

## Special intro for Revelation chapters 4 & 5

As we leave our study on the Rapture of the church and proceed back into the book of Revelation, it is appropriate that we realize that it is here in Revelation that we see more glimpses of heaven than anywhere in the entire Bible. John is going to take us with him to the third heaven by way of his pen. Here in Revelation 4 & 5 especially, we will be made privy to scenes that – if we allow them to – will take our breath away. Pictures of the very God of the universe on His throne as He prepares for war & judgment - Portraits of Jesus Christ as a Lamb slain - carrying the marks of the sacrifice that was decreed by God and carried out by sinful people so many years ago.

The judgments we will encounter as we study through chapters 6 -19, all originate from this throne room. In chapter 19, it is from heaven that Christ returns to earth to set up His Millennial Kingdom. In Rev. 20-22, we have some of the most descriptive language to give us snapshots of the eternal state in heaven – the place we all long to be.

Although many millions of people have died and their spirits are in heaven now, a few, and only a few bible characters have been given scenes of heavenly glory and then returned to record what they saw for us. Ezekiel saw amazing things, and in chapter 1 of his prophecy, he supplies an amazing report that has many similarities to what John saw. Isaiah, in chapter 6 of his book saw the Lord Jesus Christ, high and lifted up on His throne, and angelic beings serving Him. Daniel was given visions of the final judgment, the Ancient of Days, and of Christ, but much of what Daniel saw was not allowed to be written down. The Apostle Paul describes a trip to heaven he took, but is not sure whether he saw it in body or in spirit. He could not record much of what he was & heard – in fact, he said it was not permissible for him to share what he heard there. John records his visions, and spends a lot of time on his face before the sovereign majesty of the Lord, as he watches the trinity in action in chapters 4 & 5.

On any given day, you can walk into a “Christian” bookstore and find 4 or 5 books by people who claim to have had a near-death experience and during that time, they were ushered into heaven to see scenes which they gladly write down in a book and publishers seemingly cannot wait to get a book out for others to buy and read. I have read some of these books and find the experience of these people similar in some respects ( bright lights, peace, joy, Jesus is there, heavenly music, they hated to leave...). Usually though, the ‘vision’ they had includes some advice from Jesus regarding doctrine or life on earth that simply does not square with the bible, and we have to ask – which one should we believe? God’s word or someone’s “experience”?

One man describes romping in a heavenly pond as he & Jesus splash water on each other; another tells how Jesus showed him a huge warehouse filled with arms, legs, kidneys and the like which – if only people would pray with faith – God would gladly send these things down to them<sup>i</sup>; another asks Jesus why there are so many different religions, and here Jesus answers that it is because people are all at different spiritual levels and all cannot deal with the greatest spiritual truths<sup>ii</sup>; some speak of having seen heaven, and then before they are returned to their bodies on earth, they are given a glimpse of hell too. One man – Don Piper ( “90 Minutes in Heaven” ) remembers that all the music he heard was not associated with Jesus’ sacrifice or death, yet that is exactly what Christ is being praised for in the biblical account of heavenly music in Rev. 5!

We need to realize that some people write books to tell a sensational story that may or may not have occurred. In some cases, maybe they did see something, but it is not necessary to assume that they went to heaven to see it. Especially when their own theology is added, and they claim that Jesus told them this, we need to be suspicious and discerning. Some may have an agenda, while others just had a dream, and their mind conjured up all sorts of pictures of what their traditions have told them about heavenly scenes.

John the Apostle, on the other hand, is the real deal, and he supplies with the truth as God wants us to see it, and as the next 2 chapters unfold, before the Tribulation starts in chapter 6, we must revel in these scenes of ineffable glory from the future in heaven as reported by John.

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<sup>i</sup> Richrd E. Eby; “Caught Up Into Paradise”; “Didn’t You Read My Book?”

<sup>ii</sup> Betty J. Eadie, Embraced by the Light.