

## ***Breakpoint and Beyond***

We'll pick up our study on the final events of this age in Revelation chapter four. Briefly, in chapter one, the apostle John saw the glorified Lord Jesus, and in chapters two and three, he learned of the seven churches which not only existed in John's day but have played out as an accurate picture of the subsequent historical eras up unto our present day. In speaking to each of them, Jesus made clear that they all had/have a need to overcome, and He said that anyone who "has an ear to hear" should take heed. Thus, in speaking to them He speaks to all of us who believe.

Additionally, in chapter one verse nineteen we have the table of contents for the whole book of Revelation. It says, "*Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this.*" This is Jesus speaking to John. The *things which you have seen* refers to the resurrected, glorified Lord of Heaven and Earth, Jesus Christ (chapter one). The *things which are* refers to the seven churches and the church age they cover (chapters two and three). The *things which will take place after this* is our breakpoint.

After what things? Well, the church age of course. The Greek expression is 'metatauta' and, not coincidentally, it is also how we begin chapter four:

*After these things (metatauta) I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven.*

After that which typifies the church age, the first thing the apostle sees is an open door in heaven. You Bible students know that Jesus referred to Himself as the Door and as it is open, the sense is that the way into heaven is open through Him. There's a welcoming and receptivity. Looking back into chapter three, we see that one group of believers who seem to be around during the last days, Philadelphia, has the promise from Jesus - *See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it.* Many believe this to be an open door, so to speak, for missions, and I can agree, but that is based more upon an extrabiblical historical perspective rather than a purely scriptural interpretation.

If we let the Bible 'interpret itself' if you would, I'm inclined to believe that this is really saying that these last days believers who chapter three says 'have a little strength' and 'hold on to His Word' (including His promise to return) are those who will experience, as John did, the next part of the revelation:

*And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, "Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this." Immediately I was in the Spirit;*

This is the rapture. It is prefaced by a trumpet and it is instantaneous just as with the other scriptures that describe it. After this, the earthly witness of the mostly gentile church is over – the baton will be passed, if you would, to another group. After this breakpoint and beyond, that church is seen in heaven, but the whole church is as yet incomplete.

John continues to record his experience:

*...and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne. And He who sat there was like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, in appearance like an emerald.*

It's a good thing John was in the Spirit for the Bible says no man can see God and live. Even in the Spirit, John's attempt to describe the appearance of our Lord is brief. He's clearly overwhelmed and at a loss for appropriate descriptors. But he tries. What he's attempting to convey seems to be purity, brilliance and beauty. Each of these stones were found in the breastplate which the high priest wore. As such, they represented the tribes of Israel, however, we cannot be certain about which stone and which tribe go together. I like what David Guzik has to say about this scene – "*Around this setting of all sovereignty, power, authority and glory - this setting of the throne of God - God has placed a reminder of His own promise to never destroy the earth again with water, a promise that directs His sovereignty, so that it is not capricious or against His promises. A throne says, "I can do whatever I want, because I rule." A promise says, "I will fulfill this word to you, and I cannot do otherwise." A rainbow around the throne is a remarkable thing, showing that God will always limit Himself by His own promises.*"

John continues to describe the throneroom of heaven:

*Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads.*

*And from the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices.*

Now, elders represent the people of God, especially in the Old Testament. The 24 courses of the priesthood (1 Chronicles 24) represented all the priests, while the 12 tribes and the 12 apostles represent all the faithful. Exactly who these elders are we are not told, and that's certainly for our good. You see, all eyes are upon Someone else.

Both angels and saints are pictured in the Bible as clothed in white garments which represent righteousness. However, angels are never pictured in scripture with crowns. Therefore, I believe the picture here is of redeemed, glorified man sitting enthroned with Jesus. On lesser thrones, to be sure, but thrones none the less. This agrees with the scriptures that proclaim we are joint heirs with Christ (Romans 8:17), and we will reign with Him (2 Timothy 2:12).

Next, we read:

*Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.*

Seven in the Bible speaks of completion or perfection. As with the Father and the Son, there is nothing lacking to His Spirit. His being, His ministry, His fruit, everything about Him is perfect.

In addition, *Before the throne there was a sea of glass, like crystal.* Which communicates a sense of perfect peace.

After this, John continues by describing four fantastic beings: *And in the midst of the throne, and around the throne, were four living creatures full of eyes in front and in back. The first living creature was like a lion, the second living creature like*

a calf, the third living creature had a face like a man, and the fourth living creature was like a flying eagle. The four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying:

“Holy, holy, holy,  
Lord God Almighty,  
Who was and is and is to come!”

Each of these creatures are full of eyes, that is, they are all-seeing. All failure to truly worship is rooted in a lack of seeing and understanding. In addition, they each have a unique characteristic; one is like a lion, one is like a calf, one has a face like a man, and one is like a flying eagle. As we consider them, we recognize that one aspect of Christ's ministry toward mankind is pictured in scripture by each. He is known as the “Lion of the tribe of Judah” – powerful and kingly; He is the burnt offering calf – wholly devoted to Father God and atoning for our sins; He came to earth as the “Son of Man” presenting the character or face of God to man, experiencing all our temptations, knowing our grief and sorrows; He has borne His people on eagle's wings in delivering them from bondage and preserving them in trial.

Together, the creatures ceaselessly praise God Almighty and in doing so, they represent the response that resounds from all creation because of His mercy and goodness toward us. And, clearly, this response is contagious, if you would, for...

*Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four*

*elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying:*

*“ You are worthy, O Lord,  
To receive glory and honor and power;  
For You created all things,  
And by Your will they exist and were created.”*

These crowns which are cast before the throne are the *stephanos*, the crowns of *victory*, not royalty. They are the crowns of achievement that a winning athlete would receive at the ancient Olympic Games. The twenty-four elders - representing all the redeemed of God - throw every achievement reward they have back before God because they know and thus proclaim that **He** is worthy . . . to receive glory and honor and power.

In other words, as we consider these creatures, the expression of God in the person of Jesus Christ, as we consider His power and strength, His devotion to the Father and His sacrifice for us, His touchability, His leaving of heaven's perfection to come to us here in this dark, diseased world, and His care, protection and provision throughout our hardships – if we are believers - born again in Him, like the twenty-four, we will naturally and ceaselessly praise Him in response. He created all things, all things. Whether seen or unseen, they exist and were created by His will.

This, then, is the first 'act' of the 'great beyond'. It is the first scene for the church in heaven and of course it's all about God, His Son and His Spirit.