

1) With that, lets jump into the last of the seven letters.

Rev 3:14-22 (NIV)

- 1) We now begin an important transition in the book of Revelation.
 - a) Chapter 1:19 mentions "things which are" and the "things which will take place"
 - b) from the church age described in chapters 2-3, ("things which are")
 - c) to the third great division of the book found in chapters 4-22 ("things which will take place").
- 2) The scene shifts from matters concerning the church on earth to a dramatic scene in heaven.
- 3) The church on earth is not mentioned directly again until chapter 20.
- 4) The scene that begins to unfold centers on the throne of God and forms the prologue to the future historical events (the Tribulation, millennial kingdom, and eternal state)
- 5) These unfold in chapters 6-22.
- 6) Again, for those who ascribe to the Pre-tribulational (dispensational) Premillennialism point of view, the church will have been Raptured before the time of tribulation.

Rev 4:1-2 (NIV)

- 7) The phrase “after this” or “after these things” is used throughout Revelation to mark the beginning of a new vision (cf. 7:9; 15:5; 18:1; 19:1).
- 8) This is the second occurrence of the phrase and relates to God's chronology.
- 9) This is the second record in scripture of a man being brought to heaven in a vision (or not)
- 10) The first was Paul. In second Corinthians, we are told:

2 Cor 12:1-4 (NIV)

11) THIRD HEAVEN COMMENT

- a) Paul was suddenly snatched up into the third heaven which, transcending the first (earth's atmosphere; Deut 11:11; 1 Kings 8:35; Isa 55:10) and second (interplanetary and interstellar space; Gen 15:5; Ps 8:3; Isa 13:10) heavens, is the abode of God (1 Kings 8:30; Ps 33:13-14; Matt 6:9). The parallelism of the two phrases demands that Paradise be equated with heaven (see Luke 23:43; cf. Rev 2:7, which says the Tree of Life is in Paradise with Rev 22:2,14,19, which place it in heaven). The Persian word from which the Greek word translated Paradise derives means "walled garden." The greatest honor a Persian king could bestow on one of his subjects was to grant him the right to walk with the king in the royal garden in intimate companionship.

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Revelation – NOTES – 2021

- 12) And now, here, John is being invited as well.
- 13) We do not know of the interaction in Paul's case but here, we do know that Jesus (the one speaking to John "speaking to me like a trumpet" was the caller.
- 14) In Paul's case, he could not say whether it was in the body or in spirit (vision) but ...
- a) John declares "At once I was in the Spirit" so we must assume it is a vision.
- 15) However, the big difference is that John is instructed to write down what he sees with the idea of sharing it with all Christians everywhere.
- 16) In Paul's case – he says what he saw were "things that man is not permitted to tell"
- 17) The phrase "what must take place after this" or "these things" is reference to the letters to the churches.
- 18) John then exclaims "at once I was in the Spirit"
- a) Again, this expression means that the Holy Spirit was giving him a vision.
- b) The vision will be showing him situations and events that he could not have seen with mere human eyesight.
- c) All true prophecy comes from God through the Holy Spirit (1:10; 2 Peter 1:20-21) so this should not be a surprise at all.
- d) MacArthur makes an interesting comment here:

"As he was taken out of the familiar dimension of space and time and into the heaven of God's presence in the Spirit's power (cf. 1:10), John was amazed and astounded by what he saw, causing him to exclaim behold."

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- 19) As we proceed through the remainder of the Revelation, we need to remember that not only are we seeing some very strange beings and events, but we are also in a different way of looking at time.
- a) We will move back and forth thru time and long and short are not necessarily relevant any longer.
- 20) John immediately recognizes where he is and the first thing that catches his attention was the throne and someone setting on it.
- 21) It appears that the personage of the one setting on the throne is not immediately apparent.
- 22) He continues his description in verse 3. As I read and you follow along let your mind see what John is seeing – try to catch the vision not just the words.

Rev 4:3-6 (NIV)

- 23) If you did what I asked you to do, you probably had a real jumble (MESS) in your mind.
- 24) The reason is, we tend to think literally – and in looking at these visions, we must look deeper than the visual expression.

Revelation – NOTES – 2021

25) John first describes the one setting on the throne in what may at first appear to be a visually odd manner – appearance of jasper and carnelian.

- a) These two stones are linked together in Ex 28 17-20 where they are stones in Aaron's breastplate of decisions or judgments.
- b) These were the first and last of the 12 stones.
 - i) One for each of the sons of Israel and each of them was engraved with the name of one of the twelve tribes.
 - ii) The first was sardius or carnelian and the last was jasper.
- c) The idea of describing God in this manner I would think, is to show the total correctness and greatness of His decisions and judgments which is what the remainder of the visions are all about.
- d) Based on this interpretation of the visual, you can see that the statement that I made a moment ago that

“It appears that the personage of the one setting on the throne is not immediately apparent.”

Is WRONG – John did recognize who was on the throne and could only describe him as the vision led him to.

26) At the same time, John describes the rainbow encircling the throne.

- a) It was, to the Jews, a sign of God's covenant mercy.
- b) After the destruction of the earth in the flood of Noah's day, God promised that the earth would never be destroyed in that way again. The rainbow was a sign of that promise.
- c) Arching over the throne, is suggesting that God is merciful in all that he does.

27) Next, we must address one of the less clear things that John sees and reports – the 24 elders.

- a) Much debate has occurred thru the years regarding who these elders are:
- b) **Possibility #1** – Elders may represent the patriarchs of the 12 tribes and the 12 apostles.
 - i) Which in essence symbolize the two covenants of the people of God.
 - ii) The thrones and white garments suggest kingly priests.
 - iii) The crowns represent the idea of reigning
 - iv) Considering this possibility, I could not help but think back to the James and John's mother asking that her sons be seated on Jesus' right and left in the kingdom.

Matt 20:23 (NIV)

- c) **Possibility #2** – These elders are the heavenly counterpart of the twenty-four priestly ranks who served the temple.
 - i) This keeps the group together yet still does not answer the question of who they are.
- d) **Possibility #3** – They are an angelic group providing worship at the throne.

- i) I personally discount this because nowhere in scripture are angels seated on thrones or reigning.
- ii) The word elder is also never used to describe angels – only men.

28) John sees coming from ***the throne flashes of lightning, rumblings, and peals of thunder.***

- a) This strikes a contrast to the emerald rainbow.
- b) These things in combination are throughout scripture usually descriptive of the presence of God Almighty!

29) The next thing John sees is the is seven lamps blazing.

- a) The Greek word used here really describes things more like blazing torches.
- b) He clearly states the these represent the 7 spirits of God (complete Spirit of God).
- c) There are many facets to the Holy Spirit. This is a study all unto itself. As example:
 - i) Isaiah 11:2 speaks of wisdom, understanding, counsel, strength, knowledge, reverence, and deity
 - ii) In Zechariah 4:1-10 of power
 - iii) Rev 1:4 of grace and peace; and here of fiery judgment.
 - iv) And, of course, Jesus portrays Him as the Comforter of those who love Christ will be the Consumer of those who reject Him.
- d) All that being said, it really makes sense that the vision would present the Holy Spirit in a form that would be indicative of all of His characteristics.

30) John then in vs 6 says “before the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass clear as crystal”

- a) The sea of glass serves as the magnificent floor of God's throne room and highlights both the magnificence and the holiness of God.
- b) It is not a literal "sea"; rather, it is a metaphor for the scene.
 - i) Rev 21:1 tells us there is no sea in heaven.
- c) There was a similar scene written of in Exodus:

Ex 24:9-11 (NIV)

31) In summary, this vision that has here shows heaven and, in particular, God’s throne and surroundings.

32) So many times, when we see heaven portrayed in shows on TV etc., we see this cloudy misty place.

MacArthur comments on this:

“Heaven is not a shadowy world of mists and indistinct apparitions. It is a world of dazzlingly brilliant light, refracting and shining as through jewels and crystal in a manner beyond our ability to describe or imagine”

- 33) Again, we cannot take these images and make them literal, but we must look at them as indicative of what is being portrayed.
- 34) I think that this is exactly what MacArthur has done in this brief comment.
- 35) The Holy Spirit gave to John the images that, to the readers of his time would best describe God and the surroundings of His throne in a manner that was the ultimate for them.
- 36) In a manner that is beyond their ability to imagine anything greater.
- 37) Even though we are not in the same mindset as John’s original readers, we must take these descriptions and use them to transport our minds to the same level of understanding of the awe that is before them and us.