

# **THE RAPTURE IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION**

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**Although the word “*rapture*” does not occur in the Book of Revelation or anywhere else in the English Bible, it is a transliteration of the Latin word used in I Thessalonians 4:17 that translates the Greek word *harpazo*.”**

**The discovery of “rapture-related” matters in the Book of Revelation seems to include the following five issues:**

- 1. The IMPORTANCE of the promise to the church of Philadelphia found in Revelation 3:10**
- 2. The INVITATION to the Apostle John to “*Come up hither*” in Revelation 4:1**
- 3. The IDENTITY of the 24 elders in heaven in Revelation 4:4, 10**
- 4. The INVOLVEMENT of the 24 elders in heaven in singing a new song in Revelation 5:9-10**
- 5. The INFORMATION about the Textus Receptus**

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PROMISE TO THE CHURCH OF PHILADELPHIA –**

***Revelation 3:10- “Because thou hast kept the word of My patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.”***

**Christians throughout history have disagreed over the interpretation of this verse as to whether it is a promise of removal or one of immunity or protection during the coming “*hour of temptation.*” It is, of course, a disagreement between Pre-tribulationists and Post-tribulationists.**

**The preposition translated “*from*” is not the Greek *apo*, but rather the Greek *ek* – meaning “out of”.**

**Post-tribulationists are right when they argue that there will be believers who live on earth during the coming tribulation (*cf. Revelation 7*). Pre-tribulationists agree but insist that they are not church-age believers, but rather a multitude of Gentile believers who are saved during the tribulation.**

**Post-tribulationists used *John 17:15* to support their belief that *Revelation 3:10* is a promise of protection or immunity from the coming**

tribulation. Yeshua said in His prayer to His Father in heaven: *“I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil (one).”* Pre-tribulationists argue that these words are referring to those living in the church age, and not those living in the tribulation time.

The definite article (*“the”*) appears before the word *“hour”* and before the word *“temptation.”* Its usage confirms that it is a specific trial that is coming upon the entire world. The purpose of this coming trial is to test those who *“dwell on the earth.”* In Revelation, the earth-dwellers are all non-believers.

This verse given to the church in Philadelphia is a wonderful promise to all church-age believers that we will not be going through the coming tribulation but rather be rescued (raptured) and delivered by our blessed Lord.

**THE INVITATION TO THE APOSTLE JOHN TO “COME UP HITHER” – Revelation 4:1**

*“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.”*

**Revelation 1:19** gives us the outline of the Book of Revelation:

*“things thou hast seen” – Revelation 1*

*“things which are” – Revelation 2-3*

*“things which shall be hereafter” –  
Revelation 4:1ff*

The Greek phrase *meta tauta* (“after these things”) used at the end of *Revelation 1:19*, is also used to begin *Revelation 4:1* and to end that verse. The most natural sense of this usage is that what is written after these things refers to what follows in the messages to the seven churches in chapters 2-3.

The opening of a “*door*” in heaven and a voice inviting John to “*Come up hither*” is indeed amazing, and certainly by symbolic suggestion alone gives the impression that a rapture is taking place (John representing the entire church).

It would seem that this verse is also a picture of the rapture of the church.

## **THE IDENTITY OF THE 24 ELDERS IN HEAVEN**

**Revelation 4:4 – “*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.*”**

**Revelation 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...*”**

**The term “*elders*” is used in the Book of Revelation 11 times: *Revelation 4:4, 10; 5:6, 8, 11, 14; 7:11, 13; 11:16; 14:3; 19:4***

**Out of these 11 times, 6 use the number “24” in front of the word “*elders*.”**

**There is no doubt that the issue of the 24 elders is critical to the whole argument of Pre-tribulationism. George Eldon Ladd, a Post-tribulationist, admits that very fact in his commentary on the Book of Revelation.**

**Here are the facts about the 24 elders:**

- 1. They sit on thrones around the throne of God in heaven – *Revelation 4:4a***
- 2. They are clothed in white raiment – *Revelation 4:4b***
- 3. They have crowns of gold on their heads – *Revelation 4:4c***
- 4. They are pictured as ones who fall down before God and worship Him, casting their crowns at His feet – *Revelation 4:10-11; 5:14.***
- 5. They are also pictured as falling down before the Lamb, and have harps and bowls of incense representing the prayers of the saints *Revelation 5:8***
- 6. They sing a new song about the worthiness of the Lamb – *Revelation 5:9-10***

**The very fact that the 24 elders are seen in heaven, NOT on earth during the judgments of the Tribulation forces us to connect them with the following possibilities:**

- 1. They refer to angels.**
- 2. They refer to all believers who have died and are now in heaven.**

**3. They refer to Gentile believers who are saved during the Tribulation and are martyred.**

**4. They refer to church-age believers only.**

**The 24 elders cannot refer to angels because they are identified separately from them in *Revelation 5:11 and 7:11*. They cannot refer to the Gentile multitude that is saved during the tribulation on the basis of the discussion of *Revelation 7:13-14*.**

**The description of these 24 elders in *Revelation 4:4* connects them with the promises to church-age believers in *Revelation 2 and 3*. The words about them sitting on thrones remind us of *Revelation 3:21*; the reference to them being clothed in white raiment connects us with the words of *Revelation 3:5*; the picture of them with crowns of gold on their heads reminds us of *Revelation 2:10 and 3:11*.**

**These 24 elders are not called “*priests*” or “*saints*” but rather “*elders*.” That is a specific description of church leaders as well as the “*elders*” who acted as judges and administrators of justice among the children of Israel.**

However, the “*elders*” of the Sanhedrin who are often connected with the priests and the scribes are not treated as genuine believers in the New Testament. They are the ones who condemned our Lord to death and delivered Him to the Romans for crucifixion.

The use of the number “24” is also very instructive. There have been many attempts by Bible teachers to divide this number into the 12 tribes of Israel and the 12 apostles of the Church. But, there is no Biblical warrant for that kind of exegesis. The number is found in *I Chronicles 24 and 25* and refers to 24 divisions of priests and musicians for the Nation of Israel. But, these are not called “*priests*” or “*musicians*” but rather “*elders.*”

### THE INVOLVEMENT OF THE 24 ELDERS IN HEAVEN IN SINGING A NEW SONG - *Revelation 5:9-10*

King James – “*And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed US to God by Thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;*



***And hast made US unto OUR God kings and priests: and WE shall reign on the earth.”***

***New King James – “And they sang a new song, saying: ‘You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; For You were slain, and have redeemed US to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made US kings and priests to our God; and WE shall reign on the earth.”***

***New International – “And they sang a new song: ‘You are worthy to take the scroll and open its seals, because You were slain and with Your blood You purchased MEN for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made THEM to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and THEY will reign on the earth.”***

***New American Standard – “And they sang a new song, saying, ‘Worthy art Thou to take the book, and to break its seals; for Thou wast slain, and didst purchase for God with Thy blood MEN from every tribe and tongues and people and nation. And Thou has made THEM to be a kingdom and priest to our God; and THEY will reign upon the earth.”***

**Christian Standard Bible** – *“And they sang a new song: You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals; because You were slaughtered, and You redeemed PEOPLE for God by Your blood from every tribe and language and people and nation. You made THEM a kingdom and priests to our God, and THEY will reign on the earth.”*

**Complete Jewish Bible** – *“And they sang a new song, ‘You are worthy to take the scroll and break its seals; because You were slaughtered; at the cost of Your blood You ransomed for God PERSONS from every tribe, language, people, and nation. You made THEM into a kingdom for God to rule, Cohanim to serve Him; and THEY will rule over the earth.”*

**The Net Bible** – *“They were singing a new song: ‘You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals because You were killed, and at the cost of Your own blood You have purchased for God PERSONS from every tribe, language, people, and nation. You have appointed THEM as a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and THEY will reign on the earth.”*

**The English Standard Version – “And they sang a new song saying, Worthy are You to take the scroll and to open its seals, for You were slain, and by Your blood You ransomed PEOPLE for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. And You have made THEM a kingdom and priests to our God, and THEY shall reign on the earth.”**

**The New Revised Standard – “And they sang a new song, saying, Worthy are You to take the scroll and to open its seals, for You were slain, and by Your blood You ransomed PEOPLE for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. And You have made THEM a kingdom and priests to our God, and THEY shall reign on the earth.”**

**The Geneva Bible (1599) – “And they sang a new song, saying, “Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof, because Thou wast killed, and hast redeemed US to God by Thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation. And hast made US unto our God Kings, and Priests, and WE shall reign on the earth.”**

**First of all, in relation to the differences in verse 10 between the King James Version (and New**

King James and the Geneva Bible) and other English translations, the Greek text shows a number of variant readings. If the third person plural is preferred, it still does not prove anything because it can simply refer to those mentioned in verse 9. It is interesting that we have in Revelation 1:6 these words: “*And hath made US kings and priests unto God*” – and there is no variation in the manuscripts supporting another reading. It would appear that the King James Version of Revelation 5:10 is supported by the reading of Revelation 1:6.

Secondly, the real problem depends upon the manuscript evidence behind Revelation 5:9. Does the evidence support the word “US” or a reading of “THEM” or “MEN” or “PEOPLE” etc.? The Greek manuscripts (that we have today) of the passage in Revelation 5:9 are 24 in number, and 23 of them read “US” – only Codex Alexandrinus differs in this regard. We also have many Latin manuscripts of this verse and all of them read “US.” Even the primary languages into which the Greek version was soon translated – all read “US.” The issue is critical to the argument – are the 24 elders singing a song of redemption about themselves or about others who would be

**redeemed during the Tribulation? It appears that the evidence is overwhelming and that the King James translation is the correct one of Revelation 5:9.**

**NOTE: It is fascinating to read all the arguments concerning the Greek manuscripts of Revelation 5:9. In the arguments of those opposed to the King James Version of this verse, we read such things as appear on the web site *Sola Scriptura* and then is quoted by other sites:**

***“The use of the word ‘us’ in Revelation 5:9-10 and ‘we’ in verse 10 are found only in the King James Version of 1611. When the King James Version was translated, only a small number of printed Greek texts were available to the translators. They include the 1567 edition of Theodore Beza and the third edition of Stephanus which was printed in 1550. These editions were the primary texts for the well-known ‘Textus Receptus’ which was actually printed in 1633 and was the dominant Greek text until the nineteenth century. Since that time, older and more textually credible Greek manuscripts than the ones available to Stephanus and Beza have been found. Two well-attested and authoritative uncial***

*manuscripts (Sinaiticus and Alexandrinus) are among these finds.”*

The opening statement is quite misleading since there are thousands of manuscripts previous to 1611 that read “us.” In reference to Greek texts, it is fascinating to see the admission that the Textus Receptus was “the dominant Greek text until the nineteenth century.” The statement that manuscripts that are “older and more textually credible” are therefore “well-attested and authoritative” is almost amusing in its credibility! The ONLY Greek text of Revelation 5:9 that omits the word “us” is Codex Alexandrinus (about 240 Greek fragments are available on the Book of Revelation, but only 24 contain the reading of Revelation 5:9.). Their mention of Sinaiticus does not help them, since it reads “us” as well. Since half of its New Testament leaves are missing, and the Shepherd of Hermes and the Epistle of Barnabas inserted into the text, it hardly represents that which is more credible. Codex Vaticanus, along with Sinaiticus, are the favorite Greek manuscripts of modern English translations. Interestingly, Codex Vaticanus ends at Hebrews 9:14 and there is nothing the rest of the way (including Revelation 5:9-10!). It also

**contains the Jewish Apocryphal books, not as a separate section, but woven throughout the text of the Biblical books. Also, Codex Basilianus (in the Vatican) reads “us.” The word “us” is also in ALL Latin manuscripts as well as Coptic and Armenian.**

## **THE INFORMATION ON THE TEXTUS RECEPTUS (The Greek text behind the King James Bible)**

**The first edition of the Greek text to be published was that of Desiderius Erasmus in 1516 AD, followed by his edition in 1519 AD which was used by Martin Luther for his German translation of the Bible. Erasmus also published editions in 1522, 1527, and 1535 AD, the last two of which contained some changes from the Complutensian Polyglot printed in 1514 AD, but not circulated until 1522 AD. This Complutensian Greek text was reprinted with only a few changes in 1571, 1572, 1573, 1574, 1583, 1584 AD, and in Geneva, editions were put out from 1609 to 1628 AD.**

**Simon Colinaeus, a printer in Paris, published an edition of the Greek text in 1534 AD based upon those of Erasmus and the Complutensian Greek NT. It was superseded by the famous editions of his step-son, Robert Stephens, who printed editions in 1546, 1549, and 1550 AD, the last one**

**known as the “royal edition.” This was the primary Greek text used by the King James translators, along with additions by Theodore Beza, especially the one of 1598 AD.**

**The Elzevir partners, Bonaventure and Abraham, published editions of the Greek text in 1624, 1633, and 1641, following primarily the 1565 edition by Theodore Beza. The preface to the 1633 edition gave the name to this historical tradition of manuscript evidence and called it “*Textus Receptus*.” In the course of time, it was applied to the Stephens text of 1550 AD and those which followed. The primary edition behind this Greek text is that of F.H.A. Scrivener that was published by Cambridge University Press in 1894 and 1902 AD.**

**About two-thirds of the NT Greek text was discovered in the 20<sup>th</sup> century AD – manuscripts that preceded 300 AD and the famous *Codex Sinaiticus* and *Codex Vaticanus*, and *Codex Alexandrinus*.**

***Codex Vaticanus* differs greatly from the *Textus Receptus* throughout the NT. The great Greek scholar Dean Burgon published in 1881 that in the gospels alone, *Codex Vaticanus* omits 2877 words, adds 536, substitutes 935, transposes 2098, and modifies 1132 – making 7578 total changes! *Codex***



***Sinaiticus* has 8972 changes from the *Textus Receptus*.**

**The popular Greek texts of today are dependent upon two ecumenical institutes in Germany. To illustrate, the 26<sup>th</sup> edition of the Nestle Greek text was done according to Kurt Aland “*in cooperation with the appropriate agencies of the Roman Catholic Church.*”**

***Codex Vaticanus* is the Greek text used by the *Emphatic Diaglot* which is behind the Watchtower Bible of the Jehovah Witnesses.**

***Codex Vaticanus* ends at Hebrews 9:14 and excludes the Pastoral Epistles and the book of Revelation. It contains all 14 Apocryphal books – contains 7579 changes from the *Textus Receptus*.**

***Codex Sinaiticus* has one-half of its NT leaves missing, and contains the *Epistle of Barnabas* and the *Shepherd of Hermes*. It has 9000 changes from the *Textus Receptus*.**

**Tischendorf, the one who found *Codex Sinaiticus*, made 3369 changes in his 8<sup>th</sup> edition from his 7<sup>th</sup> edition.**

**In English, the above two MSS make over 30,000 changes.**

**Today we have over 5500 Greek MSS, over 10,000 Latin MSS, and over 4000 in other primary languages. We also have over 86,000 separate references in the writings of early church leaders.**

**The King James Bible was translated by 54 men who labored from 1607 to 1610 AD – spent hours in prayer and insisted on unanimous decisions on the readings of the text. It was indeed a remarkable effort and has been the Bible of the English speaking world for over 350 years.**

**CONCLUSION: It is our strong belief and conviction that the Book of Revelation teaches that church-age believers will be removed from planet earth BEFORE the tribulation begins. Our only proper response is to say “HALLELUJAH!” and to continually anticipate that sweet day when the LORD calls His church home!**

