

"A DOOR OPENED IN HEAVEN"

Rev. 4

We have here an account of a second vision with which John was favored. The first being -- seeing Christ walking in midst of the golden candlesticks. The fourth chapter is a call to the church for the conflict, and a call to believe in God. It provides a brief vision of the transcendent greatness and majesty, and power, and authority of God. To John, this is a revelation of God as the Creator.

Nearly all the images come from the Old Testament. Especially from Ezekiel, Isaiah, and Daniel. The after, these things, refers to the great drama of redemption. God has rescued his people from the peril of Domitian persecution. Here is a vision of triumph. And a door stands open in Heaven -- and by means of this door he is able to see some of the things that are going on in Heaven. There is no doubt about the outcome of the struggle that the Christians are engaged in. A God is on his throne. And, we recognize here that every word seems to be very meaningful. This is the close-out of things.

I would like to say at this point, there is much about this book that we have been speaking of that we do not understand. There is so much that God has not revealed. Even in an exposition - we can merely take what God has chosen to reveal and what John has written down for our encouragement. And use this. We are coming to a different scene now. We are no longer occupied with the first things, which he had seen. And faithfully recorded. He had looked around at the things that existed -- which are - here is a church, there is a church, until he recorded seven churches and their great periods.

Now in this third part of the book of Revelation, he writes the things which shall be. Those things which are coming. Write the things which shall be after the churches. The churches are no more. All church history now is past. For thousands of years that God has been preached. And the church has been taken away.

The first thing that we note is -- that the church has disappeared. The church up until this point was at the center. But there are no more churches. And he is no longer occupied with a professing church in the place of his testimony here. They are carried far above the shifting scenes of this poor world. To look and to hear some things that even are kept secret in the foundation of the world. So this is the third great division -- the things that shall be after these things.

They shall take place after the churches' history has ended. We never see the church on earth again in this solemn book.

How did the church disappear? How did it get up there? Paul calls this a mystery. I Cor. 15:51. Behold, I show you a mystery. And the mystery is a riddle - it is hard to find out. But the Bible says that it is the secret in God's heart. And no man can ever find out until God chooses to reveal it.

We could never know except that God reveals it. Paul says, we shall not all sleep - but we shall all be changed. We are all going to be changed. We are not all going to die. But we may be taken up as Enoch or Elijah. But Paul says that is going to happen in a moment -- in the twinkling of an eye. And Paul prayed that it would be in his generation.



You will notice in I Thess. 4:16-17 - for the Lord himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout. With the voice of an archangel and a trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ shall rise first. Not that the dead are going to be raised. Is that we are alive and will remain until the coming of our Lord, and will be caught up with our Saviour. That is caught up, and be translated.

Now this is where people get the old English word "rapture". Quite often you hear people building a whole doctrine on this Latin word -- which means to transport. To take away, to snatch away. That is, we are swept off our feet. The church is raptured or transported upward to Glory. The household of faith. Now Paul says this is a mystery.

Now in V. 1 - the door in Heaven is open. And the invitation is to come up hither. And I will show you the things which must be, the things after the things of the church. Now Revelation is a description of that awful and terrible period when God is taking his people out of the earth. And he pours his judgement out upon them.

There is another thing in connection with this that people quite often speculate on - and that is the tribulation. The Great Tribulation period. There have been some troubled periods in this world. The Spanish tortured thousands and put them to death, during the French Revolution there was great destruction in 70 A. D. Jerusalem was destroyed and the streets were red with blood. They were terrible days. We often hear people saying, (will) the church have to go through the tribulation. Now, some very reliable scholars say "no". That God should deal with this world in its iniquity, in its unbelief, and judgement will fall upon it.

And the Gentiles shall be saved out of the Great Tribulation. But no church,  
no body of Christ, no bride of the lamb, shall be anymore here upon this earth.

Note the structural outline of the book. The things which thou hast seen  
Chapter 1 That is the vision on Patmos.

Write the things which are. Now they are found in Chapter 2 and 3.

And write the things that shall be hereafter - Chapter 4-19. The things that  
were to come to pass after there would be no more church. How had the church gone  
to Heaven. They had been taken up to God. The tribulation is at an end. And the  
visitation of God upon sin, Satan, and lawlessness. The judgement falls upon the  
Godless world - and God's people, the church, will face only one type of judgement.

2 Cor. 5:10 - We will stand before the judgement seat of Christ. And this  
will be a judgement of rewards. Because in John 5:24, Rom. 8:1 - there is no  
condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus. Now we have passed the judgement  
when Christ died on the cross, for the penalty of our sins.

The mystery says that the days of the tribulation will be at an end. The  
awful days that will move and the anti-Christ will come. It seems that Satan has  
some man always ready to be the dictator of this world. Hitler, Stallion, and on  
and on.

There is one restrainer, however, in the earth. And that is the Holy Spirit



of God. And the Holy Spirit is in his people. And some day the Holy Spirit of God, and his church, and his people are going to be taken away. And when that is done, and when the Holy Spirit of God and Christ's people have been taken away, then unrestricted, the man of sin will be revealed. And there will be disastrous things that will take place, in this world.

Did you know there are really some types in the Old Testament which give us illustrations about this.

(Luke 17) - Jesus said, as it was in the days of Noah, it shall be in the days of the coming and of the appearing of the Son of Man. Likewise also, as it was in the days of Lot.

Now in the days of Noah, when judgement was coming on the earth, Enoch was taken up before the flood. And Noah passed through the flood. But the vile, wicked, unbelieving, perished in the flood. Enoch is a type and a picture of God's people who are taken to himself. Before the tribulation, Noah is a type of that remnant which is saved through it. Even in the terrible days of the tribulation. But of course, the unbelieving perish.

Now take the illustration of Lot, he was called carnal, and he was a compromising Christian. 2 Peter 2:8 says, that the angel said to Lot, I can do nothing until thou become thither. Lot was in Sodom and the fire could not fall. Judgement could not come. I can do nothing until thou become thither. Lot was taken out - then judgement descended upon Sodom and Gomorrah. They were awesome days of the tribulation and God's people must be taken away.

Enough was taken away to Glory. Lot, compromising, was also taken away.

We find that God has promised his people comfort and hope.

What are we to look for. Now, as we get along a little further in this book. Does the Bible tell us to look for the man of sin. Does it tell us to look for the beast, the false prophet. Does it tell us to look for Armageddon - the last great battle of this earth. Does it tell us to look for the tribulation period.

What are God's people told to look for.

God bids his people to look only for the blessed, holy Saviour. We are to look for him. Titus 2:13 - looking patiently for, waiting for, praying for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of our God. And our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

God's people are not told to look for the Battle of Armageddon. Or to look for the Great Tribulation. Or to look for a beast or an anti-Christ. So why do we get wound up in these things. But our hope is that we have a comfort of the church in Christ. We are told to look for and to pray for, and to love the appearing of our great God and Saviour.

Let me insert something else here -- that is why I don't think it is right to put any program on a number of years, or any dates or days, that any development may take place. Between now and the coming of the Lord. I think the coming of the



Lord is always within a moment, or a second, or a twinkling of an eye. This day, or this evening at twilight, or tomorrow. The Lord will come. And He is at the door.

When he comes, it will be without announcements. There will be no signs.

And he may come very quietly. And the peril of great price. (Enoch) was gloriously translated and transfigured.

In the Philadelphia age— the door is open. In the Laodicean age, the door was closed. Christ was on the outside knocking. Now there is a signal for the door to be opened in Heaven. To come up hither and see, as this door is opened, and it gets his attention. He is invited to come and to take a look.

V. 2 The Lord had invited him to come and at once, this seems to be intensified. God is seated on the Throne. And God, himself, is never really described. We search a lot of Scriptures. Exodus 24 - but here is the throne which stands for authority and rulership, and control.

We can only know what God is pleased to discover for us. Through this open door. To prepare John for the vision, a trumpet was sounded, he was called up into Heaven. To have a sight of things which were to be hereafter.

The Apostle was in the Spirit, it says. And then the vision itself, opens up to him as he saw a throne set in the Heaven. A seat of honor.

He saw a glorious one upon the throne. The throne was not empty but it was filled, and that was God. His countenance.

✓ 1,3 It was like a jasper and a sardine stone. He is not described by any human features - only representing by these wonderful things which he sees. The jasper stone was in a variety of colors. Very descriptive.

✓ The jasper stone was later described as clear as crystal -- it probably was the diamond. The most brilliant of all of the precious jewels.

✓ Sardine stone was a blood red stone and may have been a ruby. The two of them together give the idea of glory and of sacrifice.

✓ What would these stones suggest to them? There was also the rainbow, you remember, like the emerald. That was the color green. A refreshing, reviving color. Referring back to the Covenant with Noah.

✓ These to the Hebrew would recall the first and the last stones on the breastplate of the High Priest. Ex. 28:17-20. As these stones bore the names of the tribes of Israel, so there was the various tribes around about the throne, a rainbow. This was



praise. Unto the Covenant of God which had been fulfilled.

V. 4 - He saw four and twenty seats round about the throne, and they were not empty - but were filled. Probably the whole church of God is represented here -- the Old Testament and the New Testament. The representative of God's people sitting in honor and satisfaction. And this was a sight of enjoyment. They were clothed in white raiment. Righteousness of the saints. They have on their heads, crowns of God, signifying their authority. Who were these 24 elders. They were clothed, crowned, seated. They were not spirits, they were not angels. But they are numbered.

I think they are God's saints -- redeemed, blood bought people. They are seated. They have won the victory. And they are redeemed from every language, and tongue, and family. And they make up God's society. And they were seated around the throne.

Another thing, note the number 24. That is a symbol of all inclusiveness, without the loss of one.!!

In I Chron. 24, 25, the Priesthood of the Levites was divided up into 24 courses. That included all of them. Every Priest was included in the twenty-four. I Peter 2:5 - we are told that God's people are a Royal Priesthood. So that 24 represents all of God's people. That is a definite number. And they are written in the lamb's book of life. It is a definite number that is included here.

Another thing, where are they? They are in Heaven, at the beginning of this

chapter in Revelation, we come to a huge scene. A great thing has come to pass. The Lord was seen walking among the lampstands on the earth. Now he is seen on the throne. And the church is always in Heaven -- looking down upon earth. The church never again appears on earth, until the people of God come with Christ.

We read about a sight that will never be held in Heaven on any previous occasion. 24 thrones, not merely seats, surrounding the central throne. The elders had crowns on their heads, their robes of purest white. Who are these favorite ones. Now we can look in the Scripture, or we can use our imagination, but here must have been some symbolism from the temple as to the heads of the 24 courses of priests instituted by David, I Chron. 24:1-19. These elders stand for the whole church of God.

The number 24 - a double of 12, organized religion is designed to represent the glorified people. All of the redeemed. We find that this is familiar when King David had to represent the entire Levitical priesthood. He divided them up in this way in the temple of Solomon. Which Solomon later built.

The priests were many thousands in number - they could not all come together at one time. But when the 24 elders met in the temple - the whole priestly household was presented. The elders in Heaven represented the priesthood. That is, all of the redeemed who died in the past and shall be living at the Lord's return.

These were the Old Testament saints, but the church of the present age. And all worshipped.



Another way of interpreting this, there were 12 patriarchs in Israel. And 12 Apostles which introduced the new dispensation. The two together would give you a complete, 4 and 20.

This was the triumphant church.

V. 5 - We read about the symbolism of the lightnings and the voice, and the appeals of thunder. These were heard in connection with the vision. At Sinani when the law was given, the clouds, the lightning was not so much tokens of the coming judgement, as symbols of righteous power which show that itself is judgement. The presence and the power of God. Ex. 19:16 - God has not left his people to the mercy of their own foes.

There are also torches of fire. These represent the Holy Spirit, the seven spirits, the fullness suggested here of the seven lampstands of the law. It is made a symbol of the Holy Spirit.

V. 6 - The glass like sea around the throne. A sea can be seen as a separation here. A great gulf separates the Holy God from frail struggling humanity. We are forever set apart.

There is also another thing about this. There was a laver, a brass laver, which symbolized the word of God. For it contained the water used for priestly cleansing. And we are sanctified and cleansed by the washing of the water, by the word. Now this sea is not for cleansing. It is as crystal. It is clear. It is the word of God still. And it abides, and is stable, and is forever more.

V. 6-7 The vision here includes four living ones. The word, they tell us, translated here is not beast. It is Zoa which refers to living ones around the throne. It is very difficult and different than the word used in Chapter 13. These represents the attributes of the living God.

Here is the lion. The well-known symbol of majesty.

The young ox. Divine strength. Serving man.

The face of a man. Intelligence and purpose.

The eagle. Suggests swiftness to detect evil and execute judgement. These four living creatures are found in the Old Testament. We have been introduced to them many many years before. The first chapter of the book of Ezekiel, the prophet saw a whirlwind. And in that whirlwind, there was a great black cloud of fire. And in that fire, there were four living ones -- four living creatures. In the 10th chapter of the book of Ezekiel, V. 20, he gives their familiar name. This is the living creature that I saw under the God of Israel, by the River of Chebar. A vision that he saw in the first chapter. That they were the cherubim. The four living creatures. He names them the four cherubim of God.

In the book of Genesis, when the man and the woman were cast out of the garden, the cherubim were placed on the East side to keep guard of the tree of life.



In the building of the tabernacle, the pattern of which God gave Moses, there were cherubim fixed in the sacred veil for the holy of holies.

There were cherubim interwoven, and standing above the arc of the covenant.  
Where the Ten Commandments were.

In the temple Solomon, there were cherubim interwoven and the veil in the holy place between the holy of holies.

In the temple that Herod built, there were pictures of the likeness of the cherubims painted on the walls.

We have no idea what cherubims were like in shape and figure, except they had wings. What they looked like is known only to God. Ezekiel and Revelations seem to give them some symbolic form. They have eyes, in front and behind. They are watchful. They are adoring God day and night.

Let us dig a little further into the meaning of the cherubims. First, they have to do with this world. They have to do with God's purposes. They are four in number. And that is the number, the Scriptural number for the world. As seven is the number of the fullness of God. Three is the number of deity of God. Four refers to the world that God made.

There are four seasons. There are four points on the compass. There are four

elements. Four winds. Four is the number that refers to the earth.

There was the primary forms of life, that God created. And here was man who was second among all the domestic life - the ox. Third, among all the wild and tamed life - the lion. And then there were the birds of the Heavens - the eagles which could fly.

The theory that the lion represents bravery, the bull represents strength, man represents intelligence, and the eagle represents speed or swiftness - or eternal watchfulness.

There is another view, that these four living creatures have a four-fold division of animal life. The lion represents the wild animal life. The calf represents the domestic animal life. And man represents human life. And the eagle represents bird life. And all of these were to adore and to worship the whole creation of man. The bird, the beast.

Second, the cherubims were to carry out the execution of God's purpose. Whatever he decreed. They stand on the steps leading up to the throne, ready and equipped to go on an assignment. And this we can discern from the Scripture.

Third, they are emblems or instruments of the love and purposes of grace for us. In the Garden of Eden, man and woman were driven out. They regarded the tree of life - less man in his sin should eat, and therefore, live forever in his sin. That was the provision of blessing, and God's mercy and grace, and goodness



toward us.

Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. This body gets as death, disease, and blindness - and other things.

1 Fourth these cherubims signify blessings in our earthly life The tribes of the children of Israel.

2 - An old Rabbi commenting on the second chapter of the book of Numbers said, the twelve tribes of the children of Israel marched three tribes on each side of the encampment. They marched under four banners, four insigna, for the purposes of God.

1 The standard of Judah was the lion. And on that side three tribes gathered.

2 The standard of Rubin was a man. And on that side three tribes gathered.

3 The standard of Dan was a flying eagle. And on that side, three tribes gathered.

4 The standard of Ephriim was an ox. And on that side, three tribes gathered.

To the twelve tribes gathered around the center, and the Glory of God, and

marched through the wilderness. Under the banner of the lion, the ox, a man, a flying eagle -- the four living creatures. The four zoa. Out of the bondage of Egypt, he preserved them through the wilderness and they settled in the Promised Land. This was God's protecting care, of his people.

V. 8-9 - He heard the song of the four living creatures. They adore one God, the Lord God almighty. They adore the three holies in this one God. The holy Father, the holy Son, and the Holy Spirit.

He heard the adorations of the four and twenty -- there was a song of redemption as they were singing the new song.

V. 9 - In conclusion - a song of praise. They speak of glory, and honor, and thanks to the eternal God - not to the temporal domitian.

V. 10 The twenty-four elders in V. 10 - representing redeemed humanity fall down before the throne of God. They take off their crowns and cast them before the throne. The song of creation. The song of re-creation and redemption. The enemies of the cross may rage against him. But he is unmoved. The invincible sovereign God is in control. And John sees all creation and the church - V. 11. Joining in this common hymn that is described to God.

God has power to rescue the church from eternal peril and destruction.

V. 11 I want you to observe in V. 11 - they do not say we give thee glory, and honor,



and power, for what can any preacher pretend to give unto God. But note, they say, thou art worthy to receive Glory.

Far above the blessings and praise, he was worthy to receive all of this.

We have reason and ground to give adoration to him. This is something of the final things that are coming to pass.

They are singing of the day when the wolf shall dwell with the lamb. And the leopard shall lie down with the kid. The lion shall eat straw like the ox. The sucking child shall play on the whole of the ass. And the weened child shall put his hand in the cockatrices den and none shall make them afraid. All of animal life that is vicious, God will remake into the beautiful peace of Eden by which he decreed life at the beginning. All of creation shall be redeemed not just the man. But all of God's creation. The animal life, the bird life, the human life, the domestic life. And what an ultimate blessedness and glory the Lord has purposed for his people. Until then, precious beyond compare, it is to call upon his name now to love him now. To trust in Jesus now.

That is our appeal and invitation to your heart.