

Revelation 4 - John Ascends to Heaven

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COURSE COMMENTARY



4:1 - Door to Heaven

- After these things

Meta tauta = "After these [things]." What things? The "things which are" ([Rev. 1:19](#)). We now begin the third part of the outline:

- 1) The *things which you have seen* (vision of glorified Christ, Chapter 1).
- 2) The *things which are* (chapters 2 and 3, letters to churches).
- 3) The *things which shall take place after this (these) [meta tauta]*.

- Come up here!

Typological parallels between this verse and the Rapture:

- 1) Like John, saints hear a verbal command ([1Th. 4:16](#)).
- 2) Like John, saints are transported to heaven ([John 14:1-3; 1Th. 4:17](#)).
- 3) Like John, those raptured are *in Christ*, members of the Church created on the Day of Pentecost ([1Cor. 12:13](#)).
- 4) John hears a voice as a trumpet. The saints hear a voice *and* a trumpet ([1Cor. 15:52; 1Th. 4:16](#)).
- 5) The command "Come up here!" also attends the resurrection of the two witnesses ([Rev. 11:12](#)).

The Rapture

- Is there a Rapture?

The term "rapture" is a biblical term -- from the *Latin Vulgate*. *Rapiemur* in the Latin is "we... shall be caught up," *harpazo* in the Greek.

- What is the Rapture?

Harpazo means to *snatch, seize, take suddenly and vehemently*. The catching away of the church prior to meeting Christ in the air and return with Him to heaven ([John 14:1-3; 1Cor. 15:51-52](#);).

Rapture vs. Second Coming

Contrasts Between Rapture and Second Coming

Rapture	Second Coming
Christ comes for His own (John 14:3; 1Th. 5:28; 2Th. 2:1).	Christ comes with His own (1Th. 3:13; Jude 1:14; Rev. 19:14).
Christ comes in the air (1Th. 4:17).	Christ comes to the earth (Zec. 14:4; Acts 1:11).

Tribulation begins (2Th. 2:6-9).	Millennial Kingdom begins (Rev. 20:1-7).
Saved are delivered from wrath (1Th. 1:10 ; 1Th. 5:9).	Unsaved experience the wrath of God (Rev. 6:12-17).
No signs precede the Rapture (1Th. 5:1-3).	Signs precede the Second Coming (Luke 21:11-15).
World is deceived (2Th. 2:3-12).	Satan is bound (Rev. 20:1-2).
Believers depart the earth (1Th. 4:15-17).	Unbelievers are taken away from the earth (Mat. 24:37-41).
Precedes the career of the man of sin (2Th. 2:1-3).	Terminates the career of the man of sin (Rev. 19:20).
All believers removed from the earth (1Th. 4:17).	Believers found on the earth (Mat. 25:31).

The Holy Spirit and the Rapture

- [The Body of Christ](#)

A unique spiritual organism created on the Day of Pentecost: the Church ([Mat. 16:18](#); [John 7:38-39](#); [Acts 1:4-8](#)). The Holy Spirit is omnipresent and has *always* ministered on the earth ([Gen. 1:2](#)), but not in the same way.

- [The Restrainer](#)

The church will be gathered prior to the revealing of the man of sin. The man of sin won't be revealed until the restrainer "is taken out of the way" ([2Th. 2:1-4](#)).

1) The restrainer is referred to using both masculine and neuter.

2) He was restraining in Paul's day and is *still* restraining today.

3) He is powerful enough to restrain spiritual powers of darkness on a global basis.

- [Salvation - Always of the Spirit](#)

Salvation has always been and will always be by being "born of the Spirit" ([John 3:5](#)). Yet the Holy Spirit "had not yet been given" prior to Pentecost ([John 7:38-39](#)). After the Rapture, the Holy Spirit will continue to regenerate people just as He did *before* He came on the Day of Pentecost.

Saved From God's Wrath

- [Is All Tribulation the Same?](#)

There are two distinct types of tribulation which occur:

1) General tribulation due to the curse, sin, the flesh, and the devil. ([Mat. 13:21](#); [Rom. 5:3](#)). All believers experience this tribulation which refines their character.

2) A unique time of tribulation which is the result of **God's Wrath** being poured on the *earth dwellers* ([Ps. 2:12](#); [6:16-17](#)). The church will not experience this time of wrath **from God** ([Rev. 3:10](#)).

- [Delivered from the Wrath to Come](#)

Believers are fully and completely saved from future judgment the *moment* they believe. Paul

speaks of a *future wrath* beyond reconciliation with God which believers are saved from ([Rom. 5:9-10; 1Th. 1:10; 1Th. 5:9](#)).

- **Timing of the Rapture**

Numerous lines of evidence indicate the church will be taken to the "Father's house" before the events which attend the 70th week of Daniel.

4:2 - In the Spirit

- **I was in the Spirit**

A similar experience to Ezekiel ([Eze. 1:3; 3:14; 8:3; 11:24; 37:1](#)) and Paul ([2Cor. 12:1-2](#)).

- **One on the throne**

God the Father, as seen by Daniel ([Dan. 7:9](#)), Ezekiel ([Eze. 1:26](#)), and Isaiah ([Isa. 6:2](#)).

4:3 - stones

- **precious stones**

Jasper may be a diamond. The last stone in the high priest's breastplate ([Ex. 28:20](#)). **Sardius** was the first stone in the high priest's breastplate ([Ex. 28:17](#)). Together, they denote "all Israel" or "first and last".

- **rainbow**

God's covenant with Noah never again to judge the earth by flood ([Gen. 9:13](#)). This time, judgment will be by *fire* ([2Pe. 3:5-7](#)).

4:4 - elders

- **twenty four elders**

There are two major views regarding their identity:

- 1) Angelic beings.
- 2) Redeemed human beings.

- **Angels or Redeemed Men?**

- 1) The term *elder* never is used of angels.
- 2) Angels are never said to wear crowns.
- 3) Angels are never said to sit on thrones--or even sit in God's presence.
- 4) Are they members of the redeemed ([Rev. 5:9](#)) ? Which textual variant is correct?

4:5 - Judgment Coming

- **lightnings, thunderings, and voices**

Hint at the power and magnificence of the Father, as at Sinai ([Ex. 19:16-18](#)). Forewarn of the impending judgment to follow ([Rev. 8:5; 10:3](#); etc.).

- **seven lamps**

The seven spirits of God. Their burning is an indication of judgment ([Mat. 3:11](#)) and zeal ([Acts](#)

2:3). See the lesson on [Revelation 1:4](#).

4:6 - Living Creatures

- [four living creatures](#)

Probably angelic beings of high order, such as cherubim or seraphim. Very similar to those seen by Ezekiel ([Eze. 1:5-22](#)).

Similarities: 1) they attend the throne; 2) they are winged; 3) aspects of their character represent a lion, ox (or calf), a man, and an eagle.

Differences: 1) Ezekiel's creatures have four wings, these have six (like Isaiah's,); 2) Ezekiel's creatures *each* had all four faces. Each *individual* creature has these characteristics here. 3) Ezekiel's creatures did not have multiple eyes like the wheels they attended did. These have many eyes.

4:6 - Four Faces

The Fourfold Gospel

Gospel	Portrait	Genealogy	Face	Camp (Num. 2)	The Branch
Matthew	King Messiah	From Abraham (Mat. 1:1)	Lion	Judah (East)	King (Jer. 23:5-6)
Mark	Lowly Servant	No Pedigree	Ox	Ephraim (West)	Servant (Zec. 3:8)
Luke	Son of Man	From Adam (Luke 3:23)	Man	Reuben (South)	Man (Zec. 6:12)
John	Son of God	From Eternity (John 1:1)	Eagle	Dan (North)	God (Isa. 4:2)

4:7-10 - Worship

- [six wings](#)

Ezekiel's creatures had four wings ([Eze. 1:11-12](#)), whereas Isaiah's seraphim had six ([Isa. 6:2-6](#)).

- [full of eyes](#)

An indication of great intelligence ([Eze. 1:18](#); [Dan. 7:8](#); [Dan. 7:20](#); [Rev. 1:14](#)).

- [Holy holy holy](#)

Worship is a major theme of this book which reveals God's sovereign control of the events about to transpire. Repetition may denote emphasis or reflect the Trinity.

- [Who was and is and is to come](#)

See lesson on [Revelation 1:4](#).

4:11 - The Creator

- **created all things**

God alone is the unique "uncaused cause." He alone is *independent*, all else is *dependent* upon Him. He alone is **Creator** all else **creature**.

- **were created**

Creation is *past tense!* It is not an ongoing process. God finished creation and rested ([Gen. 2:2-3; Ex. 20:11; Ex. 31:17](#)). Evolution is bankrupt on two counts:

- 1) Complexity cannot arise without intelligence.
- 2) Scripture precludes ongoing creation.

- **creation is tied to redemption**

The worship of the elders and living creatures emphasizes *creation* because it is the *creation* which God is about to redeem ([Rom. 8:18-22](#)) as the seals are loosed from the scroll in the next chapter.

For additional information on this topic, see the [commentary](#).