

2) Elders. These elders are also seen "around" the throne. Hot debate has centered on their identification. Several items are known about them. Notice:

a) There are 24. Although the term "elder" is used scores of times in the Bible, this figure seems to be significant. It is used of the porter-Levites (1 Chron. 26:17-19). It is found for the courses of the priests (1 Chron. 24:3-18). Zacharias comes into this course structure (Luke 1:5).

b) They are clothed in white. This color is used more than any other in this book of Revelation. It speaks of the clothing and undoubtedly of the imputed righteousness which they possess (Isa. 61:10). What they possess is not their own (Isa. 64:6).

c) They are crowned. This crown is the victor's crown and not the ruler's diadem. No one will receive a crown of this nature until after the Lord's return (2 Tim. 4:8).

Taking these facts, it appears that here is a company of persons who have a specific number, are righteous before God, and are now crowned. Keeping the distinctions between angels, Israel, Gentiles, and the church, it is right to interpret these 24 elders as being the church redeemed, crowned, and now sitting in heaven. They are the raptured church. They are not merely 24, but the entire course of king-priests are in view. The crowns speak of the rewards received. They are crowned before the seals are opened, hence, God's work with His own after the rapture is not something dragged out and judgmental in the ordinary sense.

Conclusion God has His plan of the ages. The current scene is known and described (chapters 1-3). What will take place when the present events have run their course is the rapture of the church (redeemed people placed into the body of Christ since Pentecost). A view of this group's enthronement and related events is recorded in this chapter. Since the Word of God is a trusted vehicle of God's revelation, believers can rejoice in the knowledge of what is to take place. Unbelievers need to take note and yield to the truth of their sinfulness and accept God's righteousness to be fit for the privilege to worship the Lord of Lords, Jesus Christ.

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

"Come Up Here"
Revelation 4:1-11

Introduction

1. The key verse for the outline of this book is 1:19. It indicates: a. What John saw, even the things which are (chapters 1-3). b. The things which shall be hereafter (4-22). The present chapter is the beginning of the second major section of the book.

2. Just as chapter 1 introduces chapters 2 and 3, so chapters 4 and 5 introduce the remaining portion of the book (4-22), particularly 4-19.

3. The whole position is now changed. It is all earthly in focus in the first three chapters. Now the scene moves to heaven (v. 1). How dramatic this is. When most look to earth for future events, the Bible clearly notes the opposite. Rather than the events of this place, the church has but one arena from which to gain its future: UP!

4. So, what does John record? Major items are clearly found in this chapter. Mark them well and benefit from them in spiritual growth:

1. DOOR OPENED v. 1.

The verb here is a perfect passive participle. The door is not moving at its own behest! God moves it. It is the door to allow believers into glory (rapture) and to see the events God will permit to take place (4-19). Other doors are mentioned in this book (3:8--witness; 3:20--fellowship). There are four openings in this book: here--God's personal involvement; 11:19--temple of heaven indicative of Israel; 15:5--tabernacle of testimonies which speak of God's judgments; 19:11--the great triumphal return of our Lord to earth. The big thing to get in all of this: God's Word is a great opening to those who will read it and believe it. We are given the Word to know (1 Cor. 2:12).

2. VOICE HEARD v. 2.

The fact that this is the "first" voice is no

suggestion that it is part of a series. Rather, it is a reference to the one already heard (1:10). There, however, it was heard on earth; here it comes from heaven. The sound is clear like a trumpet! God help us to respond to the clear voice from heaven and not to the rattle here below! What does the voice say? Listen:

a. Come up!

In the chronological order of the book, the meaning is obvious. This is the rapture of the church. John is the representative of a heavenly company and he is called to "come up here." Hence, the church will actually be in heaven following chapter three. To look aright at the remaining chapters of the book, you must be in heaven spiritually! This view of things fits in perfectly with the phrase "after these things."

b. I will show you!

The promise here is to the effect that God will reveal to John (and us!) what will take place following the rapture of the church. Remembering the key (1:19), it is obvious that what now occupies the heart of God is the time period between the rapture and the second coming to the earth (19:11). It is true that details might not be clear, but the broad outline of events is now being made known. The first scene is heaven itself (chapters 4, 5).

3. THRONE SET vv. 4-8a.

Three items are noteworthy here: 1) The scene is in heaven. There can be no doubt about this (vv. 1, 2). The believer, therefore, is allowed to look right into the very place of the Lord's abode. He views things from God's perspective and not from the earth. 2) John is in the Spirit. The verb should be rendered "become" in the Spirit. Hence, God again by His Spirit controls His servant in this matter of revelation. This, indeed, is the condition in which we must find ourselves if we are to understand the Word of God (1 Cor. 2:10-12). 3) The view of John is filled with the "throne." The imperfect verb shows that the throne is continually in the view of the seer. It is the throne which is the center of the vision. All eyes are there! Look:

a. On the throne vv. 2, 3.

The verb for "sit" is used without an expressed subject to refer to the Lord occupying the throne. This "One" on the throne is the triune eternal God Who still has His throne "set" in the heavens. He rules and reigns after the counsels of His own will. He is described further:

1) Like jasper. This word is used again (21:11, 18). The jasper known to us comes in a variety of colors (green, buff, red, tan), but it is impossible to see through it. This single feature suggests that the Bible jasper must be some other stone. Some think it is a diamond. More to the point is the fact that it is the first stone in the New Jerusalem foundation (21:11) and it was the last stone in the high priest's breastplate (Ex. 28:17-20). It speaks of unapproachable deity.

2) Like sardis. Only found in two places in the New Testament (here and 21:20). It was the 6th stone in the New Jerusalem and the first of the high priest's breastplate (Ex. 28). This is a deep red stone. The Hebrew term for Adam is the same as this word and it means "red." The picture is of the Lord's humanity. The two stones, therefore, speak of the God-Man in a very wonderful way. Further, the stones on the high priest's breastplate represent Reuben, the first, and Benjamin, the last. The former means "Behold a Son," and the latter, "Son of My right hand." Both relate to our Lord.

b. Round the throne

1) Rainbow. The Greek term used here means the rainbow is completely surrounding the throne. Hence, here is a full rainbow and not just half of one. Its color is a dominating green (emerald) and this connotes grace. Whilst the entire scene breathes with judgment, here is something which speaks of God's grace! The covenant with Noah is obviously in view here (Gen. 9). These days of judgment are foreshadowed by Noah (Matt. 24:37-41). What days? The days of the Great Tribulation! God keeps His covenants as the rainbow shows, but it must also be remembered that Noah was safe BEFORE the judgment took place (picture of the rapture).