

**PREFACE**

These notes are to serve as a blessing and help to those studying the word with Pastor Neil Spencer. Pastor Neil does not claim to fully agree with all the thoughts, beliefs, writings, or teachings of every named source/person in these notes. The Bible is the ultimate authority & ALL believers are to be Bereans (Acts 17.10-11).

**INTRODUCTION:****1. JESUS LOVES CHURCH**

1. In Chapters 1—5, we see Jesus' **LOVE** for the **CHURCH — REVEALED**

2. Rev 1.19 gives us what many would call the **DIVINE OUTLINE** of the book; John is told **19** "*Write down what you have seen—both the things that are now happening and the things that will happen.*"

2. Now, this morning we're stepping into the longest section of the book of Revelation

1. We've considered "*the things that John saw*" in chapter 1 — the **PERSON** of **JESUS**

2. We've considered "*the things that are*" in chap 2/3 — the **PEOPLE** of **JESUS**

1. The 7 letters to 7 churches

2. These letters follow a similar pattern:

1. **Church**—Identification the city where the church resides.

2. **Characterization** — Insightful/Relevant description of Jesus to that local church

3. **Commendation**—Encouragement from Jesus

4. **Critique/Complaint**—Warning of something erroneous or even egregious.

5. **Command**—Instruction of how do/get/stay right...

6. **Counsel/Caution** — Exhortation & even warning to all believes

7. **Comfort**—Jesus offers words of comfort & encouragement for the future.

3. Today, we'll begin the 3rd section (CH 4–22 ) "*the things that will happen*" — the **PROGRAM** of **JESUS**

1. We'll see a reckoning, judgment, wrong made right, the presence of sin dealt with once & for all.

2. The establishment of a NEW Heaven & Earth

4. But, before that begins in chapter 6... in chapters 4/5 — we see HEAVEN... we see WORSHIP...

5. The reckoning stage is being set... and as this text & many supporting texts throughout the NT indicate/express, the church is with JESUS... b/c **JESUS LOVES CHURCH!**

3. In our study today, we'll see:

1. That immediately after John records the 7 letters to the churches, a heavenly voice calls him to heaven.

2. John describes both his entrance into heaven & his experience of heaven.

3. And, there's a shift in perspective that'll take place in chapter 4...

1. In chapters 1-3, the vantage point is from earth into the things of & from heaven

2. Beginning in ch4, we're looking at earth from the vantage point of heaven.

4. So, let's consider the 4th chapter of Revelation

## REVELATION 4.1—11

*1 Then as I looked, I saw a door standing open in heaven, and the same voice I had heard before spoke to me like a trumpet blast. The voice said, “Come up here, and I will show you what must happen after this.” 2 And instantly I was in the Spirit, and I saw a throne in heaven and someone sitting on it.*

### 1. A Door Open in Heaven

1. The word heaven is used in 3 ways in the Bible:

1. 1st Heaven—the atmosphere: the skies above the earth where birds fly, clouds float, & from which we receive dew, rain, & snow (Gen. 8:2; Deut. 11:11; Isa. 55:10).
2. 2nd Heaven—the universe: the celestial realm of the sun, moon, stars, and planets (Gen. 1:1; 15:5; Ps. 8:3, which says, “*When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and stars, which You have ordained, what is man . . . ?*”).
3. 3rd Heaven—the dwelling place of God: where God resides, where He is enthroned, where He renders judgment, & the place from which His blessings flow (1 Kings 8:30; Ps. 2:4; Isa. 66:1; Rev. 2:7; Matt. 6:9, which says, “*Our Father, who is in heaven*”).

2. It is in this 3rd Heaven that John sees a door...

1. Did you notice that it's not a pearly gate? And St. Peter isn't standing there telling dumb jokes.
2. Peter has nothing to do with your getting into heaven. Only Jesus does. Jesus said, “*I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved*” (John 10:9)

### 2. There is a Voice

1. Speaks Like a Trumpet Blast

2. “*Come up here, and I will show you what must happen after this.*”

3. I absolutely love what Pastor David Guzik says on this:

1. **(PP)** *Many see John's going up to heaven as a symbol of the rapture of the church. John was called up to heaven by a voice that sounds **like a trumpet**, just as the church will be as described in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17.*
2. **(PP)** *The pattern is significant. Jesus finished speaking to and dealing with the churches in Revelation chapters 2 and 3, and all churches are comprehended in the seven. Now, after dealing with the church, Jesus called John up to heaven, “catching him away” with a voice that sounded **like a trumpet**. All this happened before the great wrath that will be described beginning at Revelation 6. As that great judgment on the earth unfolded, John – a representative of the church – was in heaven, looking down on earth.*
3. **(PP)** *Significantly, the word church never occurs in the chapters describing this period of judgment on earth, no where in Revelation chapters 4 through 19.*

4. In these 2 opening verses we're given a description of John's entrance to heaven + insightful & exciting & mystifying description of what many call the RAPTURE of the church... what is that?
  1. The rapture is God "snatching away" all believers (present/past) from the earth in order to make way for His righteous judgment to be poured out on the earth during the tribulation period — God will resurrect all believers who have died, give them glorified bodies, & take them from the earth, along with all living believers, who will also be given glorified bodies at that time.
  2. The word *rapture* does not occur in the Bible (neither does the word Trinity nor Bible — but, they're there).
    1. When Jerome, in the 4th century, translated this passage from the original Greek text into Latin, he used the word the Latin term *raptus*, which means "to rapture."
    2. The term comes from a Latin word meaning "a carrying off, a transport, or a snatching away."
  3. The concept of the "carrying off" or the rapture of the church is clearly taught in Scripture, & is described primarily in 1 Thess 4:13–18 & 1 Cor 15:50–54.
    1. 1 Thess 4:16-17 *"For the Lord Himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever"*.
    2. Scholar Kenneth Wuest translated 1 Thess 4:17: *"We shall be snatched away forcibly in masses of saints, having the appearance of clouds for a welcome meeting with the Lord in the lower atmosphere."*
    3. Skip Heitzig says, *"Do you see how this describes the same phenomenon that John experienced? He wrote, "Immediately I was in the Spirit" (Revelation 4:2)—just as will happen in the rapture."*
  4. One author says: *"The rapture of the church is a glorious event we should all be longing for. We will finally be free from sin. We will be in God's presence forever. There is far too much debate over the meaning and scope of the rapture. This is not God's intent. The rapture should be a comforting doctrine full of hope; God wants us to "encourage each other w/ these words" (1 Thess 4:18)."*
  5. I truly believe that this *snatching* is the next piece to fall into place on God's prophetic time-line...
    1. There is so much MORE to be shared about the rapture
    2. **(PP)** These 3 are accessible/meaningful reads on this glorious truth
      1. "Unlocking the Last Day" — Jeff Lasseigne
      2. "You Can Understand the Book of Revelation" — Skip Heitzig
      3. "Revelation" — Greg Laurie

3. He said he was *“Instantly in the Spirit”*

1. John already said he was *in the Spirit* (Rev 1.10), but this was yet a different experience, as John came to heaven & a heavenly perspective.

2. So, what does this all mean?

1. As a one who has been raised as a PK, a graduate from a local private Christian school, one who has served for the last 20yrs as Kids Pastor, Youth Pastor, Executive Pastor, Worship Leader, Church Planter, Lead Pastor, as one who holds a Bachelors Degree in Biblical Studies, Masters in Christian Leadership, MDIV by June 2022, a licensed Christian worker, & ordain Pastor — IDK :-)

2. Was it like this? — (PP) Dr. Strange — IDK???

3. It seems similar to Paul’s experience in 2 Cor 12.1-4... when he had his heavenly experience, didn’t know if he was *in the body* or not.

4. But look at what it says he sees, and what most impresses him:

## 4. There was a Throne — with someone sitting on it

1. The key word in this chapter is THRONE; it is used 14x — & used 46x in this book.

2. Why is this important?

1. The THRONE is the 1st thing... & THAT thing which most impresses John

2. It’s the centerpiece... everything else is described in relation to it...

1. This is truly theology 101 — there is a throne in heaven... & it is not yours.

2. There is a seat of authority or power that the entire universe must answer to.

3. Yet, the throne of God is NOTHING w/out the ONE who sits on that throne

3. Who is sitting on the throne? — look at v3

**3** *The one sitting on the throne was as brilliant as gemstones—like jasper and carnelian. And the glow of an emerald circled his throne like a rainbow. 4 Twenty-four thrones surrounded him, and twenty-four elders sat on them. They were all clothed in white and had gold crowns on their heads. 5a From the throne came flashes of lightning and the rumble of thunder.*

## 1. John Gives His Best Description of the One on the Throne

1. Bible commentator/author Warren Wiersbe says of the one sitting on the throne:

1. *“This is God the Father, since the Son approaches the throne in Revelation 5:6, and the Spirit is pictured before the throne in Revelation 4:5.*

1. God is on the Throne.

2. Simply, but that simple truth can revolutionize your anxiety/worry — if you’ll allow it to.

2. *There is no possible way for human words to describe what God is like in His essence. John can only use comparisons.”*

2. Pastor/Author Skip Heitzig says, *“John tries to picture God by describing at least three kinds of brilliant stones. He mentions a jasper, which is a clear, diamond-like gem with spectacular brilliance. He also speaks of a sardius (carnelian) stone, a gem something like a ruby, with a reddish hue. As he gazes upon the throne, he sees a brilliant white light exploding outward, all colored with a reddish hue—perhaps reminding the heavenly inhabitants of the blood of Christ shed on the cross. Whenever they look toward the throne, they recall the Savior’s departure from heaven and the crimson stain that followed, which bought their salvation. John also saw a rainbow, “in appearance like an emerald” (v. 3)—the third gemstone (sry Frank Oz... there is the real Emerald City) He sees this rainbow not after the storm of divine judgment, but before it—as if to remind him that God always keeps His promises. Only when God’s patience has come to an end will He judge. And even after that future judgment, we can rest assured that the rainbow, as a promise of God’s commitment to keeping His word, will remain throughout all eternity.”*

1. Language fails John in his attempt to describe what he sees...

2. But, what he’s conveying is brilliantly beautiful & packed with meaning...

2. Next, John sees 24 Thrones w/ 24 elders clothed in white & crowned — What is this about???

1. In 1 Chronicles 24, we see that there were 24 courses of the priesthood, representing all the priests

2. **(PP)** I like what Pastor Heitzig says, *“The Old Testament speaks of twenty-four courses of priests who served in the temple in Jerusalem near the Ark of the Covenant (the earthly symbol of God’s throne). That’s the only other time in the Bible we see this number in a similar context. The twenty-four courses of priests represented the nation of Israel before God; so it’s safe to say that the twenty-four elders represent the church before God.”*

3. Rm 8.17 says that “we are join heirs with Christ” & 2 Tim 2.12 says that “we will reign with Him”...

4. David Guzik says, *“Redeemed, glorified man sits enthroned with Jesus. On lesser thrones, to be sure, but thrones none the less.”*

5. These elders most probably symbolize the people of God in heaven, enthroned & rewarded.

3. From the throne w/ these 24 glorified representatives of God’s ppl — flashes of lightning/thunder

1. As NWFL—idans we know what that’s like... What does this mean here?

2. **(PP)** Wiersbe: *“These “storm signals” will be repeated during the time of judgment, always proceeding from the throne and temple of God. God has indeed prepared His throne for judgment. Our world does not like to think of God as a God of judgment. They prefer to look at the rainbow around the throne and ignore the lightning and thunder out of the throne. He certainly is a God of grace, but His grace reigns through righteousness (Rom. 5:21). This was made clear at the cross where God manifested both His love for sinners and His wrath against sin.”*

3. These are indications of a coming storm & reminders of God’s awesome power.

4. Now, in the remainder of this chapter we'll what's happening before the throne of God in heaven... now, this is where it gets weird... :-)

1. There are a lot of descriptions given in the rest of the chapter that are ... well, ... descriptions
2. John will use the word "like"... "it's like"... he's not reverting to a SoCal valley girl or a pre-teen/teen — whose vocabulary it littered with the qualifier like, like like... — no, no, no....
3. But, he's giving the best that human language will allow for insights into heaven... Let's look... beginning at the 2nd half of verse 5...

**5b** *And in front of the throne were seven torches with burning flames. This is the sevenfold Spirit of God. 6 In front of the throne was a shiny sea of glass, sparkling like crystal. In the center and around the throne were four living beings, each covered with eyes, front and back. 7 The first of these living beings was like a lion; the second was like an ox; the third had a human face; and the fourth was like an eagle in flight. 8 Each of these living beings had six wings, and their wings were covered all over with eyes, inside and out. Day after day and night after night they keep on saying, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God, the Almighty—the one who always was, who is, and who is still to come." 9 Whenever the living beings give glory and honor and thanks to the one sitting on the throne (the one who lives forever and ever), 10 the twenty-four elders fall down and worship the one sitting on the throne (the one who lives forever and ever). And they lay their crowns before the throne and say, 11 "You are worthy, O Lord our God, to receive glory and honor and power. For you created all things, and they exist because you created what you pleased."*

1. John sees 7 lamps of fire & a sea of glass before the throne.

1. Have you ever heard this statement? The greatest commentary on the Bible is the \_\_\_\_\_. (Bible)
2. A grasp/understanding of the Old Testament gives us insights into what John is seeing/describing.
  1. The tabernacle—the tent-like, portable temple that Israel used during its wilderness experience —was a model of God's throne room in heaven & it featured 7-branched candlestick; & a bronze laver of water, in which the priest would wash his hands before offering a sacrifice.
  2. Here in heaven we see 7 lamps of fire & "sea of glass, like crystal" in front of the throne.
    1. The 7 lamps are a picture of the Holy Spirit
    2. The water, I like what what Heitzig says of this, *"The water is solid now, no longer liquid, because in heaven there will be no need for cleansing. Jesus died on the cross, paying the price for our sins. And in heaven, we'll stand on the finished work of Jesus Christ."*
      1. So the crystallized water could be a symbol of the finished work of Jesus
      2. Surfers — there may be hope of heavenly waves :-)

2. In v6-8, we see the descriptions of the 4 living creatures worshipping God before throne

1. From the best commentary on the Bible — the Bible — we see in Ezekiel 1 & 10 that these creatures may be the same if not, at the very least closely related to be *cherubim*.
2. These spectacular beings that surround the throne of God in worship & involved in His divine Justice.
  1. And cherubim do not look like this...
    1. **(PP)** a little baby — Like my Laney Pearl
    2. There is a 3D Artist/Motion Designer from Hamburg, Germany — Jonas Pfeiffer, on his instagram he has motion descriptions of what John writes about here that look like this
    3. **(PP)** VIDEO...
  2. Time does not afford me the ability to unpack all the intricacies & implications of the meaning of these creatures... their resembles being like a lion, an ox, a human face; & like an eagle in flight... their wings... their eyes... but, again, I would recommend these resources
  3. **(PP)** Books & **(PP)** Enduring Word — superb on this ... you could spend hrs/days studying...
3. Chapter 4 closes with a vision of worship before the throne of God
  1. Worship that is
    1. Overwhelmed with the perfection, the holiness, the completeness, the power of God
    2. Comprehensive — heaven (4 living creatures) & humanity (24 elders) ... worship
  2. The 24 elders recognizing the supremacy of God by laying down their crowns of victory before the one on the throne who is crowned in royalty.
  3. And as it says in v11 the overwhelming consensus is clear: *“You are worthy, O Lord our God, to receive glory and honor and power. For you created all things, and they exist because you created what you pleased.”*

## CONCLUSION:

1. As we close this morning, let's be reminded that Revelation is the revealing/unveiling of something to us...
  1. God has given this book to **prepare** us, not to **scare** us.
  2. God has given this book not to **conceal** things from us, but to **reveal** them to us.
  3. God has given this book not to **overstimulate** our mind, but to **motivate** our hearts & hands to worship.
2. In chapter 4 today, we see the beginning of *“the things that will happen”* — the **PROGRAM** of **JESUS**
3. The Program includes:
  1. A reckoning... judgment... wrong being made right... the presence of sin dealt with once & for all.
  2. And the establishment of a NEW Heaven & Earth
4. But, before that begins...(chapter 6)... in chapter 4/5 — we see HEAVEN... we see WORSHIP...
5. The reckoning stage is being set, & as Rev 4 evidences, the church is w/ JESUS, b/c **JESUS LOVES CHURCH!**