so ignorant? ²² God sits above the circle of the earth. The people below seem like grasshoppers to him! He spreads out the heavens like a curtain and makes his tent from them... ²⁵ "To whom will you compare me? Who is my equal?" asks the Holy One. ²⁶ Look up into the heavens. Who created all the stars? He brings them out like an army, one after another, calling each by its name. Because of his great power and incomparable strength, not a single one is missing.

In other words, if you try to reduce God to an object, if you turn Him into something that can be seen and touched—what you make to represent Him is infinitely less than what He really is and therefore is a *false* representation and therefore is a false god.

God is an omnipresent Spirit—and no statue, picture or anything else can even begin to properly represent Him—

Psalms 139:7-10 (NKJV)

⁷ Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? ⁸ If I ascend into heaven, You *are* there; If I make my bed in hell, behold, You *are there*. ⁹ If I take the wings of

the morning, *And* dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,¹⁰ Even there Your hand shall lead me, And Your right hand shall hold me.

To reduce God to anything which you then pray to or worship is to bow before a false god—and God condemns it in the strongest possible way.

Speaking later of Israel's experience at Sinai, Moses wrote:

Deuteronomy 4:12 (NKJV)

¹² And the LORD spoke to you out of the midst of the fire. You heard the sound of the words, but saw no form; *you only heard* a voice.

This established the principle that the worship of God was to be word-based and not image-based—

John 4:23-24 (NKJV)

²³ But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. ²⁴ God *is* Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

Those people that think of God in terms of the statue on their dresser or the medal around their neck or the picture on their wall do not understand the divine majesty of God—that He is an infinite Spirit and His presence fills the universe and all of eternity itself! (Comment)

Paul denounced the unsaved religious people of this world for doing this very thing in Romans 1—

Romans 1:22-23 (NKJV)

²² Professing to be wise, they became fools, ²³ and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man--and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.

To accommodate the use of statues (idols) in their churches and worship services the Roman Catholic Church couldn't let this commandment (Exodus 20:4-5a) stay—so they took the whole second commandment out of the Catholic Bible.

But then to keep the Ten Commandments the Ten Commandments and not the Nine Commandments—they took the tenth commandment and broke it into two parts.

In closing, some have said that the second commandment doesn't forbid making an image of God or Jesus for artistic purposes—as did da Vinci and Michelangelo.

Further, they say that God isn't forbidding us from pictures of Jesus in our homes or a statue of Jesus on our dressers—as long as these images are not used in our worship of God.

I'll let you come to your own conclusion with regard to that based on your own conviction.

I will just say that I personally have never had a picture of Jesus in my house.

And Cyndi and I have never used any object (not a statue, picture or anything else) to represent God in our home or in our worship of Him.

When people use those things to help them feel they are in the presence of God—they have actually *lost* the awareness of God's presence in their lives not captured it.

Whenever a person has to have an object to help them connect with God—they are at least in a backslidden, diminished or stunted spiritual state—and at worst they are still in spiritual darkness and have not been born-again of the Holy Spirit.

God wants you to have a true, vibrant, *spiritual* relationship with Him which can only happen when you receive Jesus into your life as your living Savior and Lord—and then every day after, that you walk in the Spirit and fill your mind with His Word.

Close