

‘Come Up Here!’

How It All Ends

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Bible Text: Revelation 4:1

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Starting in verse 1, we see that John said that “he heard a voice which was like a trumpet talking and said to come up hither and I will show you the things which must be hereafter.” The events in Revelation 1:19, we saw that John said that he was going to tell us about the events which will take place and in that passage, the word “will” comes from the Greek word *melio* whereas here in chapter 4:1, the events that “must take place.” Now, it’s not a real significant thing but this one is a little more emphatic in that it comes from the word *dei* which means “a very for sure thing.” It is translated here in the English the events that “must take place.”

In chapter 1, we were seeing the scene being set for just the overall revelation that John was going to receive from the Lord and now we’re going to be getting into some specific things that are going to take place yet in the future. Remember, I’m not going to go back and visit with what Pastor Bill had shared but prior, we just came out of chapter 3 which was dealing with the messages to the various churches in Asia Minor and now we’re getting into – John is going to be sharing with us that things that are definitely future, things that are coming that must take place. Of course, we haven’t seen these take place yet as far as what we are living in today, this is still future.

Also, in verses 1 and the first part of 2, we see that the voice that was speaking to John said, “Come up hither, and I will show you these things.” So, we have a request by someone from heaven asking John or telling John to come up hither and in verse 2, the first part, it says, “Immediately I was in the spirit.” So, there is the term there “coming up” but “coming up in the spirit.” That would be as of a vision, John being in the spirit, and that takes place also in Revelation 1:10, 17:3 and 21:10. All of those events where he is transported up. It’s “transported” or “in the spirit” and that is as opposed to physically being transported where if you look in Revelation 11:11-12 is where the two witnesses during the times of the tribulation or the pouring out of God’s wrath, the witnesses are killed and then brought to life and it says that “after the three and a half days the breath of life from God came into them and they stood on their feet and great fear fell upon those who were watching them and they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, Come up here.” Then they went up into heaven in the cloud and their enemies watched them and in that passage, there is no mention of “in the spirit.” This is where the two witnesses were raised from the dead after they’d been killed and summoned into heaven but

summoned up physically. So, that is a different sense than where John is speaking in several different instances where he was “in the spirit.”

Now, also in 2 Corinthians 12, we see that Paul talks about – and this is just for reference – in chapter 12 of 2 Corinthians, verse 2, Paul says, “I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) How that he was caught up into paradise.” And we take that passage to mean Paul was talking about himself and where he had a special event in his life where God brought him up into the third heaven and even Paul was saying, “It was so real, I couldn’t even tell whether I was in my body or whether it was a vision.”

So, when we take that in conjunction with what we’re seeing John say here in Revelation 4 and the other passages where John says “in the spirit,” it obviously would be very difficult with his experience to probably like Paul say, “It definitely was in the body,” or “It definitely was not in the body because it was very real.” But he does have, under the, I believe, the direction of the Holy Spirit, does relate to us that it was “in the spirit” and, therefore, a vision. I believe that John was still living or still bodily in the isle of Patmos but such an experience that it would be hard to tell whether he was physically experiencing it or as he says, “in the spirit” only or as a vision. Of course, we know from many of the Old Testament prophets, often their revelations that they received from God were specified as visions.

Then as we go on in verse 2 and 3, John starts describing the scene that he is seeing. “A throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne.” Now, this next picture is one that I actually found on the internet. It’s amazing what you can get nowadays, actually there were several different illustrations that I could have found. I have two of them here. This one and this one and hopefully I can back up. This one, we see it loses some of its brilliance when it goes on the projector screen but the drawing when I was looking at it on my computer, this was quite a dazzling aura that the artist had managed to draw around the central figure.

And our central figure in this passage was “the throne set in heaven and one sitting on the throne.” And so, again, when we look at all the other passages of Scripture related to visions of God and seeing God, it’s indescribable and also bright and unable to look upon. Remember, even Moses when he saw the burning bush, was taken aback, fell down. I believe it would be very difficult to draw a correct representation of what some of these prophets and writers were seeing when they got a glimpse of God in his glory. So, even our best descriptions or our best paintings are probably very minimal.

This one was a different image, a different portrayal and, of course, I imagine you have as many different artists trying to depict this, you’re going to get as many different drawings but, again, focusing on the central figure. Notice, even this artist kind of tried to draw it so bright that the obliteration, the image is not really visible. We don’t know what

God looks like in his, however we would say, manifestation of something that we would recognize, whether we could recognize it or not.

Then we see, going on in the passage, “he that sat upon the throne was like a jasper and a sardine stone: and also there was a rainbow around the throne.” One of the definitions of the word “the rainbow” is an iris, like the iris of your eye or a halo. So, when we see the word “rainbow” automatically we think of the multi-colored rainbow and, of course, God used the rainbow in the sky at the end of Noah’s flood as a sign of a covenant. So, here we could look at this rainbow as being representative of the covenant but even more so, the fact that it said it had an emerald appearance which isn’t multi-colored but if you think of it as the halo effect, then this facet of the halo or the rainbow which was mostly like and emerald or green.

Now, the term for “the one sitting on the throne appeared as a jasper and a sardine stone,” “jasper” was described as being mostly clear. So, we have the clear or the transparent or the crystal look around the one that is sitting on the throne and then the sardius was a red colored and in the Old Testament sometimes, the term translated sardius by some of the translators was translated “ruby.” So, we have this image of a little bit of the ruby color around the crystal color and then, of course, the emerald hue from the rainbow. Again, the person and it depends on how they draw it, now we have the clear in the middle, the reddish with the halo effect and the emerald color.

Where it talks about the jasper and the sardius stones, the first and the last stones on the high priest’s breastplate which are described in Exodus 28. The first stone was the sardius stone and the last stone was the jasper stone. So, we have kind of symbology here from the Old Testament breastplate of righteousness, so to speak, from the priests attire. Then also in Revelation 21:19-20, the foundation of the New Jerusalem includes the jasper stone and the sardius stone.

Now, as we continue in verse 4, “And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold.” Now, back in our picture, here we have this depiction where the scene in heaven is shown kind of as a bowl with the 24 thrones and the 24 elders around the throne. Then we have, in this picture, just kind of like a perspective where the drawing shows them around from John’s viewpoint, seeing them go all the way around the throne and then the beasts in the forefront. In this drawing, the beasts are, again, kind of distributed about the throne and then we’re going to see in a little bit, the seven flames. In this one, they are not as easy to see the bowls of the flames of the Spirit. Here they’re right in the front of the throne. We’ll talk about those in a minute, or I’ll talk about them. I’m not letting you talk today.

The elders that we’re seeing here – about everybody that I’ve read, there are a couple of possibilities but the strongest is that the elders represent the redeemed of the church. Now, Pastor Bill always tells us that we need to look at Scripture from Scripture and I agree but there are no other passages in Scripture where we talk about the 24 elders that we see in this scene. Therefore, we just have to take with what the symbology John is

trying to represent and because the elders have church significance, if we were to look in Acts 20:17 and 1 Timothy 5:17 and Titus 1:5, those are all passages related to the elders as the leaders, the overseers of the church and individual churches but also representative of the believers.

So, taking that into conjunction with the fact that they have the white garments and if we were to look in Revelation 3:4-5, this was also from the church spoken of to Sardis. Verse 4 and 5 of Revelation 3, “But you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their garments; and they will walk with Me in white, for they are worthy. He who overcomes will thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life.” Remember, how do we become overcomers? Because we trust in who Jesus Christ is and his salvation. It’s not the idea that you’re overcoming because you do certain things but because of we trust in and trust in Christ fully.

So, the clothing in white garments throughout the Scriptures and particularly as it’s used in the book of Revelation, is very often related to the believers and attributed to the believers. So, we see that these elders are clothed in white garments and then they also have the crowns of gold. The term “crown” in this passage comes from the Greek word *stephanos* which is the wreath or garland which was given and awarded at public games. Those that were winners at public games as opposed to a crown that was worn by a monarch or somebody that was in a ruler authority. So, these crowns and the words used for these crowns are specifically not of those of the same crown that would be worn by a king or one who in several instances in Scripture, is referred to God on his throne.

So, the elders here that we’re looking at, I hold to and I believe most people would hold to, represent a representation of the believers before the throne of God. John is looking ahead or the scene approached ahead and now, “Behold, I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousands and thousands of thousands.” Now we see in verse 11 of chapter 5, that the angels have been added, specifically talking about the angels being added to the group of people who are around the throne and praising God. By that time, we also see the Lamb that has come before the throne. If we are going to add the angels and have them included along with the number of elders and the number of the beasts, then they are probably not the angels that we see when we talk about the elders in chapter 4:4.

As we go on in chapter 4:5, “And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.” Then going on, “And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind.” Now, I didn’t prepare to go into any explanation of the descriptions of these beasts. That’s one that Pastor Bill wants to go into that a little more and we’ll let him.

But I wanted to jump down into verse 9 and 10, “when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever, he four and

twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and cast their crowns before him,” and this is in this one picture, we see the representation of the elders, the 24 elders around the throne, have fallen down and it’s hard to see in this little picture but at the ends of their out-stretched hands are their crowns. Of course, we’ve all had songs and instances of talking about the casting of our crowns before him and this is the passage that I believe this comes from where those of us that when we get to heaven and before the awesomeness of God, any rewards, any crowns that we would have, then we would give them back to our God.

Now, going on in chapter 5, we see that there was a book in the right hand of the one that was sitting on the throne. This picture, you can’t see it very well, but there is the representation of the book or the scrolls in the hands of the one sitting on the throne. In chapter 5, we see that the angel proclaims, “Who is worthy to open the book?” and this is where we’re going to start getting into the revelation of the events that happened throughout the rest of the book of Revelation.

“And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book,” and John says, “And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book. And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.” There goes on to be a description. Again, because it’s a dark drawing, but on the main computer screen and, hopefully, Pastor Bill will send out these slides later on or I can, I guess. It really comes up stronger on your computer screen than it does up here but somebody did a nice job of representing, again, as best we can in our limited understanding.

Verse 6 says, “And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth. And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne. And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.”

Now, I don’t have time to go into all of this. There are some other details here that are kind of interesting when you look at a couple of different translations but the thing that I’d like to leave us with is this picture of the one who is worthy and also, along with the falling down, the elders and the beasts, again are falling down and worshipping in the same manner that they did the one who sat on the throne. Again, pure in my mind, two characteristics of God the Trinity or all of the Trinity is represented here: the Spirit, the Father, the Son. And in all cases, they are the central figures that the four and twenty elders, the beasts and the angels and the hosts are all praising and worshipping and singing. Of course, this passage, verse 9, is the one that there is a very popular chorus that

we sing, or that we are aware of: Worthy is the Lamb. It's one of my favorite choruses. I have a lot of them that I really like because of the theology and the stuff that's in them, so it's hard to pick a favorite but it is a very good chorus.

This is going to end kind of abruptly but in verse 9 it says, "they sung a new song." This is the saints and the four and twenty elders and the beasts but in verse 11 and 12, where the angels have been included, in verse 12, it says, "Saying with a loud voice." Now, you notice that in verse 9, those that didn't include the angels were singing and in verse 12, "saying" is a different word which is a spoken word, not a singing word. We've just come through the Christmas season and we have songs like Angels We Have Heard On High and the heavenly host singing and praising God, there is no place in Scripture where the angels sing. Did you know that? They speak but you never see anything...I'm not saying they don't, I'm just saying the Scriptures never record the angels singing. They are always speaking. That'll be interesting to find out if angels sing or if it's just the ones like us that are able to sing.

Either way, I want us to end today with the thought of the Lamb that is worthy, the Son who is the Lamb who was slain, the Holy Spirit and God the Father all represented in this scene that we're seeing in heaven and the only response that everybody can have is to fall down and to worship and to praise.