

The SCROLL
of REVELATION
given to the
Apostle JOHN

explained by
a servant of God

PART THREE:
“The Things Which Are...”
(in Heaven):
The Throne Room and the Lamb
(4:1-5:14)
January, 2003

2b. The things which are (in heaven) (4-5)

Come up hither. (4:1) Oh the strange work that popular “theologians” have done with chapter 4 , verse 1. In this simple passage, John is addressed by Heaven, and told to come up to heaven for further revelations. Incredible to me is the notion that here, Jesus is actually calling His *entire Church* to Heaven! The statement is made by believers in this interpretation, pre-tribulation rapturists all, that , from this point on, the Church is “absent” in the book of Revelation! And when it is pointed out in several places that *believers are indeed on earth*, the response is made that these believers are really not the “Church” , but “tribulation” saints, whatever that means. A conclusion is made, and facts to the contrary are explained away. This is not good exegesis, to say the least!

Evidence. For those who desire to look at it, the evidence for the **Church** being in the book of Revelation *after* chapter 4 is strong:

1. Definition. First, we assume that by “**Church**” we mean the “**saints**”, or as in Daniel, “holy ones”, a term used over *40 times* by New testament writers to refer to the Body of Christ, the people of God. We also assume we are talking about a people who have been promised by Jesus, Paul, and Peter a life of persecution often ending in martyrdom .

2. Passages that don’t say “Church” but are Church:

5:8, The worshipers in Heaven pour out before God **prayers from the saints**.

6:10-11, **martyrs** are here received to God and told that their fellow-martyrs will soon join them. They have been slain for the Word of God and their testimony.

7: 13 ff, the same **believers** referred to in chapter 6 are now standing before the Throne, having come out of the Great Tribulation by means of martyrdom.

8:4, The **prayers of the saints** are now seen as incense.

12:11, The **same saints** as in 6 and 7 are seen in a flashback in the context of the Beast who persecuted them.

12:17, Those who keep the **commandments of God**, as brother John loved to talk about in his writings (John 12:49-50, 13:34, 14:15,21,31, 15:1-12, I John 2:3-8, 3:22-24, 4:21, 5:3-6, II John 4-6) *and* have the testimony of Jesus Christ, are distinguished here from the persecuted Israelites who are in the process of being hidden and sealed, and therefore unreachable by antichrist. He now vents his fury on the only “saints” left, the Church.

13:7, As in Daniel 7, the man of sin is seen here being given the authority to **conquer the saints**. He overcomes their body, and they overcome him by going straight to Jesus.

14:6, The **everlasting Gospel** is being preached all over the world. I wonder who does this job? A company of angels? The 144,000? Why not the same group that has always preached it?

14:13, Blessed are the dead who **die in the Lord**. To die in the Lord is to be a member of Christ. Members of Christ are the Church.

15:1-4, Singing the song of Moses **and the Lamb**, those who died in the Lord, those who seemingly were conquered by antichrist, now are around the Throne.

16:15, In the worst of the worst hours comes a **message from Heaven**: I am coming. Keep your garments clean! Who is He talking to, if not the Church?

18:4, Also in the midst of devastation, **God’s people are called** out, but not *up*, FIRST. Who are they? The Church!

3. Passages that all persons agree are the “Church” but *still* don’t use that word:

19:7, The marriage is announced. We KNOW this is the Church! But the word “Church” is **not used**.

19:14, The armies of Heaven follow Jesus to earth. Everyone agrees this is the Church. But the word “Church” is **not there!** .

20:4-6, They live and reign with Christ 1000 years. Who? Everyone knows it is the victorious Church. But not by the *word* “Church” .

22:17. Once more, the word **“bride”, not “Church”**.

Neither is the word “church” used in all the Gospels of Mark, Luke, and John. Nor does Paul mention it to Titus. Jude does not mention it at all. What does that mean? Nothing. By the way, Jude uses the word “saints” to say the same concept.

What a **holy people** are described in FOURTEEN out of EIGHTEEN chapters of Revelation, portions which are supposed to be “Church-free”! Who among us is claiming some priority over these saints, some separation from them? Is it only those who have not dug deeply into God’s Book and have rather relied on the shallow teachings of men? Oh, brothers and sisters, these saints are ours!

4. The wrath of God is not for the saints! Paul says God’s people are not appointed to wrath. (I Thessalonians 5:9) Indeed! And 2 chapters before (I Thessalonians 3:3, 4) he tells us to what we ARE appointed in this life: “...that no one should be shaken by these *afflictions* ; for you yourselves know that we are appointed to this. For in fact, we told you before when we were with you that we should *suffer tribulation* just as it happened...” Trouble is a way of life for the believer, and the Lord delivers him out of it all! As to the word “wrath”, God’s anger and judgment on sin: Noah and Lot were on the planet when the wrath fell. Both were kept from it. In the Book of Revelation, the pouring of wrath is reserved for those end-of- all-things manifestations, especially the coming of Jesus, at which time, God’s people will indeed be caught up to be with Him. Other wrathful times, such as the bowl judgments, God’s people are excluded, as were Noah and Lot.

For example, 1) **The bowls**, in which “the wrath of God is complete”, 15:1, are aimed at the men who took the mark (16:2), the sea creatures, the rivers, “men” (16:8) , and the beast’s kingdom (16:9) . Saints are not mentioned, except to warn them to stay clean until the end (16:15). Obviously Christians are not in Heaven here, if God is talking to them on the Earth!

2) When **Babylon** is to be destroyed, God’s people are called out (18:4) for the express purpose of keeping them from her plagues .

And as stated, 3) When Jesus comes to execute the wrath of God by treading the winepress (14:20, 19:15) God’s people are securely with Him.

God has not appointed us to *wrath*. But he has appointed us to TROUBLE.

Having given a Biblical defense for only *one* “second coming” of Jesus, may I simply suggest that **Revelation 4:1 is no different from Revelation 11:12**, where the same statement, “Come up hither!” is made to the “two witnesses.” No one that I know of suggests another rapture there.

So, as you can see by now, I will not be aligning myself in this study with those who have followed the recent teaching of a “**pre-tribulation rapture**.” I align myself rather with the words of Jesus in Matthew 24:29-30, Who said that the gathering of the elect to Himself occurs *after* the tribulation. To quote Him exactly:

“Immediately **after the tribulation** of those days the sun will be darkened...Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in Heaven...”

Such clear language. There is no verse among pre-tribulation theologians that states their case so clearly.

In the following verses of chapter 4, John is graced once more, as in chapter 1, to have a **glimpse of Deity** and those who surround Him. Whereas before, and at the end of the book, Heaven comes to Earth, in these verses John goes to Heaven.

(4:2-3) There is manuscript evidence suggesting that the “**He Who sat there**” of verse 3 could be omitted, making the gem-like attributes to follow a description of the Throne of God, and not of God Himself. The stones mentioned, besides being some of those called for in Aaron’s breastplate (discussed in chapter 21) are likewise found in the make-up of the city (21:11). The city has the glory of God on it, making it seem like these very substances mentioned here. Please understand, further, that the appearance was only “like” the gems. Oh, but our language is too pauperized to describe what John *really* saw!

24 saints (4:4) who have lived on earth but have overcome, are there with Him. If this is twelve apostles and twelve Old Testament saints/prophets, we are faced once more with the possibility that John is seeing himself in the vision. Or we may have to concede that we simply do not know who these twenty-four are.

(4:5) Here is mention of “**lightnings, thunderings, and voices.**” The storm-like quality of the Throne Room, in concert with a myriad of voices, is seen elsewhere: 1) in 8:5, **just before** the sounding of the seven trumpets. This scene seems to be visible on earth, and is accompanied by an earthquake; 2) also see 11:19, 16:18, **just after** the sounding of the trumpets, where all of the above, with hail added, occur. Such drama foretold for the planet as Heaven’s wrath draws near!

We meet again in 4:5 the **Seven Spirits of God**. Please see under 3:1 for explanation.

The “**sea of glass**” **(4:6)**. A “sea” is simply a large body of water, at least large in comparison to the features around it. The Sea of Galilee is large when seen in the context of bodies of water in Galilee. It would not hold up well next to the North Sea. So then, an indoor body of water, such as Solomon set up in his classic Temple, could be considered huge next to a simple waterpot. The description of such a “sea” is found in I Kings 7:23-26. Solomon created a 12,000 gallon cylindrical tank out of cast bronze, 15 feet in diameter, 8 feet high. He then mounted it on 12 sculpted oxen, faces pointing outward in a circle. Later in the chapter is recorded his placement of ten other bronze water containers called “lavens”, five on either side of the Temple.

This spectacular arrangement of purification containers far outdoes the single portable laver made for the tabernacle, though the concept was the same (Exodus 30:21): **Wash or die!** You are dealing with holy things here, and you must be ceremonially clean. All of this was a picture of our own cleansing and the totally perfect priesthood He is making from us. The concept of cleansing of the people of God was an ordinance in Israel, but it originated in Heaven. Ezekiel sees a future temple (Ezekiel 47) from which will flow healing waters. Perhaps the origin of this water is the very sea of glass we are viewing with John. “Glass” because calm and peaceful, but a sea speaking of the living water. And all of it declaring, perhaps, our own cleansing.

ISAIAH 6	EZEKIEL 1,10	JOHN in Revelation 4
called Seraphim	called cherubim & 4 living creatures	called 4 living creatures
6 wings	4 wings	6 wings
2 wings cover face, 2 cover feet, 2 fly	2 wings touch each other, 2 wings cover body	
cry holy		cry holy
take coals from altar	like burning coals	
	each have 4 faces	full of eyes, front and back
	face like man, lion, ox, eagle soles of calves' feet	like man, lion, calf, eagle

The four living creatures (4:6-8) . Four very similar creatures are seen by brother Ezekiel (Ezekiel 1, 10). There they have four wings instead of six. But Isaiah sees creatures with six wings called *seraphim*, whereas Ezekiel's are called *cherubim*. So are these seraphim? Read carefully the passages involved, and compare the characteristics, as I have begun to do in the chart . See what conclusions you reach.

What man among us can describe these awesome ones? It seems **their entire reason for being** is to give praise to God. Their song is recorded for us and we are pointed once more to the Deity of Christ when we compare the song of the living creatures to the words of Paul in Colossians 1:16. The One Who created all things for Himself and by Himself is none other than our Lord Jesus Christ, One with the Father.

(4:9-11) The end of this chapter also records a heavenly song. This one is sung by the twenty-four elders, the ones we have believed are representing the people of God through the years. It is sung as **a response to the song of the seraphim and cherubim**. Now, if the living creatures are singing praise day and night, then the twenty-four elders are responding day and night. That's what Heaven does to a person. When that heavenly vision becomes more and more a part of who we are, we too will be people of constant worship. Is it not then true that the **creation of humans** was for a similar purpose to that of the seraphim and cherubim? We will see the answer to this as the people of God arrive in Heaven throughout the Book. We were made for His glory! Is this not Peter's conclusion in I Peter 2:9? We are chosen, royal, and holy, yes, but in order that we may "proclaim the praises of Him Who called you..."

In chapter 5 we are introduced to the "Book" which in one sense IS the "Book of Revelation." It is this "Book" , or more accurately, *scroll*, which throws the unwary reader into fits of confusion and dismay. Some finally give up and say, "Not for me." But it is for us, and a blessing is placed, recall, on *all* readers in 1:3: "Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it..."

The scroll (5:1) has writing on the inside and out, as did the one which Ezekiel (Ezekiel 2:9, 10) received. But unlike Ezekiel's scroll, this one is sealed, and cannot be opened by just anyone. In fact, a challenge is issued to heaven and earth **(5:2)**. Does anyone dare step forward and unlock the mysteries of God? Can anyone see what will take place in

the far-flung future? Is there a glimmer of understanding in all of creation about the ultimate purposes of Heaven? A resounding silence follows (5:3), a silence so long and so threatening as to bring tears of dismay and confusion to the waiting apostle (5:4). He has seen the Scroll, and heard the invitation go unheeded. Has John been caught up in Heaven's priorities so much that he realizes the import of that Book? More to the point for us, do we weep when the seals are not opened to us? Do we struggle and cry and pray and beg God to give us grace to understand the things which shall surely come to pass? The seals have been *opened!* The Revelation is before us! Blessed is he who cares enough to dig into its depths!

Regarding **the elders (5:5)**. This is the very term, *presbuteros*, that John applies to himself in his 2nd and 3rd epistles. Is John one of them later? The actions and words of these persons seem to point to human qualities. In 5:5, an elder is John's personal comforter. In 7:13, "one of the elders" is his educator, quizzing him on a portion of the vision he experiences. Nearly every other time we see these "elders", they are worshipping prostrate before the Throne of God. (4:10, 5:8, 5:11, 5:14, 7:11, 11:16, 19:4)

The Lamb (5:6), also here called the *Lion*, is announced as the One worthy to open the seals, and He steps forward, (5:7). Let me say for the first time here that *all* of the rest of Revelation is included in the seven seals. The trumpets, the bowls, all the background information, is a part of "the scroll." In fact, by the time the 7th seal is opened (8:1), the Scroll of Revelation is finished. All else in the chapters that follow is background, commentary and detail.

As to the One who will open the seals, the Lamb: He has **seven horns**. (5:6) In the coming animals of Revelation, as well as the past revelations of Daniel, the presence and number of horns on an animal has great significance, and can usually be traced to a nation or nations. For example, the 10 horns on Daniel's "4th beast" and John's "beast from the sea" are clearly an end-time amalgamation of nations arising from the long-sleeping Roman Empire. But the Lamb has horns also. Seven. The Dragon we will meet later has a similar array. Those Satanic seven horns are said to be the Empires of all time. But one day ALL the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ! Seven, as in seven days, and seven Spirits and seven angels, is a number indicating the perfection of an event or a series. Jesus rules all.

The Lamb also has **seven eyes**. We are told that the eyes and the **seven spirits** are the same. Now, we have seen the "seven spirits" enough times as to be forming a clear conclusion about their nature. Please review the discussion on 1:4 above, but consider also the mention in 3:1 and 4:5. Taking all four passages together (the only ones in this or any other Book that clearly mention "seven spirits"), we find the following:

1. The seven spirits are **before God's Throne**, that is, have instant and constant access to God. (1:4)
2. They are **dispensers of grace** that seem to have authority from Father and Son. (1:4)
3. **Jesus "has" these spirits** in a similar way that he "has" the "stars" or messengers of the churches. They both are in His hand. (3:1) In Hebrews 12:9, God is called the Father of spirits. God has created and given to His Son all power over things in Heaven and earth.
4. They are equated to **lamps of fire** burning before the Throne. (4:5) See Hebrews 1:7, where God says that He makes His angels spirits and His ministers a flame of fire.
5. They are equated to the **seven eyes** in the Lamb (5:6) This strange expression is from Zechariah 3:9 ff, where the High Priest Joshua, in filthy clothing, is made clean, even as our

Joshua is made into our righteousness. Before him is laid a stone with seven eyes carved on it. Zechariah 4:10 says “These seven..are the eyes of the Lord, which scan to and fro throughout the whole earth.” (See also II Chronicles 16:9 in this connection.)

6. They are **sent into all the earth** (5:6) This connects, in my thinking, to Hebrews 1:14, “Are they [angels] not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister...?”

I definitely lean here to the seven spirits being **angels**, but would be interested in hearing other Biblically-based arguments.

“He” (5:7) - Jesus - takes the scroll from **“Him”**- the Father- and then “He”, like the One on His Throne (4:9) begins to receive praise! Who but God Himself can be thus worshiped? (see 5:8-10, 12-14). After the Lamb takes the Scroll the focus of the chapter is on **the Revelator**, not the Revelation! May it be so with us as we read. Let us join in the praise songs that follow, often and with a whole heart. Jesus is **worthy** to tell our future for He made our future happen! He was slain. He redeemed us. He elevated us. The word *worthy* in 4:11, 5:9, 5:12 is the English word whence comes “worthship” or *worship*. The heart of true praise is not how we feel or what praise will do for us, but rather His eternal worth coupled to our eternal acknowledgement of it.

The rest of chapter 5 (8-14) is a scene of **incredible overwhelming praise** to the Lamb.

Of harps and harpists (5:8) . Notice first that all the main worshipers have a harp and know how to play it! It was Jubal (Genesis 4:21) who created this wonderful instrument. He is called the “father of those who play the harp.” We see harpists and harps all throughout the days of the patriarchs (Job 30:31, Genesis 31:27) and the Kings, especially the sweet Psalmist of Israel himself, King David. Several of his Psalms and those of the sons of Korah and also of Asaph mention the harp. David even set aside certain special people in his kingdom to play it and prophesy (I Chronicles 25:1-3) ! The harp was known to the school of unnamed prophets of I Samuel 10:5, as well as seers Isaiah and Daniel. One prophecy of Isaiah suggests (24:8) that the harp will be with us to the end of time, as it indeed has been through the centuries in one form or another. Its broader family includes harpsichord and piano. In Revelation we are introduced to the heavenly edition of harps, “harps of God” (15:2). One wonders what those who refrain from instrumental music in the church will do when confronted with such a thing in the New Jerusalem.

Of prayers of the saints .God said “of” not “to”. But one need not try to cover up that the prayers coming from earth saints are somehow in the presence of saints gone before us. Those same prayers are seen in the presence of angels in chapter 8. The angel, not the elder, finally sends that prayer “up” on the altar before the Throne (8:3-4). Now, nowhere is a believer ever told to pray to a deceased Christian. We pray to the Father, through the Son. But here is a behind-the-scenes look at the Heavenly postal system. It is only a glimpse, mind you, and no theology ought to be formed around it, but know that angels and saints above are at the very least aware of our struggles and needs. The Kingdom to which we belong is a family and God’s heart is shared liberally with all His own, both here and there. Truly in coming to Jesus we have come to “Mount Zion... the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven...” (Hebrews 12:22-23)

As for the **new song (5:9)** here and in 14:2-3, it is the song of redemption, glorifying Jesus for His actions. It is a praise of the NEW covenant, the NEW birth. All things are new in

Christ Jesus, Who takes away the old forever.

Next is proclaimed the **coming authority and priesthood of all** the redeemed, (5:10). The reign on earth that is to come is by those who will serve as intermediaries in the new world order. There is a sense in which we do this now, interceding on behalf of a lost world, begging God to send forth laborers into the harvest. God has always had a true priesthood in the world and always will. The Old Covenant priesthood of Aaron was true in form but was only a preview and a picture of the true priesthood of Melchizedec (Genesis 14:18 ff), our King of Righteousness. And we cannot forget that in our day the false Babylonian/Roman priesthood is being mixed in with the true.

5:11 speaks of the **enormity** of what John was privileged to see. He starts with a “ballpark” figure of one hundred million heavenly beings, but soon abandons that number for a broad “thousands of thousands”. In verse 13 we then see Heaven’s choirs joined to Earth’s in a preview of the anthem that shall fill the universe when “every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess” the Lordship of Jesus (Philippians 2:10). Speculation: Is this universal praise time limited to creatures that *have* knees and tongues and can *speak praises*? Will sea creatures be enabled to worship or are these “creatures” merely humans at sea? Oh I want to be there and see this myself! What glory for Jesus!

See now the **progression of the music festival (5:12)** unfolding. In 4:8 it seems wonderful enough, the four living creatures. They sing a song of God’s holiness. In 4:11 the twenty-four elders respond to their song with a song of their own, of God’s worthiness. In 5:8-9, the two groups are combined to sing a “new song” to Jesus, for what He did. Now, a third group, the billions of angels, add their agreement to Jesus’ worthiness.

Then in **5:13** comes the **grand climax** when every imaginable member of creation, whether in Heaven or Earth, joins in to bless the Lamb *and* the One on the Throne. All of God being worshiped by all He has created all at once! Finally He receives His due. Only now is all well! Only now can we proceed with the opening of seals, the unveiling of the tragedy that shall surely play itself out on this planet. God is on His Throne and will be eventually worshiped by all! Know the outcome of all first, and this little blip in time called Tribulation will be bearable. Soon we will be home to enjoy Eternity and His abiding Presence. Thank God that in this book He reveals *Himself* before and above all that He *does*.

And for those who still need evidence of the absolute **Deity of Jesus**, note that the One who has told us He will share His glory with no one (Isaiah 42:8), is receiving blessing, honor, and GLORY at the same time as is the Lamb, verse 13. Father and Son are One.

The scene ends (5:14) with a great “Amen!” , and as the “lights lower” we leave the twenty-four elders totally and absolutely caught up in praising the Eternal One. Hold that position, brothers and sisters. Difficult times are coming soon.