

Get Your Worship On

INTRO

In Stephen Covey's bestseller *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, he laid out a chart with four quadrants that show how we spend our time:

- Quadrant I: Activities that are IMPORTANT AND URGENT
 - Life threatening crises
 - Pressing problems at home, work, or school
 - Things that have pressing deadlines
- Quadrant II: Activities that are IMPORTANT BUT NOT URGENT
 - Building relationships
 - Planning for your future
 - Taking time to rest
- Quadrant III: Activities that are NOT IMPORTANT BUT URGENT
 - Answering calls, texts, and emails
 - Going to meetings or classes
 - Addressing various responsibilities at home, school, or work
- Quadrant IV: Activities that are NOT IMPORTANT AND NOT URGENT
 - Watching TV or movies
 - Surfing the Internet
 - Scrolling through social media
 - Busywork

QUESTION: What quadrant do you think you spend most your time in?

According to Covey's work, where do most of us spend the majority of our lives? Quadrant II, the things that are IMPORTANT but NOT URGENT is what Covey discovered in his investigation.

Somebody once said "*The important things in life are seldom urgent, and the urgent things in life are seldom important.*" Do you think this is true for most of us? Can you think of any examples? As I've gotten older, my cholesterol keeps inching up higher as happens to most people as they age. Of course, this is important to keep a check on and get medicine for if needed, but after my physical at work, the doctor thought I should see my general doctor and I might need to go ahead and get on some cholesterol medicine. Have I scheduled an appointment yet? NO. I keep saying I will "next week", even though this is IMPORTANT, I'm not giving it much URGENCY. But on the other hand, I have a huge list of things each week that I call URGENT, but really are not too important. We're getting new carpet at the beginning of March and I have to get the walls painted in three rooms AND put down new flooring in the closets before they come. In my mind, this is extremely URGENT, but really, is it that urgent or even hugely important? Is the world going to stop turning if I have to put off the carpet layers

for an extra week? Will I lose my home if it's not done? Will something awful happen if it's not done in time? NO!!! **Can you think of any examples in your life?**

- Dentist appointments
- You know you need to keep your car serviced for safety reasons and is IMPORTANT (what could happen if your tire blows out going down the road or your engine blows up) but don't find it too URGENT to stay on top of....but being 5 minutes late to meet your friends somewhere is hugely URGENT even though not very IMPORTANT (I mean, it's not like they won't wait 5 minutes for you)
- You know your friend is having a tough time with something and it is IMPORTANT to you to stay in touch with them but it's not on top of your list as being URGENT. On the other hand, it is URGENT that you get in front of a TV to watch that new episode of some sitcom (which holds no real IMPORTANCE) and decide you will call your struggling friend later.

QUESTION: If you had to explain what worship is to somebody, what would you say?

QUESTION: Which of these four groups would you say worship falls in for you? Where does building up yourself and others spiritually fall, because that is a form of worship also? Where does youth group and church fall? Does Worship, Worship, Worship cry out to you in some form every day? At the top of most our lists of things that are IMPORTANT but not URGENT, is worship (and I mean worship through study, church, youth group, reading your bible, prayer, etc) We know it's important, but we don't place it very high on our urgency list.

Here's the thing. When we received salvation, our place was reserved in heaven to be with Jesus eternally, but while we are here on earth, we are supposed to be readying ourselves for the day we do leave to be with the Lord. That means moving forward to what we will completely become.

QUESTION: What do you think we will be doing in heaven? What will be the central theme in heaven? What will everything we do be based upon? There is a variety of things we will do and we may talk about that one day if we have a study on heaven, but central to EVERYTHING we do is the worship of God.

In Revelation 4 the scene changes dramatically! God the Father is seated on His throne surrounded by all the heavenly host in constant adoration, love, and worship. In Revelation 1, we looked at "the things we have seen" (the past vision of Christ). This was where Jesus visited John in that exact moment in time telling him to write down all that he is fixing to see and hear. In Revelation 2-3, John showed us the "things which are" (the present condition of the seven churches which is the same condition as many churches right now). Remember the "churches" stand for the Christian body, including you and I. Now, we will see "the things which will take place after these things" (the future worldwide tribulation that will climax with the return of Jesus Christ)

The Million-Dollar Question

What exactly is the RAPTURE? Is the term actually in the Bible?

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17

QUESTION: What exactly will the “rapture” be? Can you spot it in these verses?

What exactly is being described? The people are having anxieties and fears about their loved ones who have already died. Will they see them again? What happens to them since they put their trust in Christ, but have died before Jesus returned? Is there any hope? Absolutely. Let's examine the verses:

13-14: **What does the Bible mean when it refers to a Christian as being “asleep”?** The Bible often uses the term “asleep” for a Christian that has died. **Why is “asleep” actually a better term than “dead”?** This “sleep” only refers to the body, not the soul and spirit. **So what happens to a Christian's Soul and Spirit after they die then?** We could find that answer a number of places in the Bible. Remember what Jesus told the thief on the cross that accepted Jesus in his last minutes alive? “Today we will be in paradise”. 2 Cor 5:8 is pretty clear about where our Soul and Spirit is. Because He died, our physical bodies only “sleep” while our soul and spirit goes to be with the Lord. Our bodies are awaiting for his return where we will be made new. **What about those that have denied Christ that have died? ???**

15-17: This shout is a military command signaling this great even where the dead will rise first, and then all living Christians, all to be together reunited with the Lord in the sky. “Caught up” *harpazo* in Greek is translated into English as *rapture*.

Will the rapture happen before tribulation occurs? Here are three reasons to believe in a pretribulation rapture:

1. The promise of God:

- a. **2 Peter 2:5-9:** We are reminded Noah was saved from the flood and Lot was saved from the judgement on Sodom and Gemorrah. So believers will also be saved from the wrath of God that is to come.
- b. **1 Thessalonians 1:10, 5:9:** “delivered us from the wrath to come” and “hath not appointed us to wrath.”
- c. **Revelation 3:10:** While Christians are not exempt from suffering or persecution, we never have to fear God's wrath.
- d. **Romans 8:1:** “Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”

- e. **POINT:** If we have to fear some future punishment of God, then the death of Christ was absolutely worthless.
- 2. **The Absence of the church in Revelation 6-18:** When John starts describing in detail all the fierce judgements during the tribulation, the church is not mentioned one time? This does not mean that no one comes to Christ during the Tribulation, but they are not considered part of the church in these descriptions of the rapture.
- 3. **The purpose of the Tribulation:**
 - a. **One last chance for Israel:** In an act of mercy, God gives Israel one last chance to respond.
 - b. **The condemnation of unbelievers:** God will pour out his wrath on unbelievers. The tribulation is the time that happens on earth before an eternity in hell.

The Scene Now Shifts from Earth to Heaven

“A Prelude to the Tribulation”

Revelation Chapters 4 and 5

John’s Invitation To Heaven

4:1-2: A door opens in heaven and John is invited in by Jesus to be shown “what must take place”. A few points about “heaven” in the Bible.

In Scripture, there are multiple meanings of “heaven”:

1. The First Heaven: The atmosphere around the earth with clouds, birds, and the air we breathe. (Genesis 1:6-8)
2. The Second Heaven: Where the sun, moon, and stars are. (Matthew 24:29)
3. The Third Heaven: Where God dwells (2 Cor 12:2,4)
4. The Fourth Heaven: We will see in Revelation 21, there is a future heaven that God is preparing for us right now that will be our eternal home.

Which heaven was this door opened up in? Maybe the 2nd Heaven, maybe the 3rd. Not sure? Either way, John was only able to come because he was invited.

What about these “things that must take place”. Are they events that “may” happen or “could” happen? These things have been ordained by God. There are no surprises or last minute changes. Things will happen exactly as God had laid out even before this universe was created. We cannot forget that God is not controlled by time, matter, or any other laws of this universe or world. If you have a hard time grasping that because it is so unbelievable, well, your not supposed to be able to grasp it fully else you’d be God. God has given us PLENTY of evidences and proof of His existence, power, and who He is, but we cannot ever fully grasp everything about Him.

John said, “Immediately, I was in the Spirit”. Was his body literally caught up into heaven or just his spirit? We don’t know for sure. It’s not hugely relevant 😊

QUESTION: Who is sitting on the throne? God the Father, not Jesus. Why? We haven’t got there yet, but In chapter 5, the “One on the throne” is holding the scroll with the seven seals. There is only one being that is worthy to open the scroll and break the seven seals. The only one that can do this is described as “*The Lion of the tribe of Judah*” and “*The Root of David*”. This is most obviously Jesus, so it has to be God the father on the throne who possesses the scroll with the seven seals and Jesus is the one who takes the scroll and opens the seals.

What John Witnessed In Heaven

A DESCRIPTION OF GOD

4:3: John records what he saw when he entered in the throne room of heaven and saw God sitting on His throne.

QUESTION: How would you best describe John’s description of this figure sitting on the throne? Why did John use the word “like” and proceed to use similes to describe God? What John saw was so indescribable that he couldn’t explain exactly what it was; he could only say what it was like.

What similes did John use? Notice the best he could describe it was different kinds of lights emanating from the throne. This had to be only a manifestation of God as no human being can see God in His entirety and live, even John. God is never described in human form, always light.

This light described by John is represented by three precious gemstones that also appeared in the breastplate of God’s High Priest:

- Jasper (a diamond): Probably representing God’s purity and holiness
- Sardius (sardine stone)(sometimes referring to a ruby): Probably representing God’s justice and wrath
- Emerald (this was the color of rainbow, not a multi-colored one, that was like a halo around God’s throne): Probably representing God’s mercy. The four times the rainbow is mentioned in Scripture (Rev 4:3, Rev 10:1, Ge 9:13-16, Eze 1:28) it is always associated with God in a time of judgement on the earth, but also associated with His mercy and grace during such times of judgement)

THE WORSHIPPERS OF GOD

4:4-8: John describes three groups of beings who were worshipping God at His throne in heaven.

QUESTION: What 3 groups of beings and/or things did John see around the throne?

- **24 Elders:** These are actual individual redeemed men, not just symbols, but do represent all the redeemed saints before God’s throne. **Are you considered a “saint”?** Absolutely. Only because and through Christ, you are considered “righteous” in God’s eyes. Not from your works, your good deeds, your tithes, your church status, or anything else. **If you pull out the 24 patriarchs whose names are given in Genesis, how many are there?** 24! So these 24 men could very well be the 24 patriarchs who are in the following order: Adam, Seth, Enos, Cainan, Mahaleel, Jared, Enoch, Methuselah, Lamech, Noah, Shem, Arphaxad, Salah, Eber, Peleg, Reu, Serug, Nahor, Terah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, and Pharez.
- **Seven lamps of burning fire which are the Seven Spirits of God: We touched on this in Revelation 1. What are the Seven Spirits of God?** When I gave you some verses for this the other day, Bradfield noticed it only listed six attributes. I have them all for you here. These are the seven distinct names given to the Holy Spirit in the New Testament:
 - Spirit of Truth (Jo 16:13)
 - Spirit of Holiness (Rom 1:4)
 - Spirit of Faith (2 Co 4:13)
 - Spirit of Wisdom (Ep 1:17)
 - Spirit of Power (2 Ti 1:7)
 - Spirit of Grace (He 10:29)
 - Spirit of Glory (1 Pe 4:14)
- **Four beasts: QUESTION: What could these four beasts represent? (Think Genesis)** The term in Greek for this is Zoon, which stands for “living creatures”. We should not be surprised to see these “beasts” here gathered around the throne of God.
 - **Have these “beasts” been seen before by anyone else in the Bible?**
 - **Ezekiel 1:5-25, 10:1-22:** Around 580bc, Ezekiel witnessed these four beasts in a vision and identified them as “cherub” or “cherubim”.
 - **Isaiah 6:1-7:** Sometimes around 700bc, Isaiah witnessed beasts with a similar description as Ezekiel and Revelation and identified them as “seraphim”.
 - **Genesis 3:24:** The cherubim are first mentioned as guarding the entrance to the Garden of Eden
 - **Exodus 25:17-22:** Figures of the cherubim were constructed as overshadowing the ark of the covenant
 - **What characteristics do the beasts have?** Like a lion, Like a calf, Had a face like a man, Like a flying eagle
 - **When was the cherubim created, before or after mankind and the creatures of the earth?** They were created before man or animal.
 - **What possibly could these “beasts” be in reference too?** God’s animal and human creations. God created all things and therefore has dominion

over all things. These beasts are worshipping God. Note below how you can reconcile the beasts with God's creations in Genesis:

- **The Lion:** Represents the beasts of the earth with the lion the supreme among the wild beasts and represents nobility
 - **The Ox/Calf:** Represents the domestic animals with the calf being supreme among domestic animals and represents strength
 - **The Eagle:** Represents the fowl of the air with the eagle supreme of all flying creatures and represents swiftness
 - **Face like a Man:** Mankind is God's supreme of all His creation and represents intelligence.
- **Notice there are no beasts representing the "fish of the sea" or "creeping things"?** We cannot be for sure why those were left out, but it is interesting to note Revelation 21:1 states that in the new earth there will be "no more sea", and also that the creeping things created in Genesis mostly refers to serpents and scorpions which are usually depicted in Scripture as enemies of mankind
 - **What could the six wings full of eyes represent?** Many believe their eyes indicate they are always aware of what is taking place and their wings represent their ability to swiftly carry out the will of God.

THE ALL TIME-WORSHIP

QUESTION: What are all three of these groups doing?

4:9-11: In this new heaven and new earth, we will do many things, but the most important thing we will do is worship God and share a relationship of love with Him. The word worship comes from the old English word meaning "worth-ship". It means to ascribe value to.

QUESTION: Does this mean we wait for heaven for that to happen or do we show God his "worth" here and now through our thoughts and actions?