Revelation 4.1-11 – *Come up here and I will show you things!*

**What Jesus Wants to Show Us...**

The power of living an overcoming life! Fellowship with Jesus...

**1 Thessalonians 5.4-8 4**But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. **5**Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. **6**Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. **7**For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. **8**But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.

One of the significant things any interpreter of the book of Revelation will notice is the abrupt shift in focus which takes place between chapters three and four. Chapters two and three, which describe “the things which are” (Rev. 1:19), are focused entirely on the Church. Then, abruptly, chapter four opens, John ascends to heaven “in the Spirit,” and the Church is no longer mentioned until the close of the book. This shift in focus and absence of all mention of the Church would in itself be somewhat remarkable. But when it is combined with what Scripture elsewhere teaches concerning the character and destiny of the Church, it is considered by some to suggest that the Church will not be present on the earth during the events of Revelation 4 through Revelation 19 , including the period of the tribulation.See Footnote**[[1]](#endnote-1)** for discussion on the Rapture and the absence of the Church during this time of Revelation.

**Rev. 4:1** 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 shew thee things which must be hereafter.

**Rev. 4:2** And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne.

**Rev. 4:3** 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.

**Rev. 4:4** 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.

**Rev. 4:5** 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.

**Rev. 4:6** 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.

**Rev. 4:7** 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.

**Rev. 4:8** 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.

**Rev. 4:9** And when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever,

**Rev. 4:10** 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,

**Rev. 4:11** 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.

I. AFTER THIS I looked (and SAW) a door opened in heaven, and heard the voice as a *trumpet*  say *Come up here, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter.* And I was *IN THE SPIRIT* and I SAW a throne and the One sitting on it, brilliant with a rainbow round the throne like an emerald.

**Rev. 4:1** 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 shew thee things which must be hereafter.\*\*\*

**Rev. 4:2** And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne.

**Rev. 4:3** 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.

\*Jesus said to the angel of the church in Philadelphia: Rev 3**8** I know thy works: behold, ***I have set before thee an open door***, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.

\*\****trumpet:*** Jeremiah 4.19 -- *My bowels, my bowels! I am pained at my very heart; my heart maketh a noise in me; I cannot hold my peace, because thou hast heard,* ***O my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war****.*

\*\*\* Whenever the reader is tempted to focus on the enormity of the events transpiring on the earth below, the scene shifts to the heavens above, the ultimate source of what is transpiring, and the destination of the glory derived from all that transpires in His creation. “No matter how many parentheses and digressions may be introduced, the Revelation maintains the celestial setting for terrestrial events. Behind the changing panorama of human history described under the symbolic pictures ***abides the unchanging reality of an eternal world in which God’s purpose is unfailing and His Christ victorious***.” See complete study on this here:

https://www.spiritandtruth.org/teaching/Book\_of\_Revelation/commentary/htm/intro/themes.html#2.4.3 detailed in Footnote.[[2]](#endnote-2)

In this vision, the One seated on the throne is God. The imagery of jasper and carnelian is significant. Jasper, in biblical times, was a clear, precious stone, possibly resembling a diamond, symbolizing purity and holiness. Carnelian, a red stone, may represent the fiery nature of God's judgment and His righteous wrath. Together, these stones convey the majesty and glory of God, emphasizing His divine nature and the awe-inspiring presence that John witnesses. This imagery aligns with other biblical descriptions of God's appearance, such as in Ezekiel 1:26-28 (see below), where God's glory is depicted with radiant colors.

***and a rainbow that gleamed like an emerald encircled the throne***

The rainbow encircling the throne is reminiscent of the covenant God made with Noah in Genesis 9:13-17, symbolizing God's mercy and faithfulness. The emerald color suggests a sense of peace and tranquility, contrasting with the fiery imagery of the stones. This combination of judgment and mercy reflects the dual aspects of God's character. The circular nature of the rainbow indicates completeness and eternity, reinforcing the idea of God's eternal covenant with His creation. The presence of the rainbow in this heavenly vision underscores the continuity of God's promises and His unchanging nature throughout biblical history.[[3]](#endnote-3)

**Ezekiel 1:26-28**  26And above the firmament that *was* over their heads *was* the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone: and upon the likeness of the throne *was* the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it. **27** And I saw as the colour of amber, as the appearance of fire round about within it, from the appearance of his loins even upward, and from the appearance of his loins even downward, I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and it had brightness round about. **28** As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so *was* the appearance of the brightness round about. This *was* the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. And when I saw *it*, I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice of one that spake.

The secret of the LORD *is* with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant. Psalm 25.14

**Proverbs 3:32 32** For the froward *is* abomination to the LORD: but his secret *is* with the righteous.

**John 15:15** No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not understand what his master is doing. But I have called you friends, because everything I have learned from My Father I have made known to you.

He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel. Psalm 103.7

After six days Jesus took with Him Peter, James, and John, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. There He was transfigured before them. / His clothes became radiantly white, brighter than any launderer on earth could bleach them. / And Elijah and Moses appeared before them, talking with Jesus. ... Mark 9.2-8

Application Questions:

 1. Have I worked on being an *overcomer*, knowing **then** I will be in a position to be shown things from God in the Spirit and see more clearly spiritually.

 2. Do I see Him in His *majesty and glory*, *emphasizing His divine nature and the awe-inspiring presence* and KNOW He is on the throne and reigns?

 3. Do I know His *combination of judgment and mercy,* reflecting the dual aspects of His character? Do I know how His *mercy* is not inconsistent with, but necessitates His *judgment?* How have I seen this in my own life?

*4. Do I see Him with the circular nature of the rainbow indicating completeness and eternity*, and know that I know that God's eternal covenant with His creation is not thwarted but see *the continuity of His promises and His unchanging nature throughout biblical history*.

 3. Do I see Him in all HIS GLORY?🕆

🕆 What is God’s glory?? The glory of God is when you offer a sacrifice to God, His FIRE falls on your offering and burns it, showing His acceptance of it, and His presence *replaces* the sacrifice with His glory. 2 Chronicles 7.1 shows that seamless sequence: Solomon prays, **God** answers with purifying fire, the **sacrifice** **is** **accepted**, and **God's** **glory** inhabits the temple. A study on the word ***glory*** shows that sincere prayer, atoning **sacrifice**, and divine presence belong together.

Malachi 1.1-14  **1**The burden of the word of the Lord to Israel by Malachi. **2**I have loved you, saith the Lord. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the Lord: yet I loved Jacob, **3**And I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness. **4**Whereas Edom saith, We are impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places; thus saith the Lord of hosts, They shall build, but I will throw down; and they shall call them, The border of wickedness, and, The people against whom the Lord hath indignation for ever. **5**And your eyes shall see, and ye shall say, The Lord will be magnified from the border of Israel. **6**A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the Lord of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name? **7**Ye offer **polluted bread upon mine altar**; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of the Lord is contemptible. **8And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil**? offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the Lord of hosts. **9**And now, I pray you, beseech God that he will be gracious unto us: this hath been by your means: will he regard your persons? saith the Lord of hosts. **10**Who is there even among you that would shut the doors for nought? neither do ye kindle fire on mine altar for nought. I have no pleasure in you, saith the Lord of hosts, **neither will I accept an offering at your hand**. **11**For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and **a pure offering**: for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of hosts. **12**But ye have profaned it, in that ye say, The table of the Lord is polluted; and the fruit thereof, even his meat, is contemptible. **13**Ye said also, Behold, what a weariness is it! and ye have snuffed at it, saith the Lord of hosts; and ye brought that which was torn, and the lame, and the sick; thus ye brought an offering: should I accept this of your hand? saith the Lord. **14**But cursed be the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth, and sacrificeth unto the Lord **a corrupt thing**: for I am a great King, saith the Lord of hosts, and my name is dreadful among the heathen.

II. Round the throne are 24 seats with elders sitting who have overcome, and from the throne are lightnings, thunderings and voices, and lamps with fire burning before the throne, which are the 7 Spirits of God that never go out!

**Rev. 4:4** 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.

\*See overcoming churches (chart): in Sardis – reward of *no spot on garment.* Reward for ***overcoming.*** Laodacea – NOT LUKEWARM = sit with Him on the throne; Smyrna – faithful to death = crown of life. Philadelphia – let no ***man*** take your crown.

**Rev. 4:5** 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.\*\*

\*\* **The seven Spirits of God:**

Isaiah 11.2 – Spirit of the Lord, Spirit of wisdom and understanding (Deuteronomy 34.9); Spirit of grace (Hebrews 10.29); and supplications (Zechariah 12.10); Spirit of counsel and might; spirit of the knowledge and fear of the Lord; spirit of Truth (John 14.17, 15.26, 16.13); Spirit of prophecy (Revelations 19.10); Spirit of holiness (Romans 1.4).

**The Spirit of the Lord gives us wisdom.**

*“For the Lord gives wisdom; From His mouth come knowledge and understanding.”* Proverbs 2:6

**The Spirit of the LORD gives us freedom.**

*“Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.”* 2 Corinthians 3:17

**The Spirit of the Lord gives us understanding.**

*“For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding.”* Colossians 1:9

**The Spirit of the Lord provides us counsel.**

*“I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.”* John 14:16-17

**The Spirit of the Lord gives us power.**

*“‘But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.’”* Acts 1:8.

**The Spirit of the Lord gives us knowledge.**

*“‘These things I have spoken to you while being present with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.’”* John 14:25-26.

 **The Spirit of the fear of the Lord.**

*“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.”* Proverbs 1:7

Spirit of prophesy (Revelation 19.10), Spirit of grace (Hebrews 10.29), Spirit of holiness (Romans 1.4), Spirit of supplications and grace (Zechariah 12.10, Spirit of Truth (John 14.17, 15.26 16.13, 1 John 4.6).

* **Is. 11:2** *And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD;*
* **Deut. 34:9** *And Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom; for Moses had laid his hands upon him: and the children of Israel hearkened unto him, and did as the LORD commanded Moses.*
* **Heb. 10:29** *Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?*
* **Zech. 12:10** *And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.*
* **John 14:17** *Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.*
* **John 15:26** *But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me:*
* **John 16:13** *Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.*
* **Rev. 19:10** *And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.*
* **Rom. 1:4** *And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead:*

Application Questions:

 1. What is an *overcomer?* Moment by moment, decision by decision, *how do I overcome* the sin which so *easily besets me?*

**Hebrews 12:1**   Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset *us*, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, **2** Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of *our* faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. **3** For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, **lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds**.

**Isaiah 40.28-31 28** Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, *that* the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? *there is* no searching of his understanding. **29** He giveth power to the faint; and to *them that have* no might he increaseth strength. **30** Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: **31** But **they that wait upon the LORD shall renew *their* strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; *and* they shall walk, and not fa**int.

2. Am I close enough to Jesus to hear Him clearly? How do I let His Word into my heart and carry it *within your heart,*

**Deuteronomy6.6-9 6** And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: **7** And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. **8** And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets (the principles that guide each decision we make and enable us to shine forth God’s ways in every word and action) between thine eyes. **9** And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.

**Deuteronomy 11.18 18**Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be as frontlets between your eyes.The frontlets are the principles that guide each decision we make and enable us to shine forth God’s ways in every word and action.

**Proverbs 3.3 3**Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart:

**Psalm 37:31 31** The law of his God *is* in his heart; none of his steps shall slide.

**Proverbs 6.21 21**Bind them continually upon thine heart, and tie them about thy neck.

**Proverbs 7.3 3**Bind them upon thy fingers, write them upon the table of thine heart.

**Hebrews 8:10-12 10** For this *is* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: **11** And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. **12** For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.

**Jeremiah 31:33** But this *shall be* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.

**2Corinthians 3:3***Forasmuch as ye are* manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.

**Jeremiah 31:31** Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: 32 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day *that* I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: 33 But this *shall be* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. 34 And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

**Psalms 119:11**Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.

**Psalms 51:**10 Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.

**Ezekiel 36:26** A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.

**Hebrews 10:16** This *is* the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them;

**Psalms 40:8** I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law *is* within my heart.

**Proverbs 4:23** Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it *are* the issues of life.

 3. In view of the above scriptures, how can I see and demonstrate Him more clearly *in all His glory?*

III. Before the throne, God shows Himself in all His character (7 Spirits and through the 4 beasts full of eyes to see), and they never stop saying *Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.*

**Rev. 4:6** 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.

**Rev. 4:7** 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.

Four beasts full of eyes before and behind: Lion, Calf, Man, Eagle

**Ezekiel 1.5-10** - 5*Also out of the midst thereof came the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance; they had the likeness of a man.* 6*And every one had four faces, and every one had four wings.* 7*And their feet were straight feet; and the sole of their feet was like the sole of a calf’s foot: and they sparkled like the colour of burnished brass.* 8*And they had the hands of a man under their wings on their four sides; and they four had their faces and their wings.* 9*Their wings were joined one to another; they turned not when they went; they went every one straight forward.* 10*As for the likeness of their faces, they four had the face of a man, and the face of a lion, on the right side: and they four had the face of an ox on the left side; they four also had the face of an eagle.*

**Rev. 4:8** 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.

Application Questions:

 1. How much do I want to see God in *all His glory?*

**Isaiah 66:1**   Thus saith the LORD, The heaven *is* my throne, and the earth *is* my footstool: where *is* the house that ye build unto me? and where *is* the place of my rest? **2** For all those *things* hath mine hand made, and all those *things* have been, saith the LORD: **but to this *man* will I look**, *even* to *him that is* **poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth** (#2729 and #2730 *charad* and *chared: careful;* reverential) **at my word**. **...**Yea, they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations. **4** I also will choose their delusions, and will bring their fears upon them; because when I called, none did answer; when I spake, they did not hear: but they did evil before mine eyes, and chose *that* in which I delighted not.

**Psalm 51.17 17** The sacrifices of God *are* a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.

 2. Do I see Him in His holiness, power, and eternal being? Can I say **Psalm 40.8** I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law *is* within my heart.

IV. WHEN all honor and thanks is given to HIM ON THE THRONE who lives for ever and ever, the 24 elders (showing the way) fall down before Him and worship Him for ever, casting THEIR crowns to Him saying: 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.

**Rev. 4:9** And when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever,

**Rev. 4:10** 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,

**Rev. 4:11** 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.

Note: In the previous section, John has just described four creatures who resemble cherubim (a type of angel) but here they are not referred to as [here]. We saw that these four creatures are forever giving glory and honor and thanks to God, never ceasing day or night.

John continues, saying:  when the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, to Him who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders will fall down before Him who sits on the throne, and will worship Him who lives forever and ever, and will cast their crowns before the throne (vv 9-10).

The word Him is singular in the phrase describing the living creatures giving glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne. As we saw in Revelation 4:2, God is One. There is One God, with three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The twenty-four elders here are those introduced in verse four, having "white garments, and golden crowns on their heads (Revelation 4:4). These elders have thrones that they sit on themselves, but they also worship Him who sits on the throne and cast their crowns before the throne.

The Greek word translated elders is "presbyteros" and indicates those having authority. These elders have been given authority. They have power and authority themselves, but they submit their power under the One who has ultimate authority. The image of them giving glory and honor to God shows that although God has granted them the glory and honor of having authority, they recognize that God is the source of all glory and honor.

Thus, these elders who have been elevated to reign are themselves servants. The image of them casting their crowns before the throne indicates full submission of their authority to the One who is over all.

Presuming that these elders either represent or are the chief among those who overcome, it is consistent with the primary admonition of Revelation that those who are faithful witnesses gain great rewards. In Revelation 3:21 Jesus promised that for those who overcome as He overcame, He would share His authority with them. Now we see this image of those given to share authority, and they are in full submission. **Their submission is voluntary-it stems from their worship of God.**

**This picture of submission shows that those who will be given power to reign will be those who are faithful and willing servants. This is a consistent theme throughout scripture. A few verses that assert the theme of faithful servants receiving authority follow:**

Matthew 25:21, the Parable of the Talents, where Jesus rewards the faithful servants by making them rulers over many things.

Hebrews 2:5-10, where Jesus led the way to restore humanity to the "glory and honor" of reigning over the earth through the "suffering of death." He desires to bring many sons with Him to the restored glory of having authority over the earth.

Romans 8:17b, which says those who suffer as Jesus suffered will share His inheritance, which is to reign over the earth.

This is completely the opposite of Satan, the current ruler of this world (John 14:30). Satan's objective is to be a tyrant, having submission to no one (Isaiah 14:13).

This chapter further elevates the theme that continues throughout Revelation: God's authority over all things, that He is on the throne. He will give to reign over the new earth those who are faithful witnesses and willing servants (Revelation 3:21). The new earth will be a place where righteousness dwells (2 Peter 3:13). **"Righteousness" means all things operating according to God's design. It is God's design for leaders to be servants, and servants to be leaders. The elders illustrate this design; they have authority but also submit to authority.**

When the twenty-four elders prostrate themselves in worship they are saying:

"Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created" (v 11).

Again here, You is singular in the phrase You, our Lord and our God. In the next chapter we will see a search for someone worthy to open the scroll that will initiate events leading to the culmination of the age. We will see that the Lamb will come from the throne and be found to be the only one who is worthy (Revelation 5:5-6). The One Lord and God will begin to express as persons, when the Lamb emerges.

**That Jesus is the Lamb emphasizes His humanity. This picture of a Lamb emphasizes that He was slain as a sacrifice for the sins of the world** (Hebrews 9:11-12). But here the elders assert Worthy are You, our Lord and our God because He created the world. We are told that Jesus created the world (Colossians 1:16-17). We are also told God created the world. We know God is One, but the word translated "God" in Genesis 1:1 is plural, and in Genesis 1:26, God says "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness" indicating that God is both One as well as Three. It appears that Jesus, the Son, was both the agent as well as the redeemer of all creation.

The twenty-four elders once again proclaim that the Lord God is worthy to receive glory and honor and power because He is the creator of all things. All was created to work in harmony with God's design, which was good.

The phrase glory and honor is the same phrase in Hebrews\* to describe the privilege humans were given in the original creation to reign over the earth. However, humanity proved to not be worthy of that calling, as humanity fell into sin.

But Jesus recovered the glory and honor intended in God's original creation through the "suffering of death" (Hebrews 2:9). As we will see in the next chapter, He is now worthy of the calling. He is worthy to have all the power to reign over the earth. This is because He served (Matthew 20:28). He was obedient, even to death on a cross (Philippians 2:8). Because He served, laying down His life as the Lamb, He is worthy to reign.

God is One. He created all things, and because of His will they existed, and were created. He is worthy for that reason alone. Jesus existed as God, but He did not grasp that privilege (Philippians 2:5-7). Rather He emptied Himself, and became the Lamb that takes away the sins of the world. He is on multiple accounts worthy to reign over all.

Jesus's worthiness to reign is in direct contrast to the claim of Satan, who apparently attempted to grab power to ascend on high as a usurper (Isaiah 14:13). The Lord God is worthy to receive all power because He created all things. In the next chapter, we will see that the Lamb is worthy to receive all glory and honor and power because He was obedient to His Father's will, and was slain for the sins of the world. So the Lord God is worthy because He created the world, and the Lamb is worthy because He redeemed the world.[[4]](#endnote-4)

\***Hebrews 2:6-3.6**   **6** But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him? **7** Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands: **8** Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing *that is* not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him. **9** But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. 10 For it became him, for whom *are* all things, and by whom *are* all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. **11** For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified *are* all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, **12** Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee. **13** And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me. 14 Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; **15** And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. **16** For verily he took not on *him the nature of* angels; but he took on *him* the seed of Abraham. **17** Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto *his* brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things *pertaining* to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. **18** For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted. **3**  1 Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus; **2** Who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses *was faithful* in all his house. **3** For this *man* was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house. **4** For every house is builded by some *man*; but he that built all things *is* God. **5** And Moses verily *was* faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after; **6** But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.

Application Questions:

 1. Do I give all honor and thanks to HIM ON THE THRONE and see Him eternally as the One Who gave me everything?

 2. Do I cast any crowns I have received to Him, acknowledging *without Him I can do nothing?*

 3. Do I see how He has *created* ***all things for His pleasure?!***

Subject Sentence: Jesus wants to show me things but I need to be in a position to hear them.

Aim: This passage would cause me to desire that open door in heaven and be in a position that God can trust me with His secrets, knowing that without HIM I can do nothing and seeing Him in all His glory by living in the Spirit and not catering to the flesh and by seeing all the ways He shows Himself by His Spirit, with my life crying out always: ***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.***

1. Please see webpage

https://www.spiritandtruth.org/teaching/Book\_of\_Revelation/commentary/htm/topics/rapture.html#4.14 for

footnotes to this endnote.

One of the significant things any interpreter of the book of Revelation will notice is the abrupt shift in focus which takes place between chapters three and four. Chapters two and three, which describe “the things which are” (Rev. 1:19 ), are focused entirely on the *Church*. Then, abruptly, chapter four opens, John ascends to heaven “in the Spirit,” and the Church is no longer mentioned until the close of the book. This shift in focus and absence of all mention of the Church would in itself be somewhat remarkable. But when it is combined with what Scripture elsewhere teaches concerning the character and destiny of the Church, it provides additional evidence that the Church will not be present on the earth during the events of Revelation 4  through Revelation 19 , including the period of the tribulation.

Twenty-four verses in the book of Revelation refer to the church. . . . Twenty of the 24 verses refer to the church in the present church age (Rev. 1:4 , 11 , 20 ; 2:1 , 7 , 8 , 11 , 12 , 17 , 18 , 23 , 29 ; 3:1 , 6 , 7 , 13 , 14 , 22 ; 22:16 , 17 ). Two verses refer to the church in the marriage of the Lamb, which will take place *in heaven*, not on the earth (Rev. 19:7 , 8 ). Two verses refer to the church in the eternal state (Rev. 21:2 , 9 ). It is important to note that there are no references to the church *on the earth* in chapters 4 through 18, the chapters relating specifically to the 70th week of Daniel 9 , including the seals, trumpets, and bowls.1

The church is mentioned 17 times in the first three chapters of Revelation, but after John (a member of the church) is called up to heaven at the beginning of chapter 4, he looks down on the events of the Tribulation, and the church is not mentioned or seen again until chapter 19, when she returns to the earth with her Bridegroom at His glorious appearing. Why? The answer is obvious: *She isn’t in the Tribulation*. She is raptured to be with her Lord before it begins!2

In our day, the Rapture has come under attack by many. Some think it represents the novel teachings of “defeatist Christians.” Others think it is pure fantasy. Still others seem to savor the idea of the Church going through the events of the Tribulation in order to “prove her metal” or refine her. We find it difficult to understand why there is such opposition *by Christians* to the idea that the bridegroom would come for His bride prior to pouring forth His wrath (John 14:1-3)?

If the Church is to come through the tribulation judgments that are to come upon the earth, then, say it plainly, there is no blessed hope in the Bible.3

So determined, however, are many not to have this blessed hope, or even to allow others to have it, that they would rather hold that this “great and terrible day of the Lord” is our only “hope” and (!) thus be driven to interpret the “thief” [Rev. 3:3 ] or Christ coming as a friend to fetch us away as he *steals* precious jewels. And this is done in the face of the opposite statement in 1 Thessalonians 5:4, that day shall “not come as a thief” on the church. . . . this thief is to be watched *against*: but Christ is to be watched *for*!4

Our treatment of the subject here is not intended to be exhaustive by any means—this is a commentary on the book of Revelation, not a book on the Rapture. However, the Rapture is an important aspect of understanding the Revelation given by John and especially the nature and purpose of the Tribulation period which it describes. In what follows, we outline aspects of the Rapture which are relevant to understanding the book of Revelation and mention additional resources for further study by the interested reader.

#### 4.14.1 - Is there a Rapture?

A frequently-heard statement by Christians is, “There’s no rapture mentioned in the Bible!” As we shall see, this is an inaccurate statement on two counts:

	1. The term “rapture” *is* a biblical term.
	2. The teaching of the Rapture is found in Scripture even if the term is absent.In the first case, we need to recognize that “the Bible” has changed form over time. Originally, the Bible was written in Hebrew and Greek. But for most of the history of the Church, the Bible used by the majority of people was not in these original languages. Instead, people used a translation in their native language, just as we use an English translation today. And for the greater part of the history of the Church, the translation used by most in the West was the *Latin**Vulgate*. This was “the Bible” for over a thousand years—and dominated Bible study and doctrine for a period far longer than any other translation.5 It reigned supreme in the West until the time of the Reformation when men began to return to study the original language texts and translate them into the vulgar tongues (e.g., German, English).

The term *rapture* means “to seize” and “to carry off,” and is taken from the phrase “caught up” in 1Th. 4:17 in the Latin Vulgate which reads:

Deinde nos, qui vivimus, qui relinquimur, simul **rapiemur** cum illis in nubibus obviam Christo in aera, et sic sempe cum Domino erimus. [Then we, who are alive, who remain, together will be **caught up** with them in the clouds to meet Christ in the air, and so always with the Lord we will be.] [emphasis added]

So we see that the term “rapture” *is* in the Bible—it just depends *which* Bible you are talking about! If you mean one of the recent translations which have only been on the scene for *decades*, or even the KJV which is *hundreds* of years old, then you won’t find the term. But if you are talking about the Grand Daddy of all Bibles which ruled for a millennium (the Vulgate), then the term is indeed there!

Even if we could not find the actual term “rapture” in a Bible, it would not indicate that the *doctrine* of the Rapture is not taught within Scripture. After all, we don’t find the terms *Trinity*, *omnipresence*, or *omniscience* in Scripture, but these doctrines are clearly taught by Scripture. So all that is necessary to establish the truth of a teaching is whether the *concept* is found in Scripture. Here too, the Rapture passes the test.

#### 4.14.2 - What is the Rapture?

If we go back to the original language of the New Testament, we find the *rapiemur* of 1Th. 4:17 in the Vulgate to be a translation of the Greek term ἁρπαγησόμεθα [*harpagēsometha*] which is the 1st person, plural, future tense, passive voice, indicative mood form of the verb ἁρπάζω [*harpazō*] meaning to “snatch, seize, i.e., take suddenly and vehemently”6 and which can denote “rescue from a threatening danger.”7

In general usage, it describes: how violent men take the kingdom by force (Mat. 11:12); carrying off property from the strong man’s house (Mat. 12:29); how the evil one snatches away what has been sown (Mat. 13:19); or how the people approached Jesus to take Him by force and make Him king (John 6:15).

The term is also used of supernatural events where God takes people in the Spirit and transports them either physically or in a vision. Philip was *caught away* from the Ethiopian eunuch to Azotus (Acts 8:39), the Apostle Paul was *caught up* to the third heaven (2Cor. 12:2), and those who are alive and remain will be *caught up* to meet Christ in the air (1Cor. 15:51-52; 1Th. 4:17). The same term is used to describe the ascension of Christ who was *caught up* to God and His throne (Rev. 12:5 ).

When we extend our study of this “catching away” to include the Old Testament, we find numerous rapture events including: Enoch (Gen. 5); Elijah (2K. 2); Isaiah (Isa. 6); Jesus (Acts 1:11; Rev. 12:5 ); Philip (Acts 8); Paul (2Cor. 12); The Church (1Th. 4); and the Two Witnesses (Rev. 11 ).8

The Scriptures present six raptures. Four have already taken place. Two are still to come. . . . The four raptures that have taken place include when both Enoch and Elijah who were taken up from earth to heaven without experiencing death (Gen. 5:24; Heb. 11:5; 2K. 2:1, 11), when the Lord Jesus ascended to heaven after His death and resurrection (Mark 16:19; Acts 1:9-11; Rev. 12:5 ), and when Paul referred to the rapture of a man (probably Paul himself) to the third heaven (2Cor. 12:2-4). . . . The other future rapture [besides that of the church, 1Th. 4:17] will occur when the two witnesses of the future Tribulation period ascend to heaven after God has resurrected them from the dead (Rev. 11:3 , 11-12 ).9

The Rapture, in the sense we are using the term, is the “catching away” of persons to a new location by the power of God without their initiation or control. We are specifically interested in the Rapture of the Church—the event which describes the translation of the living and dead in Christ to be caught up in the clouds forever to be with Him (1Th. 4:17).

#### 4.14.3 - How Many Comings of Christ?

Typically, we speak of only two “comings” of Christ. The First Coming was His virgin birth by Mary and subsequent ministry which ended at the cross and His ascension. The Second Coming will be at the end of the age to judge evil and establish His kingdom. So far, so good.

But how are we to understand the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost? After all, Christ said:

And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever— the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. **I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you**. (John 14:16-18) [emphasis added]

Elsewhere, we see that the Holy Spirit is “the Spirit of Christ” (Rom. 8:9; 1Pe. 1:11). So in a sense, “Christ came” on the Day of Pentecost for it was His Spirit which breathed life into a new creation on that day: the *Body of Christ* (1Cor. 12:13). If we include this “coming,” we have at least *three* comings of Christ—two *physical* and one *spiritual*. We know these three comings are all different because of differences in the situations which attend each event.

What we are doing here is analogous to the way we study “coming” passages in the Old Testament. In the Old Testament, we notice some passages which describe the coming Messiah as a victorious king (e.g., Ps. 2; Isa. 9:6) and other passages which describe Him as a suffering servant (e.g., Ps. 22; Isa. 53). How are we to reconcile these differences? One solution, taken by many who reject Christ, is to assume these passages describe two different individuals. The correct solution, which we understand from the New Testament, is to understand that a *single individual* is in view, but He comes *multiple times*. At His First Coming, He is the suffering servant. At His Second Coming10 He is the victorious King who will reign eternally. As Christians studying the Old Testament, we think nothing strange in noticing the irreconcilable differences between these “coming” passages and understand them as describing *different events*.

This same situation occurs when a careful study is made of the many “coming” passages within the New Testament which describe His *future* coming. The “coming” passages differ in numerous ways which make it impossible to see them all describing the same event.

##### 4.14.3.1 - Rapture versus Second Coming

The following contrasts are found in passages describing the coming of Christ. We suggest that these differences are an indication that different comings are in view: the coming of Christ as bridegroom for His expectant Church (the Rapture) versus the Second Coming of Christ upon an unbelieving world in judgment.

|  |
| --- |
| **Contrasts Between the Rapture and the 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 ).11 |
| Christ comes in the air (1Th. 4:17). | Christ comes to the earth (Zec. 14:4; Acts 1:11).12 |
| Christ claims His bride (1Th. 4:16-17). | Christ comes with His bride (Rev. 19:6-14 ).13 |
| Removal of believers (1Th. 4:17). | Manifestation of Christ (Mal. 4:2).14 |
| Only His own see Him (1Th. 4:13-18). | Every eye shall see Him (Rev. 1:7 ).15 |
| Tribulation begins (2Th. 1:6-9). | Millennial Kingdom begins (Rev. 20:1-7 ).16 |
| Saved are delivered from wrath (1Th. 1:10; 1Th. 5:9). | Unsaved experience the wrath of God (Rev. 6:12-17 ).17 |
| No signs precede rapture (1Th. 5:1-3). | Signs precede Second Coming (Luke 21:11, 15).18 |
| Focus is Lord and Church (1Th. 4:13-18). | Focus is Israel and kingdom (Mat. 24:14).19 |
| World is deceived (2Th. 2:3-12). | Satan is bound so he cannot deceive (Rev. 20:1-2 ).20 |
| Believers depart the earth (1Th. 4:15-17).21 | Unbelievers are taken away from the earth (Mat. 24:37-41).22 |
| Unbelievers remain on earth. | Believers remain on earth (Mat. 25:34).23 |
| No mention of establishing Christ’s Kingdom on earth. | Christ has come to set up His Kingdom on earth (Mat. 25:31, 34).24 |
| Christians taken to the Father’s house (John 14:1-3). | Resurrected saints do not see the Father’s house (Rev. 20:4 ).25 |
| Imminent—could happen at any moment. | Cannot occur for at least 7 years.26 |
| Precedes the career of the man of sin. (2Th. 2:1-3). | Terminates the career of the man of sin (Rev. 19:20 ). |

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#### 4.14.4 - The Holy Spirit and the Rapture

An important aspect concerning the Rapture is the unique relationship between the Holy Spirit and the *Body of Christ* which was created on the Day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came in a new way to earth. While it is beyond the scope of our treatment here to tackle this subject in-depth, several important points should be noted.

##### 4.14.4.1 - The Coming of the Spirit

	1. The Holy Spirit has always been present and ministering upon the earth (Gen. 1:2).
	2. Prior to the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit *came upon* and *filled* believers (Num. 24:2; Jdg. 3:10; 6:34; 1S. 10:6; 19:20; 2Chr. 15:2; 20:14; Luke 1:67), but His presence was not permanent (1S. 16:13-14; Ps. 51:11).
	3. Prior to the Day of Pentecost, John explains that the Holy Spirit “had not yet been given *because* Jesus was not yet glorified” (John 7:39). Notice that the Holy Spirit has always been omnipresent and ministering upon the earth, but John clearly says at that time that He “had not yet been given” (John 14:16).
	4. The Holy Spirit came to the earth to begin a new ministry on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 1:4-8; 2:1-4, 17; 11:15).
	5. The new ministry of the Holy Spirit during this, the church age, is baptizing believers into the Body of Christ (1Cor. 12:5, 12-13) wherein believers are *permanently* indwelt and sealed with the Spirit (2Cor. 1:22; Eph. 1:13; 4:30).It is important to grasp two aspects regarding this important transition which took place on the Day of Pentecost:

	* The Holy Spirit ministered on earth before the formation of the Church *and He will continue to minister on the earth after the departure of the Church at the**Rapture*.
	* The Holy Spirit never *permanently indwelt* believers prior to the Day of Pentecost. The Church is a unique spiritual organism which began on the Day of Pentecost and which has a unique relationship to the Spirit.As you can see, there are elements of *continuity* and *discontinuity* which attend the Day of Pentecost. This is important to grasp because these same elements of continuity and discontinuity attend the Rapture of the Church when the Holy Spirit is removed from the earth *in the sense He came at Pentecost* but continues to minister upon the earth in the Tribulation period in the same sense He did prior to the Day of Pentecost. His “coming” on the Day of Pentecost and subsequent “removal” at the Rapture of the Church has no effect upon His role in salvation. Salvation has always been by grace through faith alone and by spiritual regeneration in which the Holy Spirit plays a key role (John 3:5-8; Gal. 4:29).

For a more detailed discussion of the significance of the Day of Pentecost in relation to the ministry of the Holy Spirit, see [Tony Garland, “Does Dispensationalism Teach Two Ways of Salvation?,” in *The Conservative Theological Journal*, vol. 7 no. 20 (Fort Worth, TX: Tyndale Theological Seminary, March 2003), 58-59].

##### 4.14.4.2 - Who is the Restrainer?

In a key passage concerning “the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him,” Paul relates that the Day of Christ (NU—*Day of the Lord*) cannot come unless the man of sin is revealed (2Th. 2:1-4) and that the man of sin was being actively restrained at the time Paul wrote.

And now you know **what** is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only **He** who now restrains *will do so* until He is taken out of the way. (2Th. 2:6-7) [emphasis added]

The Restrainer is referred to both in the neuter (*what*) and masculine (*he*) gender. This mix of gender appears in relation to the Holy Spirit Who is a *person*, but also described using a Greek term which is neuter in gender (πνευμα [*pneuma*]). It is also said that the Restrainer “now restrains” and will continue to do so until “He is taken out of the way.” Since the man of sin has yet to be revealed,27 we can infer that the Restrainer, whoever or whatever he is, has been effectively suppressing the revelation of the man of sin for over 2000 years. When we collect the pieces of evidence concerning the identity of the Restrainer, we find:

	* The Restrainer is referred to as both neuter (τὸ κατέχον [*to katechon*], “*what* is restraining”) and masculine (ὁ κατέχων [*ho katechōn*], “*He* who now restrains”).
	* The Restrainer existed in Paul’s day.
	* The Restrainer has been continually and effectively restraining for nearly 2,000 years so far.
	* The Restrainer is powerful enough to suppress the spiritual powers of darkness seeking to promote the man of sin.
	* The restraint is *global*.Numerous suggestions have been made concerning the identity of the Restrainer:

Several of these views do not necessarily involve a supernatural force. These include the Jewish state and James, Paul and the preaching of the gospel, the Roman Empire, and human government. Other views may be grouped as hostile supernatural views, which include Satan, a hostile false prophet, a general hostile force in the form of the mystery of lawlessness and human government, and the preincarnate state of the man of lawlessness. In several views ὁ κατέχων [*ho katechōn*] is seen as a benevolent supernatural figure rather than a hostile one. Usually an angel, such as Michael, or another type of heavenly being, such as Elijah, or a mythological being, is suggested. The most common supernatural figure suggested, though, is God Himself.28

Of the various suggestions, it would seem that the Restrainer must be supernatural in power. For what government could restrain Satan and do so continuously for 2,000 years? Yet, Scripture indicates that the Holy Spirit had just such a ministry (Gen. 6:3; 20:6; John 16:18). It seems the best solution for the identity of the Restrainer is the Holy Spirit Himself. “The first participle (τὸ κατέχο [*to katecho*]) conforms to the gender of πνεῦμα [*pneuma*]. The second participle ὁ κατέχων [*ho katechōn*] confirms the personality of the Holy Spirit.”29

If this is so, this has significant implications concerning the Rapture of the Church because we previously saw that the Holy Spirit indwells those who are baptized into the Body of Christ *permanently* for the day of redemption. It is impossible that the Holy Spirit could depart from indwelling the sealed believer—He cannot be taken out of the way *unless all born-again believers indwelt by Him are taken with Him!*

The Holy Spirit came down into the world at Pentecost in a special sense in which He had never been in the world, to dwell in the Church, the body of believers which is called the temple of the Holy Spirit (1Cor. 6:19). When all believers are removed to heaven according to the promise made to the church in Philadelphia (Rev. 3:10 ), . . . the Holy Spirit goes out of the world in the sense that He came into it at Pentecost.30

This was precisely Paul’s point in his letter to the Thessalonians. Some of them thought that they had already entered the Day of the Lord, but Paul reassures them that this could not be the case for the man of sin must first be revealed and he will not be revealed until the Restrainer has been taken out of the way. The Thessalonian believers would be “gathered together” to Christ before the man of sin would be revealed.

Since the ministry of the Holy Spirit includes indwelling believers and working through the church, then ἐκ μέσου γένηται [*ek mesou genētai*] (“taken out of the way”) could possibly refer to the removal of the Holy Spirit through the removal of the church in the pretribulational rapture. Since the passage concerns the gathering of believers, this cryptic apocalyptic reference to the Spirit, who indwells the church, is probably in view. This would be an encouragement to the Thessalonian believers to stop being alarmed about any false teaching on the Day of the Lord.31

Who or what is restraining the satanically empowered movement against God’s law and is postponing the revelation of the man of sin? Some say it is the Roman Empire. But the empire has long vanished and “the holder back” is not yet revealed. Another suggestion is that this is Satan, but it is difficult to see why he would hold back sin. Others suggest that human governments are holding back sin and the revealing of the Antichrist. But human governments will not end prior to the Antichrist’s unveiling. Nor do all governments restrain sin; many encourage it! The Holy Spirit of God is the only Person with sufficient (supernatural) power to do this restraining. Some object to this being the Holy Spirit on the grounds that to *katechon* in 2 Thessalonians 2:6 is neuter (“what is holding back”). But this is no problem for two reasons: (a) The neuter is sometimes used of the Holy Spirit (John 14:26; 15:26; 16:13-14). (b) In 2 Thessalonians 2:7 the words are masculine: *ho katechōn*, the one who . . . holds it back. How does He do it? Through Christians, whom He indwells and through whom He works in society to hold back the swelling tide of lawless living. How will He be taken out of the way? When the church leaves the earth in the Rapture, the Holy Spirit will be taken out of the way in the sense that His unique lawlessness-restraining ministry through God’s people will be removed (cf. Gen. 6:3). The removal of the Restrainer at the time of the Rapture must obviously precede the day of the Lord. Paul’s reasoning is thus a strong argument for the pretribulational Rapture: the Thessalonians were not in the Great Tribulation because the Rapture had not yet occurred.32

Many suggestions have been made to identify the restraining force of 1Th. 4:6, 7. These include: (1) human government; (2) preaching of the gospel; (3) the binding of Satan; (4) the providence of God; (5) the Jewish state; (6) the church; (7) the Holy Spirit; and 8) Michael. Whatever now restrains the Antichrist of 1Th. 4:3, 4, 8-10 from being revealed in the fullness of his apostasy and evil, must be more than human or even angelic power.33

The restraint which has withheld the revelation of Antichrist all these years involves both the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. Some understand the neuter τὸ κατέχον [*to katechon*], (“*what* is restraining”) as denoting the Word of God, whereas ὁ κατέχων [*ho katechōn*], (“*He* who now restrains”) denotes the Holy Spirit. If so, the former may be the *means* by which the later *agent* performs His ministry through the Church.

Regarding the association of the Holy Spirit with the gospel, it might be said that neither the Spirit nor the gospel (or the Word of God) operate independently of each other. This is true of Creation when God spoke and the Spirit hovered over the waters (Gen. 1:1-3). The gospel came in power and in the Holy Spirit (1Th. 1:5). Sanctification comes through both the Word and the Spirit (cf. Ps. 119:9, 11; 1Th. 4:8; 2Th. 2:13; 2Ti. 3:16-17). The sword of the Spirit is the Word of God (Eph. 6:17).34

For a more detailed discussion of the identity of the Restrainer, see [Pentecost, *Things to Come: A Study in Biblical Eschatology*, 259-263] and [Powell, *The Identity of the “Restrainer” in 2 Thessalonians 2:6-7*].

##### 4.14.4.3 - How were People Saved before Pentecost?

We pause here to reiterate the point made earlier: people have *always* been saved by spiritual regeneration, being “born of the Spirit” (John 3:5-6). Yet John made it clear that the Holy Spirit “had not yet been given” prior to the Day of Pentecost (John 7:39). The new ministry of the Spirit which began on the Day of Pentecost was not that of *regeneration*, but of *baptism into the**Body of Christ* (1Cor. 12:13). *Prior to the Day of Pentecost, believers were never baptized into the Body of Christ. Therefore, the Body of Christ is a new and unique organism ministering in Christ’s absence during the present age.*

##### 4.14.4.4 - How are People Saved in the Tribulation?

When the Holy Spirit, as the Restrainer, is taken out of the way, the Body of Christ will go with Him, *but He will still minister on the**earth to save**souls during the**Tribulation to follow*. In the same way He participated in regenerating people *prior* to Pentecost, so will He *after* the Rapture.

From this chapter (Rev. 7 ) it should be evident that the Holy Spirit will be still at work in the Tribulation, for the work of regeneration is His particular ministry. While the work of restraining evil is removed, allowing the Antichrist to begin his evil rise to power, the Holy Spirit Himself will still be in the world and will have an active ministry. While He will no longer be baptizing (for that is a special ministry for the Church only), He will be performing some of His other ministries, such as regeneration, filling, sealing, etc. In all this, the second purpose of the Tribulation will be accomplished: that of bringing about a worldwide revival.35

For further discussion of the role of the Holy Spirit during the Tribulation, see [Pentecost, *Things to Come: A Study in Biblical Eschatology*, 263-274].

#### 4.14.5 - Is all Tribulation the Same?

Critics of a pretribulational rapture point to many verses which indicate that Christians will undergo tribulation—as is also demonstrated by experience (Mat. 13:21; Mark 4:17; John 16:33; Rom. 5:3; 8:35; 2Cor. 1:4; 7:4; Rev. 1:9 ). They rightly argue that tribulation refines the saints and develops their character. They conclude that the Church must go through the time of God’s wrath in order to prove and refine the saints of the end time. However, Revelation 3:10  contradicts this view because it indicates that the purpose of the Tribulation is to test the *earth dwellers*, not the Church.

Also, there is an important difference between general tribulation which is the result of Satan and a sinful world (Mat. 24:21, 29; Mark 13:19; Rev. 7:14 ) and tribulation which is the result of the outpouring of God’s wrath on an unbelieving world (Ps. 2:12; Isa. 13:9, 13; 63:3; Jer. 10:10; Rev. 6:16-17 ; 11:18 ; 14:8-10 ; 19 ; 15:1 , 7 ; 16:17 , 19 ; 19:15 ). It is the Lamb Himself who opens the seven seals which lead to the events of the seven trumpets and seven bowls (Rev. 6:1 ). It is the bridegroom who initiates the events which trigger the Tribulation of the end! Will the bridegroom pour out *His wrath* upon His own bride? Scripture says no!36 (See *Church Betrothed to Christ*.) The Church will be kept from the “hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth” (Rev. 3:10 ). The Church is kept not from the *trial*, but from the very *hour* of trial (see commentary on *Revelation 3:10*).

Many additional verses indicate that the Church is not appointed to endure *God’s wrath*, that it will be exempted from this *time period* (Luke 21:36; Rom. 5:9; 1Th. 1:10; 5:9). Although some saints in history have been kept *through* times of tribulation (e.g., Noah’s family in the Ark, Israel at the Passover), others were kept *from* God’s judgment (e.g., Enoch prior to Noah’s flood, Lot and his daughters in Sodom). In the case of the Church, as Christ’s bride she is not appointed to wrath, but like Enoch will “walk with God” for God will “take her” (cf. Gen. 5:24).

#### 4.14.6 - Delivered from the Wrath to Come

Some have understood Paul’s teaching concerning the delivery of believers from the “wrath to come” (1Th. 1:10) as describing their exemption from the wrath of judgment which unbelievers will undergo for rejecting Christ (John 3:18-19, 36). But everywhere in Scripture, the benefits of redemption are fully and immediately applied at the time of redemption. Believers *have* eternal life (John 3:15; Acts 13:48; 1Jn. 5:13). The *wrath to come* does not speak of the potential judgment of believers which has already been averted by their saving faith, but the “hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth” (Rev. 3:10 ).

Much more then, **having now been justified** by His blood, we **shall be saved** from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. (Rom. 5:9-10) [emphasis added]

The justification is *present tense* and entirely complete. The believer stands totally and completely justified the moment he comes to faith. The wrath here is *future*.

The wrath of God here [1Th. 1:10] is future, and hence, cannot refer to the general wrath of God against sin which is a present reality. This wrath is future. While Hell and the Lake of Fire are also future, they cannot be what this passage is referring to. By virtue of salvation, the believer is already redeemed from Hell. . . . the wrath that the Church is being delivered from is the wrath of the Great Tribulation. He is coming for the specific purpose of delivering the Church from the wrath to come, namely, the Tribulation period.37

The salvation spoken of here [1Th. 5:9] is future, and so cannot be soteriological, which is a present reality. The salvation here is eschatological, referring to the redemption of the body which will occur at the Rapture. It is this salvation that the Church has been appointed to and not to the wrath of the Day of the Lord.38

#### 4.14.7 - The Church and the book of Revelation

Some note that although the term “church” (εκκλησία [*ekklēsia*]) is not found in chapters 6-18 of the book of Revelation, “saints” (ἁγίων [*hagiōn*], Rev. 13:7 ) are frequently the subject of the events of the Tribulation period. Yet this does not prove that the *Church* is present at that time because *saints* is a generic term which describes believers of all ages. And as we have already discussed, saints of the present Church age enjoy a unique relationship by virtue of the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost which differentiates them from saints of other ages, including the Tribulation period.

The fact that saints are found in the Tribulation does not prove that the Church is there any more than the existence of saints in the Old Testament proves that the Church was there. It has already been shown that the Church began at Pentecost with the baptizing ministry of the Holy Spirit. Thus, the Old Testament saints are not part of the Church. In the same way, the existence of saints in the Tribulation does not prove that the Church is there either, and not even once are they called the Church. The Church, as such, is never mentioned in any passage dealing with the Tribulation. . . . in chapters 6-18 [of the book of Revelation], which deal with the Tribulation period itself, the Church is not even mentioned once. This is most unusual in light of the prominence of the Church in the chapters dealing with events prior to and after the Tribulation. . . . This is only an argument from silence, but within the structure of the book of Revelation it is a powerful case indeed. From the viewpoint of pure exposition, it is impossible for anyone to turn to a Tribulation passage and to show that the Church is there.39

#### 4.14.8 - The Timing of the Rapture

Although there are a variety of views as to *when* the Church is caught away to be with Christ, we believe the Scriptures indicate a catching away of the saints *prior to* the Tribulation or 70th week of Daniel (Dan. 9:24-27 ).

There are expositors who argue that Revelation supports a pretribulational rapture of the church. They cite the following arguments: (1) the promise of exemption from tribulation that was given to the church of Philadelphia (Rev. 3:10 ); (2) John’s spiritual translation to heaven as [a typological] indication of the Rapture (Rev. 4:1-2 ); (3) the presence of the twenty-four elders in heaven which indicates that the church is removed during the Tribulation (Rev. 4:4 ff); (4) the absence of any reference to the church in Revelation 4 -18 ; (5) the marriage supper of the Lamb coming down with Christ at His Second Coming (Rev. 19:7-9 ); (6) The complete absence of any statement of rapture in the closing days of the Tribulation.40

Additional reasons for a pretribulational rapture include: (7) the Jewish focus of Daniel’s 70th week in light of the distinctions made between the Church and Israel (Rom. 11:25-26);41 (8) the imminent coming of Christ for His Church precludes prophetic views42 which hold that events such as the revealing of Antichrist or the signing of the seven-year covenant take place *before* the Rapture (Dan. 9:27 ; 2Th. 2:1-4); (9) the Church is everywhere instructed to watch for *Christ* but never *Antichrist* (Tit. 2:13);43 (10) believing sheep (which would have been caught up in a posttribulation rapture) are found upon the earth at Christ’s coming (Mat. 25:31).

#### 4.14.9 - Typology and the Rapture

It is a well-established fact that Scripture contains typology—passages which do not explicitly teach doctrine, but which provide “hints” concerning aspects of God’s plans and actions. For example, Christ points to the incident where Moses raises a serpent on a pole (Num. 21:9) as a type (*demonstration or model*) of His crucifixion (John 3:14-16). Although the doctrine of the crucifixion cannot be taught from the passage in Numbers, *by God’s design* the correlation between the incident of the serpent on a pole and the crucifixion is meant to be instructive and worthy of study:

|  |
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| **Example of Biblical Typology: Moses and the Serpent on a Pole (Num.****21)** |
| **Type (Model)** | **Antitype (Fulfillment)** |
| The Israelites were bitten by serpents resulting in death (Num. 21:6). | Adam and Eve, and by extension all of mankind, were “bitten by Satan” resulting in the curse of death (Gen. 3:1, 19). |
| Moses lifted up the serpent on a *pole* (Num. 21:9). | Jesus was lifted up on a *tree* (Acts 5:30). |
| Moses placed a *serpent* on the pole (Num. 21:9). | Jesus was nailed to the cross. God made Him who knew no sin *to be sin* for us (Isa. 53:6, 10; 2Cor. 5:21). |
| Merely *looking on* the serpent on the pole provided life (Num. 21:9).44 | Merely *trusting in* Jesus on the cross provides life (Isa. 45:22; John 3:16; Rev. 2:7 ). |
| The serpent was *cursed* (Gen. 3:14). | Christ was made a *curse* for us (Gal. 3:13). |
| The serpent deceived man using a tree (Gen. 3:6; Num. 21:9). | Christ *redeemed* man using a tree (Acts 10:39). |
| The serpent, representing sin, was brazen—a metal not consumed by fire, representing judgment (Num. 21:9). | Those who trust in Christ are sinners, but their sin is judged while they themselves are not consumed. |

These are a few examples of the extent to which typology can reveal subtle aspects concerning a related event. Here, the serpent on a pole incident sets forth numerous aspects of the crucifixion of Christ hundreds of years in advance. We could make a similar study of Abraham’s offering of Isaac which models, in advance, the offering of another Son by another Father on the very same mountain (Gen. 22). Or we could point to the book of Ruth and the way in which Boaz, Ruth, and Naomi model Jesus, the Church, and Israel.45

Our point here is to establish the fact that God has embedded within the events of Scripture small “gems” of additional insight into future events for those with eyes to see them. These typological hints cannot be used to teach doctrine, but neither should they be ignored. The student of God’s Word who ignores them is overlooking a mine of riches.

In the case of the Rapture and God’s judgment, we have several typological examples we might note:

	1. Noah’s flood: Enoch was raptured *prior to* the flood. (Noah and his family were *preserved through* the flood.)
	2. Sodom and Gomorrah: Lot and his daughters were rescued prior to judgment. The angels could not destroy Sodom until Lot had been removed (Gen. 19:22).
	3. After the seven letters to the seven churches of chapters 2 and 3 of Revelation, John hears a voice like a trumpet calling him up to heaven (Rev. 4:1  cf. 1Th. 4:16). Thereafter, the Church appears in heaven.
	4. The overcomer at the church of Thyatira is promised “the morning star” (Rev. 2:28 ). The morning star is Christ (Rev. 22:16 ). The morning star rises near the end of the long night, *before the night has run its course* and before the dawn. The night is the current age. The day is the millennial reign of Christ. The morning star will appear to those who watch for Him before the night concludes (Heb. 9:28).These examples vary from somewhat simple and compelling (the rapture of Enoch prior to the flood) to complex and tenuous (the morning star) and are by no means exhaustive. On their own, they are mere hints or possibilities. But when combined with the other factors listed above, they reinforce the teaching that a category of believers—those who “walk with Him,” His own *Body of Christ*—will be taken up before He pours forth His wrath in judgment upon “those who dwell upon the earth.”

Postribulationalists reject this conclusion, contending there is no reason why Christians in the last generation deserve to escape the great tribulation. The fact is, however, that Christians in every other generation have escaped the great tribulation, so there is no reason why the last should be singled out for participation in it.46

#### 4.14.10 - Additional Resources on the Rapture

For those who wish to study the issues surrounding the Rapture in greater detail, we suggest the following resources:

	* Ice, Thomas and Timothy Demy. *The Return*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1999.47
	* Ice, Thomas and Timothy Demy. *When The**Trumpet Sounds*. Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1995.48
	* LaHaye, Tim. *The Rapture*. Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2002.49
	* Pentecost, J. Dwight. *Things To Come: A Study In Biblical Eschatology* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1958.50
	* Ryrie, Charles C. *Come Quickly, Lord Jesus*. Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1996.51
	* Showers, Renald E. *Maranatha, Our Lord Come*. Bellmawr, NJ: Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, 1995.52
	* Stanton, Gerald B. *Kept From The**Hour*, 4th ed. Miami Springs, FL: Schoettle Publishing Co., Inc., 1991.53
	* Walvoord, John F. *The Rapture Question*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1979.54Resources which discuss the pre-wrath rapture position include:

	* Fruchtenbaum, Arnold G. *A Review of the Pre-Wrath Rapture of the Church*. Tustin, CA: Ariel Ministries, n.d.
	* McClean, John A. “Another Look at Rosenthal’s ‘Pre-Wrath Rapture.’ ” *Bibliotheca Sacra*55
	* Rosenthal, Marvin. *The Pre-Wrath Rapture of the Church*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1990.
	* Showers, Renald E. *The Pre-Wrath Rapture View*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2001.
	* Stanton, Gerald B. “A Review of the Pre-Wrath Rapture of the Church.” *Bibliotheca Sacra*56We do not advocate the pre-wrath rapture position because we believe it suffers from numerous problems—including the denial of an imminent return of Christ for His Church.

**For those of us who may be bedazzled or dazed by the current blizzard of alternate theories, positions, and prophetic perspectives blowing our way, there is a simple****test we can use to check for truth. It involves one word: *Imminence*. What does the purveyor of a new, novel, or absurd approach to end-times events have to say about the****imminent return of Christ, which the Scriptures declare to be the watchword of the church? Any proposition that ignores, delays, or mutilates the clear****meaning of the word and the way in which the early church understood *imminence*—the any-moment return of Christ—should be immediately discredited**.57

https://www.spiritandtruth.org/teaching/Book\_of\_Revelation/commentary/htm/topics/rapture.html#4.14 [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Please see webpage

<https://www.spiritandtruth.org/teaching/Book_of_Revelation/commentary/htm/intro/themes.html#2.4.3> for

footnotes to this endnote.

While it seems tempting to identify a primary theme of the book of Revelation, it appears that there are actually a number of themes which receive great emphasis within the book: ***the sovereignty of God*, *worship of God*, and *the arrival of God’s Kingdom*.**

**2.4.1 - The Sovereignty of God**

One the most prevalent doctrines throughout Scripture is the sovereignty of God (Job 9:17; 33:13; Ecc. 3:14; Isa. 46:10-11; Mat. 10:29; Eph. 1:11) and the book of Revelation is no exception. Within the book of Revelation, God’s sovereignty is *demonstrated* by His powerful intervention in the events of history. From the opening of the first seal by the Lamb (Rev. 6:1 ) to the pouring forth of the seventh bowl, whereupon God pronounces “It is done!” (Rev. 16:17 ), it is manifestly clear that the physical and spiritual events which transpire are the direct result of God’s initiative.

This sovereign might is seen in the incredible use of ἐδόθη [*edothē*] ( . . . “was given”), a divine passive that points to God’s control of the events. This verb is used frequently in the book (Rev. 6:2, 4, 8, 11; 7:2; 8:2, 3; 9:1, 3, 5; 11:1, 2; 12:14; 13:5, 7, 14, 15; 16:8 ) and is especially clustered in the passages on the four horsemen (Rev. 6:1-8 ) and the activities of the beast (Rev. 13:5-15 ). In other words, even the actions of the forces of evil are controlled by God. Everything they do comes only by the permission of God.1

The very descriptions of God throughout the book emphasize the immutability of His purposes, which presents a threat to those who oppose Him but provides ultimate security for those who trust in Him.

Revelation presents a sovereign God whose purposes must be victorious. He is almighty (Rev. 1:8 ), everlasting (Rev. 4:8 ), seated upon the throne of the universe (Rev. 4:2 ), the Creator of all things (Rev. 4:11 ). His authority is greater than that of evil (Rev. 12:10 ), and His name is the security of those who trust in Him (Rev. 14:1 ).2

The sovereignty of God is manifest in the visions of heaven and His throne, an image which occurs some forty-six times in the book.3God’s sovereign control is illustrated by His role as Creator (Rev. 3:14 ; 4:11 ; 10:6 ) and the necessity of His sustenance for its continuance (Rev. 20:11 ; 21:1 ).4

**2.4.2 - Worship of God**

The first question of the *Westminster Confession* asks: “What is the chief and highest end of man?” To which the following answer is given: “Man’s chief and highest end is to **glorify God**, and fully to enjoy him forever.” [emphasis added] Like God’s sovereignty, the theme of God’s glory stretches from Genesis to Revelation. His manifest presence among His people is represented by His abiding glory (*shekinah*, Ex. 14:10; 16:10; 24:15-16; 40:34; Lev. 9:23; Num. 14:10; 16:19, 42; 20:6; 2Chr. 7:1; Isa. 4:5; 35:2; 40:5; Eze. 1:28; 3:23; 9:3; 10:18; Acts 9:3 ).

Here in the last book of the Bible, God’s glory is seen through the visions and choruses of worship and praise offered up to God. From the first chapter, the glory of God and John’s response are clearly revealed (Rev. 1:17 ).

Worship is one of [the book’s] strongest emphases. The first vision of the book brought the writer prostrate before the figure of the living Christ who appeared to him on Patmos. Through the long series of visions that followed there are repeated references to worship. . . . The implication of the book is that worship is a token of the genuineness of spiritual life now. The contrast between the saved and the lost in Revelation could be called a contrast in worship, since the latter worship the beast (Rev. 13:4 , 8 , 12 , 15 ). Man is made to worship someone, and if he will not have the true God, he will inevitably turn to a false idol.5

Tenney notes the importance of worship in an ongoing celestial commentary of the events transpiring on earth below.6

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| --- |
| Poetic Expressions of Praise |
| Title | Passage | Participants | Occasion |
| Tersanctus: “Holy, holy, holy” | Rev. 4:8  | Living Creatures | Constant worship |
| “Worthy art Thou” in Creation | Rev. 4:11  | Twenty-four Elders | Worship by Elders |
| “Worthy art Thou” in Redemption | Rev. 5:8-10  | Living Creatures and Elders | Lamb’s assumption of rights |
| “Worthy is the Lamb” | Rev. 5:11-12  | Angels, Living Creatures, Elders | Lamb’s assumption of rights |
| “Unto him that sitteth” | Rev. 5:13  | Every created thing | Lamb’s assumption of rights |
| “Salvation unto our God” | Rev. 7:9-10  | Great multitude | Sealing of 144,000 |
| “Amen. Blessing. . .” | Rev. 7:11-12  | Angels | Sealing of 144,000 |
| “The kingdom of the world” | Rev. 11:15  | Great voices | Seventh angel |
| “We give thee thanks” | Rev. 11:16-18  | Elders | Seventh trumpet |
| “Great and marvellous” | Rev. 15:2-4  | Victors over Beast | Seven last plagues |
| “Four Hallelujahs” | Rev. 19:1-8  | Great multitude, Elders, Living Creatures, Great voices | Fall of Babylon, Marriage of Lamb |

Whenever the reader is tempted to focus on the enormity of the events transpiring on the earth below, the scene shifts to the heavens above, the ultimate source of what is transpiring, and the destination of the glory derived from all that transpires in His creation. “No matter how many parentheses and digressions may be introduced, the Revelation maintains the celestial setting for terrestrial events. Behind the changing panorama of human history described under the symbolic pictures abides the unchanging reality of an eternal world in which God’s purpose is unfailing and His Christ victorious.”7

The importance of glory and its expression through worship is also evident in the degree to which Satan parodies God in a short-lived attempt to subvert God’s glory for himself.

Indeed, everything Satan does is a parody or “great imitation” of what God has already done. The mark of the beast (Rev. 13:16-17 ) in the right hand or forehead is a mere copy of God sealing the saints in the forehead (Rev. 7:3 ). The false trinity (the dragon, beast, and false prophet, Rev. 16:13 ) is an obvious copy of the triune Godhead. The mortal wound that is healed (Rev. 13:3 , 12 ) imitates the death and resurrection of the Lord. The dragon giving the beast his power; throne, and “great” authority (Rev. 13:2 ) copies the relationship between God and Christ. The demand for the nations to worship the beast and dragon (Rev. 13:8 , 14-15 ) follows the constant commands in Scripture to worship God.8

Here in the book of Revelation the attempt of the *creature* to occupy the role of the *Creator* comes to its vain conclusion (Isa. 14:13-14; Mat. 4:9; Luke 4:7; Rev. 13:4 , 8 , 12 , 15 ; 14:11 ; 16:2 ; 19:20 ). Near the close of the book, the angel informs John and those who would read or hear this prophecy that it is *God* Who alone is to be worshiped (Rev. 22:9 ).9

**2.4.3 - The Arrival of God’s Kingdom**

When the New Testament opens, we find John the Baptist preaching, “Repent, for the **kingdom** of heaven is at hand” (Mat. 3:2) [emphasis added]. Later, when John was imprisoned, Jesus too preached, “the gospel of the **kingdom** of God” (Mark 1:14). During this time of Jesus’ early ministry while his disciples *had no understanding of His destiny on the cross*, they too announced, “The **kingdom** of heaven is at hand” (Mat. 10:7) [emphasis added]. At the time of these early pronouncements, there is no additional explanation given to the hearers concerning the nature of this kingdom. It is evident that these pronouncements were in keeping with the expectations set forth by the very promises of God in the Old Testament. Promises which would have been familiar to the “lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Isa. 49:5; Mat. 10:5-6; 15:24; Mark 7:27; John 1:11; Acts 10:36).

Thus, read in the light of its evident Old Testament context, the phrase ‘kingdom of heaven’ does not refer to a kingdom located in heaven as opposed to the earth, but rather to the coming to earth of a kingdom which is heavenly as to its origin and character.10

After the religious leaders of the Jews committed the ultimate sin of blaspheming the Holy Spirit by attributing the works of Jesus to demon-possession (Mat. 12:24-31; Mark 3:22, 28-30; Luke 11:15; John 7:20), Jesus began using parables to teach *new truths* concerning this kingdom (Mat. 13, especially Mat. 13:52). An important new truth which Jesus began to reveal was the *delay* before the kingdom of God would come fully on earth: “Now as they heard these things, He spoke another parable, because He was near Jerusalem and **because they thought the kingdom of God would appear immediately**” (Luke 19:11) [emphasis added]. 11

When the disciples asked Jesus how to pray, His example included a petition to the Father to bring about His kingdom *on earth* (Mat. 6:10).12Later, Jesus told His disciples that in the “regeneration” they would sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Mat. 19:28). Immediately prior to his ascension, the disciples asked about the coming of the kingdom: “Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6). Jesus never corrected this expectation of the kingdom of God on earth, but indicated that the *timing* of its arrival was yet future and that in the meantime a special period of time characterized by the permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit to move the gospel across the world was the more immediate task (Acts 1:7-8).

Jesus had just been speaking for forty days of the kingdom of God (Acts 1:4), and no doubt the content of his discussions prompted this question. Christ’s answer must not be understood to be a denial of the hope reflected in this question, a hope firmly founded upon the provisions of the Davidic Covenant and the predictions of the prophets (Isa. 11:11; 55:3), but a confirmation of it. If the disciples were mistaken in this hope, this would have been a most opportune time to correct them, but Christ did not (John 14:2; 20:29; Rom. 15:8). Yet, misunderstanding this, many expositors have gone far astray in their understanding of the prophetic plan of God revealed in Scripture. Misunderstanding on this point is virtually fatal to understanding Biblical prophecy as a whole.13

This last book of the Bible includes key events related to God’s kingdom coming *to earth* and its extension into the eternal state. The King extends His rightful rule over all the nations (Rev. 12:5 ; 19:15 ). Here is recorded the final defeat of the kingdoms of man (Ps. 2:1-2; Dan. 2:34-35 , 44-45 ; Rev. 1:5 ; 19:15-21 ), the ushering in of the Millennial Kingdom on earth (Rev. 11:15 ; Rev. 20:4 ), the demise of the kingdom of Satan (Rev. 20:2 , 10 ), and the permanent dwelling of the King among His subjects (Rev. 21:3 ; 22:3 ).

Although relatively little is said concerning the *earthy* nature of the Millennial Kingdom in Revelation 20:4 , this is but a small slice of all that God has said concerning this time of peace and great blessing upon the earth: Isa. 2:1-4; 9:7; 11:1-16; 60:1-12; 65:17-25; Jer. 23:3-8; 31:31-40; Eze. 37:15-28; Eze. 44-48; Zec. 8:1-17; 14:8-11; Mic. 4:1-8. That this period cannot refer to the eternal state (Rev. 21 , 22 ) is clear for it includes the continuance of physical birth, (Isa. 65:23), sin (Isa. 60:12; 65:20), and physical death (Isa. 65:20).

The belief in the Messianic Kingdom does not rest on this passage [Rev. 20:4 ] alone. In fact, it hardly rests on it at all. The *basis* for the belief in the Millennial Kingdom is twofold. *First*: there are the unfulfilled promises of the Jewish covenants, promises that can only be fulfilled in a Messianic Kingdom. *Second*: there are the unfulfilled prophecies of the Jewish prophets. . . . The only real contribution that the book of Revelation makes to the knowledge of the Kingdom is to disclose just how long the Messianic kingdom will last—namely one thousand years—for which the term *Millennium* is used. This is the one key truth concerning the Kingdom that was not revealed in the Old Testament.14

See *Millennial Kingdom*.

Tenney identifies three NT principles which receive special emphasis within the Revelation: *judgment*, *redemption*, and the *establishment of the kingdom of God*.

Judgment, redemption, and kingdom are interrelated parts of the public establishment of God’s salvation. Judgments are the fate of the unrepentant and the unredeemed, as the kingdom is the destiny of the redeemed believers. Redemption exempts one from judgment, and makes him ready for the kingdom.15

This redemptive work of God goes beyond the establishment of a *mediatorial* kingdom ruled by Jesus in Jerusalem for one thousand years. It includes the redemption of all that was originally given to man and the restoration of conditions prior to the Fall (Gen. 3:6, 14-19). See the discussion concerning *Genesis and Revelation as Bookends* for more information on the complete restoration brought about through the events recorded in the book of Revelation.

The arrival of God’s kingdom on earth is inseparably linked with the arrival of the King Himself. “The return of Jesus to this earth is the central theme of this book. It will deal with events leading up to, accompanying, and following the Second Coming.”16 The kingdom has no temporal power prior to the Second Coming.17 This emphasis on the imminent coming of Jesus Christ is found in many statements throughout the book (Rev. 1:7 ; 2:25 ; 3:3 , 11 ; 16:15 ; 19:11-16 ; 22:7 , 12 , 20 ). This last book of the Bible amplifies the teaching found throughout the NT that believers are to live in constant expectation of His return.18

**2.4.4 - A Worldwide Revival**

It should not be missed that in accordance with God’s desire that all should come to repentance (2Pe. 3:9), the events of the book of Revelation are intended to serve as a final call to those who God knows will yet respond to the message of the gospel. This can be seen in the special ministries of the 144,000 Jewish servants (Rev. 7 , 14 ), the two witnesses (Rev. 11:3 ), and the angel proclaiming the gospel message worldwide (Rev. 14:16 ). In response to their testimony, a large number of people will come to faith in Christ, although many will be martyred (Rev. 6:9-11 ; 7:13-14 ).19

Those who refuse to respond to the gospel message are shown to be unbending in their rejection of God and without any hint of repentance (Rev. 9:20-21 ; 16:9 , 11 , 21 ). Thus, the events preceding the Second Coming of Christ serve as a global “threshing” where the wheat (believers) is separated from the chaff (unbelievers) by the extreme tests which come upon the world (Luke 21:34-36; Rev. 3:10 ). In our sorrow over the destiny of the chaff, let us not overlook the wheat which is harvested to the glory of God (Rev. 14:14-16 ).

https://www.spiritandtruth.org/teaching/Book\_of\_Revelation/commentary/htm/intro/themes.html#2.4.3

Please see webpage for footnotes to this endnote. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. https://biblehub.com/revelation/4-3.htm [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. https://thebiblesays.com/en/commentary/rev+5:1 [↑](#endnote-ref-4)