

# *The Rapture as taught in Revelation*

## Part One—“Come Up Hither”

Compiled/Formatted By Tom Stephens

The word *hither* is used sixty-six times in the King James Bible—forty-three times in the Old Testament; and twenty-three times in the New Testament. You can find all passages in the Bible by going to a good computer concordance and typing *hither* into the word/phrase search box.

**Definition:** Hither, in a very simple definition means “here”. In the Word of God, *hither* is commonly used with the following words: *come, sold me* (Joseph), *sent me, came, (to) bring, sent, brought, turn aside, come thou, draw near* (1 Sam. 4:36), *camest thou, come in, hasten* (2 Sam. 14:32), *come near, divided hither and thither (here and yonder), parted, return, turn in, draw near, camest thou, send him* (Mk. 11:3), *reach, call Simon* (Acts 10:32), *Come up* (Rev. 4:1), and *come up* (Rev. 11: 12).<sup>1</sup>

In explanation, we see the word *hither* is used as a command *to do, present oneself* to a person or a place, or both. Where the command is made by the Lord, it is usually a command *to come, to come up, or otherwise make an appearance*. In the book of Revelation, *Come up hither* is used twice; and both are supernatural commands to be raised to heaven, a definite place—by His Spirit.

- “After this I looked, and, behold, a door *was* opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard *was* as it were a trumpet talking with me; which said, *Come up hither*, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter.” (Revelation 4:1—Italics is mine).
- “And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, *Come up hither*. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them.” (Rev 11:12—Italics mine).

In Revelation 4:1, The Apostle John—representing the Church, and also qualified as Elder (1 Peter 5:1)—is speaking about a door opened in heaven and a voice like a trumpet ordering him—John, representing the church—to arise by His Holy Spirit and present himself before God’s throne to hear *what was to come next*.

“Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter.” (Revelation 1:19).

**1)** *The things which thou hast seen* is the period of grace (Church Age), which John actually witnessed in person while alive on earth, and includes John’s Vision of Jesus Christ in Chapter one. **2)** *The things which are now*, is Christ’s warning His churches in chapters two and three. **3)** *the things which shall be hereafter* begin with chapter four through 22, which includes the Great Tribulation period (Daniel’s seventieth week<sup>2</sup>), or the hour of God’s vengeance, His day of His wrath, the rapture of the church and the seven year Great Tribulation period. You’ve heard the lake of fire was not designed for God’s people. Was the Tribulation designed for God’s people? A resounding NO!

Chapter four speaks of the Elders *for the first time in the Revelation*. Before we go further, we should know something about these elders. Who are they? Follow me in this study and you will be amazed at the coming proofs right here in The Revelation of Jesus Christ! Again, just who are these Elders?

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<sup>1</sup> Note that Scripture references were not given for each word shown. The scripture reference given relates to the word/s immediately before the reference.

<sup>2</sup> **Daniels 70<sup>th</sup> Week.** God’s dealing with Israel over 4,000 years. The Trib. Is week 70. (See *What Is Daniels 70 weeks* coming at a future date, how that this 70<sup>th</sup> week destines Israel to finalize this 70<sup>th</sup> week; not the Church.

## The Elders In God's Word

### Who Are They?

*Elders* are mentioned no less than 116 times in the Old Testament, and 60 times in the New Testament, including 12 times in the Book of Revelation. *Elders* are always people; they are never angels, other creatures or beasts, as many believe. Keep in mind in *every case*, the Word of God teaches the Elder is a person—most often a male—and his duties in the Old Testament are generally related to the Priesthood, and in the Temple areas. In the New Testament Gospels and Acts (in part), they are a part of the Priesthood until the development of the Church. After the church is established, the *Christian elder* becomes ordained into the Church by laying on of hands, as commanded by Paul. (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5).

You may be surprised, even as I was, to find the *elder* in a position of strong leadership within the Church of Jesus Christ in the *Epistles* to the churches. In this study, I will show why I believe the elders in Revelation represent the bride of Christ—The Church. (Rom. 10:7 Eph. 4:9,10).

Considering the “four and twenty” seats as written in Revelation 4:4, twelve seats for the twelve tribes of Israel, and twelve seats for the twelve apostles in the church. In these twenty-four seats around the throne, the elders were seated—in their thrones—all clothed in white raiment and crowns of gold on their head (vs. 4). *Now here's an alternate interpretation to the one given above concerning the 24 seats (thrones):* David divided the Levitical priesthood into 24 sections (1 Chron. 24:7-19), believers seen as a kingdom of priests (Rev. 1:6); old testament saints will not be rewarded here because they will not be resurrected and rewarded until after the Tribulation period (Daniel 12:1-3).

By God's Spirit, John saw the Father sitting on His throne and 24 seats around it. The 24 Elders are seated and are representative of the raptured church in heaven. After standing before the “*Judgment seat of Christ*” (Romans 14:10; 1 Corinthians 3:12-15; 2 Corinthians 5:10), they receive their rewards. Their **seats (thrones)** show a *reward of authority* in the coming millennial kingdom (20:4). Their **crowns** are rewards of honor, and the **white raiment** shows their righteousness, which has now been judged and purified. The four and twenty seats represent the church as priests before God on His throne, a type of the Levitical Priesthood. (1<sup>st</sup> Chronicles 24:7-19).

Below I list many passages of scripture, all dealing in specific ways with the elder; beginning at the book of Acts, giving both the passages and references. You will find evidence that the Elder is a part of the church leadership during the Church Age (grace); and when shown in heaven before the throne of God are obviously representatives of The Church of Jesus Christ.

### Elders In The Book Of Acts Through Peter

In these passages, I emphasize only the *elders*, not necessarily events:

- **Acts 4: 5-7:** And it came to pass on the morrow, that their rulers, and **elders**, and scribes, and Ananias the high priest, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem. And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, By what power, or by what name, have ye done this?
- **Acts 4:8:** Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and **elders** of Israel,
- **Acts 4: 23:** And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and **elders** had said unto them.

**Comment:** This passage speaks of the elders, scribes, and the high priest, making decisions concerning the new movement of the Church of Jesus Christ, and being determined to imprison Peter and John. In boldness, Peter ministers the power and authority given the church by Christ Himself. *These elders* are not a part of the Church.

- **Acts 6:12, 13:** And they stirred up the people, and the **elders**, and the scribes, and came upon [him], and caught him, and brought [him] to the council, and set up false witnesses, which said, This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place and the law:

**Comment:** Again, these Elders are not a part of the church, but are part of the Jewish Sanhedrin, the Jewish Council.

- **Acts 11:30:** Which also they did, and sent it to the **elders** by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

**Comment:** From this point on we will find that the Church Council has appointed and ordained the elders of the Church, for her growth/stability, powerfully anointed by the Holy Spirit, sitting on boards, etc.

- **Acts 14:23:** And when they had ordained them **elders** in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.
- **Acts 15:2:** When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and **elders** about this question.
- **Acts 15:4:** And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and [of] the apostles and **elders**, and they declared all things that God had done with them.
- **Acts 15:6:** And the apostles and **elders** came together for to consider of this matter.
- **Acts 15:22:** Then pleased it the apostles and **elders**, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; [namely], Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren:
- **Acts 15:23:** And they wrote [letters] by them after this manner; The apostles and **elders** and brethren [send] greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia:
- **Acts 16:4:** And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and **elders** which were at Jerusalem.
- **Acts 20:17:** And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the **elders** of the church.
- **Acts 21:18:** And the [day] following Paul went in with us unto James; and all the **elders** were present.
- **Acts 22:5:** As also the high priest doth bear me witness, and all the estate of the **elders**: from whom also I received letters unto the brethren, and went to Damascus, to bring them which were there bound unto Jerusalem, for to be punished.
- **Acts 23:14:** And they came to the chief priests and **elders**, and said, We have bound ourselves under a great curse, that we will eat nothing until we have slain Paul.
- **Acts 24:1:** And after five days Ananias the high priest descended with the **elders**, and [with] a certain orator [named] Tertullus, who informed the governor against Paul.
- **Acts 25:15:** About whom, when I was at Jerusalem, the chief priests and the **elders** of the Jews informed [me], desiring [to have] judgment against him.
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### **Elders In First Timothy:**

- **1 Timothy 5:17:** Let the **elders** that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.

### **Elders In Titus:**

- **Titus 1:5:** For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain **elders** in every city, as I had appointed thee:

### **In Hebrews :**

- **Hebrews 11:2:** For by it the **elders** obtained a good report.

### **In James:**

- **James 5:14:** Is any sick among you? let him call for the **elders** of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord:

### **In Peter:**

- **1 Peter 5:1,2:** 1)The **elders** which are among you I exhort, *who am also an elder*, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: 2) Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight *thereof*, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;... (My Italics).

**Comment:** Peter here, by unction of the Holy Spirit, exhorts those who are among the believers to feed the flock of God, willingly and not by constraint; not of worldly lusts, but of an alert mind in Christ Jesus. Remember when Jesus told Peter to “*Feed My sheep*”, Jesus gave him the same authority and power over the wiles of the enemy that His Father had given to Him; and Jesus left this power and authority to the Church! Now Peter, in a special anointing by the Spirit, identifies himself as an *elder*, exhorting the body of Christ to minister the Word of God to the hurting and oppressed, just as Christ exhorted him (Peter) after His resurrection.

### **Importance of the Elders Ministries**

**Note:** You may be realizing for the first time just how important the elders were to the early church. Stringent requirements were laid out by the Holy Spirit for all her ministries, with no waivers for these elders. Seems they were involved in every area of Church business and growth. Note what Peter said in his first epistle, 5:1, “*The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder...*”. Peter was boldly fulfilling God’s command for Peter to feed His lambs.

We remember when Jesus asked Peter, “*Lovest thou Me more than these?*”, , Peter answered and said, “Yea, Lord, Thou knowest I love you.”

1. Was Jesus asking if Peter loved Him (Jesus) more that *these other disciples love Him*, while waving His hands over them? It’s obvious Peter had humbled himself, for prior to this, Peter displayed arrogance in proclaiming he would never forsake the Lord...but he did. We see some humility *now* because Peter simply stated, “Yea, Lord. You know I love You.” He had gone through the fiery trial of his life when he denied the Lord three times, only hours after Christ predicted he would. Peter wept bitterly.
2. Jesus could have been asking Peter the second time, “Do you love me *more than you love these other disciples?* Peter answered, “Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love You.” At this point, Peter was somewhat exasperated. He refused to respond, “Of course, I love you more than I love all the other disciples; for You know I would never forsake You!” Peter, seeing his recent weakness, bowed in humility and simply told the Lord, Yea, Lord. You know my heart. I do love You.”
3. This third time Peter responded, “Lord, Thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love You.”

Bowing his head low, Peter must have again thought about his denial of the Lord. Several days had passed since then and he was miserable. But Jesus did see Peter's heart. He knew Peter's delight was in Him; and because of his repentance in agony, Jesus recommissioned Peter when He responded the three times, "Feed My sheep." If anyone would deny being an elder, would it not be Peter? You answer.

4. Remember the morning Jesus was resurrected and told the two women to deliver a message to His disciples, that He (Jesus) would meet with them later that same day? Well, Jesus made a remarkable statement when He mentioned that they should give Peter a word of comfort just for him: "*But go your way, tell his disciples, and Peter that He goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see Him, as He said unto you. And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulcher; for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they anything to any man; for they were afraid.*" (Mark 16:7—My bold/italics). A few days later, Christ personally recommissioned Peter.

But Peter was an Apostle. He built churches from scratch, a bold powerhouse for the Kingdom of God! It was Peter who preached the great sermon on the day of Pentecost; who went down to Samaria with John, laying hands on the new believers, and glorifying the Lord God as these new believers were filled by the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues and magnifying God.

### **The Elders In The Book Of Revelation**

**But Now**, as we enter the book of Revelation, we are about to learn who these elders *really* are; and I would like to take you there. It's amazing to me, now that I have personally studied this matter in the scriptures—and have never before heard what I am now teaching—how students of the Word and modern day Bible scholars struggle with the so-called enigma of "who the elders are", especially when anyone with a computer can find a good Bible concordance and find information such as this of virtually any subject written in His Word. I do not lie about this. If and when you become desperate enough to find answers in the Word that most Bible students previously couldn't answer for you, that is when you should continue to ask the Holy Spirit for guidance, and He will take you where you want—and need—to be.

I will not attempt to cover anything not relevant to my subject, therefore I will mention only verse 19 in chapter one: "*Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter.*" The verse means this: **1)** "*The things which thou hast seen*" refer to John's ministries in Christ on the earth and to John's vision of the Lord among His churches; **2)** "*The things which are*", refer to Revelation two and three. The Lord is warning His church to repent and do the things required of her; and **3)** *The things that are hereafter* refer to chapter 4 through 22, which is the Great Tribulation period (Daniel's seventieth week), or the hour of God's vengeance, His day of wrath.

The tribulation period begins with Revelation, chapter 4: "*After this..*" (the "*hereafter*"). Though chapter four includes the rapture, the giving of rewards and thrones to the elders, more worship; chapter five, the delivering of the 7-sealed document to the Lamb, and worship before the throne; then, in chapter six, the tribulation actually begins with the opening of the first seal, denoting the revealing of the antichrist. All these events appear to be taking place concurrently—in quick time—on the earth.

"After this I looked, and, behold, a door *was* opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard *was* as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter. **2)** And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and *one* sat on the throne. **3)** And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and *there was* a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald. **4)** And round about the throne *were* four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold."

### In The Revelation Of Jesus Christ to John:

- **Rev. 11:12:** “And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, *Come up hither*. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them.” (Italics mine).

**Comment:** Another door was opened in heaven, and a voice such as a trumpet spoke to the two witnesses, saying, “come up hither”. So John writes in chapter 11 about the two witnesses, their ministry and their endurance in the face of the enemy, anti-christ. The two witnesses had power to destroy—by fire—all who would attempt to hurt them.

There came a time, however, when God did allow the anti-christ to kill the two witnesses on the streets of Jerusalem. The Word says they lay in the streets three and one-half days, during which time those who dwell upon the earth will rejoice over the bodies, party and make merry, even to giving gifts to one another. “And after three days and a half the spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them. Then they heard a great voice from heaven saying, “*Come up hither*”. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them.” (11:11, 12)—my italics.

### (Open Parentheses)

#### A Look Into The Past (Some examples of God’s Character)

What are the Characteristics of our God? Let’s look at some:

- “Come...into the Ark.” (Genesis 7:1)
- God delivers His own people from all Egypt’s Plagues (Exodus 7-12)
- “Enoch walked with God, and was not, for God took him.” (Genesis 5:24; also Jude)
- Elijah went up by a whirlwind”, while Elisha watched. (2 Kings 2:11)
- “Come (hither)...enter thou into thy chambers.” (Isaiah 26: 20)
- “They shall be mine....when I make up My jewels.” (Malachi 3:17)
- “...shall be caught up.” (1 Thessalonians 4:17)
- “I will come again, and receive you unto Myself.” (John 14:3)<sup>3</sup>

These are a few examples of God’s preservation of those who belong to Him. He has never before, and will never in the future, forsake those who are truly washed in His blood. We need only to study the prophetic books concerning the tribulation period to realize that this period—still in the future—was designed to complete God’s dealings with Israel—in bringing them into His Kingdom; for between every *set of seven* plagues mentioned in Bible prophecy/Revelation, our Lord will continue to use several methods in strong attempt to bring into this Kingdom every person possible:

- Those saved during the Tribulation: (6:9-11 & 7:9-17). *The only Gentile witness:* (see 12:11).
- The two witnesses—Israeli ministry (Revelation 11).
- The seventh Trumpet—angels preaching God’s victory over the earth (Revelation 11: 15-19).
- The 144,000 Israelites (Revelation 14: 1-5).
- Angels soaring through the air preaching the Gospel (Revelation 14:6-13).
- The final angelic message to the fowl of the air (Revelation 19:17)

There are no ministries present on the earth as they were under the Church Age. The only saints on the earth during the tribulation period are those who had previously put off Christ, or simply rejected Him during the time of grace. Many of these were saved during the Great Tribulation, not because they chose to live the remainder of their lives for Jesus, but because they finally realized the great value of The Christ—when measured against the antichrist system. Though they were forced to make a choice, they made it in their witness to others of their own salvation. This is the *only* ministry *by saints* during the

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<sup>3</sup> In the study of this scripture (John 14:1-3), it is plain to see this incident as a picture of the rapture, as Christ says, “I will receive you unto myself; that where I am, *there* ye may be also.” Here, He receives us; but in the 2d coming, His feet land on the mountains of Israel.

tribulation period (Revelation 12:11)! Their reward was eternal life first; then they would rule with Christ over the nations during the thousand year Millennial Reign.

*“A great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; And cried with a loud voice, saying SALVATION TO OUR GOD WHICH SITTETH UPON THE THRONE, AND UNTO THE LAMB....”* (Revelation 7:9, 10).

*Search and see if you can find*, in this same chapter, any proof these are not the church, but an uncountable number of those who came out of the tribulation period as newly saved martyrs—because they refused to accept the mark of the beast. If you cannot see the difference, I will explain more about this in a later chapter. These are the only believers on earth during the tribulation because God’s judgment is activated against all evil, while at the same time He is bringing in multitudes into the Kingdom, to include “all Israel”.

### **(Close Parentheses)**

Therefore, in both incidences, we heard “*Come up hither*”. Here’s the explanation:

1. **In chapter 4**, John, representing the Church of Jesus Christ (under grace, we were the Church of Jesus Christ on earth; but during the Tribulation, we are Elders among the angels and creatures before God’s throne, continually worshiping Him, and preparing for the Marriage Supper of the Lamb), supernaturally arose into heaven through the open door (4:1), and joined with all the raptured, true believers of the dispensation of grace and were described as elders (the dead in Christ rose first, then those who were alive and remained rose up to join Jesus in the air (Jesus did not touch land here, as He did at the Second Coming at the end of the tribulation). Twelve of the Twenty-four elders were represented by the 12 apostles; the remaining twelve elders are those who represented the original twelve tribes of Israel. Every true “born again” believer will be resurrected in Revelation four.
2. **In chapter 11:1-12**, the two witnesses were killed and lay on the streets of Jerusalem for 3½ days; they then arose to life and the voice from heaven shouted, “*Come up hither*”. At that time, both witnesses were supernaturally raptured into heaven, while all who watched this incident on satellite television around the world, marveled in horror (when God cries out), “*Come up hither*”, in 4:1, that’s a supernatural resurrection of the Christian dead followed by we who are alive and remain (1 Thessalonians 5: 1-11) We, being the children of light and children of the day, are also judged now, while we are openly and determinedly walking in His Spirit—so that we are not judged and destroyed with this evil world during the Tribulation! Paul stated in this same portion of scripture that “*God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him. Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.*”

Generalizations, these are not. When God shows His character throughout the entire Word of God, and into the book of Revelation (a true and consistent system of power, judgment and deliverance), then we who are believers and are the bride of Jesus Christ begin to realize the wonders of our God and His glory. God’s Word teaches that He has never, and *will* never destroy His own children who are walking with Him by His Spirit, by choice on this earth today, washed by His precious blood, and who are not appointed to His wrath.

### **Elders In Revelation:**

- **Rev. 4:10:** The four and twenty **elders** fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying,

- **Rev. 5:5:** And one of the **elders** saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.
- **Rev. 5:6:** And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the **elders**, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.
- **Rev. 5:8:** And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and **four [and] twenty elders** fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints.
- **Rev. 5:11:** And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the **elders**: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands;
- **Rev. 5:14:** And the four beasts said, Amen. And the **four [and] twenty elders** fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.
- **Rev. 7:11:** And all the angels stood round about the throne, and [about] the **elders** and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God,
- **Rev 7:13:** And one of the **elders** answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?
- **Rev. 11:16:** And the **four and twenty elders**, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God,
- **Rev. 14:3:** And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the **elders**: and no man could learn that song but the hundred [and] forty [and] four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.
- **Rev 19:4-21:** And the **four and twenty elders** and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia. .

Coming Soon:

- The Marriage Supper Of The Lamb
- Revelation 5:5 Through 5:14
- Revelation 7—Don't miss
- Revelation 11: 15, 18
- Revelation 14
- Revelation 19: 1-21—Don't miss the Lamb's bride and a supper in her honor
- Revelation 22: 10-21

—End of Part One—

Blessings to you from Tom and Linda Stephens  
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