

Introduction to Heaven

Welcome to the study of the Book of Revelation from the mindset of a Hebrew. This is Volume 2, on the subject of “Heaven.” In this study, we will cover Revelation 4 and 5, and Revelation 21 and 22.

The verses in Revelation chapters 1 through 3 were the discussion of Volume 1 of this study. In Volume 2, chapters 4 and 5, we find our selves peering into heaven through the eyes of John the Revelator. In between chapters 5 and 19, we see God’s Wrath upon sin unleashed on the earth and the earth dwellers, the Nation of Israel taking front and center on the world’s stage, a huge harvest of souls for the Kingdom of God from the earth, Christ’s second coming with His saints, the establishment of the Millennial Kingdom on earth, and then finally, before the end of Revelation 20, the eternal judgment of all Mankind and the Fallen Angels. Then in Revelation chapters 21 and 22, also included in Volume 2 of this study, we will get a glimpse of Heaven, the Believers’ eternal resting place.

In **Revelation 1:19**, we are given a divinely inspired outline of the book of Revelation: John the Revelator was told to write down the things that he was seeing in chapter 1, the things that he saw that were presently happening during his day in chapters 2 and 3, and then the things which would take place after these things beginning in chapter 4. The things that John saw in chapter one include the many descriptions of Jesus Christ which make up His unveiling. The things that were presently happening in John’s current time, chapters 2 and 3, were the seven letters to the seven churches in Asia Minor (Turkey). The things that were to occur “after these things” were the scene in heaven, and everything else that occurred after these things. In fact, we are given a clue as to the chronological order of most things in Revelation with six more, “then after these things,” in **Revelation 7:9, 9:12, 15:5, 18:1, 19:1** and **20:3**. This makes for a total of seven “after these things.”

After the final verse of chapter 3, we no longer see the Church on earth until we get to **Revelation 19** and Jesus Christ returns to earth from heaven with His armies (the saints clothed in fine linen, white and clean following Him on white horses). Many commentators and scholars believe what happens between chapters 3 and 4 is the “harpazo,” spoken of in **1 Thessalonians 4:13-17**. The harpazo is what we commonly call the “rapture” The word “rapture” does not occur in the Bible, but the “harpazo,” does and it means “a gathering up together.” Right before Jesus returns to earth in His second coming, John is told to write again in **Revelation 19:9**, “Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.”

At Christ’s Second Coming, the beast and the armies of the world are gathered against Him and are defeated in a moment by the LORD Jesus Christ. The beast and the false prophet are seized and thrown alive into the lake of fire. The rest gathered against Him are killed with the sword of His mouth that is the Word of God.

Revelation 20 tells us that “ha-Satan,” is bound and chained and thrown into the abyss for a thousand years. After the thousand-year reign of Christ on earth, ha-Satan, once again, is released for a short period of time to gather those of all the nations who would come against Him. Again, Christ defeats them quickly as fire comes down from heaven and devours them. Here, the devil is thrown into the lake of fire where the beast and the false prophet have already been for a thousand years.

Then the judgments begin: the Great White Throne Judgment (**Revelation 20:11-15**), the Bema or Judgment Seat of Christ (**2 Corinthians 5:10**), and the judgment of the nations known as the Sheep and Goats Judgment (**Matthew 25:31-33**). It is my personal belief that these three judgments occur at the same time after the Millennial Kingdom when all the dead will stand before the throne and be judged. Those of the nations who have treated Israel poorly will be separated from those of the nations who have blessed Israel. Those nations who have treated Israel poorly will be on His left. Those nations who have treated Israel well and blessed her will be on His right side, the side of the throne with associated power. The individuals whose names are not in the Book of Life will be judged on their deeds alone and not one of them will enter heaven to be with God forever. They will be thrown into the Lake of Fire forever that is also called the “second death.” Those whose names are in the Book of Life are those who have received God’s gift of Jesus Christ as their Savior. They may stand before Him to give an account of their deeds or works in their lives. However, they will be in His presence forever, clean and forgiven of their sins because Jesus Christ bought them back for God; He “redeemed them.” Rewards will be given out to Believers at this time, possibly as “crowns,” which will then subsequently be placed at Jesus’ feet.

Then, in chapter 21, the first heaven and the first earth will pass away. And then, John sees the New Heaven and the New Earth. And he also sees the holy city, the New Jerusalem, coming out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. The Marriage Supper of the Lamb with His Bride commences. That Bride is none other than all the believing saints (Jew and Gentile in one body) of all the earth of all time.

The verses found in **Revelation 21** and **22** represent the most comprehensive picture of Heaven in the New Testament that we have available to us. The New Jerusalem will be the holy city having the glory of God. It will have a great and high wall surrounding the city with 12 gates and 12 angels at the gates and 12 foundation stones. The city will be a perfect cube. It will be 1500 miles wide and 1500 miles high and 1500 miles long. The walls of the city will be jasper stone and the city will be pure gold that will appear as transparent glass. Our John the Revelator saw no building he could call the Temple in the New Jerusalem, for “the LORD God the Almighty and the Lamb are its Temple.” There will be no sun or moon to shine on the New Jerusalem because the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb. There will be no night and the gates of the city will never be closed. The New Jerusalem will be the eternal home of those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life. This is a description of our eternal resting place if you are in Christ. God and Man will once again be in unencumbered fellowship. Sounds awesome to me! Are you ready for this?

What I have planned for you in this study is to not only look at **Revelation 4,5, 21, and 22**, from the Hebrew mindset, but also from the Christian perspective as well. How we do this will be by relying heavily on the cross referencing of the New Testament with the Old. As I said in the introduction of Volume 1, I plan to use all the many ways I've learned to study and teach the Bible and the information I have gleaned along the way to write this study. Again, this is not an inductive study, but I may from time to time use these methods to teach you something I want you to know, and the inductive method of learning is the best way to learn it. Again, this is not a topical study, but we will study many topics along the way. And finally, this is not a study of history, but there is much history in it.

Starting with **Genesis 1**, we will look together at God's plan for Man from the Beginning and journeying onward to God's plan for Man until the very End of Days in **Revelation 22**. We will discover that God's desire from the Beginning was to walk and live with Man in unencumbered fellowship. Strictly speaking, some would say that the Garden of Eden was representative of Heaven. This begins to make sense to those of you who believe that Heaven is being in God's presence and Hell is being away from God's presence. Unfortunately, the fellowship between Man and God in the Garden was broken by Adam's sin. No longer could God walk and live with sinful Man in unencumbered fellowship.

God knew that before the beginning of Creation Mankind would fall into sin. But even knowing this, He had a plan from the Beginning to redeem Mankind. He knew ahead of time that the moment He breathed the first breath into the nostrils of Adam and man became a living being, that His Son was as good as dead. He knew that this plan would be costly and He also knew that He would not give up on His Creation. God could have thrown Adam and Eve into Hell and started over with another pair, but He did not. In just 11 generations from Creation, at the Flood, God could have thrown all the inhabitants of the Earth into the fires of Hell and started over, but He didn't. Instead He preserved 8 souls through the Flood, to repopulate the Earth and to bring about the Promised Messiah of Genesis 3:15. Very quickly after the Flood, Mankind was again polluted by sin. But, instead of starting over, God chose one man out of the Sea of Humanity, to be His man, to worship Him alone. Through this one man's offspring, He would bring the long awaited Messiah who would completely defeat the devil and make possible for the return of unencumbered fellowship of God with Man.

Obviously, there is a great deal of time between Abram and the Messiah showing up. So, what did God do with His desire to dwell with Man in the meantime, in between the time when Adam and Eve sinned and were thrown out of the Garden and when the Promised Messiah finished His work on earth by dying for the sins of the people? Abraham became the father of Isaac. Isaac became the father of Jacob. Jacob became the father of the 12 sons of Israel that became the 12 tribes of Israel. In Egypt, the 12 tribes of Israel became a nation. God made a covenant with that nation who became known as the Nation of Israel. God came to dwell with the Nation of Israel through the Law that included not only the Ten Commandments, but also the plans for the dwelling place of God in the tabernacle, its priesthood and its sacrificial system. The tabernacle was a

temporary meeting place of God and the people of Israel. Once in the land of Israel, King Solomon built a permanent dwelling place for God, the Temple. The Tabernacle and the Temple were meant to be only a shadow or a representation on earth of what was actually going on in Heaven. God manifested Himself to the Israelites as the Shekinah Glory who dwelt between the Cherubim on top of the mercy seat of the Ark of the Covenant that was placed in the Holy of Holies of the Temple. This site within the Temple was separated from all sin by certain barriers that protected both sinful man and Holy God from each other. Only once a year on Yom Kippur, and only after the proper cleansings, blood sacrifices, and donning the proper wardrobe, the high priest alone would go into the presence of the Lord in the Holy of Holies and atone for the people's sin for the up and coming year. Once in the Land, the Israelites became disobedient and worshipped other gods of the other nations. In **Ezekiel 10**, because of their great sin, God left His dwelling place between the cherubim above the mercy seat in the perfect cube of the Holy of Holies and returned to Heaven. Soon afterwards, the Jewish people were taken into captivity in a foreign land called Babylon. Babylon completely demolished the Temple made for the God of the Israelites and the gold of the Temple furnishings was carted off to Babylon and placed in the temple of the god of the Babylonians. After being allowed to return to the land under a Persian king, the Jews rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem and also rebuilt the Temple. During a long period of time, more than 400 years, God was silent to the Jewish people. At the close of the Old Testament, in a little book called Malachi in the last chapter, God tells Malachi that He is going to send Elijah the prophet to Israel. When we open up the New Testament, in the Gospel account by John, we see John the Baptist baptizing Christ. In the Gospel of **John 1:17**, Jesus tells His disciples that John was Elijah who was to come from the **Malachi 4:5-6** verses. John the Baptist turned many of the sons of Israel back to the LORD their God. And John was the forerunner before the Christ in the spirit and power of Elijah.

The New Testament brought the Messiah, the Word made flesh, God the Son, to dwell among us, Immanuel that means God is with us. He came and indwelt the same body that He had created for man to live in on this earth. How did He do that? How did He wrap all that He was and is and will be forever more into that tiny space? Especially, how did He make it so that He would not consume those who were sinful around Him in His Presence? Wow! We are told later on in **Philippians 2** that Jesus, although He "existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bondservant and being made in the likeness of men".

Even though they knew they had God in their presence, the Jews as a nation rejected Him as their Messiah. They crucified Him and then He rose from the dead. To those who believed Him He gave His Holy Spirit to indwell them. We are told by Paul in **1 Corinthians 3:16** that we are the Temple of God and the Spirit of God dwells in us. One of the three who are in the Godhead, the Holy Spirit, actually lives within us. Does this not blow your mind? Of course I know He's there, but when I really get to thinking that God, the Creator of the Universe, actually indwells me, it's more than I can wrap my head around. Do you realize the power that lies within you? One of the things I was

taught about the Holy Spirit is that He is a restrainer. **2 Thessalonians 2:7** says this about the Restrainer, “For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way.” When will this restrainer be taken out of the way? When will the Restrainer no longer be on this earth indwelling the Believers? My thoughts are that the Restrainer will no longer be on this earth indwelling the Believers when the Believers are taken out of this world and we find ourselves in heaven (the space of time between **Revelation 3** and **4**). What does the Restrainer do while He is still here on this earth? What does He restrain? My thoughts are that the Restrainer restrains sin. He keeps it checked. What happens when the Restrainer goes out of the world with the Harpazo, the gathering up of the Church from the earth to Christ at what we call the Rapture? My thoughts are that all Hell will break loose because there is no restraint on sin present on the earth!

Paul tells us in the New Testament that to be absent from the body is to be forever present with the Lord. Whether or not we die or we are among those who are raptured from this earth, we will be immediately with our Lord. We will be in His presence and He will be in our presence forevermore. This is Heaven: being in the presence of the Lord forever.

Peggy Grinstead
January 8, 2017