**THROUGH HEAVENLY PORTALS**

**REVELATION CHAPTER 4**

Back in Ch 1, Jesus appeared to John and told him, “Write therefore the things that you have seen [all the things he saw in Chapter 1], those that are [Jesus’ messages to the seven churches in the present Church Age, Chaps 2 and 3] and those that are to take place after this.” [the future events from Chapter 4 onward]. **I** “After this” are the opening words of Ch 4. And so now we come to Chapter 4 and the beginning of our study of eschatology, of future events. We begin in heaven where John is given a vision of glory. I believe that John’s translation up to heaven pictures our translation to heaven, the rapture of the church.

1 After this I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven! And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this."

John sees an open door to heaven. Notice it’s NOT the streets of gold and the pearly gates we always hear about. That will come in Revelation 21, the future heavenly city. Also, there’s no mention of St. Peter greeting him as he enters. But John does hear a familiar voice. It’s the same voice he heard back in Ch 1, the voice of Jesus Himself. Jesus calls John to come up to heaven.

2 At once I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne.

3 And he who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian, and around the throne was a rainbow that had the appearance of an emerald.

“At once,” immediately upon Jesus calling him to heaven John is “in the Spirit.” The Bible says, “In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet…we shall be changed.” (1 Corinthians 15:52) That’s why I see this as a perfect picture of the rapture.

The first thing John sees as he enters the door of heaven is a throne and One sitting on the throne. This is THE throne of the ONE true and living God, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, the three in one, the Holy Trinity.

Notice who surrounds the throne…

4 Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones were twenty-four elders, clothed in white garments, with golden crowns on their heads.

These 24 individuals, called elders, are wearing white garments and victor’s crowns. Both were promised to overcoming believers in Chapters 2 and 3 and also in James 1:12. The elders are also seated on thrones. Who are they and why are there 24 of them? We know that 12 of them are the 12 apostles. In Matthew 19:28 Jesus tells His disciples that they will sit upon 12 thrones judging the 12 tribes of Israel. We therefore can conclude that the other 12 are representatives from the 12 tribes of Israel. **I**

5 From the throne came flashes of lightning, and rumblings and peals of thunder, and before the throne were burning seven torches of fire, which are the seven spirits of God,

Lightning and thunder proceed from the throne of God. These signify the judgment of God about to come on the earth. This period known as the Great Tribulation is described in detail from Revelation Chapter 6 thru 19. Jesus has taken His church to heaven and now the world is about to experience tribulation like never before seen in human history.

The seven spirits before the throne represent the seven manifestations or characteristics of the Holy Spirit as mentioned in Isaiah 11:2 – Spirit of the Lord, Spirit of wisdom, Spirit of understanding, Spirit of counsel, Spirit of power, Spirit of knowledge and the Spirit of the fear of the Lord.

6 and before the throne there was as it were a sea of glass, like crystal. And around the throne, on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind:

7 the first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with the face of a man, and the fourth living creature like an eagle in flight. **I**

8 And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!"

The glassy sea described here is an indication of God’s perfect peace. The four living creatures around the throne of God are not explained in the Book of Revelation, so, how do we know who they are? The prophet Ezekiel tells us. The prophet describes a vision he had by the river Chebar in Ezekiel 1:1-14. In this vision he saw four creatures. All four had the face of a man, all four had the face of a lion, all four had the face of a bull and all four had the face of an eagle. All four had wings and under their wings were human hands. They had feet like a calf’s hooves and they gleamed like burnished bronze. In Ezekiel’s vision he describes burning coals of fire and lightning flashing from the fire. This is eerily similar to what John is seeing! Who are these living creatures?

Ezekiel 10:20-21 reveals who the four creatures are… “These are the living beings that I saw beneath the God of Israel by the river Chebar; so I knew that they were cherubim. Each one had four faces and each one four wings, and beneath their wings was the form of human hands.”

Based on what Ezekiel tells us we can conclude that the four living creatures are cherubim, angelic beings. We know that, like men, angels have free will to choose between good and evil. We know also that some of the angels fell from their original position. One-third of the angels fell with Lucifer, the prince of heaven, who vainly desired to be equal with God and was subsequently expelled from heaven with his followers. Beyond this we know very little about angelic or heavenly beings. For all we know there could be thousands of different types of angels. The cherubim described here are angels who remained loyal to God and we see them praising and worshiping God. They sing, “Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty.”

What about the faces of the four living creatures, these cherubim? Have you ever noticed that after you have been around somebody long enough you tend to look and act a little like that person? I see this with a lot of older married couples. Well, after millions of years being in the presence of God, these cherubim possess the very likeness of Jesus Himself. You see, Jesus is described in Scripture as “the Lion of the tribe of Judah“ (Revelation 5:5); as “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29); as “the Son of man who came to save that which was lost.” (Matthew 18:11) Even though Jesus is never described as an eagle, He, like the majestic eagle, was “lifted up” into the clouds (Acts 1:9) and is “exalted above the heavens.” (Hebrews 7:26)

John’s perspective may have been slightly different from Ezekiel’s because John sees each of creatures with a different face while Ezekiel saw that each creature possessed all four faces. Perhaps John only viewed them from one side whereas Ezekiel saw all four sides. We don’t really know for sure. **I**

The angels are not the only ones praising God…

9 And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever,

10 the twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever. They cast their crowns before the throne, saying,

11 "Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created."

The 24 elders join the angelic beings in hymns of praise. Here we see all those who have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus, Old Testament and New Testament saints alike, surrounding the throne of the One who saved them. The only created being that God ever redeemed was man. None of the angels who fell were ever given an opportunity to repent and be saved. Only man who was created a little lower than the angels (Hebrews 2:7,9) was given a second chance. It’s called God’s grace! He was under no obligation to do so, but He chose to. Aren’t you glad? Because of His grace we saints join in with the heavenly host singing, “Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power.” The crowns they had been wearing, which they had earned by their righteous actions on earth, they now unselfishly cast before the throne at the feet of Jesus. A crescendo of praise fills the heavens!

For those of us who profess Jesus Christ as Lord some day we too will be able to stand before His throne and lift our then glorified voices with the celestial choir of millions, yea billions, offering up our praises to Jesus our King. We’re going to heaven. Are you ready?

You know there are a lot of people in heaven that I want to see and talk to. But at the top of my list – I can’t wait to see Jesus! He’s the whole reason I’ll be there.