

Since He is about to return—stands even at the door and knocks—He promises them who overcome to sit down and reign with Him, since at His return the kingdoms of this world become the kingdom of our Lord and His Christ.

The devil had promised Him the kingdoms of this world in the temptation, but Christ rejected it, for the price of that glory was the worship of the devil.

Christ refused the offer from the devil, that He might wait for this glorious hour when He, as an overcomer, with all the overcomers, should have earned the right to reign.

Paul said, "If we suffer with Him, we shall also reign with Him." (II Tim. 2:12)

*Lastly, we hear the final urgent call.* "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit," etc. Like the declaration, "I know thy works," this call is found in all the seven letters. It is a stirring call to the churches of this Laodicean period. Seven times He repeats this injunction, lest we lose sight of the history of the whole church throughout the seven periods of her life from Pentecost to the end.

Thus we have seen that these letters foretold the main developments and principle eras of the church down through the gospel age.

Also they were written to admonish, encourage, warn, guide, reprove, and call us to heed, to the end that we may pass the time of our sojourn here working out our salvation with fear and trembling, having respect to the "recompense of the reward."

As each of Jacob's sons had different personalities and these personalities pictured the characteristics of the tribes descending from them, so do these seven churches, through their local conditions, symbolize the conditions in each of the seven great church periods.

## PART II

### CHAPTER IV

#### THE VISION OF THE THRONE

##### *Text (4:1-11)*

**1** After these things I saw, and behold, a door opened in heaven, and the first voice that I heard, a voice as of a trumpet speaking

with me, one saying, Come up hither, and I will show thee the things which must come to pass hereafter. 2 Straightaway I was in the Spirit: and behold, there was a throne set in heaven, and one sitting upon the throne; 3 and he that sat was to look upon like a jasper stone and a sardius: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, like an emerald to look upon. 4 And round about the throne were four and twenty thrones: and upon the thrones I saw four and twenty elders sitting, arrayed in white garments; and on their heads crowns of gold. 5 And out of the throne proceed lightnings and voices and thunders. And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God; 6 and before the throne, as it were a sea of glass like unto crystal; and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, four living creatures full of eyes before and behind. 7 And the first creature was like a lion, and the second creature like a calf, and the third creature had a face as of a man, and the fourth creature was like a flying eagle. 8 And the four living creatures, having each one of them six wings, are full of eyes round about and within: and they have no rest day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come. 9 And when the living creatures shall give glory and honor and thanks to him that sitteth on the throne, to him that liveth for ever and ever, 10 the four and twenty elders shall fall down before him that sitteth on the throne, and shall worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and shall cast their crowns before the throne, saying, 11 Worthy art thou, our Lord and our God, to receive the glory and the honor and the power: for thou didst create all things, and because of thy will they were, and were created.

## INTRODUCTION

Beginning with this chapter we meet a tremendous change in the nature of the "unfolding" of the apocalypse. The chapter is filled with imagery of the most striking nature. The scene has changed entirely.

No longer does John see the Christ walking among the candlesticks, but in spirit he is permitted to look through a door opened in heaven and behold a throne! The throne is the central object of this scene, with all symbolism taking its place and significance with reference to that throne.

The entire symbolism here makes it very evident that the main purpose of this vision given John was to reveal the ascended and glorified Christ in the act of occupying His throne, at His Father's right hand.

It was of this enthronement which Peter spoke on the day of Pentecost: "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear. For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The Lord said unto

my Lord, *sit thou on my right hand*, until I make thy foes thy footstool. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. (Acts 2:32-36)

Beyond the shadow of a doubt, then, we have the "uncovering" of the transcendently glorious event fulfilling the prophecy, "The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies Thy footstool," (Psalm 110:1),—the event which the Spirit-endowed Peter proclaimed in his first sermon on the birthday of the church and later declared in his epistle, "Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto Him. (I Peter 3:22)

To this Paul adds his Spirit-filled testimony, "and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, *and set him at his own right hand* in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come." (Ephesians 1:19-21)

In the light of these scriptures it is crystal clear that the group of visions beginning here in the fourth chapter, and embracing the entire program of the seals and trumpets, has for its starting point the ascension of the risen Christ into heaven and His occupation of the throne, of which He only could be worthy, at the right hand of the majesty in the heavens.

This group of visions has then, to do with those events which began to occur from his coronation at Pentecost.

In the interpretation of the Book of Revelation, very much depends upon where we locate this vision of the throne and the book.

By the references we have mentioned, it is impossible therefore, without setting aside the plainest declarations of the scripture, to place the occupying by Christ of His throne on God's right hand at any other time than upon His ascension into heaven.

Christ, himself connects this vision with the one preceding. In His letter to the church of the Laodicean period He said, "Even as I also *overcame* and am *set down* with my Father in His throne." (Rev. 3:21) The past tenses of the verbs used in this verse declare plainly that His occupation of His Father's throne had already

taken place when He appeared unto John in the vision on the isle of Patmos.

*vs. 1* "After this," or "these things," as in the Revised version, means, after the letters addressed to the seven churches, this new and startlingly different vision was given to John. While the fourth chapter begins a second prophetic portion, it is not itself prophetic, but introductory.

"The first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking to me," seems to be the same voice of which we read in (Rev. 1:10) "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet."

That voice now summons John, evidently to pass through the open door, by saying, "Come up hither, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter."

But John, in the flesh, could not obey such a summons, so we read:

*vs. 2* "And immediately, I was in the Spirit." Since the first vision of the seven-fold portrait of Christ came to John in the Spirit (Rev. 1:10-18) so this second vision of Christ, portrayed as now sitting on the throne, could only come to John "in the Spirit."

The voice called to John to leave the realm of the natural man and enter the region of the supernatural. These words indicate that, between the first vision and the present series of visions, there was an interval in the which John was in his natural state.

This experience of John recalls such an experience by the apostle Paul. (In II Corinthians 12:1-5) "It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to *visions* and *revelations* of the Lord. I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago (whether in the body, I cannot tell, or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth); such an one caught up to the third heaven.

And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth). How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. Of such an one will I glory, yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities."

We must note this fact very carefully, that John, after his first vision left the spirit and reverted to his natural state and the second series of visions could not be given until he was caught up, as it were "in the Spirit" a second time.

We can never arrive at a true understanding of Revelation until we realize that the book does not give a regularly progressive unfolding of the future, but is divided into a number of visions, each complete in itself, and each beginning, not where the last one left off, but at some starting point, best suited to the series of events "uncovered" in that particular vision.

"Behold a throne!" introduces the special object of attention in this vision of the door opened in heaven. Truly, the throne is the central object of this scene. This becomes all the more evident when we note that in chapters four and five, the word "throne" occurs no less than seventeen times!

Thus, this rebellious earth has revealed to it, through the apocalypse, that there is a throne in heaven and that all things, both in heaven and on the earth are under Christ's authority. Did not Christ declare upon His departure to occupy this throne, "All power hath been given unto me in heaven and in earth"? (Matthew 28:18)

Truly we must ever remind ourselves that this book is a revelation, or "uncovering" of Jesus Christ. His participation in the government of the universe is but dimly seen by the eyes of men. This fact is known, and can only be known by the medium of revelation.

The ministry of the Holy Spirit is to reveal the Christ. Christ, in the days of His flesh said, "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you." (John 16:13-14)

So John had to be caught up in the Spirit to have this revealing, by the Spirit, of the coronated Christ.

Christ has given us here a symbolic presentation of his two-fold work of creation and recreation or redemption. The symbolism of this vision reveals that redemption has been provided by the payment of the ransom price—"the blood of Christ" hence He is presented as the Lamb that was slain in the fifth chapter, and "by His own blood, He entered in once into the Holy place, having obtained eternal redemption." (Heb. 9:12)

But there still remained many things to be accomplished before "the redemption of the purchased possession. (Eph. 1:14) Unto this day of redemption we have been sealed, said Paul, by the Holy Spirit of God. (Eph. 4:30)

Between those two phases of His work of redemption—the pay-

ment of the purchase price by the Lamb of God who has shed His blood, and the taking of possession of the whole redeemed creation, is to be found the entire history of the dispensation of the Holy Spirit.

Revelation is the uncovering of the events between these two phases.

*vs. 3* Just as John had given us a seven-fold description of Christ walking among the candlesticks, before he uncovered the history of the seven church periods, so here he describes the Christ sitting upon the right hand of God, before he proceeds to uncover the events contained in the seven seals, and the seven trumpets.

He said, "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."

The three stones mentioned here are, of course symbols. Doubtless their meaning is found in their colors.

The jasper stone is mentioned again in Revelation 21:11 where it is described as a stone most precious and of dazzling brightness, clear as crystal. It portrayed the wondrous light of the Holy Jerusalem, and that light it declares "is the glory of God." Evidently that is its meaning here. The jasper represented the glory of God.

The sardius is a dark red stone. Orpheus speaks of "the blood colored sardius." How appropriate, since Christ is presented in the fifth chapter as "the Lamb as it had been slain," that the blood-red sardius should appear in relation to the throne.

Since the rainbow is green in color "like unto an emerald," it may indicate that the events that are about to be "uncovered" have to do with the earth, since green is the color of earth, as blue is the color heaven.

"There was a rainbow round about the throne."

Much prominence is given to the rainbow by John. He was impressed by the fact that it was a complete circle. The rainbow we see on the storm cloud is incomplete—a half circle. This half rainbow is a token of the covenant God made with Noah and his sons, as well as with every living creature. (Gen. 9:8-17) This lengthy description in a book like Genesis noted for its brevity, testifies to its importance as a symbol.

The half circle rainbow was a token that the storm had already passed over the place where the beholders stand.

The complete, full-circle rainbow which encircles the throne

of God is visible to those over whom the spiritual storms have passed, because the onlookers had the blood of their passover Lamb upon them. The storm of God's judgment had already passed over the place where the redeemed stand and can never come again.

This complete rainbow is a token of Christ's covenant made with every redeemed Christian.

*vs. 4, 5* John saw twenty-four seats, or literally "thrones." The central throne was encompassed by twenty-four lesser thrones. And upon these thrones he saw twenty-four elders sitting. Since these are so closely associated with the four living creatures, their identity will be better considered after an explanation of these four living creatures is given in verse six.

That they were clothed with white raiment speaks of their ineffable purity. In the fact that they were seated upon thrones and had on their heads crowns of gold, indicate they share the reign of Him whose throne they encircle. Since incense is a type of the "prayers of saints" (Rev. 5:8), it would seem that they are divine agents through whom the prayers of the saints reach God.

Such a function of divine being can be better understood when we recall that Daniel had his prayer delayed twenty-one days by the prince of the Kingdom of Persia. We read in (Daniel 10:12-13) "Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am *come for thy* words.

But the prince of the Kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days, but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me."

This brings to our minds Paul's declaration, "For we wrestle not against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." (Eph. 6:12)

Evidently these are heavenly princes who have power with God in respect to our prayers. When Jacob wrestled successfully with the heavenly visitor until the breaking of day, the latter said unto Jacob, "Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a *prince* hast thou power with God and with men and hath prevailed." (Genesis 32:28)

So these princes in John's vision had power with God.

They undoubtedly belonged to the same class of heavenly intelligence as the four living creatures for the following reasons:

*First*, when the four living creatures gave glory to Him that sat on the throne, the twenty-four elders also worship Him. (Rev. 4:9, 10)

*Second*, They have harps and vials full of odors the same as the four living creatures.

*Third*, When the four living creatures say, "Amen," the twenty-four elders worship Him who is on the throne.

*Fourth*, When an innumerable company of the redeemed, praise God for salvation, the angels, elders and four living creatures are above the throne and not counted among the redeemed. (Rev. 7:9-12)

*Fifth*, They do not praise God for their own redemption. Lange on Revelation, Page 152, says the "us" of Rev. 5:9 is an interpolation. It has been found that the oldest Greek manuscripts give an entirely different meaning than the authorized version.

Tischendorf, Alford and Lange translate as follows:

"Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, and hast made them unto our God kings and priests, and they shall reign on the earth."

They do not praise the Lamb for their own redemption, but for the redemption of the world.

*Sixth*, In Revelation, 14th Chapter, the Lamb has one hundred and forty and four thousand saints about Him, who sing a new song *before* the throne, and *before* the four living creatures, and the elders. (Rev. 14:1-3) Only the redeemed could sing that new song; the elders did not join in the singing.

So we see they are about the throne, associated with the angels, but not with the martyrs. They are always separated from those who praise God for redemption.

This distinction reveals their character. They belong to the heavenly intelligences, to the same class as the cherubim. They are princes of heaven, and not of men.

The number twenty-four is probably associated with the twenty-four courses of the priests of the temple, which was a pattern of things in the heavens. Here in this vision we are looking at the heavenly things themselves (Hebrew 9:23) which no natural eye could behold.

The number twenty-four is the result of multiplying the factors



of twelve and two. The spiritual theocracy of God is represented in the Old Testament by the heads or elders of the twelve tribes of Israel, and in the New Testament the Christocracy of the Kingdom is headed by the twelve apostles.

We are not looking at objects that bear any physical resemblance whatsoever to the heavenly things. For instance, there could be no physical likeness between the glorified Christ and "A Lamb having seven horns and seven eyes."

What we are trying to do is to decipher a description *written in hieroglyphics*.

The seven lamps of fire are said to be the seven Spirits of God, which we found in the study of this symbol in the first chapter, represents the fullness of the Spirit as manifested in Christ.

*vs. 6, 7* John saw four beasts, or to be exact, "four living creatures." The term "beasts" applied to these beings is incorrect, particularly in view of the fact that the same term is used to portray the monsters of iniquity as seen in chapters thirteen, seventeen and nineteen. The Greek word in the thirteenth chapter of Revelation is a different term. The Greek word for "beasts" is entirely different.

The word used for the four creatures is "Zoa," meaning "living forms," or "living ones."

We are now ready to decipher the hieroglyphic of "Living Creatures." Shall we let the Bible be its own interpreter.

In the first chapter of Ezekial, we find that the exiled prophet of the Old Testament dispensation saw, by the river Chebar of Babylon, the same beings that John portrayed in Revelation. While there were minor differences, the general features are identical. Both prophets, Ezekial and John saw (1) four living creatures; both saw (2) four faces, like those of a man, a lion, an ox or calf, and a flying eagle. The living creatures, described by each prophet, are full of eyes, (3) each are winged. There are minor differences in the wings: John saw six wings, Ezekial saw four wings and a pair of hands under the wings, making six members. Also the Seraphim of Isaiah sixth chapter had six wings. Finally, the same Greek term is used to represent the four living creatures of both Ezekial and John. It follows then that if we can ascertain the meaning of the symbols beheld by Ezekial and Isaiah, we shall thereby "uncover" the meaning of the same symbol in Revelation.

In the tenth chapter of Ezekial, the prophet speaking of the heavenly beings that he beheld the second time, says in verse 22,

“and the likeness of their faces was the same faces which I saw by the river Chebar, their appearances and themselves.” In verse 15, he also says these are “the living creatures I saw by the river Chebar.” In verse twenty, he says, “I knew they were Cherubim.”

Isaiah says they were seraphim. It is also interesting to note that in Isaiah’s description he also saw the throne in heaven and Him that sat thereon, and above the throne were the seraphim, and he also mentions the door. (Isaiah 6:1-4)

Therefore, we know positively that these four living creatures are cherubim, or seraphim, the highest order of the angelic hosts. We know very little about them, but they are always near the throne of God.

The cherubim were first seen at the gate of the garden of Eden (Gen. 3:24), guarding the way to the tree of life with a flaming sword.

In the tabernacle cherubim hovered over the mercy seat and were embroidered on the curtains. God is addressed in (I Samuel 4:4) as the one who dwells between the cherubim. His Shekinah glory, in the Holy of Holies, was manifested from between the cherubim on the Ark of the Covenant. In Ezekial the brightness of the Lord is represented as attending the cherubim. In Rev. 5:6, the Lamb stands “in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures.

The forms seen by Ezekial and John have a symbolic significance. It may be they have to do with both the material creation and the final redemption. (Rev. 4:7) Their combined make up embraces the resemblance of the man, the lion (chief of wild beasts), the ox (chief of tame beasts) and the eagle (chief of the air).

They indicate possibly, that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now . . . waiting for the adoption to wit, the redemption of our body.” (Romans 8:22, 23)

*vs. 8-10* They were “full of eyes before and behind” in order to be able to see all things, their wings were always in motion, indicating tireless activity and like Isaiah’s four living creatures, so John’s four creatures utter the same “Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty.”

They praise Him as the one “which was, and is, and is to come.” They proclaim Him as the self existant one—the I AM, and Rev. 4:9. They praise him as the eternal One.

*vs. 11* They ascribe all glory to Him as the Creator.

While the authorized version reads: “And for thy pleasure they

are and were created," the Revised Version says, "Because of thy will they are, and were created." His will was the creative cause.

This well may be called the "Oratorio of Creation."

## CHAPTER V

### THE BOOK WITH SEVEN SEALS

*Text (5:1-14)*

#### Introduction

1 And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the back, close sealed with seven seals. 2 And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a great voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? 3 And no one in the heaven, or on the earth, or under the earth, was able to open the book, or to look thereon. 4 And I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open the book, or to look thereon: 5 and one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not; behold, the Lion that is of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath overcome to open the book and the seven seals thereof. 6 And I saw in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, having seven horns, and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent forth into all the earth. 7 And he came, and he taketh it out of the right hand of him that sat on the throne. 8 And when he had taken the book, the four living creatures and the four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having each one a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. 9 And they sing a new song, saying, Worthy art thou to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and didst purchase unto God with thy blood men of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation, 10 and madest them to be unto our God a kingdom and priests; and they reign upon the earth. 11 And I saw, and I heard a voice of many angels round about the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; 12 saying with a great voice, Worthy is the Lamb that hath been slain to receive the power, and riches, and wisdom, and might, and honor, and glory, and blessing. 13 And every created thing which is in the heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and on the sea, and all things that are in them, heard I saying, Unto him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb, be the blessing, and the honor, and the glory, and the dominion, for ever and ever. 14 And the four living creatures said, Amen. And the elders fell down and worshipped.

The last chapter which we have just studied centers its symbolism around the throne in the "way of the Holiest of all," where the crucified and risen Christ sits on God's right hand.

While in the earthly tabernacle there were the altar of burnt