

Revelation Notes Chap. 4

A Glimpse of Glory

Introduction

We have looked at the first three chapters of Revelation to date. We have seen a Vision of Christ in Chapter 1 and have looked at the seven (7) distinct letters to the churches in Chapters two (2) and three (3).

The first three (3) chapters have encompassed the surly bonds of earth but as we come to Chapter Four (4) the doors of heaven are opened and we are invited to take a glimpse.

Text and Commentary

Verse One

After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter.

Meta tauta (Grk) = after these things.

Thura (Grk) = a portal or entrance, i.e. a door or gate or an opening.

The phrase “after these things occurs twice in verse one. Its first use relates to John’s first vision of Christ and the address to the churches, whereas, its second occurrence relates directly to God’s chronology. (MacArthur, pp. 144-145).

“The Phrase is used throughout Revelation to mark the beginning of a new vision.... Its use marks an important transition in the book of Revelation from the church age (The things which are; 1:19), to the things that shall be hereafter.” (Ibid).

This phrase marks the transition from the church to heaven. The church is not mentioned once throughout chapters 4 – 19.

This is another reason that we believe that the church will not go through the Great Tribulation. Jesus told the Church at Philadelphia that he would not allow them to go through it and in Chapters 4-19 the church is never mentioned.

Idou (Grk) = behold, lo. It denotes a sense of amazement or awe.

“And the first voice which I heard...” This was none other than Jesus Christ, which was identified in 1:10: **“and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet.”**

The Invitation

“Come up hither and I will show you things which must be hereafter.”

The purpose of the invitation was to reveal to John things that would take place historically in the unraveling of events related to God’s judgment, the Great Tribulation and the Millennial Reign of Christ.

MacArthur points out that the central theme of John’s vision in this chapter is the Throne of God, since it is mentioned eleven times.

Verse Two

“And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne.”

Eutheos (Grk)= at once. The transition from the earthly scene to heaven was instantaneous.

To maintain the integrity of this verse one must deal honestly with what it says. The instant transition from earth to heaven was John, not the church. Some scholars use this verse to argue that this is talking about the Rapture of the church. In reality it involves John only, not the Church.

“I was in the Spirit...” means that John was transported spiritually by the Spirit of God. This was not some mystical fantasyland but to a real place which was breathtaking undoubtedly, hence John’s exclamation: “Behold”!

“A throne was set in heaven...”

The throne represents God’s Sovereignty and authority.

Keimai (Grk)= to lie, i.e., laying down the law or to stand, i.e., “of things put or set in any place, in ref. to which we often use “to stand”. (Thayer;s)

“One sat on the throne.” John does not identify whom this is but it is so obvious that one need not wonder or speculate. It is undoubtedly God. Remember that the throne represents God’s Sovereign Rule. ***This indeed would be comforting in light of the coming calamities upon humanity.***

Verse Three

“And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and *there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.*”

“And he that sat...” Compare Isa 6:1; I Kings 22:19; Psalms 47:8; Dan. 7:9-10

“Was to look upon like jasper and a sardine stone...”

Jasper is crystal clear and can be compared to a brilliant gleaming diamond. The Sardine stone was a brilliant flaming red like a ruby.

Thus the imagery here represents Gods shining glory. The blood red ruby may also reflect the wrath of God that is about to be poured out upon humanity.

MacArthur states: “John’s vision of God’s throne is not one of peace and comfort. Its flashing, glorious, splendorous magnificence reveals the terrors of God’s judgment.” p. 148.

“And there was a rainbow round about the throne...like unto an emerald.”

The rainbow represents the Covenant Keeping God and His mercy. The Emerald green appearance represents that it was the dominating color.

kuklothen (grk)= to fully encircle.

The scene of the Throne and the One sitting upon it is an attempt to express the splendor and majesty that are beyond description.

Verse Four

“And round about the throne *were* four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold.”

Who are these elders?

Scholars are divided as to whom these elders are. Some argue that they represent Israel and the priesthood. Others argue that they represent both the twelve tribes Israel and the 12 Apostles, hence the Church. Still others believe that they represent the Saints of both eras. A few even argue for angels, but since angels don’t age, this is highly improbable.

I personally side with those who argue that they represent the Saints of God from all ages, the Church. Since all believers make up the body of Christ and Scripture clearly teaches us that we shall reign with Christ, I personally hold to this position.

The white raiment represents the purity and holiness of God's saints who have received the righteousness of Christ.

The crowns of Gold would appear to represent their faithfulness to Christ while living on earth and hence their reward.

Verse Five

“And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and *there were* seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God. “

Compare Exodus 19:16

These lightnings and thunderings and voices represent the wrath of God that is about to be unleashed upon the earth.

The “Seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God” represent the Holy Spirits role in carrying out God's complete judgment.

MacArthur states it well: “John's vision depicts God as ready to make war on sinful, rebellious mankind and the Holy Spirit as His war torch. The Comforter of those who love Christ will be the Consumer of those who reject Him.” P. 151

Verse Six

“And before the throne *there was* a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, *were* four beasts full of eyes before and behind”

John's vision of “a sea of glass like unto crystal” appears to be at the base of the throne. Thus the pavement around the throne was dazzling.

What or who are the four beasts full of eyes?

One cannot help but think of Ezekiel's vision wherein the scenes that he attempted to describe were overwhelming, and at times, seemingly incoherent. (Ezek. 1:4-25). The four living creatures in Ezekiel's vision were actually Cherubim, “an exalted order of angels, frequently associated with God's holy power.” (MacArthur, p. 154).

“Full of eyes” speaks to their awareness, alertness and comprehensive knowledge of things pertaining to their appointed office.

Verse Seven

“And the first beast *was* like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast *was* like a flying eagle.”

The lion represents wild creatures. Thus the **lion symbolizes strength**.

The calf represents domestic creatures. The **calf symbolizes service**.

The face of a man represents the pinnacle of God’s creation. **Symbolizes reason**.

The flying eagle represents flying creatures. **The eagle symbolizes speed**.

Verse Eight

“And the four beasts had each of them six wings about *him*; and *they were* full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.”

The six wings symbolizes these four creatures (or cherubims) responsibility and privilege of constantly worshipping God.

Verse Nine

“And when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever,”

These creatures give glory and honor and thanks to God. God who sits on the throne lives forever and ever.

This speaks to the Eternality of God. God has always been, He is, and shall always be.

Verse Ten

“The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying,”

The living creatures begin the worship chorus and then they are joined by the twenty four elders.

Note the form of their worship. They fall down, i.e. prostrate themselves before God and worship him. They acknowledge God’s worthiness by casting their crowns before the throne.

Verse Eleven

“Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.”

The elders join in the chorus of praise, acknowledging God’s holiness, worthiness and creating power.

But there is also an understanding that they recognize that judgment is ready to fall upon Satan, demons and sin. God is getting ready to take back his creation for good. Cf. Romans 8:19-22.

¹⁹ For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected *it* in hope; ²¹ because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. ²² For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.¹

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¹ *The New King James Version*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982. Print.