

THE REVELATION TO JOHN

THE THINGS FUTURE, REVELATION 4 - 22

A. Abbreviated outline of Revelation

1. The Things Past (1:1-20)
2. The Things Present (2:1-32)
3. The Things Future (4:1-22:21)
 - a. The Tribulation (4:1-19:21)
 - b. The Millennium (20:1-15)
 - c. The Eternal State (21:1-22:21)

B. Introductory comments

1. Most of the book deals with the time prior to the return of Christ. The physical and spiritual difficulties encountered by believers in the church age pale in comparison to the events preceding the second coming of our Lord. The magnitude of spiritual warfare becomes more evident. A clear view of God's character may also be seen as He deals with sin on earth and in the heavenlies. This period prior to Christ's return is a time of increasing turmoil climaxing in the earthly reign of Christ.
2. Thomas Constable, *John recorded the rest of this book in order to reveal those aspects of the future that God wanted His people to know . . . Scholars have proposed many interpretations of the remaining chapters (4–22), but the ones that make most sense of the text are those that see them as predicting events yet future. This is called the futuristic approach.*
3. John Walvoord, *In keeping with the divine outline given in 1:19, God unfolded to John the details of the future, “what will take place later.” This includes the stirring events leading up to the second coming of Christ (chaps. 4–18); then the Second Coming itself (chap. 19); then the aftermath, the millennial kingdom (chap. 20); and finally the New Jerusalem and the new heaven and new earth (chaps. 21–22).*

JOHN'S INTRODUCTION TO HEAVEN, REVELATION 4 - 5

- This section gives a proper perspective of God the Father and God the Son. The throne in heaven pictures the majesty of God. The vision should naturally instill in the reader a sense of reverence and awe. The vision of the Lamb reveals the Son of God as the one who has authority to execute the judgments about to be unleashed upon the earth. Jesus Christ is qualified to loose the scroll of God's judgments. He is savior and sovereign. Therefore, the judgments to be unleashed upon the earth are righteous acts of God upon an unbelieving world.
- Charles Ryrie, *Chapters 4 and 5 form a prologue to the entire section. It was necessary that John be given a glimpse of the throne in heaven before witnessing the terrible judgments to be poured out on the earth. In other words, he was given a heavenly perspective on the coming earthly events as he walked through the door that was opened to him in 4:1.*
- Gregory Beale, *The pastoral purpose is to assure suffering Christians that God and Jesus are sovereign and that the events that the Christians are facing are part of a sovereign plan that will culminate in their redemption and the vindication of their faith through the punishment of their persecutors.*
- George Raymond, Beasley-Murray, . . . *the vision of chapters 4–5 is also a self-contained whole, serving a highly important function regarding the message of the book. It reveals the ground of assurance that God's gracious purpose for the universe will come to pass, and so it is dominated by praise and adoration . . . No part of the Scripture is more calculated to evoke worship than these two chapters of John's prophecy.*
- Thomas Constable, *This chapter focuses on God the Father, the Creator who hands over the seven-sealed scroll to the Lamb in chapter 5. Chapter 5 emphasizes God the Son, the Redeemer who receives and opens the scroll. God is never addressed as Father in chapters 4 through 19. In these chapters He is acting in His role as Judge.*

INTRODUCTION

- Thomas Constable, *Jesus gave John this vision in order to enable the readers to view coming earthly events from a heavenly perspective.*
- Warren Wiersbe, . . . *before God pours out His wrath, He gives us a glimpse into glory and permits us to hear the worshiping creatures in heaven as they praise God.*
- Kendell Easley, *In vision one John saw and heard Christ on the earth. Vision two begins with John taken to heaven. As he wrote the vision down, John included what he saw and heard in heaven as well as what he saw on earth.*
- Grant Osborne, *At the outset John is commanded to “come up” and experience the throne room vision. As readers, we are transported from earthly events in chapters 1–3 to heavenly events, and worship predominates . . . This vision celebrates creation and redemption, the victory of God and the Lamb over the powers of evil.*

THE HEAVENLY THRONE, REVELATION 4:1-11

- A. John's invitation to heaven (1), *After this I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven! And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this."*
1. *After this*
 - a. "After this" refers to the messages to the seven churches in chapter 2-3.
 - b. John Walvoord, *John saw the vision of the heavenly throne after he heard the revelation of the messages to the churches.*
 - c. Mark Hitchcock, . . . *the time after the present church age has been reached . . . many view Revelation 4:1 as a reference to the rapture . . . I do not believe the rapture of the church is presented either directly or indirectly in Revelation 4:1. Rather, all we see is the personal movement of John from earth to heaven, not the movement of the church to heaven.*
 2. A door to heaven
 - a. Thomas Constable, *What John saw in this vision was a door standing open (Gr. eneogmene) in the sky (cf. Ezek. 1:1; Mark 1:10; John 1:51). A voice, probably the glorified Christ's (cf. 1:10; Exod. 19:20, 24-25), summoned him to enter through the door into heaven (cf. 3:8, 20) . . . From that new vantage point he would receive new revelations (cf. Rom. 10:6; 2 Cor. 12:1-2).*
 - b. Kendell Easley, *In the New Testament the heavens opened when Jesus was baptized (Matt. 3:16), when Stephen was stoned (Acts 7:6), and when Peter saw a vision of a sheet filled with "unclean" animals (Acts 10:11). Later on in vision two John will see even more deeply into heaven when its temple is thrown open (11:19; 15:5). The last time heaven opens is when John sees the conquering rider on a white horse sent out from heaven to earth in vengeance (19:11).*
 - c. Grant Osborne, *The heavens split apart at Jesus' baptism (Matt 3:16), and in John 1:51 Jesus says the heavens remain open to him. This means that the kingdom has arrived, and the final events are initiated in Jesus' ministry.*
 - d. Craig Keener, *The "open" door in heaven (4:1) signifies what openings in heaven often signify, namely, God's revelation (11:19; 15:5; cf. Ezek. 1:1; Mark 1:10; John 1:51). John does not have to force his way into heaven, as some of his contemporaries thought they did; he is invited, in language that recalls God's call to Moses to receive his revelation: "Come up here" (Rev. 4:1; cf. Ex. 19:20, 24; 24:12; 34:2) recalls the Bible's first throne vision (Ex. 24:10-12; cf. also 19:24).*
 3. *Come up here*
 - a. Charles Ryrie, *The words "come up here" indicate John's personal transferral from earth to heaven. They do not specifically teach the Rapture of the church, although in the pretribulational understanding of prophecy the Rapture would occur at this point in the book. In support of this is the absence from this point on of any mention of churches, suggesting that believers of this church age are absent from the earth because of a pretribulational Rapture.*
 - b. Kendell Easley, *The voice I had first heard speaking to me was that of the risen Christ (Rev. 1:10, 17-18). His first command had been, "Write on a scroll what you see" (Rev. 1:11). Now the command is, "Come up here."*
 - c. Merrill Tenney, *The change of scene transferred the seer from earth to heaven as the voice of the heavenly summons said, "Come up hither" (4:1). The time of the vision projected him into the future, contrasting with the vision of the churches, which was contemporary with him.*
 4. *What must take place*
 - a. Thomas Constable, *The phrase things that must (dei) take place indicates that the events that God was about to reveal will indeed happen. The Greek word indicates divine necessity here . . .*
 - b. John Walvoord, *This points not only to the future but also to the sovereign purpose of God.*
 - c. Kendell Easley, *The events thus described in vision two plainly follow in time those described in vision one. On the other hand, the initial scene of heavenly worship is ongoing through time. Ever since the creation, heavenly beings have been ceaselessly worshipping the Creator around his throne.*
 - d. Grant Osborne, *The events in the central section of the book, chapters 6-16, are dictated by God's sovereign will. He is the "Alpha and Omega" (1:8; 21:6; 22:13), the absolute sovereign over history.*

TO BE CONTINUED, LORD WILLING!

- B. At the heavenly throne (2-8)
1. God on His throne (2-3), *At once I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne. 3 And he who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian, and around the throne was a rainbow that had the appearance of an emerald.*
 2. The twenty-four elders (4), *Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones were twenty-four elders, clothed in white garments, with golden crowns on their heads.*
 3. The seven spirits of God (5), *From the throne came flashes of lightning, and rumblings and peals of thunder, and before the throne were burning seven torches of fire, which are the seven spirits of God,*
 4. A sea of glass (6a), *and before the throne there was as it were a sea of glass, like crystal.*
 5. Four living creatures (6b-8)
 - a. A general description of the living creature (6b), *And around the throne, on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind:*
 - b. Descriptions of each creature (7), *the first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with the face of a man, and the fourth living creature like an eagle in flight.*
 - c. Their corporate worship (8), *8 And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!"*
- C. Worship around the throne (9-11)
1. From the living creatures (9), *And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever,*
 2. From the twenty-four elders (10-11), *the twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever. They cast their crowns before the throne, saying, "Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created."*

CONCLUSION
