The Stone Cometh

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Chapter 4

Revelation 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.

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

For those who defend, teach, and support the “rapture” theory, great hope is placed in these verses. In this doctrine, the teaching is that the Lord will “rapture” the church to “heaven” at this point in the revelation. Immediately after that rapture, the judgments of God are poured out upon the earth for a seven-year period of time.

This belief, held in the verse, is basically from two points of reasoning.

First, the voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet is interpreted as the “rapture.” It is linked with the voice and trumpet of 1 Thessalonians 4:16. In Revelation 4:1, the trumpet and voice are from the same Son of man. A look at that verse will help.

Rev 1:10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet (emphasis added)

In 1 Thessalonians 4:16, the shout is from the Lord, but the voice is from the archangel, and the trump is a trump and not a voice. This is obviously not the same event. Here in 4:1 the voice heard is as a trumpet. There is a problem with the voice and trumpet being the “rapture.” This is not the first time that John records about this trumpet voice speaking. As noted, it spoke in 1:10. Why are the voice and the trumpet and the rapture in 4:1 not in 1:10?

This type of interpretation is a serious flaw in the Dispensationalists’ interpretation of Scriptures. This teaching is very inconsistent and often seems to “pull” scriptures out of context to prove a particular doctrinal view. We see this again in the second point used in this passage to prove the Rev. 4:1 rapture theory.

The second point is that the word “church” (ekklesia in Greek) is not found from the end of chapter 3 until the Second Advent of Jesus. Dake says,

“Never are the words ‘church’ or ‘churches’ mentioned in the book after Rev. 3:22 except in the conclusion after the revelation of the ‘things which must be after the church,’ Rev. 22:6-21. If the Church were to be on earth during the Week, it surely would have been mentioned in some connection.”

Phillips says,

“(The church is not mentioned again by name in the book until the postscript at the very end.). The visions of government that are before us now have to do with Israel and the nations -- not the church. God judges the world that crucified his Son, precipitating those climatic events that usher in the end.”

The word ekklesia (church) is not found until 22:16. This supposedly proves the church is not on earth. The church must not be “in heaven” either because the word is not mentioned as being at the throne or in the multitude. Does that mean it is not there? The word is not found in chapter 20 at the viewing of the dragon’s demise. The word ‘church’ is not found as ruling during the thousand years. The doctrine teaches that the church comes again with the Lord, which would be chapter 19 at his Second Coming, but no mention of the church ekklesia is made in chapter 19.

Another interesting point is made by Chilton in The Days Of Vengeance concerning this. He notes that the name “Jesus” is not mentioned from 1:9 until 12:17. Does that mean that because he is not mentioned he is not there?

A much better interpretation and one that follows the context of the Revelation is that the second vision or portrait begins here. To show this John writes, After this... After what? After

---

1 Rev. Finis Jennings Dake, Revelation Expounded, Tenth Printing July 1991, page 54, 55
2 John Phillips, Exploring Revelation, page 81
3 Chilton, Days Of Vengeance, page 147
the first vision of the Son of man in chapters 1-3. Matthew Henry, the great expositor of years prior to the Dispensationalists’ teaching writes,

“After this, that is, not only ‘after I had seen the vision of Christ walking in the midst of the golden candlesticks, but ‘after I had taken his message from his mouth, and written and sent them to the several churches, according to his command, after this I had another vision.”

Notice the vast difference between the interpretation prior to the Dispensationalists of the 1800’s. Swaggart says,

“The words ‘after this’ refer to the time after the rapture of the church. The Greek word is ‘meta tauta’ and it means ‘after the things of the churches’ of Revelation 2-3.”

Swaggart’s interpretation of the Greek words translated “after this” is not exactly accurate. He said “it means ‘after the things of the churches’ of Revelation 2-3.” Below is a word study of the words from the Strong’s Concordance.

Strong's reference number: 3326
Greek: meta
Derivation: A primary primary word.
Definition: accompaniment

Strong's reference number: 5023
Greek: taut
Derivation: Variation of 3778
Definition: these things

Swaggart said meta meant “after.” Actually it means “accompaniment.” According to The American Heritage Dictionary, accompaniment means, “1. Music. A vocal or instrumental part that supports another, often solo, part. 2. Something, such as a situation, that accompanies something else; a concomitant. 3. Something added for embellishment, completeness, or symmetry; complement.”

Swaggart said this meant “after the things of the churches.” We have just discussed the fact that the word ekklesia translated “church” is not found from chapters 3 to 22. How then can those words mean what Swaggart said? Matthew Henry said,

“After this, that is, not only ‘after I had seen the vision of Christ walking in the midst of the golden candlesticks,

but ‘after I had taken his message from his mouth, and written and sent them to the several churches, according to his command, after this I had another vision.”

This is not the “rapture” of the church. It is the Revelation of the Lamb on the throne – another vision. Each major vision of the Jesus Christ in the Revelation begins with in the spirit.

Rev 1:10 I was in the spirit on the Lord’s day. (emphasis added)
Rev 4:2 And immediately I was in the spirit: (emphasis added)
Rev 17:3 So he carried me away in the spirit (emphasis added)
Rev 21:10 And he carried me away in the spirit (emphasis added)

This is the phrase the Spirit uses to divide the book. As discussed in chapter 1:10, John has four great visions, with each vision having its own sub or inner visions. This second great vision is the “Wrath of the Lamb” (6:16). Within the great vision are numerous other visions surrounded by seals, trumpets, and vials (bowls). The seals will bring us the opening and establishing of the New Covenant. The trumpets will bring the preaching of the kingdom of God prior to the destruction of Jerusalem. The vials will bring the judgment of God upon those that pierced Him (1:7).

Also, in this great vision, we have the sub-visions. A few of the sub-visions we will see are the woman in heaven (all who travailed through the ages to bring forth the Son of man), the red dragon (serpent who is the Devil and Satan), the sea beast (Roman Empire), the land beast (Israel), and the image (Caesar worship).

As in the first vision, John hears the same voice opening a door that only he can open. The only way to enter into this place is through that door. Anyone entering any other way is but a thief and a robber (John 10:1). Witches, warlocks, even false religions can enter a dimension of the spirit realm, but those are but thieves and robbers.

The voice commanded John to come. The purpose was to show things which must be. Each week the local assembly should enter the door into a heavenly position.

The primary purpose for the weekly assembly
should be to learn things which must be. As we open the Word of God, we should be constantly learning things which must be.

Hereafter does not seem to be a good translation for the Greek word ταύτα. The definition is “these things” (see discussion 1:19) The word carries a much more imminent meaning rather than a futuristic one. This is important. The things which John is about to be shown are not actually for a distant time. They are an “accompaniment” meta. As we have already seen, they are, in fact to happen shortly and quickly (Rev 1:1; 2:5, 16; 3:11; 11:14; 22:6, 7, 12, 20).

Hereafter is not speaking of a distant day. It actually means “these things.” A more accurate translation for today would be, “After the first vision I looked, and behold, a portal to the heavens opened. The voice I heard in the first vision which was like a trumpet talking to me said, ‘Come up here. I will show you these things which must accompany what you have already seen.’ ”

It must be asked, “What comfort would it be for John’s generation to be told of a cosmic catastrophe which would happen two thousand (or more) years later? What comfort would that be to them, and how in the world could they keep those things which are written in this book? Would not an immediate warning be much more reasonable?”

The first thing John saw in this vision was the throne. John said, …behold a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne. If heaven, in one’s theology, is a far distant place with walls of jasper and streets of gold and gates of pearls, then a tremendous blessing will be missed concerning what the Lord desires for us to understand about heaven. Heaven is the throne of God (Act 7:49).

The word throne is found thirty-nine times in the Revelation alone. An understanding of it is necessary. When the Scriptures speak of the throne of God, it is speaking of a quickening to the understanding of the vast rule and power and authority of God. John was made aware of and shown the awesome authority of God. The throne of God is everlasting (Psa 9:7; 93:2; 45:6; 5:19). The throne is the place of judgment (Psa 47:8; Psa 89:14). The throne is associated with clouds. It is portrayed as being bright, smoky, and amber in appearance. It is heaven (Psa 97:2; Eze 1:4; 1:26; 10:1; Dan 7:9). The Biblical aspect of “going to heaven” is actually going to the throne. The throne is in heaven and heaven is his throne. There is no higher judgment seat (Psa 11:4; 103:19; Isa 66:1) The throne of the Messiah must come through David (Psa 132:11; Isa 9:7).

As previously stated, the word throne is found thirty-nine times in the Revelation alone. Twelve of the uses are found in chapter 4. The throne is the central thought of chapter 4, not the rapture! The words heaven and throne are speaking of a look into perfection. In the Scriptures as heaven opens, perfection is always seen. John is allowed to view perfection. This view of perfection is a Revelation of Jesus Christ. Heaven is not about streets of gold and walls of jasper. Heaven is about the throne, and the throne is about Jesus.
There are no human attributes given to the one that **sat**. It’s a description of beautiful things that reflect the many colors found in light. In the dark, none of these descriptive jewels are beautiful, but when light touches them, they each become beautiful in their own distinct way. This _then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all_ (1 John 1:5).

John is not simply describing his great glory as pretty. This glory is a display of his light in all situations. The glory one needs of God today may not be what is needed tomorrow. What one person needs, may not be what another needs. Yet, no matter what any need, he is all and all. He is any color and glory needed for any situation. **He that sat** is not only white. He is red, but not only red and white. He is blue. He is black. He is yellow. He is brown. He is gold. Even as John attempted to gaze upon Him, it appears He constantly changed in glory as he was being seen.

Once John can remove his eyes from the throne, he noticed things **round about the throne**. There were **twenty-four seats**. In the **seats** were **twenty-four elders sitting**. It is interesting to read whom some say these elders actually are. One prevalent doctrine is that these are angels of superior rank. This is drawn from Revelation 5:9.

This (Rev. 5:9-10) is a song sung by these elders. The word translated “us” in 5:9 and 5:10 is actually better translated “men” and “them.” For example, the NIV version translates this way:

Rev 5:9 And they sang a new song: “You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.

Rev 5:10 You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth.” (emphasis added)

The belief that the **twenty-four elders** are ranking angels comes when the assumption is made that the words are “men” and “them” rather than “us.” The Scriptures never say they are angels.

Actually, it only clarifies whom he redeemed. He redeemed **men** and made **them** kings and priests (which is very important in understanding whom these **twenty-four** are). There is no reference in Scripture to these being angels. No place in Scriptures (Old Testament or New Testament) do the Scriptures refer to angels as elders. Only men are ever referred to as **elders**.

Who then are the **four and twenty elders**? The word _thrónos_ translated _seats_ in verse 4 is the same Greek word _thrónos_ translated _throne_ in the same verse. There is no obvious reason for King James to do this. The **four and twenty elders** were **upon** their own **thrones**. This tells us they were of great authority. They are, in fact, enthroned. That they were of great authority is also shown in the remainder of the verse which says, _...and they had on their heads crowns of gold_. But what did they have authority over? The number **twelve** becomes important here. **Twenty-four** would be a combining of the Old Covenant and the New Covenant with the 12 tribes and the 12 apostles. These are combined in the Lamb’s wife which is the New Jerusalem in the final chapters of Revelation. The 12 tribes are the twelve gates on which the twelve names of the twelve tribes are written. The twelve apostles are the twelve foundations (Rev 21:12-14).

The leaders of the twelve tribes were the authority in the Old Covenant. The leaders of the Church were the 12 apostles of the Lamb and were the authority in the New Covenant. This gives us **twenty-four thrones and elders**. Matthew Henry says of this,

“...**elders**, presbyters, represent the whole church of God, both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament state. This is not the ministers of the church, but rather the representatives of the people. Their sitting denotes their honour, rest, and satisfaction.”  

It is sad that modern theology, which determines modern doctrine, does not and cannot see the church as ruling and reigning with Christ. Modern doctrine would rather talk about “superior angels” upon thrones than to say the church is upon the thrones. As mentioned previously, these **elders** will sing a song in 5:10 that said the Lamb’s redemption _hast made US unto our God kings and priests: and WE shall_
The number **twenty-four** would mean something to John’s readers that it does not mean to us. Under David’s order, the priests were set to minister in **twenty-four** “courses.” Each course was under the leadership of a Levite from the sons of Aaron. These **twenty-four** were scheduled to minister a specific day and time both at and in the temple (1Ch 23:6; 24:4-5; 2Ch 8:14; 1Ch 28:13; 1Ch 24:18-19).

Wycliff Commentary says, “Sixteen and eight. The twenty-four priestly courses (23:6) continued as the basis for rotating the priestly duties down into NT times. Although some of these courses died out or had to be consolidated with others, new ones were formed to take their places.”

This was the order at the temple as John wrote the Revelation. As we will see, that day was ending. That is what this section of the Revelation is about. The ministry to God’s temple will no longer only be by the order of the Levites and the sons of Aaron. In the throne a heavenly ministry of kings and priests unto God minister to the entire earth. This is exactly what the **four and twenty elders** sing in 5:10 because they are the kings and priests. **The four and twenty elders** represent the church that rules as kings upon the earth (thrones) and are priests (twenty-four).

One final note on this verse and these **elders**. They are **clothed in white raiment**. The word leukos translated “white” is used sixteen times in the Revelation. Each use relates to either the saints of God or to the Lord Himself. No use of “white” is ever related to angels of any rank. White is the color of purity and holiness. The true church, Old Covenant and New Covenant, are seen in white raiment or white garments. This **white raiment** is referred to in 19:8 as the righteous acts of the saints (NIV version).

**Revelation 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.

5 As we saw in verse 2 of this chapter, heaven is the Lord’s throne. He makes his throne heaven.

We saw earlier with the throne came the thought of clouds – the glory cloud (Psa 97:2; Eze 1:4). We have the definite showing of the glory cloud here as John speaks of **lightnings and thunderings**.

Here John takes us back to the allusion of the glory cloud that was with Israel at Mt. Sinai. This is the cloud that went with the nation in the wilderness and led them to Canaan. John said **out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices** (Exo 13:21; 19:16-19).

The imagery of the cloud was not foreign to John’s readers. They understood that John was projecting to them that he was standing in the glory cloud before the throne of the Lord God. This sentence is worth repeating. When John went through the door in 4:1, into the Spirit in 4:2, and before the throne in 4:3, he entered the cloud that Moses was in when Moses saw the Tabernacle (Exo 25). It may sound somewhat strange to us to associate the throne and the cloud together. This is because we are not taught about the cloud. John is telling his readers that he was exactly where Moses was when Moses went into the cloud at Sinai (Exo 24:15-18).

Moses went into the cloud to receive instructions for worship (Tabernacle) and will also receive instructions for the law or what we call the Old Covenant. John will now experience what Moses experienced and see what Moses saw.

John confirms this is where he is by seeing **seven lamps of fire burning before the throne**. This would be an allusion to the lampstand (candlestick) that Moses saw and then constructed (Exo 25:9; 25:31). John tells us what that lampstand Moses saw and later made actually signified. John said **the seven lamps of fire burning before the throne are the seven Spirits of God** (see 3:1 for seven Spirits of God).

**Revelation 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.

**Revelation 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.

6 The allusion to the Tabernacle that Moses
saw continues. John said **before the throne there was a sea of glass.** The laver in the Tabernacle of Moses later became known as the brazen sea at the Temple Solomon built (Exo 30:18; 1Ch 18:8).

John stands at the very place Moses stood and saw exactly what Moses saw and what Moses attempted to duplicate on the earth. The desire of Moses was to bring the kingdom of God to earth. The purpose of the Tabernacle was to have a place where the Lord God would dwell among the people. The Lord said to Moses, **And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them** (Exo 25:8). This is the heart and desire of every man of God called into the mount. There is a desire to build a sanctuary where the presence of the Lord can be found and a place where that presence can dwell. John was in the throne cloud exactly where Moses was over 1500 years earlier.

The visit to and description of the glory cloud continued as John began to describe four living creatures. John wrote, **and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind.** Ezekiel was allowed to see into this glory cloud also. One of the magnificent descriptions Ezekiel gives is of the cherubim in the cloud (Eze 1:4-6; 10:14-15).

Moses had seen the cherubim as well and was instructed to place them over the ark (Exo 25:18), embroider them on the curtains (Exo 26:1), and embroider them in the veil (Exo 26:31).

An interesting truth is the creatures were not only **round the throne,** they were also **in the midst of the throne.** The Greek word mesos, translated in verse 6 as **midst,** means “middle and accompaniment.” We are again shown that the **throne** is not a big chair. The throne is heaven itself.

Ezekiel told us a very interesting fact about these cherubim. We read in Ezekiel 1:5, **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.** The four faces of man from the Ezekiel passage and from Revelation speak of the four personality temperaments of mankind. Below are a few Scriptures showing what the Scriptures are speaking of when they speak of the lion, ox, and eagle. Scriptures speaking of these are usually speaking about the temperaments and personalities of people.

Isa 40:31 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 faint. (emphasis added)

1Co 9:9 For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen? (emphasis added)

1Co 9:10 Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope.

Pro 19:12 The king's wrath is as the roaring of a lion; but his favour is as dew upon the grass. (emphasis added)

Around the **throne** are the personalities of man created by God. They are perfectly balanced (Eze 1:5, 10) and prepared to praise the Lord and labor for Him.

Revelation 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.

Revelation 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,

Revelation 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,

Revelation 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.

8 These **four** creatures each had **six wings.** Wings take two primary thoughts in the Scriptures. One quickly comes to mind and is understood. While the other does not readily come to mind, it is extremely pleasant when understood. The first is the thought of the **wings** as in flight. Eagle wings, wings of the peacock, wings of a hawk, stork wings, wings of a dove are all taught in the Scriptures. One very interesting truth about wings and flight is that the Lord rides upon a cherub and does fly upon the wings of the wind (Psa 22:11; 18:10).
This is what Ezekiel saw in Ezekiel 1:1-10. He saw the Lord coming upon his cherub cloud. Interestingly, the association of cherubim wings and flight is not the primary thought associated with wings. The primary thought of wings is the covering of the Lord.

Exo 25:20 And the cherubims shall stretch forth their wings on high, covering the mercy seat with their wings
Exo 37:9 And the cherubims spread out their wings on high, and covered with their wings over the mercy seat
1Ki 8:7 For the cherubims spread forth their two wings over the place of the ark, and the cherubims covered the ark and the staves thereof above.

The cherub wings covering the mercy seat is the primary thought of the wings. When the Bible speaks of the Lord covering us with his wings, it is not that the Lord has wings attached to his body. His wings are the wings of the cherub that cover the mercy seat where his covenant is located and his blood is sprinkled. The Lord covers his covenant. He watches over it as a hen would her chicks (Psa 17:8; 36:7; 57:1; 61:4; 63:7; 91:4; Mat 23:37).

The Lord is always covering his covenant. Being in the covenant is the safe place. In his covenant is being under the shadow of the Almighty. The covenant is what the wings cover. One interesting thought is the cherubim in Ezekiel have four wings (Eze 1:6). The cherubim in Revelation have six wings. We have a better covenant with an even better covering. If grasped that the four creatures are faces of humanity (Eze 1:5), we see that God’s covering is associated with the covenant people he places around and over us.

These four beasts were full of eyes before and behind. The covenantal people of God with their individual personalities and temperaments are full of understanding and knowledge (more on eyes 5:6).

These creatures continuously praised day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come. The creatures begin a chain response. We will look at this much closer momentarily. Notice now that they begin worshiping and all creation follows.

Revelation 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.
Revelation 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,
Revelation 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,
Revelation 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.

8-11 The four creatures continuously sing a song of praise. Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come. They never rest from singing this special praise day and night. Their purpose for existence is to bring praise to Him that sits upon the throne. When they give glory and honour and thanks to him on the throne, a marvelous picture begins to take form. Their praise brings a reaction from the twenty-four elders. These elders were sitting on their thrones. They now are seen as they rise and fall down before Him. Then these twenty-four cast their crowns before the throne. They sing their own song saying, Thou are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power. The song the four creatures sing provokes the twenty-four elders into song. We will see in chapter 5 how the creatures and elders will provoke many angels into songs of praise. This in turn will provoke every creature in heaven, on earth, under the earth and in the sea to give praise.

We are told the reason the twenty-four elders praise him that sat on the throne. The elders...
sing the reason as they say, for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created. It was because the Lord God Almighty received pleasure that any and all things were created. Each person is and was created because they bring God pleasure. All things were created to bring Him pleasure. The Greek word thelema translated here pleasure means “determined and choice.” We each exist because the Lord God Almighty determined and made a choice to create us. We each are an act of his pleasure.

Before we move on to chapter 5, let’s make certain we note the liturgical response of worship in heaven that we see beginning here.

Worship in the Revelation is always corporate. No place in the Revelation is there individual worship. That is not to say that individual worship does not have a place. We know that it does, but in the cloud, throne, and heavenlies, worship is corporate. It will go without saying that individual worship will come into a life before corporate worship. However, the emphasis of worship around the throne of God is corporate, full of symbolism and liturgy. We see, and will see, the kneeling or prostrate position taken freely and often.

Also, we want to note the response in worship. It happens all day and all night. The creatures sing and the elders sing back in response. Then the creatures begin again, and the elders sing back again. As we witness this worship service in heaven (throne), we need to take a few personal notes and apply our worship accordingly. We will again note this style of worship in chapter 5. Evidently man needs worship that is filled with symbolism and liturgy. When the early church began to abandon worship filled with symbolism, we find it weakened in its worship and in its power. Heavenly worship is full of symbolism and liturgy, and it is always corporate and powerful!

Contemporary Theological View(s)

1. Revelation 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.

Historical theology taught the coming of the Lord, but not the rapture of the church. Historical, first-century theology taught the tribulation because they were the generation to which it was promised to happen. However, it is impossible to find any church fathers or apostles of the second century who taught that this passage (Revelation 4:1-2) is the rapture of the church. That should be important to us. If the church fathers did not teach that Revelation 4 is the rapture, then should we?

Today’s rapture teaching places two more advents into the Scriptures when only one is taught. People in all denominations quote the “Apostles Creed” which speaks of one coming. Yet they are taught a doctrine which teaches two comings. They say in the creed that Christ “sitteth on the right hand of God, the Father Almighty. From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.” That is one coming (Joh 5:28, 29; Act 24:15), but people allow themselves to be taught two. For the rapture doctrine to work, it will require two comings. One coming and resurrection to take the church, a seven-year tribulation, and then another coming and resurrection after the great tribulation.

If studied (and all should), one finds that this two-advent doctrine was not put into the minds of Christians until around 1850. Until 1850, it was taught that Jesus would come to judge the quick and the dead, just as the Apostles Creed said, not to rapture the church. The rapture teaching began with a group called the Plymouth Brethren led by a man named John Darby. Darby was an educated, ordained minister of the Anglican priesthood. Kelly Varner has written a wonderful book with tremendous research on this subject. The book is titled Whose Right It Is and can be obtained at Praise Tabernacle, P.O. Box 785, Richlands, NC 28574-0785, Phone: (910) 324-5026. Several quotes from this book will be used here about the rapture, the Plymouth Brethren, and where the rapture doctrine
originated. "In the 1860’s and 1870’s, the Brethren’s [Plymouth Brethren] two-phase coming of the Lord with its ‘secret rapture’ made its way to America with several visits by Darby himself. (He also traveled to the West Indies and New Zealand.) Darby’s first visit to the United States seems to have been around 1864, and his influence was greatest among Presbyterians and Baptists. Darby also translated the Bible into German and French. Eventually, his futurist views found their way into the notes of the famous Scofield Reference Bible (1909)." 9

As Varner shows, Darby was a tremendously influential man with writings and works in many countries. However, his notes being added to a Bible gave an uncanny validity to his doctrine. Even if the doctrine was wrong, it was assumed to be correct because “it was in the Bible.” It is as though his doctrine became the word of God. Thus the dispensational rapture (Scofield says “translation”) teaching was born and propagated and became irrefutable because it was in Scofield’s Bible. According to that Bible, the rapture happens in Revelation 4:1. Scofield’s Bible said so, and he said that is what John meant.

Scofield writes,

“Beginning with 4:1 the viewpoint of John is from heaven. As the word ‘church’ does not appear again in The Revelation until 22:16, the catching up of John from earth to heaven has been taken to be a symbolic representation of the translation of the Church as occurring before the events of the tribulation described in chapters. 6-19.” 10

It seemed to no longer matter what the church fathers taught or believed or wrote. The dispensational doctrine consumed the world like wildfire. Scofield was quoted as though he was the Apostle Paul. He continues to be a major influence today.

Van Impe writes in 1996,

“The question often arises, ‘Will the church of Jesus Christ be on earth during the Tribulation hour?’ The answer is an emphatic, ‘NO!’ The Church is mentioned sixteen times in the first three chapters of Revelation, but is not found in chapters 6 through 18 - the Tribulation period.” 11

This is Darby doctrine propagated by Scofield. Though not stated, this is a Darby doctrine, and Van Impe is referencing Scofield writings of 1909 with that statement.

This doctrine was placed into the minds and hands of great orators and preachers. Men such as Edward Irving and D.L. Moody took this doctrine, and it became the gospel. Not until the late 1940’s was it ever challenged, questioned, or researched to see if it aligned with first-and second-century writings. Of course, it does not.

A little writing about Scofield will help here. We need to know a little about the people we allow to develop church doctrine. Again Varner is quoted:

“In July of 1880 Scofield joined the Pilgrim Congregational Church of St. Louis... This church licensed Scofield to preach and pastor a church in Dallas, Texas, even though Scofield had been converted less than three years, had no theological training, and had limited formal schooling... At about the same time, his Roman Catholic wife Leontine (whom he had married in 1866) drew up divorce papers July 28, 1881. She charged that Cyrus had absented himself, abandoned the family, neglected his duty, failed to support or contribute thereto, and made no provision for food, clothing, or home. Scofield denied each allegation. The court issued a decree for Leontine, but somehow the case was dismissed (March, 1882). On October 1, 1883, Leontine filed a second divorce petition. On December 8, 1883, the divorce was granted, stating that the young pastor was not a fit person to have custody of the children. Three months later, in March of 1884, Scofield married Hettie VanWark, a member of his Dallas congregation.” 12

Not long after this, the Oxford University Press published The Scofield Reference Bible (1909). After several publications, over three million copies were printed. It is still a major seller today along with its footnotes. This was followed by Dake’s Reference Bible which propagates the same doctrine.

Dake writes,

“We believe that the Church and the Old Testament saints are to be raptured in fulfillment of the book in Rev. 4:1, that this is foreshadowed by the bodily ascension of

9 Kelly Varner, Whose Right It Is, page 144


11 Jack Van Impe, Revelation Revealed, page 58

12 Kelly Varner, Whose Right It Is, page 145, 146
John to heaven, and that those raptured are represented in heaven by the twenty-four elders throughout the remainder of Revelation... In John’s bodily ascension to heaven at this juncture of the reception of the Revelation we have a prophetical foreview of the rapture of the Church which is to take place at this juncture of the fulfillment of the Revelation.”¹³

Though never taught by the church fathers and never taught publicly prior to 1850, this has become the belief of the contemporary church. Amazingly, the entire rapture doctrine has its roots in a 15-year-old girl named Margaret Macdonald. All of this and much more is recorded in Varner’s book Whose Right It Is. Margaret Macdonald had a vision which concerned the church being taken away (raptured) before the tribulation. She was not a member of a local church. Her church affiliation was prayer meetings in her brother’s home. She and the Macdonald clan were well known for emotionalism and not for Biblical understanding. It was in this setting 15-year-old Margaret had a vision that became a major doctrine. Varner writes,

“Her ‘two-stage’ vision of the Lord’s coming was parroted in a prophecy by Mrs. J.D. Cardale (whose husband was leader of the Albury delegation to Scottland) on April 30, 1831, in a house meeting. The Cardales soon after joined Edward Irving’s church. Irving himself began to teach these ‘revelations’ at Powerscourt house in prophetic meetings. These sessions were attended by some of the Plymouth Brethren, including John Darby and C.H. Mackintosh.”¹⁴

We all need to know that, prior to 1850, preaching concerned itself with the church gloriously overcoming and enduring. That changed when Darby and the Plymouth Brethren introduced Dispensationalism and a new rapture doctrine.


¹³ Finis Jennings Dake, Revelation Expounded, page 53

¹⁴ Kelly Varner, Whose Right It Is, page 149
Revelation 4:2 And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne.

For those who defend, teach, and support the “rapture” theory, great hope is placed in these verses. They are used to prove the pre-tribulation “rapture.” In this doctrine, the teaching is that the Lord will “rapture” the church to “heaven.” Immediately after that rapture, the judgments of God are poured out upon the earth for a seven-year period of time. This belief, held in the verse, is basically from two points of reasoning.

First, the voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet is interpreted as the “rapture.” It is linked with the voice and trumpet of 1 Thessalonians 4:16. In Revelation 4:1, the trumpet and voice are from the same Son of man—Jesus Christ. A look at that verse will help.

Rev 1:10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet (emphasis added)

In 1 Thessalonians 4:16, the shout is from the Lord, but the voice is from the archangel, and the trump is a trump and not a voice. Perhaps Paul did mean that the voice had all these sounds, but it does not read that way. This is obviously not the same event. Here in 4:1 the voice heard is as a trumpet. There is a problem with the voice and trumpet being the “rapture” here. This is not the first time that John records about this trumpet voice speaking. As noted above, it spoke in 1:10. Why are the voice and the trumpet the rapture in 4:1 and not in 1:10?

This type of interpretation is a serious flaw in the Dispensationalists’ interpretation of Scriptures. This teaching is very inconsistent and often seems to “pull” scriptures out of context to prove a particular doctrinal view. We see this again in the second point used in this passage to prove the Rev. 4:1 rapture theory.

The second point is that the word “church” (ekklesia in Greek) is not found from the end of chapter 3 until the Second Advent of Jesus. Dake says,

“Never are the words ‘church’ or ‘churches’ mentioned in the book after Rev. 3:22 except in the conclusion after the revelation of the ‘things which must be after the churches,’ Rev. 22:6-21. If the Church were to be on earth during the Week, it surely would have been mentioned in some connection.”

Phillips says,

“(The church is not mentioned again by name in the book until the postscript at the very end.). The visions of government that are before us now have to do with Israel and the nations -- not the church. God judges the world that crucified his Son, precipitating those climatic events that usher in the end.”

The word ekklesia (church) is not found until 22:16. This supposedly proves the church is not on earth. The church must not be “in heaven” either because the word is not mentioned as being at the throne or in the multitude. Does that mean it is not there? The word is not found in chapter 20 at the viewing of the dragon’s demise. The word ‘church’ is not found as ruling during the thousand years. The doctrine teaches that the church comes again with the Lord, which would be chapter 19 at his Second Coming, but no mention of the church ekklesia is made in chapter 19.

Another interesting point is made by Chilton in The Days Of Vengeance concerning this. He notes that the name “Jesus” is not mentioned from 1:9 until 12:17. Does that mean that because he is not mentioned he is

---

16 John Phillips, Exploring Revelation, page 81
The Stone Cometh
not there? 17

2 A much better interpretation and one that follows the context of the Revelation is that the second vision or portrait begins here. To show this John writes, After this ... After what? After the first vision of the Son of man in chapters 1-3. Matthew Henry, the great expositor of years prior to the Dispensationalists’ teaching writes,
“After this, that is, not only ‘after I had seen the vision of Christ walking in the midst of the golden candlesticks, but ‘after I had taken his message from his mouth, and written and sent them to the several churches, according to his command, after this I had another vision.” 18

Notice the vast difference between the interpretation prior to the Dispensationalists of the 1800’s. Swaggart says,
“The words ‘after this’ refer to the time after the rapture of the church. The Greek word is ‘meta tauta’ and it means ‘after the things of the churches’ of Revelation 2-3.” 19

Swaggart’s interpretation of the Greek words translated “after this” is not exactly accurate. He said “it means ‘after the things of the churches’ of Revelation 2-3.” Below is a word study of the words from the Strong’s Concordance.

Strong's reference number: 3326
Greek: meta
Derivation: A primary word.
Definition: accompaniment

Strong's reference number: 5023
Greek: taut
Derivation: Variation of 3778
Definition: these things

Swaggart said meta meant “after.” Actually it means “accompaniment.” According to The American Heritage Dictionary, accompaniment means, “1. Music. A vocal or instrumental part that supports another, often solo, part. 2. Something, such as a situation, that accompanies something else; a concomitant. 3. Something added for embellishment, completeness, or symmetry; complement.” Swaggart said this meant “after the things of the churches.” We have just discussed the fact that the word ekklesia translated “church” is not found from chapters 3 to 22. How then can those words mean that? Matthew Henry said,

“After this, that is, not only ‘after I had seen the vision of Christ walking in the midst of the golden candlesticks, but ‘after I had taken his message from his mouth, and written and sent them to the several churches, according to his command, after this I had another vision.” 20

This is not the “rapture” of the church. It is the Revelation of the Lamb on the throne -- another vision! Each major vision of the Jesus Christ in the Revelation begins with in the spirit.

Rev 1:10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day. (emphasis added)
Rev 4:2 And immediately I was in the spirit; (emphasis added)
Rev 17:3 So he carried me away in the spirit (emphasis added)
Rev 21:10 And he carried me away in the spirit (emphasis added)

This is the phrase God uses to divide the book. As discussed in chapter 1:10, John has four great visions, with each vision having its own sub or inner visions. This second great

17 Chilton, Days Of Vengeance, page 147
18 Matthew Henry, Matthew Henry’s Commentary On the Whole Bible, Vol 6, page 917
19 Jimmy Swaggart, The Prophecies and Symbols of Revelation, page 21
20 Matthew Henry, Matthew Henry’s Commentary On the Whole Bible, Vol 6, page 917
vision is the “Wrath of the Lamb” (6:16). Within the great vision are numerous other visions surrounded by seals, trumpets, and vials (bowls). The seals will bring us the opening and establishing of the New Covenant. The trumpets will bring the preaching of the kingdom of God prior to the destruction of Jerusalem. The vials will bring the judgment of God upon those that pierced Him (1:7).

Also, in this great vision, we have the sub-visions. A few of the sub-visions we will see are the woman in heaven (all who travailed through the ages to bring forth the Son of man), the red dragon (serpent who is the Devil and Satan), the sea beast (Roman Empire), the land beast (Israel), and the image (Caesar worship).

As in the first vision, John hears the same voice opening a door that only he can open. The only way to enter into this place is through that door. Anyone entering any other way is but a thief and a robber (John 10:1). Witches, warlocks, even false religions can enter a dimension of the spirit realm, but those are but thieves and robbers.

John 10:9 I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.

The voice commanded John to come. The purpose was to show things which must be. Each week the local assembly should enter the door into a heavenly position.

The primary purpose for the weekly assembly should be to learn things which must be. As we open the Word of God, we should be constantly learning things which must be.

Hereafter does not seem to be a good translation for the Greek word tauta. The definition is “these things” (see discussion 1:19) The word carries a much more imminent meaning rather than a futuristic one. This is important. The things which John is about to be shown are not actually for a distant time. They are an “accompaniment” meta. As we have already seen, they are, in fact to happen shortly and quickly (Rev 1:1; 2:5, 16; 3:11; 11:14; 22:6, 7, 12, 20).

Hereafter is not speaking of a distant day. It actually means “these things.” A more accurate translation for today would be, “After the first vision I looked, and behold, a portal to the heavens opened. The voice I heard in the first vision which was like a trumpet talking to me said, ‘Come up here. I will show you these things which must accompany what you have already seen.’ ”

It must be asked, “What comfort would it be for John’s generation to be told of a cosmic catastrophe which would happen two thousand (or more) years later? What comfort would that be to them, and how in the world could they keep those things which are written in this book? Would not an immediate warning be much more reasonable?”

The first thing John saw in this vision was the throne. John said, ...behold a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne. If heaven, in one’s theology, is a far distant place with walls of jasper and streets of gold and gates of pearls, then a tremendous blessing will be missed concerning what the Lord desires for us to understand about heaven. Heaven is the throne of God (Act 7:49).

The word throne is found thirty-nine times in the Revelation alone. An understanding of it is necessary. When the Scriptures speak of the throne of God, it is speaking of a quickening to the understanding of the vast rule and power and authority of God. John was made aware of and shown the awesome authority of God. The throne of God is everlasting (Psa 9:7; 93:2; 45:6; 5:19). The throne is the place of judgment (Psa 47:8; Psa 89:14). The throne is associated with clouds. It is portrayed as being bright, smoky, and amber in appearance. It is heaven (Psa
The Stone Cometh

97:2; Eze 1:4; 1:26; 10:1; Dan 7:9). The Biblical aspect of “going to heaven” is actually going to the **throne**! The **throne** is in **heaven** and **heaven** is his **throne**. There is no higher judgment seat (Psa 11:4; 103:19; Isa 66:1) The **throne** of the Messiah must come through **David** (Psa 132:11; Isa 9:7).

As previously stated, the word **throne** is found thirty-nine times in the Revelation alone. Twelve of the uses are found in chapter 4. The **throne** is the central thought of chapter 4, not the rapture! The words **heaven** and **throne** are speaking of a look into perfection. In the Scriptures as heaven opens, perfection is always seen. John is allowed to view perfection. This view of perfection is a Revelation of Jesus Christ. **Heaven** is not about streets of gold and walls of jasper. **Heaven** is about the **throne**, and the **throne** is about Jesus.

**Revelation 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.

**Revelation 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.

**Revelation 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

3 He that sat upon the **throne** is now described, though He is indescribable. It seems John is confused as he attempts to describe the one **that sat**. John writes **to look upon** Him was **like** looking upon a jasper. Then John changes and said, “No it was more like a sardine stone.” “Actually,” John said, “there was a rainbow round about the **throne**.” “Well, perhaps it was a huge emerald.” There is no need to attempt to study jasper or sardine or rainbow or

**The Revelation Of Jesus Christ Chapter 4**

The emerald in an attempt to draw or describe what John saw. The point is one cannot describe the glory of God. “His beauty is beyond description, too marvelous to bear, too wonderful for comprehension, like nothing ever seen or heard.”

There are no human attributes given to the one **that sat**. It’s a description of beautiful things that reflect the many colors found in light. In the dark, none of these descriptive jewels are beautiful, but when light touches them, they each become beautiful in their own distinct way. *This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all (1 John 1:5).*

John is not simply describing his great glory as pretty. This glory is a display of his light in all situations. The glory one needs of God today may not be what is needed tomorrow. What one person needs, may not be what another needs. Yet, no matter what any need, he is all and all. He is any color and glory needed for any situation. **He that sat** is not only white. He is red, but not only red and white. He is blue. He is black. He is yellow. He is brown. He is gold. Even as John attempted to gaze upon Him, it appears He constantly changed in glory as he was being seen.

Once John can remove his eyes from the **throne**, he notices things **round about the throne**. There were **twenty-four seats**. In the **seats** were **twenty-four elders sitting**. It is interesting to read whom some say these elders actually are. One prevalent doctrine is that these are angels of superior rank. This is drawn from Revelation 5:9.

This (Rev. 5:9-10) is a song sung by these elders. The word translated “us” in 5:9 and 5:10 is actually better translated “men” and “them.” For example, the NIV version translates this way:

**Rev 5:9** And they sang a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from
The belief that the twenty-four elders are ranking angels comes when the assumption is made that the words are “men” and “them” rather than “us.” (Reread the above verses noting the difference in King James and NIV.) If it is “men” and “them,” then those singing it cannot be men, for those singing are not singing about themselves. Therefore, they must be angels. The Scriptures never say they are angels. It is simply assumed that they are angels.

Actually, it only clarifies whom he redeemed. He redeemed men and made them kings and priests (which is very important in understanding whom these twenty-four are). There is no reference in Scripture to these being angels. No place in Scriptures (Old Testament or New Testament) do the Scriptures refer to angels as elders. Only men are ever referred to as elders.

Who then are the four and twenty elders? The word thronos translated seats in verse 4 is the same Greek word thronos translated throne in the same verse. There is no obvious reason for King James to do this. The four and twenty elders were upon their own thrones. This tells us they were of great authority. They are, in fact, enthroned. That they were of great authority is also shown in the remainder of the verse which says, ...and they had on their heads crowns of gold. But what did they have authority over? The number twelve becomes important here. Twenty-four would be a combining of the Old Covenant and the New Covenant with the 12 tribes and the 12 apostles. These are combined in the Lamb’s wife which is the New Jerusalem in the final chapters of Revelation. The 12 tribes are the twelve gates on which the twelve names of the twelve tribes are written. The twelve apostles are the twelve foundations (Rev 21:12-14).

The leaders of the twelve tribes were the authority in the Old Covenant. The leaders of the Church were the 12 apostles of the Lamb and were the authority in the New Covenant. This gives us twenty-four thrones and elders. Matthew Henry says of this,

“...elders, presbyters, represent the whole church of God, both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament state. This is not the ministers of the church, but rather the representatives of the people. Their sitting denotes their honour, rest, and satisfaction.”

It is sad that modern theology which determines modern doctrine does not and cannot see the church as ruling and reigning with Christ. Modern doctrine would rather talk about “superior angels” upon thrones than to say the church in totality is upon the thrones. As mentioned previously, these elders will sing a song in 5:10 that says the Lamb’s redemption hast made US unto our God kings and priests: and WE shall reign on the earth.

The number twenty-four would mean something to John’s readers that it does not mean to us. Under David’s order, the priests were set to minister in twenty-four “courses.” Each course was under the leadership of a Levite from the sons of Aaron. These twenty-four were scheduled to minister a specific day and time both at and in the temple (1Ch 23:6; 24:4-5; 2Ch 8:14; 1Ch 28:13; 1Ch 24:18-19).

Wycliff Commentary says,

“Sixteen and eight. The twenty-four priestly courses (23:6) continued as the basis for rotating the priestly duties down into NT
times. Although some of these courses died out or had to be consolidated with others, new ones were formed to take their places.”

This was the order at the temple as John wrote the Revelation. As we will see, that day was ending. That is what this section of the Revelation is about. The ministry to God’s temple will no longer only be by the order of the Levites and the sons of Aaron. In the throne a heavenly ministry of kings and priests unto God minister to the entire earth. This is exactly what the four and twenty elders sing in 5:10 because they are the kings and priests. The four and twenty elders represent the church that rules as kings upon the earth (thrones) and are priests (twenty-four).

One final note on this verse and these elders. They are clothed in white raiment. The word leukos translated “white” is used sixteen times in the Revelation. Each use relates to either the saints of God or to the Lord Himself. No use of “white” is every related to angels of any rank. White is the color of purity and holiness. The true church, Old Covenant and New Covenant, are seen in white raiment or white garments. This white raiment is referred to in 19:8 as the righteous acts of the saints (NIV version).

Revelation 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.

5 As we saw in verse 2 of this chapter, heaven is the Lord’s throne. He makes his throne heaven. We saw earlier with the throne came the thought of clouds -- the glory cloud (Psa 97:2; Eze 1:4). We have the definite showing of the glory cloud here as John speaks of lightnings and thunderings.

Here John takes us back to the allusion of the glory cloud that was with Israel at Mt. Sinai. This is the cloud that went with the nation in the wilderness and led them to Canaan. John said out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices (Exo 13:21; 19:16-19).

The imagery of the cloud was not foreign to John’s readers. They understood that John was projecting to them that he was standing in the glory cloud before the throne of the Lord God. This sentence is worth repeating. When John went through the door in 4:1, into the Spirit in 4:2, and before the throne in 4:3, he entered the cloud that Moses was in when Moses saw the Tabernacle (Exo 25). It may sound somewhat strange to us to associate the throne and the cloud together. This is because we are not taught about the cloud. John is telling his readers that he was exactly where Moses was when Moses went into the cloud at Sinai (Exo 24:15-18).

Moses went into the cloud to receive instructions for worship (Tabernacle) and will also receive instructions for the law or what we call the Old Covenant. John will now experience what Moses experienced and see what Moses saw.

John confirms this is where he is by seeing seven lamps of fire burning before the throne. This would be an allusion to the lampstand (candlestick) that Moses saw and then constructed (Exo 25:9; 25:31). John tells us what that lampstand Moses saw and later made actually signified. John said the seven lamps of fire burning before the throne are the seven Spirits of God (see 3:1 for seven Spirits of God).

Revelation 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.

Revelation 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.

6 The allusion to the Tabernacle Moses saw
continues. John said **before the throne there was a sea of glass.** The laver in the Tabernacle of Moses later became known as the brazen sea at the Temple Solomon built (Exo 30:18; 1Ch 18:8).

John stands at the very place Moses stood and saw exactly what Moses saw and what Moses attempted to duplicate on the earth. The desire of Moses was to bring the kingdom of God to earth. The purpose of the Tabernacle was to have a place where the Lord God would dwell among the people. The Lord said to Moses, *And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them* (Exo 25:8). This is the heart and desire of every man of God called into the mount.

There is a desire to build a sanctuary where the presence of the Lord can be found and a place where that presence can dwell. John was in the throne cloud exactly where Moses was over 1500 years earlier.

The visit to and description of the glory cloud continued as John began to describe four living creatures. John wrote, **and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind.** Ezekiel was allowed to see this glory cloud also. One of the magnificent descriptions Ezekiel gives is of the cherubim (Eze 1:4-6; 10:14-15).

Moses had seen the cherubim as well and was instructed to place them over the ark (Exo 25:18), embroider them on the curtains (Exo 26:1), and embroider them in the veil (Exo 26:31).

An interesting notation is the creatures are not only **round the throne, they are also in the midst of the throne.** The Greek word *mesos,* translated in verse 6 as **midst,** means “middle and accompaniment.” We are again shown that the **throne** is not a big chair. The throne is heaven itself.

Ezekiel told us a very interesting fact about these cherubim. We read in Ezekiel 1:5, *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. The four faces of man from the Ezekiel passage and from Revelation speak of the four personality temperaments of mankind. Below are a few Scriptures showing what the Scriptures are speaking of when they speak of the lion, ox, and eagle. Scriptures speaking of these are usually speaking about the temperaments and personalities of a people.***

Isa 40:31 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 faint. (emphasis added)

1Co 9:9 For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen? (emphasis added)

1Co 9:10 Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope.

Pro 19:12 The king's wrath is as the roaring of a lion; but his favour is as dew upon the grass. (emphasis added)

Around the **throne** are the personalities of man created by God. They are perfectly balanced (Eze 1:5, 10) and prepared to praise the Lord and labor for Him.

**Revelation 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.**

**Revelation 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,**

**Revelation 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,

Revelation 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.

8 These four creatures each had six wings. Wings take two primary thoughts in the Scriptures. One quickly comes to mind and is understood. While the other does not readily come to mind, it is extremely pleasant when understood. The first is the thought of the wings as in flight. Eagle wings, wings of the peacock, wings of a hawk, stork wings, wings of a dove are all taught in the Scriptures. One very interesting truth about wings and flight is that the Lord rides upon a cherub and does fly upon the wings of the wind (Psa 22:11; 18:10).

This is what Ezekiel saw in Ezekiel 1:1-10. He saw the Lord coming upon his cherub cloud. Interestingly, the association of cherubim wings and flight is not the primary thought associated with wings. The primary thought of wings is the covering of the Lord. Exo 25:20 And the cherubims shall stretch forth their wings on high, covering the mercy seat with their wings Exo 37:9 And the cherubims spread out their wings on high, and covered with their wings over the mercy seat 1Ki 8:7 For the cherubims spread forth their two wings over the place of the ark, and the cherubims covered the ark and the staves thereof above.

The cherub wings covering the mercy seat is the primary thought of the wings. When the Bible speaks of the Lord covering us with his wings, it is not that the Lord has wings attached to his body. His wings are the wings of the cherubim that cover the mercy seat where his covenant is located and his blood is sprinkled. The Lord covers his covenant. He watches over it as a hen would her chicks (Psa 17:8; 36:7; 57:1; 61:4; 63:7; 91:4; Mat 23:37).

The Lord is always covering his covenant. Being in the covenant is the safe place. In his covenant is being under the shadow of the Almighty. The covenant is what the wings cover. One interesting thought is the cherubim in Ezekiel have four wings (Eze 1:6). The cherubim in Revelation have six wings. We have a better covenant with an even better covering. If grasped that the four creatures are faces of humanity (Eze 1:5), we see that God’s covering is associated with the covenant people he places around and over us.

These four beasts were full of eyes before and behind. Opened eyes are an aspect associated with God in his infinite knowledge. One of the temptations with which the serpent approached Eve was that her eyes could be opened (Gen 3:5).

Genesis 6:8 says, But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD. Eyes are used to speak of understanding or lack of it. Paul prayed that the eyes of our understanding would be enlightened. If this would happen, then we would know our calling, the inheritance we are, and the exceeding great power God has toward us (Eph 1:18).

Eyes equal understanding and knowledge. These creatures were full of eyes before and behind. The covenantal people of God with their individual personalities and temperaments are full of understanding and knowledge (more on eyes 5:6).

These creatures continuously praised day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come. The creatures begin a chain response. We will look at this much closer momentarily. Notice now that they begin worshiping and all creation follows.

Revelation 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
Revelation 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,

Revelation 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,

Revelation 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.

8-11 The four creatures continuously sing a song of praise. Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come. They never rest from singing this special praise day and night. Their purpose for existence is to bring praise to Him that sits upon the throne. When they give glory and honour and thanks to him on the throne, a marvelous picture begins to take form. Their praise brings a reaction from the twenty-four elders. These elders were sitting on their thrones. They now are seen as they rise and fall down before Him. Then these twenty-four cast their crowns before the throne. They sing their own song saying, Thou are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power. The song the four creatures sing provokes the twenty-four elders into song. We will see in chapter 5 how the creatures and elders will provoke many angels into songs of praise. This in turn will provoke every creature in heaven, on earth, under the earth and in the sea to give praise.

We are told the reason the twenty-four elders praise him that sat on the throne. The elders sing the reason as they say, for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created. It was because the Lord God Almighty received pleasure that any and all things were created. Each person is and was created because they bring God pleasure. All things were created to bring Him pleasure. The Greek word thelema translated here pleasure means “determined and choice.” We each exist because the Lord God Almighty determined and made a choice to create us. We each are an act of his pleasure.

Before we move on to chapter 5, let’s make certain we note the liturgical response of worship in heaven that we see beginning here. Worship in the Revelation is always corporate. No place in the Revelation is there individual worship. That is not to say that individual worship does not have a place. We know that it does, but in the cloud, throne, and heavens worship is corporate. It will go without saying that individual worship will come into a life before corporate worship. However, the emphasis of worship around the throne of God is corporate, full of symbolisms and liturgy. We see, and will see, the kneeling or prostrate position taken freely and often.

Also, we want to note the response in worship. It happens all day and all night. The creatures sing and the elders sing back in response. Then the creatures begin again, and the elders sing back again. As we witness this worship service in heaven (throne), we need to take a few personal notes and apply our worship accordingly. We will again note this style of worship in chapter 5. Evidently man needs worship that is filled with symbolism and liturgy. When the early church began to abandon worship filled with symbolism, we find it weakened in its worship and in its power. Heavenly worship is full of symbolism and liturgy, and it is always corporate and powerful!

Contemporary Theological View(s)
1. Revelation 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.

Historical theology taught the coming of the Lord, but not the rapture of the church. Historical, first-century theology taught the tribulation because they were the generation to which it was promised to happen. However, it is impossible to find any church fathers or apostles of the second century who taught that this passage (Revelation 4:1-2) is the rapture of the church. That should be important to us. If the church fathers did not teach that Revelation 4 is the rapture, then should we?

Today’s rapture teaching places two more advents into the Scriptures when only one is taught. People in all denominations quote the “Apostles Creed” which speaks of one coming. Yet they are taught a doctrine which teaches two comings. They say in the creed that Christ “sitteth on the right hand of God, the Father Almighty. From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.” That is one coming (Joh 5:28, 29; Act 24:15), but people allow themselves to be taught two. For the rapture doctrine to work, it will require two comings. One coming and resurrection to take the church, a seven-year tribulation, and then another coming and resurrection after the great tribulation.

If studied (and all should), one finds that this two-advent doctrine was not put into the minds of Christians until around 1850. The imminent (any moment) coming of the Lord was taught, but not the rapture. Until 1850, it was taught that Jesus would come to judge the quick and the dead, just as the Apostles Creed said, not to rapture the church. The rapture teaching began with a group called the Plymouth Brethren led by a man named John Darby. Darby was an educated, ordained minister of the Anglican priesthood. Kelly Varner has written a wonderful book with tremendous research on this subject. The book is titled Whose Right It Is and can be obtained at Praise Tabernacle, P.O. Box 785, Richlands, NC 28574-0785, Phone: (910) 324-5026. Several quotes from this book will be used here about the rapture, the Plymouth Brethren, and where the rapture doctrine originated.

“In the 1860’s and 1870’s, the Brethren’s [Plymouth Brethren] two-phase coming of the Lord with its ‘secret rapture’ made its way to America with several visits by Darby himself. (He also traveled to the West Indies and New Zealand.) Darby’s first visit to the United States seems to have been around 1864, and his influence was greatest among Presbyterians and Baptists. Darby also translated the Bible into German and French. Eventually, his futurist views found their way into the notes of the famous Scofield Reference Bible (1909).”

As Varner shows, Darby was a tremendously influential man with writings and works in many countries. However, his notes being added to a Bible gave an uncanny validity to his doctrine. Even if the doctrine was wrong, it was assumed to be correct because “it was in the Bible.” It is as though his doctrine became the word of God. Thus the dispensational rapture (Scofield says “translation”) teaching was born and propagated and became irrefutable because it was in Scofield’s Bible. According to that Bible, the rapture happens in Revelation 4:1. Scofield’s Bible said so, and he said that is what John meant.

Scofield writes, “Beginning with 4:1 the viewpoint of John is from heaven. As the word ‘church’ does not appear again in The Revelation until 22:16, the catching up of John from earth to heaven has been taken to be a symbolic representation of the translation of the Church as occurring before the events of the
It seemed to no longer matter what the church fathers taught or believed or wrote. The dispensational doctrine consumed the world like wildfire. Scofield was quoted as though he was the Apostle Paul. He continues to be a major influence today.

Van Impe writes in 1996,

“The question often arises, ‘Will the church of Jesus Christ be on earth during the Tribulation hour?’ The answer is an emphatic, ‘NO!’ The Church is mentioned sixteen times in the first three chapters of Revelation, but is not found in chapters 6 through 18 - the Tribulation period.”

This is Darby doctrine propagated by Scofield. Though not stated, this is a Darby doctrine, and Van Impe is referencing Scofield writings of 1909 with that statement.

This doctrine was placed into the minds and hands of great orators and preachers. Men such as Edward Irving and D.L. Moody took this doctrine, and it became the gospel. Not until the late 1940’s was it ever challenged, questioned, or researched to see if it aligned with first-and second-century writings. Of course, it does not.

A little writing about Scofield will help here. We need to know a little about the people we allow to develop church doctrine. Again Varner is quoted:

“In July of 1880 Scofield joined the Pilgrim Congregational Church of St. Louis....This church licensed Scofield to preach and pastor a church in Dallas, Texas, even though Scofield had been converted less than three years, had no theological training, and had limited formal schooling (some purport that the Dr. in front of his name was self-given).

At about the same time, his Roman Catholic wife Leontine (whom he had married in 1866) drew up divorce papers July 28, 1881. She charged that Cyrus had absented himself, abandoned the family, neglected his duty, failed to support or contribute thereto, and made no provision for food, clothing, or home. Scofield denied each allegation. The court issued a decree for Leontine, but somehow the case was dismissed (March, 1882). On October 1, 1883, Leontine filed a second divorce petition. On December 8, 1883, the divorce was granted, stating that the young pastor was not a fit person to have custody of the children. Three months later, in March of 1884, Scofield married Hettie VanWark, a member of his Dallas congregation.”

Not long after this, the Oxford University Press published The Scofield Reference Bible (1909). After several publications, over three million copies were printed. It is still a major seller today along with its footnotes. This was followed by Dake’s Reference Bible which propagates the same doctrine.

Dake writes,

“We believe that the Church and the Old Testament saints are to be raptured in fulfillment of the book in Rev. 4:1, that this is foreshadowed by the bodily ascension of John to heaven, and that those raptured are represented in heaven by the twenty-four elders throughout the remainder of Revelation.... In John’s bodily ascension to heaven at this juncture of the reception of the Revelation we have a prophetical foreview of the rapture of the Church which is to take place at this juncture of the fulfillment of the Revelation.”

---


25 Jack Van Impe, Revelation Revealed, page 58

---

26 Kelly Varner, Whose Right It Is, page 145, 146

27 Finis Jennings Dake, Revelation Expounded, page 53
Though never taught by the church fathers and never taught publicly prior to 1850, this has become the belief of the contemporary church. Amazingly, the entire rapture doctrine has its roots in a 15-year-old girl named Margaret Macdonald. All of this and much more is recorded in Varner’s book *Whose Right It Is*. Margaret Macdonald had a vision which concerned the church being taken away (raptured) *before the tribulation*. She was not a member of a local church. Her church affiliation was prayer meetings in her brother’s home. She and the Macdonald clan were well known for emotionalism and not for Biblical understanding. It was in this setting that 15-year-old Margaret had a vision that became a major doctrine. Varner writes, “Her ‘two-stage’ vision of the Lord’s coming was parroted in a prophecy by Mrs. J.D. Cardale (whose husband was leader of the Albury delegation to Scotland) on April 30, 1831, in a house meeting. The Cardales soon after joined Edward Irving’s church. Irving himself began to teach these ‘revelations’ at Powerscourt house in prophetic meetings. These sessions were attended by some of the Plymouth Brethren, including John Darby and C.H. Mackintosh.”

We all need to know that, prior to 1850, preaching concerned itself with the church gloriously overcoming and enduring. That changed when Darby and the Plymouth Brethren introduced Dispensationalism and a new rapture doctrine.

In all honesty the kingdom of God is not the new doctrine. Jesus taught the kingdom of God (Mat 12:28; 19:24; 21:31; 21:43; Mar 1:14; 4:11; 4:26; Luk 8:1, 10; 21:31; Joh 3:3, 5). The apostles taught the kingdom of God (Act 8:12; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23). The new doctrine is the contemporary rapture. It is new and it is false.

---

28 Kelly Varner, *Whose Right It Is*, page 149
Revelation is first and foremost a revelation about Jesus Christ (1:1). The book depicts Him as the risen, glorified Son of God ministering among the churches (1:10ff.), as the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth (1:5), as the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. It is impossible to see all the events in Revelation as already fulfilled. The second coming of Christ, for example, obviously did not take place in the first century.