

CHAPTER 4

Chapter 4 is the dramatic shift in context in this book from what we have been previously discussing.

This movement is one into the final seven years of an age that is known as the Age of the Gentiles.

In Luke 21 you will find Jesus speaking about the Age of the Gentiles. This reference is from the book of Daniel, specifically, Daniel 9. In Daniel 9 we find this prophecy of 70 weeks which upon further examination is better translated at 70 sevens.

The angel Gabriel gives this prophecy to Daniel of 70 sevens, so 490 which is best understood as years. Gabriel speaks that for Israel, 490 years of judgment has been decreed for them. And this age of judgment is referred to as the Age of the Gentiles.

This judgment comes upon Israel because of their refusal to keep the covenant of the Law that they agreed to. In Leviticus 26 you find that there are blessings and curses that come upon Israel for keeping or failing to keep the Old Covenant.

Because of their disobedience, they come under this time of judging known as the Age of the Gentiles.

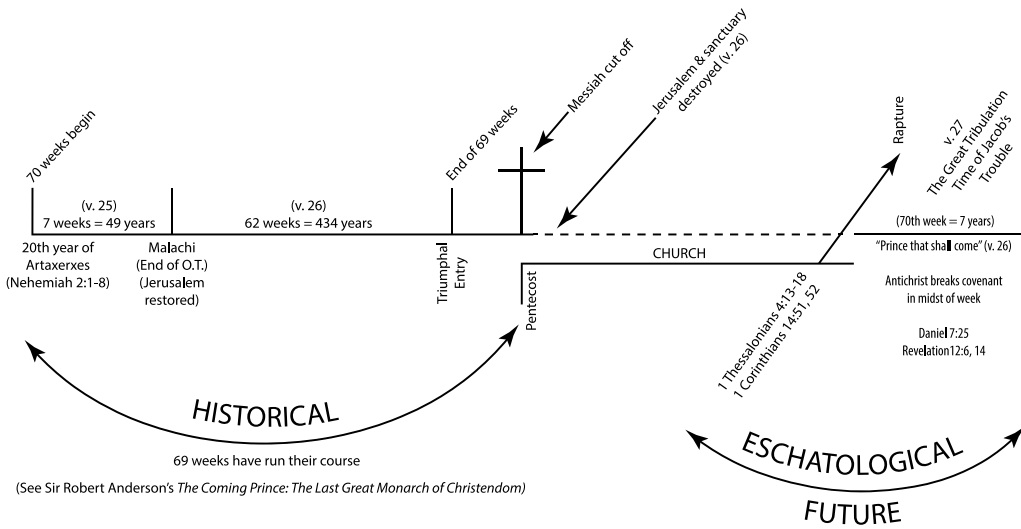
This begins with the conquest of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar in 605 BC and it ends with second advent, the physical return of Christ to earth to end the final seven years of this time period.

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This is a bit confusing because you might me saying obviously more than 490 years have passed since this prophecy.

If you further investigate Daniel 9, you understand that these years are not all contiguous.

THE 70 WEEKS OF DANIEL 9



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So what we understand is that 69 of these 70 sevens have taken place between Daniel's prophetic vision and Christ's first coming.

Then there is a pause between the 69th and 70th seven or as some scholars call it "The Great Interval".

That pause or interval is what you and I are both living in currently. Paul says that it was necessary so that the Gentiles might be brought into the family of God.

That pause or interval is also what you might call the church age. It's the age that we read about in chapters 2 and 3.

So at the end of the church age, we are ushered into the final seven of the sevens.

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Revelation 4:1-4

[1] After this I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven! And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, “Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this.” [2] At once I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne. [3] And he who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian, and around the throne was a rainbow that had the appearance of an emerald. [4] Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones were twenty-four elders, clothed in white garments, with golden crowns on their heads.

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Chapter 4 is a transition from the things that are to the things that are to be. It is a shift into Daniel's seventieth seven.

There are a number of names that we know this seven as. The most common name in the New Testament for this age is "the day of the Lord."

It's also called the "Day of Jacob's trouble", indicating a time of trouble for Israel as a nation.

The most common name for it comes from the book of Deuteronomy and that is The Tribulation. The root word for it in Hebrew means to constrict or compress like a grape in a press.

This chapter begins with a door being opened and it is an amazing scene of the throne room of God. The voice of Jesus, the voice of one as a trumpet from chapter one speaks to John and tells him to come up here.

John is taken to the throne room of God and the first thing he sees is God the Father seated on the throne. He gives a description of Him appearing as jasper or diamonds. God the Father is shining bright with a dazzling fiery light abounding in the throne room.

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Around this throne are twenty-four elders. The elders are wearing crowns on their heads and white garments seated on thrones of their own.

Elders are always associated with human beings who are leaders in the church in the Bible. The use of the word elder, means that these are humans. This is the first time we see elders being mentioned in the throne room of God, as the vision of Isaiah and Ezekiel do not mention elders.

They are are wearing crowns and have robes of white and sitting on thrones. The robes of white are connected to salvation through faith. They are believers who have put on the righteousness of Christ. With white representing the work of the saints.

The thrones represent authority. We know that Jesus said saints will rule with authority in His kingdom.

Lastly, they are wearing crowns and the Greek word means a reward for excellence. So this is the believer's eternal reward for completing their race.

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These elders represent all of the leaders of the church throughout the ages. Jesus couldn't possibly show John all of them, so He showed him 24.

So why does Jesus show John 24?

The number twelve is associated with leadership in the Bible.

Twelve tribes govern Israel, twelve apostles govern the church...

Doubling that to 24 means to make complete. So 24 is used to signify that these are all of the leaders of the church.

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Revelation 4:9-11

[5] From the throne came flashes of lightning, and rumblings and peals of thunder, and before the throne were burning seven torches of fire, which are the seven spirits of God, [6] and before the throne there was as it were a sea of glass, like crystal. And around the throne, on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind: [7] the first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with the face of a man, and the fourth living creature like an eagle in flight. [8] And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!”

[9] And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever, [10] the twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever. They cast their crowns before the throne, saying, [11] “Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.” (ESV)

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There were seven torches of fire which as John tells us are the seven spirits of God. Now obviously there is only one Holy Spirit, so why the use of seven?

It's John's way of saying that all or 100% of the Holy Spirit is in the throne room of God at this time. And if 100% of the Holy Spirit is in the throne room of God, it must mean that He is nowhere to be found on earth at the time.

It makes sense for this to be true since we understand that Jesus told us that His presence would remain with the church until the end of the age.

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With what John witnesses here, it would serve to indicate that all of the church is present at this time in the throne room of God. Because if all of the leadership is present in the throne room of God, it would serve that all of those under its care would be present. And also all of the Holy Spirit is present in the throne room as well.

And it leads us to believe that the church has been taken up out of the earth and into the throne room of heaven.

Aside from the suppositions we make from John's description, what else leads us to believe this?

There are two terms used in the Bible for Jesus' appearing and sometimes they become confused with one another. And its important to distinguish between them because they are two different events.

We talked about the term "The Day of the Lord" earlier and this refers to the second coming of Christ to the Earth. This event ends the tribulation period and starts what we refer to as the Millennial Reign of Christ to be discussed further in our study. It has definitive events that need to happen before it can occur.

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The second term we associate with Christ's return is "The Coming of the Lord". Most often we use the word rapture to indicate this event.

And this is not the return of Christ to the Earth, but rather Christ's gathering of believers to be with Him. So we believe in what is referred to as a pre-tribulation rapture of the church, meaning that the church will be caught up before the events that are about to be played out through the next several chapters of this book.

We believe this because of the description that John gives us in this chapter. And we can believe that the entire church is in the throne of God for a few different reasons.

The first is that we know that there is a distinctive catching away of believers from the earth by Christ. The term "day of the Lord" is used in James as indicating a time that could be at any moment. We know that since it had no preceding events, that it could happen at any time. So it made it distinctive from The 2nd Coming of Christ.

Jesus says in John 14 that He was coming to bring us to the place that He had prepared for us. He takes us off of this earth and to the place that He has prepared for us.

Throughout the New Testament, we find that we are instructed to believe that the coming of Christ is ever possible. The Second Coming of Christ depends upon rulers rising up and other events. The Coming of the Lord doesn't depend on anything and could have happened today.

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The second thing we know from 1 Corinthians 15 is that if we are to appear in the throne room of God, there must be a change to our bodies. The corruptible cannot put on the incorruptible.

So our bodies must be transformed. Our current bodies cannot inherit the kingdom of God. So when Jesus comes we must be resurrected to put on a new eternal body.

Paul says in 1 Thessalonians that those who are dead in Christ will rise first and that those who are still living will be caught up next. So if we are living, we will be resurrected to this eternal body without ever tasting death. But regardless, both those who are living and those who are dead who are in Christ will be resurrected and transformed.

The third thing is that in Hebrews 11, we understand the promise of the Kingdom is given to all at once. In other words no one person from a group can receive their inheritance of an eternal body apart from the rest of the group.

The fourth thing we understand from John 14 is that at the coming of the Lord, we will receive our eternal reward. We as believers will all be judged and based on our judgment receive our reward. Paul talks about this in 1 Corinthians 3 when he speaks to what we are using for building materials. And that those things that we've built with will be judged by fire. So based on that we will in turn receive our reward for our works.

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If we pull all of this together, we can say that the 24 elders in the throne room have glorified bodies with crowns to represent their rewards represents all of the church who has been taken out of the world along with the Holy Spirit.

They've been removed from the world because of the coming tribulation that is about to unfold. Paul tells us in 1 Thessalonians 5 that the coming tribulation is not something that the church would experience.

He also speaks in 2 Thessalonians that the lawless one, the Antichrist cannot appear until the one who restrains is taken away. It appears that the Holy Spirit is this One who is the restrainer. And once He is removed from the earth, it gives the ability for the Antichrist to have his way.

At this point in chapter 4, we can believe that the church has been raptured off of the earth and is sitting in the throne room of God.

John says that there are four living creatures which if we connect Revelation to the book of Ezekiel, we understand them to be cherubim which is the highest classification of angelic beings.

These angelic beings have a particular role and that is that they serve as the guardians of God's glory. So these angelic beings sit around the throne of God and they cry out Holy, Holy, Holy.

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This is a reminder of what happens in the throne room of God day in and day out, 24x7. Constantly praising God in the highest.

It's a reminder to you and I of what we will one day do as well.

The phrase Holy, Holy, Holy is used in order to place an emphasize on it to the max. So Holy, Holy, Holy indicates praising God's holiness and worthiness to the utmost.

When praise happens, what the church does the church do? They cast their crowns before Him. The rewards, everything that they earned is because of God. And its nothing and means nothing in the presence of Him.