



Revelation 4

Revelation 4
Tape #8243
By Chuck Smith

Let's turn in our Bibles to Revelation chapter four. You remember back in chapter one, verse nineteen, the book of Revelation was divided into three divisions. "Write the things which you have seen" (Revelation 1:19). Chapter one, his vision of Jesus Christ walking in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, holding the seven stars in His right hand. And the glorious description of Jesus in His glory and power. The things which you have seen.

The second division was to be the things that are. That is, this present period of history of you might say, church history. Because as we get into chapters two and three, we get an interesting history of the church as Jesus addresses the seven periods of church history. And we go from the early church of the book of Acts to the modern day Laodicean apostate church. And so the things which are.

Now in chapter one, in the divisions, the third division was to be the things, which will be after these things. After what things? After the things of the church. When the church has completed its ministry on the earth, our mission on the earth, then what events are going to take place on the earth after the church is gone. So the Greek words *meta tauta* is after these things. It's translated in King James, hereafter, but literally after these things.

It is interesting that this fourth chapter begins with the Greek words, *meta tauta*. It shows us that we are coming into the third section of the book, the things that will take place after the things of the church. So we're entering in now to the future. The church's history is complete and now we move in to what is going to happen after the church has finished her ministry. After these things. You see, it's very logical. After what things? The things that He's previously talked about. What is that? The church and the history of the church.

So after these things [John said], I looked, and, behold, there was a door open in heaven: and the first voice was as of a trumpet saying unto me; Come up hither, and I will show you things which must be after these things (4:1).

So the repetition of after these things, both at the first and the last of this verse, indicate and it's as though the Lord is drawing your attention to it, repeating it twice, we are moving on now beyond the history of the church and we're going to take a look at what's going to happen after the church has finished her witness upon the earth. John looks and he sees "a door that is open in heaven: and there is a voice as of a trumpet saying unto him; Come up hither."

I believe that this is the rapture of the church. And it takes place when the church's witness and ministry is complete. The door will be opened in heaven and "the trump of God shall sound: and the dead shall be raised incorruptible: And we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 4:16,17).

Paul writing about this in First Corinthians chapter fifteen said, "I show you a mystery; Not all will die, but we will all be changed, In a moment, in a twinkling of an eye, at the last trump" (1 Corinthians 15:51,52). In First Thessalonians, he defines it as the trump of God. Here John hears the voice like a trumpet. It's saying, Come up hither. And I will show you things, which must be after these things.

Some people foolishly say, The word rapture isn't in the Bible. Many of our English words come from Latin, many of them come from Greek. And there are many words that when you take them from Latin, we have the English that sounds sort of like it. You have in Latin, for instance, *agrikala*, which means farmer. We have our English word, agriculture. Talks about a farmer. Agriculture, *agrikula*. And so many of our words are just adaptations of Latin words or of Greek words so that in the King James Bible which is a translation of the Greek, they have chosen to translate the Greek word *harpazo*, which means to be caught away. They have translated that as caught away. Or we shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. And that word caught up is the Greek word *harpazo*.

Now there is a Latin version of the Bible, it is called the Latin Vulgate. And it was translated far before

any English translation. Translating the Greek word *harpazo* into Latin, they used the Latin word *raptus*, which means the same as *harpazo*, it's the Latin word for caught up. So in the English Bible, we've translated it caught up but the Latin Vulgate Bible would be *raptus*, from which we get our word rapture. Have we been translating from the Latin Vulgate into English, we probably would have used the word rapture to translate the Latin word *raptus*.

So they again say, Well, the word millennium isn't in the Bible. And we're going to be talking about the millennial reign of Jesus Christ. And they say millennium is not in the Bible and so there's no millennial reign. Millennium again is from the Latin *milli annum* and *milli* is a thousand and *annum* is years. So it just comes from the Latin a thousand years. It's translated in your Bible, "And we shall live and reign with Him for a thousand years" (Revelation 20:6). *Milli annum*. And thus, people who make those kinds of arguments are arguing from a position of ignorance of languages. And it's rather sad because they try to make a big issue because the word rapture isn't, the word itself, isn't in the Bible but the experience is surely taught in the Bible.

And so John heard the voice, it was like a trumpet, it was saying to him, Come up hither. And John was caught up by the Spirit as the church will be caught up by the Spirit to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord. And he said, I will show you things which will be hereafter or after these things. So we're going now into the future. The church is taken out of the world and we enter now into the future.

Immediately I was in the spirit; and, behold, there was a throne set in heaven, and one sat on the throne. 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 the sight like unto an emerald (4:2,3).

The first thing that captures the attention of John when he gets to heaven, and John is there as a representative of the church, which means the first thing that will capture our attention when we enter into heaven will be the throne of God. A lot of people say, Well, I'm anxious to see my loved ones and all. The first thing that's going to draw your attention and capture attention is the awesome throne of God. And John sees this throne of God that is set there in heaven, and the One who is sitting upon the throne. And to look upon, He was like the jasper and the sardine stone. The jasper was like a blue white diamond. It had the brilliance of a sparkling diamond. The sardine stone came from Sardis and it was an interesting blood red type of gem. He sees the throne or as he's looking at God, notice, no form is mentioned but just this brilliance.

The Bible says that God dwells in a light that is unapproachable to man. The Bible says that God is light. And so to look upon was like the jasper and the sardine stone. And this rainbow, round about the throne of God, in sight like unto an emerald. That would be a greenish hue.

And round about the throne there were twenty-four seats (4:4).

And the word seats there is thrones. They are lesser thrones.

and upon these lesser thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold (4:4).

There are many who believe that these twenty-four elders are representative of the church. J. Vernon McGee takes this position that there are the twelve apostles and so he believes that these twenty-four thrones are representatives of the church. These elders representing the church. There are difficulties with that inasmuch as John is instructed by the elders many times concerning events that he is not really aware of what's going on and it is explained to him by an elder.

There are others such as William Newell and Sees, who believe that these twenty-four elders are actually an order of angelic beings. Now there are many orders of angelic beings. And the Bible speaks of the various orders. And in just a moment, we're going to be looking at an angelic being that is known as a cherubim. But just exactly who the twenty-four elders is not clear but we do see them seated on these thrones with crowns of gold on their heads.

And out of the throne there proceeds lightning, thunderings, voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God (4:5).

And so these lamps, the seven Spirits of God. As we dealt with the seven Spirits in the previous chapters, we pointed out in Isaiah chapter eleven the prophecy concerning Jesus Christ and the sevenfold work of the Holy Spirit within His life. The Spirit of wisdom and understanding, and these sevenfold workings of the

Spirit in the life of Jesus which are the seven Spirits or the seven or complete work of the Spirit of God in Jesus Christ.

Before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, there were four (4:6).

And the word beast here is an unfortunate translation because you usually think of some kind of an animal, domesticated or wild, we talk about the beast and we think of them in the category of an animal lesser than man. The word in Greek is living creatures. And these are living creatures that are there in the midst of the throne and about the throne and John tells us,

they are full of eyes in front and in back. And the first beast or living creature was like a lion, the second was like a calf, the third had the face of a man, and the fourth was like a flying eagle (4:7).

Many see in this the four faces of Jesus that are presented in the gospels. In the gospel of Matthew, Jesus is presented as the Lion of the tribe of Judah. The gospel of Mark portrays Jesus as the servant, the ox. The gospel of Luke presents Jesus as the Son of man, the humanity of Jesus, the face of a man; and the fourth gospel, John's gospel, presents Jesus as the eagle, the ruler, the divinity of Christ or the divine aspect of the nature of Jesus. John opens, "In the beginning was the Word, the Word was with God, the Word was God" (John 1:1). And he emphasizes the deity of Jesus, the face of an eagle.

These four living creatures had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, which is, and which is to come (4:8).

In Ezekiel, the prophet Ezekiel had a vision of heaven and he describes in chapters one and in chapters ten, the vision of heaven that he had. And Ezekiel also saw these four cherubim and he describes them there in Ezekiel and it is in Ezekiel that we discover that these are the cherubim. Now the "i-m", of course, is the plural in the Hebrew, like the "s" in our English language and thus the cherub is singular but the cherubim would be the plural. So the four of them, the cherubim. The cherubs are an angelic order, probably and it would appear that they are of the highest angelic order in heaven.

There is Michael who is called the archangel, but then there are the cherubim and of course, in Ezekiel, we are told that prior to his fall that Satan was one of the cherubim. He is described in Ezekiel of "having been in Eden, the garden of God: every precious stone was his covering, he was perfect in wisdom, perfect in beauty, perfect in all of his ways until the day of iniquity was found in him" (Ezekiel 28:12-15). And so Satan was once one of these cherub class. He was called the anointed cherub that covereth. And thus of this high category of angelic beings until he exercised his will against the authority and the will of God as Isaiah describes, "Lucifer, son of the morning, how art thou fallen from heaven? For you did say in your heart, I will exalt my throne" (Isaiah 14:12,13). So the fall of Satan, one of the cherubs.

Now these cherubim are engaged in the worship of God. There about the throne of God, they cease not day or night saying, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come." In reality, that which was, which is and which is to come, is an interesting description of the eternal attribute of God. He lives outside of time. So God has always been, He is, He is to come. But He is that all at once. With God being eternal, there is no time. He is outside of the time domain. Outside of the time dimension. Now we cannot even think in this realm. Our brains are not geared to conceive or to understand the eternal now. But God is outside of time. You remember when Moses said to God, Who shall I say has sent me? God said, Say I AM THAT I AM hath sent thee" (Exodus 3:14).

Only God can say I AM. I might say I am, but then I just said that a moment ago, so I was. But God continues to be the I AM. The eternal God. And outside of the time domain. So it is all wrapped up with God which was, which is, which is to come, all at the same moment. The whole time of eternity is wrapped up at that moment in God.

Solomon tried to define it but sometimes our human definitions only sort of confuse things a little bit more. And Solomon in Ecclesiastes, as he is speaking of the concept of the eternal, tells us that "that which has been is now, and that which shall be has already been; and God requires that which is past" (Ecclesiastes 3:15). When you can figure that one out, you've got eternity figured out.

We live in this time continuum. And as I said, it's impossible for us to think apart from the time continuum. We're not wired to think apart from the time continuum. Einstein was wired a little differently

and he developed that *Theory of Relativity* saying that time was relative to speed and that in his illustration of this, if the astronauts could develop a space ship that could say, travel at the speed of light, that time sort of elongates and if you could travel at the speed of light, of course, you'd be vaporized. But if when you get to the destination you could materialize again, if you would travel from the earth to the closest star outside of our solar system, outside of the sun, Andromeda, it would take you four-and-a-half years to get to Andromeda on this ray of light. And visiting Andromeda, you decide to come back or you'd circle it and come back on a ray of light, it would take you, of course, nine years to make the round trip. But when you got back to the earth, you would find that the earth would be millions of years older. And you'd go to your old address and you look for Los Angeles and it's long, long, long gone. And they talk about astronauts travelling at different speeds, how twins or whatever would be different ages when they return. The relativity of time. Hard for us to conceive.

But God is outside of time. And thus, God sees the whole time continuum at once. We think in terms of beginning and ending, of birth and death. And all we think of is in the terms of the time continuum. Yesterday, today, tomorrow, we can't divorce our minds. Last month, next month. Last year, next year. We're bound by this time concept and we can't really free ourselves of it.

Trying to illustrate is difficult but let's say that we decided to go to the Rose Parade. And we ordered our tickets that were in the grandstands that were set up at Lake Avenue and Colorado Boulevard. And so December 31st comes, we're all excited. We have a hard time sleeping but we have the clocks set at three in the morning so we can get up and drive up to Pasadena. We have already our reserved parking and we have our reserved places in the grandstand so we're not too worried about seeing the parade. And as we arrive, it is still dark, it's cold. We sort of bundle up and we get the program and we look at the floats that are going to be in the order in which they will be coming down, the various bands, the various equestrian groups and so forth. And we are sort of studying the whole parade and getting excited and of course, we're going to go to the Rose Bowl game afterwards and this is going to be just a great day.

So as we are sitting there waiting, finally we hear some bands and we stretch and look up Colorado Boulevard towards Orange Grove and we see this marching band coming down the street. But in front of are two fellows walking along with a big banner that says, Rose Bowl Parade and Grand Marshall. And so we see Matt Dillon as he's sitting there in the convertible, waving to everybody as he goes by. And then the bands come by and then some of the horses. And then begin the floats. The various floats. And we are amazed at the ability of the artist who put together the various seeds and flowers and all, and making these floats. Surely they are geniuses and they are tremendous artists.

A float comes along that is just really outstanding. It is the float from San Gabriel. Their entry this year just is breathtaking. And as it goes by, we just cheer and we wave and it's just beautiful. It just attracts our attention. But then it's followed by a band and other floats and someone comes running up and they call up where we're sitting there at the edge of the grandstand and they say, Has the San Gabriel float gone by yet? We say, Oh yeah, it went by about five minutes ago. They said, Oh, no, I heard it's beautiful and I wanted to see it. Oh, it was beautiful. You want to see it? Look, get in your car and race on down, race ahead on Colorado Boulevard. And if you'll race ahead to say, Sierra Madre or whatever, you can park there and you'll probably be able to see it go by. They have to go ahead to see what's behind. You see, it's past for us. But to see the past, they have to go ahead. You're beginning to catch on.

So let's say that someone then comes up, another person and says, Has the Long Beach float gone by? I hear it's a real beauty this year, that it won the Presidential trophy. We look in our program, we say, No, no, here is the float from Disneyland and that means that it should be here in about five minutes. They say, Oh, but I wanted to see it right now. Well, go back on the parade route to the corner of Orange Grove and Colorado Boulevard and by the time you get there, it should be making the turn onto Colorado Boulevard. So if you go back, you can see what's ahead. You can see the future by going back. That's because we're sitting on the corner. Time is moving past. We're watching it as it moves past. It's a progression, moving past us and we watch it as it moves fast because we're at this fixed point.

Now, let's get in the Goodyear blimp. And let's go high above Colorado Boulevard where we can look down on Pasadena. And from this vantage point high above Pasadena, we can see the Grand Marshall's car here and we can see the street sweepers following the last equestrian group down Colorado Boulevard. You

can see the whole thing moving. And you can say, Oh yeah, there's the San Gabriel float, yeah, there's the Long Beach float, yeah, there's the Disney float, yeah, there's, and you could see the whole thing because you are removed and looking down and you can watch the whole progression.

So that God outside of time looking, sees the whole history of man in one swoop. As we go past our fixed point and the progression is going past. God sees the whole thing at once. So He sees Adam there in the garden. Don't, Adam, don't. And He sees us caught up. I told you we can't understand it. But we can get little insights here and there.

When these cherubim. Isaiah also got a vision of heaven, which he records in chapter six. He said, "In the year that king Uzziah died, I saw the Lord high, lifted up, sitting on his throne, his train or glory filled the temple. Then said I, Woe is me! for I am a man of unclean lips, I dwell amongst the people of unclean lips. And he saw the seraphim that had six wings; with two they covered their face, with two they flew and so forth. And one took a coal from the altar and put it on his lips and he describes the seraphim" (Isaiah 6:1-6).

Now because the description of the seraphim and the cherubim are so similar, most Bible scholars believe that seraphim and cherubim are actually two names for the very degree of angels that are the angels of the highest order. There are many exciting surprises that are waiting for us in heaven. We will see angels, millions of them, of different rankings and orders. The cherubim just happen to be of the highest order. They are there at the throne of God declaring the holiness of God.

Way back in Genesis is the first mention of the cherubim and that is when Adam had sinned and was driven out of the garden of Eden, God put a cherub to guard the garden, the gate to the garden to prohibit Adam's re-entry into the garden to eat of the tree of life and live forever in a sinful state. For man's protection, God put the cherub there guarding the entrance into the garden. The first mention we have. But here guarding in heaven they say the holiness of God as they declare, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which is, which was, which is to come.

And when those living creatures give glory and honour and thanks to him that sits upon the throne, who lives for ever and ever (4:9),

As this worship of God takes place,

The twenty-four elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and they worship him that lives for ever and ever, and they cast their crowns before the throne (4:10),

Remember, they have twenty-four lesser thrones, they have crowns of gold upon their head and in response to the worship of the cherubim, they fall on their faces, taking their crowns, casting them on this glassy sea, before the throne of God. That hymn, *Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, early in the morning our songs shall rise to Thee*. The one verse that speaks about *casting down our golden crowns before the glassy sea. Cherubim and seraphim bowing down before Thee, God in three persons, blessed trinity*, of course is taken from this picture in the book of Revelation. As they respond to the worship of the cherubim,

they declare, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for You have created all things, and for Your pleasure they are and were created (4:10,11).

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). Over and over the Bible declares that God is the originator. The self-existent God is the One who created the heavens and the earth. In the Hebrew the word is *bara*, which is an interesting Hebrew word because it means to bring something out of nothing. The physicist start with a tightly clustered, small little fistful of atoms that exploded and the vast universe came with a big bang. That doesn't really go back to the beginning. Where did this tight little cluster of atoms come from? Tightly compacted, where did it come from? That isn't the beginning. They start with something.

"In the beginning God." He was always there. But He created, *bara*, out of nothing. Brought into existence the universe. There is another Hebrew word employed there in the first chapter of Genesis and that is the Hebrew word, *asah* and that means to assemble from existing materials. Man can do that. We can create a pulpit. We can create a building. But we have to start with existing materials. So God created the existing materials in the beginning. God created the universe, the heavens and the earth.

In the first chapter of John, he declares, "In the beginning was the Word, the Word was with God, the Word was God, and the same was in the beginning with God and all things were made by Him and without Him was not anything made that was made" (John 1:1-3). So he declares that Jesus, of course, being God

was the Creator of all things.

Paul writing to the Colossians said concerning Jesus, “Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: [And these are rankings of angels, thrones, dominions, principalities, power, those are rankings of angelic beings, invisible things] all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things. And He is the head of the body, the church: the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the preeminence” (Colossians 1:15-18).

So now Paul basically made the same statement that is being made here in heaven concerning God, “Thou has created all things and for Your pleasure they are and were created.” Paul tells us that Jesus was the One who created all things and that they were created by Him and for Him. We were created for God’s good pleasure. That’s basic, that’s foundational, you can’t escape it. You can fight it. You can’t escape it! You were created for God’s pleasure. That’s why you exist, in order to bring God pleasure! By coming into a meaningful, loving relationship with God. God created us for the pleasure of fellowship.

When John was writing his epistle, he said, “That which was from the beginning, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have handled, which we have gazed upon; (For He became flesh, we touched Him, we handled Him.) And that which we have seen and heard we declare unto you, that you might have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and His Son Jesus Christ. And these things we write unto you, that your joy may be full” (1 John 1:1-4). To have fulfillment, fullness of joy, you have to have fellowship with God.

The world today is in a mad pursuit for joy. They have substituted happiness. The world can offer you happiness but it can’t offer you joy. Happiness is a thing of the emotions. It’s an emotional experience. Joy is a spiritual experience. And being a spiritual experience, it comes through the spiritual fellowship and relationship with God. The fullness of joy. Happiness, yes, the world can give you happiness. But, oh, what a variable it is. Happy tonight--sorry tomorrow. And it’s such a fluctuating thing from happiness to joy.

Have you ever noticed with a little child that it’ll be smiling big as life and then just break into tears? So the emotions of man. We can be exceedingly happy. Should you come and say, Chuck, I’m really going through some desperate times financially, I need some money. I need help, Chuck. Could you possibly help me? Well, how much do you need? Oh, I could use \$10,000. Here I’ll write you out a check. And you go away, Wow, I’m happy, oh man, going to pay all my bills. Chuck gave me a check for \$10,000. You’ll be happy until you try and cash it. How the emotions will change. Rather than Chuck being hail fellow, he’ll be a curse and a byword.

The world can offer happiness but you can’t cash in on it. It doesn’t last. And that’s why they call it the pursuit of happiness because it’s something you’re constantly pursuing. It doesn’t last. It’s the pursuit of happiness.

But joy is a lasting experience because it’s in the realm of the Spirit. And it doesn’t vary. You can have joy in the midst of the most difficult circumstances. Things can be looking horrible and yet your life overflowing with joy. Why? Because joy is based upon relationship. The relationship with God, fellowship with God. “These things we write unto you that you might have fellowship with us, but truly our fellowship is with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ.” And when you have fellowship with God, these things we write unto you that your joy may be full. You have that fullness of joy that’s related to your fellowship with God. That’s not a variable. That’s a constant. And thus the constant joy that I have as I live in fellowship with God.

And that’s the purpose of my existence. God wants fellowship! That’s why He created man in order that there might be fellowship. Meaningful fellowship based upon love. Thus a loving fellowship with God. And if you’ve come to a loving fellowship with God, then your life is fulfilled! You are bringing God pleasure and this is why you exist. “And for Thy pleasure, they are and were created.” You were created in order to bring God pleasure. You’ll only find fulfillment when your life is bringing pleasure to God.

The world cannot offer fulfillment. It gives you false hopes. It gives you false promises. Madison Avenue is very aware of that emptiness in man and that quest that man has, every man has for meaning and fulfillment. And they take advantage of you. And happiness is having a good breath and the right toothpaste.

Happiness is using the right deodorant. Or drinking the right brew. They hold out these little carrots saying, This is what you need to be happy. This is what you need to be fulfilled. But it's empty, it's a sham. You pursue those things and you find that the excitement is just in the pursuit. When you arrive, it's empty. It's an empty promise that the world makes. But when you live in fellowship with God, a loving relationship with God, your life becomes so rich, so full, so meaningful. Why? Because that's why you exist. If you were created for the purpose of bringing pleasure to God, it stands to reason that if you are not bringing pleasure to God, you can't be fulfilled because you're not living according to the basic purpose of your existence.

But if you are living a life that is pleasing to God, then your life is fulfilled because you are now fulfilling the basic purpose of your existence. Just that simple. You wonder why people don't catch on. And so here we find the answer to the philosopher's question, Why am I here?

As we move into the next chapter, and subsequent chapters, we'll find out where we're going. And as we move into chapter five, we have an exciting scene in heaven. After the initial worship of God, joining in this glorious worship, watching and observing the cherubim, watching and observing the twenty-four elders, in the next chapter we begin to participate in the worship also and it is quite fascinating as we study the basis for our praise and worship unto God. So it's perfectly alright to read ahead.

Father, we thank You for that hope that You've given to us of eternal life in Jesus Christ. That hope of spending eternity in the glory of Your presence in Your kingdom. Lord, may Your kingdom come and may Your will be done here on this earth, even as it is in heaven. Lord, we look around the world today and we see how desperate is the need of mankind to have the righteous rule of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. And so Lord, we wait for that day and we look for that day when You shall come and You shall reign forever and ever in the kingdom of God. Sustain us, Lord, help us, Lord in the intervening time. That we would not be trapped by the world's enticements. But Lord, that our hearts will ever be towards You and Your coming kingdom. And may we learn, Lord, to seek first the kingdom of God and Your righteousness, letting you take care of all of the other details. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.