

Revelation 4:1-3

"A Throne Set In Heaven"

Entering into Ch 4 allow me to draw your attention back to Ch 1. Because it's there that we discovered (be it a couple of months ago) the Divine 3 part outline for this book that Jesus gave to John. It's found in Vs 19 where Jesus said to John, "*Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this.*"¹

Jesus says to John, "I want you to write about the past, the present & the future." He's been kind enough to save us tons of questions and confusion by laying out the appropriate way for you and me to understand this book. 1st of all He says, "Write what you have seen" which speaks of the past. He'd seen up to that point the glorified Christ w/7 stars in His right hand, a sharp 2 edged sword proceeding from His mouth (which is the razor sharp sword of the Word of God) and His countenance shining like the sun in it's strength.

Then Jesus said, "Write the things which are", the things of the present, Ch's 2 & 3, the age of the church, both literally at that time & historically we've followed the flow from 33 A.D. to present day Christianity; the things which are.

Then finally, "The things which will take place *after this*:" after what? After the things of the present age of the church; after Ch's 2-3. So Ch 1 is past, Ch's 2-3 are present & everything from Ch 4 forward is yet future.

Now again the primary way that we make that connection is through the words that Jesus gives to John; & then the words that John employs to bridge that gap for us. They're 2 key words that Jesus uses in Vs 19 of Ch 1, they're the Greek words "Meta Tauta" which translate "after this". Meaning "after the things of the present time" they point to the future, when various events will occur w/(as we'll discover) increasing rapidity and accumulating intensity bringing more & more devastation upon the earth as the result of God's judgment upon the Christ rejecting world, which will ultimately culminate/climax w/the 2nd coming of Christ. (Which, btw is the main purpose of the book of Rev, right? To present the 2nd coming of Christ & the various events leading up to it so as to strike as sense of urgency in the people of God and warn the world of the necessity of receiving Christ lest they fall prey to God's judgment.) Because things won't always go on as they are, the day will come when Jesus will call us home & God will resume His plan w/Israel and bring judgment upon the world.

¹ The New King James Version. 1982 (Re 1:19). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Those are the things which will take place “meta tauta”, after this, after the age of the church. Which brings us back to Ch 4. It’s very obvious for us that John is connecting the dots for us, alerting us to the fact that the things of the future begin right here because he uses these same Greek words that Jesus used to inform us that we’re headed into this particular portion of the book (which includes the rest of the book in essence) that is yet future. The same Greek words that Jesus used in Ch 1:19, John uses twice in Ch 4 Vs 1 informing us of the fact that this begins the 3rd and final division of the book of Revelation. Let’s look at it together.

Vs 1-3

It’s almost unbelievable the amount of information that the Holy Spirit is able to pack into a few short Vs isn’t it? However for now this is what I want you to see. Ch 1 Vs 19 Jesus says, “write the things which will take place meta tauta”, then He proceeds to give us the letters to the churches so as to exhort us to have repentant hearts & encourage us to stay true to Him, walk intimately w/Him. Vs 22 of Ch 3, “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches”, Ch 4 Vs 1 “Meta tauta” after these things, “I looked...” & I saw this, & I heard that (he’s being alerted both through the eye gate & the ear gate) & the voice spoke to him & said, “Come up here, & will show you things which must (not might) take place meta tauta” after this, “after what?” After the things of Ch’s 2-3.

So everything from Ch 4 forward is yet future. It’s important that we establish that because a significant chunk of the church today wants to see these things as being fulfilled in the past, even before John wrote this (primarily in Rome’s destruction of Jerusalem & the slaughter of Israel.) Making what John wrote here some kind of cryptic language whereby he’s actually recording history (even though Jesus says I’m giving you prophecy).

Others want to think that these things took place after John’s day but before ours. But when in human history has 1/3 of all marine life died? When has 1/3 of the earth’s fresh water supply been polluted & a 1/3 of all the trees and grass of the earth been burned? These are just a few things that the book revelation declares will take place on the earth. You see, it’s safest to simply keep it simple, allow it to say what it says & understand that what we have from Ch 4 forward is yet future.

Jesus speaks to John regarding the churches (both literally; & the flow of church history) & then says, “Now I’m gonna show you what takes place after these things, the things of the church” and He calls John up to heaven and shares w/him, shows to him things unimaginable.

Vs 1

In Vs 20 of Ch 3 we find Jesus appealing to man to open the door of his heart to Him. Here's the beautiful thing; if we'll open the door of our heart to Jesus, He'll open the door of heaven to us...

John looked, & there it was, a door standing open in heaven; then he heard a voice, it was the 1st voice that he'd heard. Remember Who that voice belonged to? It's back in Ch 1 & it's the voice of Jesus Himself, & John says that it was like a trumpet. Not in the sense of it sounded like an instrument of the brass family, but that it came w/the authority, w/clarity, there was no mistaking it's identity.

Trumpet calls were used in the scripture for various & sundry reasons. Be it to tell the assembly when to move, to warn a city of impending attack, to assemble the men to recruit an army, or to call the congregation to worship. **And when it's time for Jesus to assemble His "army", when it's time for us as the body of Christ to gather together before Him & worship Him as one family; we will hear the trumpet sound, the voice of our Savior calling us up to meet Him in the air & so shall we ever be w/the Lord.**

John hears the trumpet sound, the voice of Christ calls him, up & *immediately* he was in the spirit, before the throne, standing in heaven. You know what we're seeing here don't you? We're talking about the rapture of the church. John is having a "rapture" experience here & I believe he stands to typify the church being called up to meet the Lord in the air prior to God's judgment being poured out upon the earth.

Now, I don't really need to be dogmatic about a pre-tribulation rapture position here because I believe it's easily demonstrated throughout scripture; but we're going to talk about it right here, right now. Whether you choose to see John as a type of the church or not we believe that the bible demonstrates that the church will be taken out of the world prior to the wrath of God being poured out upon the earth.

When I talk about a "type" of the church what does that mean? It means he is as a picture or a portrait of the church demonstrating the position of the church. "Types" are not unfamiliar to the scripture, for instance we see Joseph (in many ways) as a type of Christ. Beloved of his father, rejected by his own initially but received and honored ultimately, sold for silver and given into gentile hands, came into Egypt a humble servant, but his position culminated in ruling (in essence) over the earth and his brothers bowing before him. We just see pictures of Jesus in him. He serves in various ways as a "type" a picture of Christ.

We have these kind of pictures laced & layered throughout the scriptures.

Here, I see John as a “type” of the church fulfilling what Jesus called him to do throughout Ch’s 2-3, then called to heaven in an instant, then judgment begins to be poured out *from God upon* the world that has rejected His Son. But John gets an aerial view of it, he’s not on the earth throughout any of it.

Check it out, up to this point the church has been the central focus of the book of revelation. The word of Christ *to* the church, the *work* of Christ *in* the church: we’ve seen, the church this, the church that, the church here, the church there; as a matter of fact the word church (or churches) has been used 19 X’s up to & through Rev Ch 3. Beginning in Ch 4 all the way up through Ch 21, guess how many times the word “church” is used in this book... 0, zilch, not once; why? I suggest to you because it’s not there; we’ve been called out, & called up to meet the Lord in the air.

Don’t you think that if the church was present on the earth during the Great Tribulation that Jesus would offer at least a shred of instruction as to what we should do in the midst of such chaos, despair & destruction? But there’s nothing, not a single word; we’re getting the aerial view.

Let me give you a # of reasons why I believe (& we here take the position of a pre-tribulation rapture position).

#1 As I’ve already been demonstrating, “The Flow Of This Book.” After Jesus finishes speaking *to* & dealing w/the churches in Ch’s 2-3 He calls John up to heaven, snatching him up *immediately/instantly* w/a voice; the clarion call of the trumpet & all this happens *before* the great wrath that will be described beginning in Ch 6. John (a representative of the church – is in heaven looking down on the earth).

#2 As it pertains to the rapture, we know that the bible identifies it specifically w/the clarion call of the trumpet sounding. Where have we heard that before? Leave Rev 4 & turn in your bibles to **1 Thess 4** (Vs 13-18)

Notice quickly 3 things. #1 In connection w/our current text the trumpet will sound (The Lord will descend w/a shout) we’ll hear those words, “Come up here!” Then we believers who are alive on the earth will be caught up together to meet w/the Lord & our loved ones in Christ who’ve gone before us in the air & thus we shall always be w/the Lord, Amen?!

#2 I want to say this, those who say that the word “rapture” doesn’t appear in the bible, they’re right.

It's translated from the Greek "Harpazo" which we see here in Vs 17 as the words "caught up", the word rapture comes from the latin vulgate "raeptius" (if I say it correctly) eventually brought into the English language as rapture. But the Greek word is harpazo & it means to "take forcefully" or "snatch away violently" it's a word that speaks of something happening instantly/suddenly.

#3 We need to see something here & that is this: the doctrine of the rapture of the church is supposed to be something that *comforts* us, not *concerns* us. If the rapture was supposed to take place ½ through the trib or for that matter at the end, how would that be *comforting*. "Prepare to go underground, avoid the anti-christ, be-beheaded, try not to starve, flee for your life! However if you live through it all I'll call you up just before we come down..." Well, that's not real comforting... I'd rather die now than be subject to all of that.

Understand that the idea of the rapture is not foreign to the scriptures at all, either in "type" or in plain pictures & stated in scripture.

If you've been hanging out there in 1 Thess, keep turning to the left, go to **1st Cor 15** (Vs 50-53). What is he talking about, "the dead shall be raised (that is given their resurrection bodies) & *we shall be changed*; in the moment in the twinkling of an eye when the trumpet sounds"? He's talking about the rapture. It's all over the bible. The idea of the rapture is not at all foreign to scriptures.

Another reason we believe in a "pre-trib" rapture is that we read (again in 1 Thess) **"For God did not appoint us to wrath but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,"**² As a matter of fact when Jesus was speaking about the great tribulation and warning of the times that would try the earth He said, **"Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man."**³ Question: if you're going *through* it, how can you escape *from* it & stand before the Lord in His presence? The way of escape is the rapture; even as Jesus said to the church of Philadelphia, **"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."**⁴

² The New King James Version. 1982 (1 Th 5:9). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

³ The New King James Version. 1982 (Lk 21:36). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁴ The New King James Version. 1982 (Re 3:10). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

“But didn’t Jesus say that in this world we’d have tribulation?” Yes, but here’s the distinction, the tribulation we undergo currently results from the world, our flesh, or satanic opposition. The tribulation we’re talking about in the book of Rev comes from God.

Rev 6:16 (among other places) make that very clear. God will not pour out His wrath upon His children, because we haven’t been appointed to His wrath but to obtain salvation through our Lord J.C.

We see the rapture pictured in the OT in a few places. People say, “Well, Noah was a believer & he was subject to the flood, even so the church will be sustained through the tribulation.” However Noah isn’t a picture of the church, he’s a picture of Israel whom the bible makes clear *will* go through the tribulation, God will revive them & use them greatly during that time as we’ll see later on in the book of Rev. You’ve got to back up, the flood comes in Gen Ch 7, but guess what happens in Gen Ch 5? We read these words; *“And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.”*⁵ Enoch becomes a type of the church who is taken away, then judgment comes. BTW guess what the word “took” means? “Seized, snatched up, or carried away”, he was raptured...

Shadrach-Meshach & Abed-Nego going through the fire (Israel), Daniel mysteriously missing (the church); Peter uses Lot as an illustration of how God is able to deliver the righteous while reserving the wicked for judgment, you guys time fails me to teach you exhaustively about how conclusively the scriptures develop the doctrine of the rapture (& I believe) support a pre-trib position.

The pre-trib position is the only one that keeps us looking for Jesus. Jesus said we’re to watch & be ready because we don’t know the day or the hour in which He’ll come for us. Yet, if I’m anything other than Pre-trib I’m not looking for J.C., I’m thinking I got time because I haven’t seen the temple rebuilt, the A.C. isn’t in power, we’re not yet a one world order. But if I think I could be called out & called up any moment; then I’m on the edge preparing my heart to meet Jesus. Which begs the question doesn’t it? Are *you* ready to meet Jesus? I pray that you are, & if you’re not before we’re finished today I’ll give you the opportunity to make sure that you are.

I love the power & the authority of word of the Lord. Notice the transition between the 1st 2 Vs. John heard the Lord’s voice clearly, w/authority saying, “Come up here” & what happened? Did he say, “You know, that makes me a little nervous I think I’ll stay right here”?

⁵ The New King James Version. 1982 (Ge 5:24). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

No way, Jesus called & his spirit *instantly/immediately* was stationed in heaven. I can't wait to be changed w/immediacy, instantaneously & be standing before the Lord.

Vs 2

Do you ever wonder what you're going to see when you get to heaven? What is it that immediately grabbed John's attention when he stood there in heaven? Streets of gold? Pearly gates? Majestic mansions or angels everywhere? No, as awesome as those things are believe me when I tell you that they pale in comparison to what it is that will grab your attention & seize your heart when you get to heaven. John says it like this, "and behold, a throne *set* in heaven." It's *set*, the idea is that it's fixed; it's solidly established & not going anywhere. But more than that it's an *occupied* throne, One sat *on* the throne; it's the centerpiece of heaven, everything else is described in relation to *this* throne (the word throne is used some 14x's in Ch 4 alone).

Here's the point: God is still on the throne, He is sovereign & high above the affairs of man, the affairs of the nations; God is on the throne, He is in control, He reigns from heaven sovereignly & will judge the nations righteously.

Atheism/materialism says there is no throne, no seat of authority that man will have to answer to. Humanism says there is a throne but man sits upon it. Essentially it seems to me that man can't live w/out the concept of a throne; if he seeks to *dethrone* God then he will seek to *enthron*e himself, or perhaps a political leader or their favorite musician or celebrity.

But there is a throne & God Himself occupies it; & John's attention is immediately arrested when he stands in heaven; here's how he explains what he sees...

Vs 3

Now here's where John allows a bit of interpretive license; he's not saying he saw a jasper or sardius; nor does he describe a distinct form so as to point out any shape or dimension or likeness. But he's speaking here of the effulgence, the brilliant radiance; & outshining of God. He notes 2 colors in particular, jasper (not like our modern jasper) probably like unto our modern diamond, later on we'll read where he says that jasper is clear like crystal; & then the equivalent of what would be a deep ruby red.

People speculate on what the colors may mean, do they speak of God's holiness & God's wrath? Do they speak of the glory of the empty tomb & the shed blood, the redeeming love of God? Do they point to the 1st & last stone on the breastplate of the high priest? There's no way to know for sure; but I love the idea of the holiness of God; mingled w/the redeeming love of God shining forth from the heart of God upon the throne.

Then surrounding the throne is a deep emerald green light forming a complete rainbow around the throne. So we have these brilliant white & deep ruby & emerald colors coming forth from God upon the throne & surrounding the throne.

Of course the rainbow reminds of the covenant God made w/man to never flood the earth again, it's an emblem of His mercy; His commitment to His covenant.

So see the scene; around this setting of sovereignty, power, authority & glory God has placed a reminder of His mercy that He allows to temper (if you will) His sovereignty.

However God has entered into an even greater covenant of grace & mercy w/man. You see typically a rainbow appears after a storm, here it appears *before* the storm; a reminder of God's mercy even in judgment. The storm of God's judgment is coming; but God has entered into a covenant w/man through the shed blood of J.C. If you will turn from your sin; believe in the Lord J.C. receive Him into your heart & into your life; if you will open the door of your heart to Jesus, He will open the door of heaven to you. There's coming a day when Jesus will call us out & call us up, are you rapture ready? I pray that you are...

Prayer Points:

God Your word is so good, so clear, so direct. We thank You for Your faithfulness to urge us unto righteousness; holiness & intimacy w/You. We are eager to hear the trumpet sound, to get the clarion call to meet w/You in the air. We praise You God that You are on the throne & You are in control; & we thank You for Your mercy; strengthen our inner man that we might live for You whole-heartedly.

Are you rapture ready? Ready to be caught up to meet the Lord in the air? In Christ be in you than you can answer w/a resounding "Yes". If you've not *received* Christ than you're not ready to stand *before* Christ. So the opportunity is before you now to turn from your sin, to trust in Jesus & receive new life in Him. If you're ready to open the door of your heart to Him, He's ready to open the door of heaven to you; He calls us to make a decision; you need to be intentional in your decision to trust J.C. are you ready today?