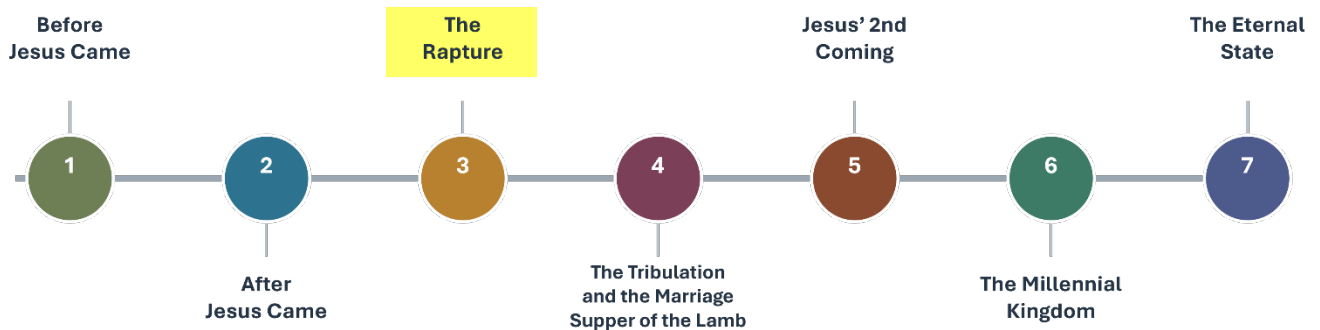


So far in this series we have looked at **1)** where one who had put their faith in God before Jesus came then went (the location) when their body died. And the state of the **soul** and **body** also. **2)** Then we looked at these same three key areas for those whose bodies died after Jesus came. **3)** And last week we began to look at the same three pieces when the rapture of the church occurs (something which has not happened yet and is the next big event on the prophetic calendar).



3. THE RAPTURE (everything from here forward is future)

Last time we covered the four main views by which people interpret the book of **Revelation** (it's singular because it's the Revelation of Jesus Christ [1:1], not a series of visions or prophecies such as in **Zech**). You can go back and review that if you missed it last time. But for clarity, we take the **Futurist** view. Meaning we see all of **Ch. 4–22** as future events with a more **literal** interpretation.

And we also listed the chapters of Revelation that speak to this subject of heaven. Which are as follows.

- **Ch. 4–5** The rapture of the church and the scene in heaven right afterward (today's subject).
- **Ch. 19** The rejoicing in heaven, followed by **the 2nd coming** of Jesus to the earth for judgment.
- **Ch. 20** Satan bound 1,000 years, Jesus reigns with the saints **1,000 years**, the Great White Throne judgment after the 1,000 years ends.
- **Ch. 21–22** The New Heavens and the New Earth—**eternal Heaven**.

All of these speak about the location and the state of our souls and bodies.

And now we are going to quickly review the three divisions of the book of Revelation as given to us in **Rev. 1:19**, where John is instructed, *“Write **1)** the things which you have seen, **2)** and the things which are, **3)** and the things which will take place after this (numbering added).”* Many have referred to this as the divine outline, and I agree. So let's define each just a little bit more.

- We believe *“the things which you have seen”* speaks to **Ch. 1**. And because it's about Jesus (**Rev. 1:1**), this speaks of the life, ministry, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus to take His rightful place.
- *The things which are* speak to what is recorded in **Ch. 2–3**. This is known as the church age or the age of grace (not focal in this study). It started in **Acts 2** and will come to an end at the rapture.
- *And the things which will take place after this* is covered in **Ch. 4–22**. This immediately takes us into the scene in heaven, which brings us to the starting point of the tribulation period, then takes us through and past the millennial kingdom, and into eternity!

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And you should also know this book (1:3) is the only one that comes with a promise of blessing for those who read, hear, and keep the things written in this book.

- And since the vast majority of this book is waiting to be fulfilled, *it should tell us that God wants us to look into this, know what He has said, and understand it.* So we are right where He wants us to be!
- And that includes one of the most comprehensive looks into the scene in heaven immediately after the rapture, the institution of the millennial kingdom, and of the eternal state, that the Bible gives.

Now let's just jump in at Ch. 4:1. But please do understand that since this is a study on heaven, I am not going to draw out every last piece found in this book or these chapters (as if anyone could). But I must say the chapters we will cover sure do contain a lot that is relevant to heaven. So much so that just these first two (Rev. Ch. 4–5) are going to take us multiple studies just to get through. And afterward we will come back to discuss other aspects as to why I believe only a pretribulation rapture really makes sense in light of the rest of the Bible and church history.

4:1 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."

Now, I hope you immediately recognized the phrases "*After these things*" and "*after this*", because this is the opening of the third of the three divisions we just spoke about from 1:19.

- And this third division, *the things which will take place after this* begin with **the rapture** of the church.

In the first verse of this final division of the book, John hears this voice which says, "*Come up here*". And folks, I believe with all of my heart this is what we will one day hear from the Lord if we do not die bodily before the rapture of the church.

- For you see, from this point forward in the book, **the church is not mentioned again**, although in Ch. 1–3 it was mentioned 19 times. Instead, when we get to Ch. 19 thru to the end (which covers the millennial kingdom and then the eternal heaven), we are identified as 1) "*the bride*" (19:7), 2) "*priests of God*" (20:6), 3) "*His people*" (21:3), 4) "*My son*" (21:7), 5) and His "*servants*" who "*see His face*" (22:3–4). Something significant will have happened!
- The church age is over at this point, **because we are now in heaven with Jesus and all the others who have ever died in faith up to this point in time.**
- And this reality is also found in verses such as 1 Cor. 15:51–52, where Paul tells us, "*Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep (die bodily), but we shall all be changed (take on our glorified bodies)—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 (speaking of those whose souls are already in heaven at this time and awaiting the resurrection of their bodies), and we shall be changed.*" Then 1 Thes. 4:17, "*Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air (not on the earth like will be the case in the 2nd coming—this is the rapture). And thus we shall always be with the Lord (emphasis added).*" Do you understand that this is the reunification so many have been waiting and longing for? **This is that day!**

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Now for you students of prophecy, this means the last 7-year period, where God uses Israel for the final countdown to the 2nd Coming of Jesus, and for reaching the lost world (as noted in [Dan. 9:24–27](#)), will now be occurring on earth while we are in heaven.

- And because this is so important, let me give a quick rundown of the unfolding of the coming events one more time; [1](#) the church age (actually we are in this one currently), [2](#) the rapture (next on the menu), [3](#) the 7 year tribulation on the earth with the marriage supper of the Lamb in heaven, [4](#) the Second Coming of Jesus, [5](#) the millennial kingdom, [6](#) the great white throne judgment (that's not for the believer), [7](#) and finally the eternal heaven (state).
- And I believe [Ch. 4–5](#) begins with the rapture, meaning the tribulation is coming for those who have rejected Jesus' gift of grace. This isn't really part of this study, but it's something to take to heart.

And we should also see this is an invitation by God for John to peer into the heavenly realm so that John can share it with us ([Rev. 22:10](#)—*Do not seal...*). He wants us to know!

- So it bears saying that all of [Ch. 4–5](#) are conducted in heaven above, being this is the focus of this series.
- And if we were to then continue into [Ch. 6](#) (which we are not going to do), going forward we would be invited to see what is to come upon the earth while we are with Jesus above—which is all still future.

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.

Now this is cool stuff, for John is before the throne of God the Father in heaven and trying to describe in earthly terms what he is experiencing. That's why he uses the word “*like*” here, because it's unlike anything you and I have ever seen!

- Now from what we know, the *jasper* described here is clear like a diamond. The *sardius* stone is opaque and red in color. And an *emerald* is opaque and green in color. Yet these are not the actual stones, but the appearance of God the Father is *like* them, for the Bible tells us *God is Spirit...* ([John 4:24](#)).
- Therefore, John cannot describe Him with human attributes—He is so much more than that!
- And this makes sense because throughout the Bible God the Father has been described by His brightness, radiance, and His being the source of light ([Psa. 104:2](#), [Hab. 3:4](#), [Rev. 21:23](#)).

Now, most know how music affects us, but it's not the only thing which can move us mightily; *light is another that is equal to music and often underappreciated.*

- The sources and hues of light we see through and in, can change the way we view everything. For example, there are glasses made to see live plant tissue, and black light reveals otherwise hidden things.
- And when we see God the Father, we will rub our eyes to make sure we're not dreaming, because we have never seen anything like Him before. And imagine what else His radiance will reveal to us then.
- We will see glory beyond comparison to anything we could ever know down here. And without glasses.

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And right off the bat this is at least a starting piece to our understanding of what God the Father will look like in heaven. Can I fully grasp it right now? No. But I sure have enough to work with for the time being. Because God wants us to know.

⁴ Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads.

There are several thoughts on who these 24 elders are. Some say they are angels, some say they are the tribulation saints (those who come to faith in Jesus during the tribulation). But **neither** of those adds up when we keep reading this letter.

- [Ch. 7:11](#) makes it clear they are **not angels**, because *the elders* are specifically listed there, in addition to **ALL the angels** and **the 4 living creatures** (which we will be introduced to us in [Rev. 4:6–8](#)).
- [Ch. 7:9](#) makes it clear they are **not the tribulation saints**, identifying a group there that is clothed in white robes with palm branches in their hands. And we know this for certain because one of *the elders* asked John, “*Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?*”, and so John answered, “*you know*”. And then *the elder* tells him, “*These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb*” ([Rev. 7:13–14](#)).
- And who is having this dialog with John? One of *the elders*, and as we find here ([4:4](#)), the elders are already in heaven before the tribulation begins!

Now, further evidence of this is the kind of crown mentioned here, for the Greek word for what’s on the heads of these **24 elders** is *stephanos*, which is not a symbol of royalty, but **the crown given as a prize or reward**.

- And while there is no mention anywhere in the Bible of angels receiving crowns, there are **5 specific crowns listed that the follower of Jesus could receive** (go back to our teaching in [1 Cor. 9:24–25](#) [teaching #11 in that series] if you want more on this).
- And what we see here is the church has already received the crowns at the awards stand ([2 Tim. 4:7–8](#)).
- These 24 elders represent the church in heaven—meaning they are no longer on the earth before the seals of the tribulation begin to be opened in [Ch. 5](#)!

⁵ And from the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices. Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.

Here we find **God the Father** and **God the Holy Spirit** together. And when we get to [Ch. 5:6](#), we will see **Jesus** is there also! **Can you imagine yourself being there with all three persons of the Godhead at once?**

- But what’s ominous here is represented by the *lightnings, thunderings, and voices* which are coming from the Father’s throne. For as **Wiersbe** notes “these are storm signals that indicate a judgment is coming”. But don’t worry, that storm isn’t going to be in heaven, where we will be, but upon the earth.
- As the letter continues into the tribulation ([Ch. 6–19](#)), we can find this same description of “*noises, thunderings, lightning*”, and **added to them, devastating “earthquakes”** ([8:5](#) & [16:18](#)). Keep this in mind for later because this tells us this is the wrath of God and not of antichrist or mankind (see also [1 Thes. 5:9](#)). This is relevant to the reality of the rapture. And we’ll come back to it in a few weeks.

^{6a} Before the throne there was a sea of glass, like crystal.

McGee nails it again here saying “This placid sea indicates the position of rest to which the church has come. No longer is she the victim of the storms of life. No longer is she out there on the tossing sea”. Amen!!!

- This alone should make each and every one of us long for heaven. I sure do. I can't imagine a place where nothing will ever take us by surprise in a bad way. A place where rest is real because there is no need to have contingency plans, recovery periods, or sympathy cards. The storms are gone forever at this point.
- And might I just add this is a place where some confusion also exists. You see there have been people in heaven above now (whose bodies have not yet been resurrected) who have not yet come to this event either. I say this because some have said to me, "I don't want to spend all eternity just singing". That's good, because you won't be.
- Later we will hear about the gates of the city being open so everyone can go out and then come back in. That sounds a lot to me like venturing out to explore what God has created. It sounds a lot to me like the making of all kinds of experiences in a place where sin can never spoil an event or special moment again.

But as we come back to this topic next week (and for a few more weeks after that), we are going to see that on the day we are raptured, along with the saints whose bodies are waiting to rise incorruptible, **there is going to be a time of worship that not one person who is there will want to come to an end.**

- Of course our worship will go on forever and ever. But just as it is now, that worship will take on many different forms. **1)** When you gaze upon the created handiwork of God you are worshipping. **2)** When you delight in the tastes, texture, color, and satisfaction of the things He's provided us to eat, you are worshipping. **3)** When you love and serve the others who God has also made in His image, you are worshipping.
- You will be worshipping for all eternity, but you will not be just standing in one place singing. This is one of the big mistakes people make in Bible interpretation when it comes to heaven. **They fail to see this as one aspect of heaven that occurs during the seven years we're in Heaven.** Because once that time is over, we are returning with King Jesus to the earth where He will rule and reign a thousand years ([Zech. 8:3](#), [Rev. 20:4-6](#)).
- [Zech. 8](#) alone tells us in that time "*Old men and women shall again sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each one with a staff in his hand because of old age* (so we know this is not the eternal state because people born in the millennium are still aging). *The streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets* (of course they could be 100 years old 😊 [[Isa. 65:20](#)])." And we hear of gardens and vines growing (that alludes to the fact there will be eating), and people of different nationalities going in and out of Jerusalem (which tells us we won't be standing at the throne perpetually singing worship songs).

Let me say it once again, as we continue to read through these chapters in [Revelation](#) that foretell of the gathering together to worship Him following the rapture. After having experienced it, you may wish that we just stayed there singing forever!

CROSS REFERENCES

Rev 1:1 NKJV – The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants--things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John,

Rev 1:3 NKJV – Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near.

Rev 19:7 NKJV – "Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready."

Rev 21:3 NKJV – And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.

Rev 21:7 NKJV – "He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son.

Rev 22:3–4 NKJV – (3) And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. (4) They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads.

Dan 9:24–27 NKJV – (24) "Seventy weeks are determined For your people and for your holy city, To finish the transgression, To make an end of sins, To make reconciliation for iniquity, To bring in everlasting righteousness, To seal up vision and prophecy, And to anoint the Most Holy. (25) "Know therefore and understand, That from the going forth of the command To restore and build Jerusalem Until Messiah the Prince, There shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; The street shall be built again, and the wall, Even in troublesome times. (26) "And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; And the people of the prince who is to come Shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it shall be with a flood, And till the end of the war desolations are determined. (27) Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; But in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, Even until the consummation, which is determined, Is poured out on the desolate."

Rev 22:10 NKJV – And he said to me, "Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand.

Jhn 4:24 NKJV – "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

Psa 104:2 NKJV – Who cover Yourself with light as with a garment, Who stretch out the heavens like a curtain.

Hab 3:4 NKJV – His brightness was like the light; He had rays flashing from His hand, And there His power was hidden.

Rev 21:23 NKJV – The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light.

Rev 7:11 NKJV – All the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God,

Rev 4:6–8 NKJV – (6) Before the throne there was a sea of glass, like crystal. And in the midst of the throne, and around the throne, were four living creatures full of eyes in front and in back. (7) The first living creature was like a lion, the second living creature like a calf, the third living creature had a face like a man, and the fourth living creature was like a flying eagle. (8) The four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!"

Rev 7:9 NKJV – After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands,

Rev 4:4 NKJV – Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads.

1Co 9:24–25 NKJV – (24) Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. (25) And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown.

2Ti 4:7–8 NKJV – (7) I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. (8) Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.

Rev 8:5 NKJV – Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and threw it to the earth. And there were noises, thunderings, lightnings, and an earthquake.

Rev 16:18 NKJV – And there were noises and thunderings and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such a mighty and great earthquake as had not occurred since men were on the earth.

1Th 5:9 NKJV – For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,

Zec 8:3 NKJV – "Thus says the LORD: 'I will return to Zion, And dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. Jerusalem shall be called the City of Truth, The Mountain of the LORD of hosts, The Holy Mountain.'

Rev 20:4–6 NKJV – (4) And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. (5) But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. (6) Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.

Isa 65:20 NKJV – "No more shall an infant from there live but a few days, Nor an old man who has not fulfilled his days; For the child shall die one hundred years old, But the sinner being one hundred years old shall be accursed.