

“The Rapture?”

(Revelation 4:1-4)

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I. Introduction

A. Trying to describe 2007 to Ben Franklin

1. Airplanes
2. Automobile
3. Computers
4. Satellites
5. Lasers
6. Men on the moon
7. Television
8. Microwave ovens
9. Automated teller machines
10. Cell phones

B. Trying to describe Heaven

1. John gets a peak into Heaven
 - a. (Rev. 4:1) *“After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven”*
2. Tries to describe the Physical Layout
 - a. The Crystal Sea
 - b. The New Jerusalem

- c. The Tree of Life
- 3. Tries to describe the other residents of heaven
 - a. Cherubim
 - b. Seraphim
 - c. The Living Creatures
 - d. Angels
 - e. The animals
- 4. He tries to describe God and His throne room
 - a. Words fail to do justice

C. We are about to move from earth to Heaven

- 1. Will boggle the mind
- 2. Will only scratch the surface

II. Review

A. The outline in Revelation 1:19

“Write, therefore,

1. Chapter 1 *“what you have seen”*

2. Chapters 2 & 3 *“what is now”*

*the seven churches

3. Chapters 4-22 *“what will take place later”*

*after the church age

B. Chapter 4 marks the beginning of that 3rd division

- 1. Chapters 4 & 5 serve as a glorious preface
 - a. To encourage God’s people

- b. The vision of the glorified Christ walking among the churches on earth is followed by a vision of the Court of Heaven.
 - c. A breathtaking glimpse of Heaven
 - d. Watching Christ assume the throne
 - e. Angels, cherubim, seraphim and living creatures
 - f. As Christ prepares to return and take the earth back
2. Chapters 6 – 19 describe that 7 year period we called the Tribulation
- a. The 7-year period immediately preceding the return of Christ

C. But first....the removal of the true church

1. Chapter 3 closes with the church on earth
- a. Rev. 3:22 “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”
 - b. The rest of the book he says, “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says.”
2. It appears that when Chapter 4 opens...the true church is in Heaven
- a. What happened....and when?
 - b. Is this the “Rapture?”

III. Text

A. “*After this*”.....v.1

1. After John’s vision of the seven churches in ch. 2 & 3
2. ***“After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven. And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, ‘Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this’”v.1***
- a. After the “Church Age”
 - b. The mystery of the Church age
 - 1. Never fully understood in the O.T.

2. Revealed by God in N.T. times
3. The Jews and Gentiles saved in one body
 - a. After Israel's formal rejection
- c. Hinted at in Daniel
- d. The mystery

(25) I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. (26) And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written:" (Romans 11:25-26)

B. John sees the Throne of God....v.2-3

1. *"At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it".....v.2*
2. He describes the one sitting on the throne.....v.3
 - a. *"And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian. A rainbow resembling an emerald, encircled the throne.".....v.3*
 1. Like a jasper
 - Diamond
 2. Like a "carnelian" (or "sardius")
 - Ruby
 3. God!
3. May be a reference to the Breastplate of Righteousness
 - a. Worn by High Priest
 - b. Had 12 jewels....one for each of the 12 tribes
 1. 1st stone = jasper (diamond)
 - a. For Reuben – the firstborn

2. Last stone = carnelian (ruby)

a. For Benjamin – the lastborn

c. Note—

--Reuben means – “Behold a son”

--Benjamin means – “A son at my right hand”

d. Picture of God’s son sitting at his right hand

3. The Rainbow.....v.3

a. Encircled the throne

b. A sign of God’s faithfulness

c. Assurance of no more judgment

C. The 24 Thrones and Elders....v.4

1. 24 thrones surrounding God’s throne

a. *“Surrounding the throne were 24 other thrones, and seated on them were 24 elders. They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads.”....v.4*

2. Who are these 24 elders?

a. Angelic beings?

b. Cherubim?

c. Seraphim?

d. The Church as represented by 24 elders?

3. Why these are most likely saints from the church age

a. *The 24 Elders can’t be angels*

1. Angels are never said to occupy thrones

a. They stand in god’s service

2. Angels are never crowned
3. Angels are never called “elders”
4. Angels weren’t purchased by the blood of the Lamb
 - a. Rev. 5:9 The same elders say, “You were slain and purchased us for God with your blood.”

b. The Church on the other hand-

1. Is instructed to work for the crowns

- (Rev. 2:10) "Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life." (Stephanos)
- (Rev. 3:11) "Behold, I come quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown." (Stephanos)

2. Is promised thrones

- Jesus promised the Apostles
- (Mt. 19:28) "You who have followed me will sit on 12 thrones"

3. Is told it...not angels...will carry out judgment

1. We will even judge the angels

4. Is led by individuals called “Elders”

- The theme of I Tim 3
- Key title for leaders of the Church after the Apostles

5. Is pictured as dressed in white

6. Keeps appearing in Heaven during the Tribulation

4. It is likely that the believers of the church age will not go through the tribulation
 - a. The “pre-tribulation rapture”
 - b. “Raptured” to heaven before the great tribulation

- c. Can't be dogmatic
 - 1. Good people with other views
- d. I could be wrong however it appears to be the consistent position
- e. But positive we will leave prior to what is termed the "*wrath of God*"

III. Why it is likely the Church will not go through the Tribulation

1. The PRESENCE of the true church in Heaven during the Tribulation

- a. The Church is mentioned 19 times on earth in chapters 1, 2, 3
- b. Then it stops cold!
 - 1. Only mentioned in Rev. 22:16
 - a. Summary of purpose of Revelation
- c. Closed each address to the 7 Churches with:
 - 1. "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches..."
- d. Yet Rev. 13:9 says: "if any has an ear, let him hear!" Period!
 - 1. No longer adds "what the Spirit says to the Church"
 - a. Because they are in Heaven!
 - 2. The remaining church on earth is viewed as apostate
- e. We keep spotting church in Heaven during the Tribulation
 - 1. Saints weeping before the throne of God during Tribulation
 - 2. The presence of the whole church in Rev. 19:7
 - a. The marriage of the Lamb and His Bride
 - b. The "church" is called the Bride of Christ? (Eph. 5:25)
 - c. Wedding ceremony is *completed during* Tribulation!

3. The church returns with Christ in Rev. 19:14

2. The PERSONALITY of the Tribulation is Jewish

a. A key purpose of the Tribulation is to restore Israel spiritually

1. The Church grafted in

(Rom. 11:19-20)--"***You will say then, 'Branches were broken off that I might be grafted in.'***" ²⁰ ***Well said. Because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith. Do not be haughty, but fear.***"

2. God has not given up on Israel

(Rom. 11:25-26)--"***For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that hardening in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.***" ²⁶ ***And so all Israel will be saved,...***"

3. The O.T. consistently prophesies the physical and spiritual restoration of Israel

a. Physical

- Zechariah 12:2-9
- Why Israel was re-established in 1948 (May 14)

b. Spiritual

- (Zech. 12:10)-"***And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they have pierced; they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn.***"
- Will happen during the tribulation

4. The Tribulation is called the "Time of Jacob's trouble" (Jer. 30:7)

a. Jacob was called "Israel" by God

3. The PUNISHMENT of the unrighteous during the Tribulation

a. The Book of Revelation reeks of judgment

1. Vials-Seals-Trumpets
2. The unsaved of-
 - a. Israel
 - b. The World
3. Revelation
 - a. unparalleled destruction
- b. Yet, God's promise for the Church?
 1. (Rev. 3:10) *"I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on earth."*
 2. (I Thes. 5:1-11)
 - a. Presents the horrors of the coming day of the Lord
 - b. But to the believers...true Church?

(v. 8)-"But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation. 9 For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. (v. 11) Therefore comfort each other!"
- d. There is no reason for the true Church to be there
 1. Not to be punished
 2. Evangelism done by the 144,000 Jewish evangelists

4. The PECULIARITIES of the Rapture and 2nd Coming

- a. The Bible talks of two distinct returns
 1. Rapture or Translation of believers
 3. The Second Advent or glorious appearing
- b. At least a dozen differences:

- (1) The Rapture entails the removal of all believers, while the Second Coming entails the appearing of the Son.
- (2) The Rapture sees the saints caught up into the air, and in the Second Coming He returns to the earth.
- (3) In the Rapture Christ comes to claim a bride, but in the Second Coming He returns with the bride.
- (4) The Rapture results in the removal of the church and the inception of the tribulation, and the Second Coming results in the establishment of the millennial kingdom.
- (5) The Rapture could occur at any time, while the Second Coming is preceded by a multitude of signs.
- (6) The Rapture brings a message of comfort, while the Second Coming is accompanied by a message of judgment.
- (7) The Rapture is related to the program for the church, while the Second Coming is related to the program for Israel and the world.
- (9) The Rapture leaves creation unchanged, while the Second Coming brings dramatic changes in creation.
- (10) The Rapture is said to take place before the day of wrath, but the Second Coming follows it.
- (11) The Rapture is for believers only, but the Second coming has its effect on all men.
- (12) The expectation of the church at the Rapture is to be taken into the Lord's presence, while the expectation of Israel at the Second Coming is to be taken into the kingdom.

5. The PROMISES made to Israel and to the Church

- a. Separate and distinct
- b. Walvoord: ****skip****
 - (1) **The extent of Biblical revelation:** Israel—nearly four-fifths of the Bible; Church—about one-fifth.
 - (2) **The Divine purpose:** Israel—the earthly promises in the covenants; Church—the heavenly promises in the gospel.

- (3) **The seed of Abraham:** Israel—the physical seed, of whom some become a spiritual seed; Church—a spiritual seed.
- (4) **Birth:** Israel—physical birth that produces a relationship; Church—spiritual birth that brings relationship.
- (5) **Headship:** Israel—Abraham; Church—Christ.
- (6) **Covenants:** Israel—Abrahamic and all the following covenants; Church—indirectly related to the Abrahamic and new covenants;
- (7) **Nationality:** Israel—one nation; Church—from all nations.
- (8) **Divine dealing:** Israel—national and individual; Church—individual only.
- (9) **Dispensations:** Israel—seen in all ages from Abraham; Church—seen only in this present age.
- (10) **Ministry:** Israel—no missionary activity and no gospel to preach; Church—a commission to fulfill.
- (11) **The death of Christ:** Israel—guilty nationally, to be saved by it; Church—perfectly saved by it now.
- (12) **The Father:** Israel—by a peculiar relationship God was Father to the nation; Church—we are related individually to God as Father.
- (13) **Christ:** Israel—Messiah, Immanuel, King; Church—Savior, Lord, Bridegroom, Head.
- (14) **The Holy Spirit:** Israel—came upon some temporarily; Church—indwells all.
- (15) **Governing principle:** Israel—Mosaic law system; Church—grace system.
- (16) **Divine enablement:** Israel—in power and glory for judgment; Church—to receive us to Himself.
- (19) **Position:** Israel—a servant; Church—members of the family.
- (20) **Christ's earthly reign:** Israel—subjects; Church—co-reigners.
- (21) **Priesthood:** Israel—had a priesthood; Church—is a priesthood.
- (22) **Marriage:** Israel—unfaithful wife; Church—bride.

(23) **Judgments:** Israel—must face judgment; Church—delivered from all judgments.

(24) **Positions in eternity:** Israel—spirits of just men made perfect in the new earth; Church—church of the firstborn in the new heavens.

6. *The PERFORMANCE of the Marriage Ceremony*

1. Read Revelation 19:7-10
2. Wife?
 - a. The Church (Ephesians 5:25-27)
3. Garments?
 - a. Fine linen, clean and bright
4. When does it take place?
 - a. When the bride is ready
 - b. Weddings I've done
5. Bride is the Church
6. Prior to the 2nd Coming of Jesus Christ
 - a. Read Rev. 19:11-16
 - b. The Word of God v. 13?
 - Jesus
 - c. The Armies of Heaven
 - Clothed in fine linen, white and clean
 - The Church
 - d. After the marriage ceremony

7. *The PARACLETE'S removal*

- a. The Holy Spirit is called the "paraclete"

1. "the Comforter"
2. (John 14:16)-As Jesus prepared to leave
 - Gave the Church power!
 - *"And I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever..."*
3. (John 14:26)-*"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you."*
 - How they wrote the N.T.
4. The Holy Spirit came at Pentecost
 - Power for the Church
5. Each is baptized by the Holy Spirit
6. Special gifts
7. Bodies are Temple of the Holy Spirit
8. To be filled by the Holy Spirit

b. The Restrainer

1. The Son of Perdition will not be revealed until *the Restrainer* is taken out of the way....II Thess. 2:1-8
3. Tribulation won't begin until the Restrainer is taken out of the way
3. When and how removed?
 - a. His temple is the bodies of the Saints of the Church Age
 - c. What happens when they are raptured?
 - The Restrainer "restrains" the evil one no more
 - Hell on earth
 - The Tribulation begins

8. *The PERPLEXITY and assurance of the Thessalonian believers*

- a. The concern of the Thessalonian Christians
 - 1. Worried about the Saints who had already died
 - 2. Feared they would miss the Rapture
- b. The Assurance of deliverance
 - 1. The dead in Christ would rise first
 - a. Called the “rapture”
 - 2. I Thes. 4:13-18

(13) Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. (14) We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. (15) According to the Lord’s own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. (16) For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. (17) After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. (18) Therefore encourage each other with these words.

- 3. Imminency
 - a. Could happen at any time!
 - b. Comfort one another