

A Trip to Heaven, Part 1

Revelation 4:1–3

God did take Paul to heaven. Tells us that very clearly in 2 Corinthians. He was caught up into the third heaven, and he saw things too wonderful to speak.

“After these things, I looked and behold a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard, like the sound of a trumpet, speaking with me, said, ‘Come up here and I will show you what must take place after these things.’”

Immediately I was in the Spirit and behold a throne was standing in heaven and One sitting on the throne. And He who was sitting was like a jasper stone and a sardius in appearance. And there was a rainbow around the throne like an emerald in appearance. And around the throne were twenty-four thrones. And upon the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white garments and golden crowns on their heads.

“And from the throne proceed flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder. There were seven lamps afire, burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God. And before the throne there was, as it were, a sea of glass like crystal.

And in the center and around the throne, four living creatures full of eyes in front and behind.

And the first creature was like a lion and the second creature, like a calf, and the third creature had a face like that of a man. And the fourth creature was like a flying eagle.

“And the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings, are full of eyes around and within. And day and night they do not cease to say, ‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God, the Almighty who was and who is and who is to come.’

And when the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, to Him who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders will fall down before Him who sits on the throne and will worship Him who lives forever and ever and will cast their crowns before the throne saying, ‘Worthy art thou, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power, for thou didst create all things and because of thy will, they existed and were created.’”

That vision extends into chapter 5, which we will discuss after chapter 4. This is a personal visit to the divine throne room of heaven. It is John’s second vision, his second unveiling, his second apocalypse.

The focus of the trip to heaven is on the throne and the one who sits on it and on the Lamb of God.

Verse 1. “After these things I looked and behold a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like the sound of a trumpet speaking with me said, ‘Come up here and I will show you what must take place after these things.’”

What things? After the things that he had just experienced. What did he just experience? The tremendous vision of Christ in chapter 1 and then the giving of the seven letters for the churches in chapters 2 and 3.

“Come up here, I will show you what must take place after these things.” In other words, you have here not John’s chronology but God’s chronology.

God is saying to him, or the voice is saying to him, “After the things you have just written about, then will come these things.” That is a very important transition point. The phrase “after these things” is used throughout the book of Revelation to mark the beginning of a new vision.

After these things, I looked and behold, I saw a door standing open in heaven.” He didn’t see it open, it was already opened when he saw it.

Now note, please, a door standing open in heaven. The heaven being described is the abode of God.

It is the place that Jesus Christ went after His resurrection. After, of course, He rose from the dead, He ascended into heaven. Acts 1:10 and 11 talks about that. Acts 3:21, Acts 7:55 and 56, Romans 10:6, Colossians 3:1, 1 Thessalonians 4:16, all of those things indicate to us that the Lord ascended into heaven. It is the abode of God.

John 14. “If I go, I will go and prepare a place for you that where I am, there you may be also.”

For the rest of the book of Revelation, John spends most of his time in heaven.

And the first voice which I heard” was like the sound of a trumpet speaking with me.” Come up here and I will show you what must take place after these things.”

I don't think he's going up for the purpose of glorification, I think he's going up for the purpose of revelation. This is not a picture of the Rapture of the church.

What you have in chapters 4 and 5 is the prologue to those historical events which happen in Chapters 6-22. the activity around the throne of God as God begins to move into action.

It is a curiosity and should be noted that from chapter 4, verse 1, on through the remainder of this book, the church is never mentioned. It is not mentioned.

And by assumption, therefore, many would say the Rapture must occur before these things begin to take place. But what is said here, “come up here,” cannot be equated with a Rapture call.

Remember back in chapter 3, verse 10, there was the promise from the Lord to the church that because you have kept the Word of my perseverance, I will also keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world to test those who dwell upon the earth.

Now, the central theme here is the throne.

Verse 2 “Immediately I was in the spirit and behold, a throne was standing in heaven

What he means is, “I was under the control of the Spirit and I was taken out of the time-space dimension.”

Please note: The throne John saw was not so much a piece of furniture but a symbol of sovereign rule and sovereign authority.

The throne, by the way, is located not in a palace.

All throughout the book of Revelation, we learn that the throne is in a temple.

Please notice: A throne was standing in heaven. The idea of that is that this is not a portable chair. This is something set.

This is a fixed and set and permanent throne occupied by God. It is immovable. “I saw there a fixed, set, established place of divine rule, worship, and judgment.”

“One sitting on the throne.” There is a sovereign of the universe in charge. Sitting, please, indicates the posture of reigning, because something is about to happen.

We know who it is. Isaiah, in his vision, when he saw the very same throne, went into the very same situation and the very same scene. He simply says this, “In the year of King

Uzziah's death, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple."

It is indeed the same Lord that is on the throne that was there when Isaiah got his vision. It is the same throne set, established, fixed, and immovable, and sitting on it is the same almighty, sovereign God of the universe.

Verse 3: "And He who was sitting on the throne was like a jasper stone and a sardius in appearance, and there was a rainbow around the throne like an emerald in appearance."

Chapter 21, verse 11. "The brilliance of the holy city Jerusalem is the brilliance of the glory of God. Her brilliance was like a very costly stone, as a stone of crystal-clear jasper." So, what we learn about jasper is that it is crystal clear. It is best to see this as a term that describes a diamond.

Chapter 4 "The one sitting was not only like a jasper stone but like a sardius."

Sardis-The stone itself was a blood-red ruby stone, fiery bright. It speaks of the blazing, fiery nature of God's wrath and fury.

Daniel Chapter 7. Verse 9, "I kept looking until thrones were set up and the Ancient of Days" "took His seat. His vesture was like white snow and the hair of His head like pure wool" - "His throne was ablaze with flames, its wheels were a burning fire, a river of fire was flowing and coming out from before Him."

Deuteronomy 4:24, “For the Lord your God is a consuming fire.”

The jasper and the sardius were the first and last stones on the breastplate of the high priest.

And so, it may be that in these stones, God is seen in covenant relationship to Israel, that even though He is going to fire out the wrath and the fury and the blazing laser flames of judgment, it will not consume the covenant people.

As we well know, during the time of the tribulation, Israel is going to be what? Saved. And He will fulfill His covenant with them. God is not through with them yet.

And so, it may be that those two stones also speak of the fact that God in His covenant has not forgotten His promise to Israel. And He will, first of all, call out twelve thousand from each of those twelve tribes to be His witnesses and seal them so they can evangelize.

There’s another interesting note. Reuben, represented by the jasper, means in Hebrew “behold a son.” Benjamin, represented by the sardius, in Hebrew means “son of my right hand.”

Could those names also speak of the greatest Jew, the true Son, the Son sitting at His right hand, even Jesus Christ?

Thirdly - first the throne, then on the throne - around the throne, and we’re just going to begin to see this. Verse 3,

“There was a rainbow around the throne, like an emerald in appearance.”

Ezekiel 1:28, “There was a radiance around Him and it had the appearance of the rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day.”

Genesis 9:13, “Just to prove to you that I will be faithful in my covenant, Noah, and never again drown the world, I’ll put” “my rainbow in the sky.”

And every time you see a rainbow, it is God’s way of saying to you He will never again destroy the world by water. The rainbow is a sign of God’s faithfulness. God is faithful to His Word, faithful to His promise, faithful to His covenant.

At the center of the throne, you see this holy wrath, but surrounding it you see this beautiful green hue of faithfulness. Listen: Wrath is never at the expense of faithfulness. Judgment never overrules promise.

Malachi-“They shall be mine in the day when I make up my jewels.” Romans 8:1, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ.”