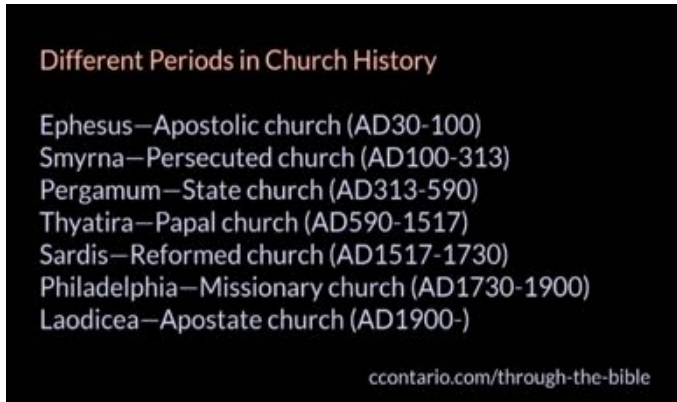


20230514 Revelation Chapter 4 – The Heart of Worship – *Avodah*



Revelation chapter four is a look into heaven itself. Today we will read of worship that goes on in heaven, and we will examine over the next two Sundays the subject of worship itself. First however, let's review what we've seen so far in the Book of Revelation.

In chapter one, John was told to "write the things which thou hast seen." In Chapter one, you will remember that we saw Jesus walking among the seven lampstands which represented the seven churches. In chapters two and three, John was told to "write the things that are." We studied seven different messages that were given to each of seven churches that were in Asia Minor at the time. These were not only actual instructions to actual churches at the time, but they carry a message to us as individuals and to all churches that have existed throughout the Church Age.



We also considered an interesting perspective called the Historical-Prophetical view. In that view, the successive church messages correspond with successive eras in the Church Age (time period from Pentecost until the Rapture of the Church). A list of those is shown on the left. The church age began with the Apostolic Church and it will end after the era of the Apostate Church

which some believe we are experiencing at present. So, if that theory is true, we are in the last era of time before God takes His own to heaven.

Along with being instructed "to write the things that were" and to "write the things that are," John was instructed to write "the things which shall be hereafter." And "those things that are to be" begin in chapter four and will be what is described in the rest of the Book of Revelation. These are the things that will happen in the future when believers are taken out of the earth. This will occur when the ministry of the Church is completed and the "time of the Gentiles" has come to an end. The possibility that things are coming to an end should not frighten us, but rather it should give us great hope.

Chapter four begins and ends with the Greek work "metatauta", meaning "after these things" or simply "afterwards."

¹ After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. 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." (Revelation 4:1, NKJV).

John was taken in his spirit through a door that was open into heaven. He relates that the first "voice" that he heard was "like a trumpet" speaking to him saying, "come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this." This will happen AFTER the things happen to those seven Churches. It is reasonable to conclude that he is talking about what will happen after the Church of Laodicea. In other words, what will happen AFTER THE CHURCH AGE. I am, of course, referring to the theory of interpreting the seven churches by the Historical-Prophetic view which I discussed above. That perspective has the world as we know it ending after the great falling away, as sometimes is attributed to the Church of Laodicea, or the present apostate church.

Many think this trumpet that is speaking is the same trumpet of God which is mentioned in 1 Thessalonians chapter four. That's what will be heard by all believers when Jesus comes to claim His own. Paul tells us:

*¹⁵ For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and **with the trumpet of God**. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. (1 Thessalonians 4:15-17, NKJV).*

Paul refers to this same event in 1 Corinthians 15:51-52. *⁵¹ Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed - ⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, **at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.** (NKJV).*

This event of the trumpet sounding, and the Church being removed is the "rapture". The word "rapture" is not in the Bible, but the event of a rapture is described. The Greek word used in that passage is *harpazo* meaning snatched away. Many words like *harpazo*, which is translated "caught away" are given a name that encapsulates the thought. Jerome's Latin Vulgate Bible, which was translated directly from the Greek and the

Hebrew translates that word *harpazo* as "*rapiemur*" which also means "seized" or "caught up." That word "rapio" is where we get the word "rapture." The event is described in the Bible even though the word we use to describe it is not in the Bible. So now in this passage, we're entering into the future of things to come.

² Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne. ³ 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. (Revelation 4:2-3, NKJV).

The first thing that John sees when he enters into heaven is the throne of God. He describes it being like jasper (blue-white crystal stone) and the sardius stone (a blood red gem stone - like a ruby). God dwells in a light that is unapproachable to man. His throne is surrounded by a rainbow that is described as being green like an emerald.



⁴ 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. ⁵ And from the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices. Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.

(Revelation 4:4-5, NKJV).

Some believe that these 24 elders are an order of angelic beings. This is unlikely. No where in scripture are crowns (*stephanos*) promised to angels, and nowhere in scripture are angels ever seen wearing crowns. The word translated "crown" (*stephanos*) refers to the victor's crown, worn by those who have successfully competed and won the victory, as Christ promised. Those are heroes of the faith who have done well and who were faithful servants. These heroes of the faith are wearing these crowns.

Dr. J. Vernon McGee taught that these twenty-four elders are representatives of the Church. I'm thinking maybe these are special representatives from **God's entire time-line of history**. By that I mean perhaps there were twelve (outstanding Jewish faithful) representing the 12 Tribes of Israel and twelve representing the 12 Disciples of the New Testament (or outstanding representatives of the Christian faith). It's not really clear, but what we do know is that they were in worship before the throne. Interestingly, the King James Rendition of Hebrews chapter 11 (the hall of faith) uses the word "by faith"

twenty-four times! So, maybe there will be twenty-four outstanding representatives of those who have lived by faith.

John saw lightning and thunder, and he heard voices. There were seven lamps burning before the throne, and these were the seven spirits of God. We have looked at that description already back in chapter two. These together represent the Holy Spirit with all of His attributes as found in Isaiah 11:2-3. These are the seven-fold workings of the Spirit as manifested in the life of Jesus Christ.

⁶ Before the throne there was a sea of glass, like crystal. And in the midst of the throne, and around the throne, were four living creatures full of eyes in front and in back. ⁷ 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. ⁸ The four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying: (Revelation 4:6-8b, NKJV).

This is a pretty “far out” description to our human minds. We see creatures like a lion, a calf, a man, and a flying eagle. Some think four faces of Jesus are presented in the gospels. In Matthew, He is the lion of Judah. In Mark, He is portrayed as a servant, the Ox. In Luke, He is seen as a man, and in John the divinity of Jesus is accentuated. Hence, the eagle. Walvoord discusses the possibility that four animals bring out attributes of God: the lion indicating majesty and omnipotence; the ox, typical of faithful labor and patience; man, indicating intelligence; and the eagle, the greatest bird, representing supreme sovereignty.¹ The bottom line is that no explanation is given so it is all conjecture. I don’t know what they mean and that’s okay. In any event, they were covered with eyes making them all-seeing. That much we do know. And day and night, they proclaim:

***“Holy, holy, holy,
Lord God Almighty,
Who was and is and is to come!” (Revelation 4:8c, NKJV).***

In reading this, my mind was taken to the whole idea of worship. This will be the theme that carries us over into next Sunday’s study. I’ve been thinking on this for quite a few days now. We’re going to be talking about this scene of worship and we’re going to discuss how we, too, can enter into worship in spirit and in truth. What does that really

¹ Walvoord, J. F. (1985). [Revelation](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 944). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

mean? The statement here, of course, echoes Isaiah's vision of the seraphim in Isaiah chapter six.

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple. ² Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. ³ And one cried to another and said:

*"Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts;
The whole earth is full of His glory!" (Isaiah 6:1-3, NKJV).*

Anytime a triplet of words is used in Hebrew, it is an extreme intensifier. "HOLY, HOLY, HOLY is rendered KODESH, KODESH, KODESH." This means that **GOD IS MOST HOLY**. It is also significant that none can look on His glory. The Seraphim themselves cover their eyes with one set of wings.

This declaration of holiness is followed by the statement **"who was and is and is to come."** That which was, and is, and is to come is an interesting description of the timeless attribute of God. God is not confined to time. He is outside of the time dimension. We cannot understand this because we are inside of the time dimension. He is the I AM THAT I AM. He is not the I WAS. The eternity of God is defined in this one sentence "who was and is and is to come."

We are totally bound by the concept of time. God is not. What seems to us like an eternity (or a lifetime) is just a vapor. God is outside of time seeing the entire panorama of human history before Him. All of this thinking of holiness has led me to meditate on heaven. All of this is so fantastic that we really don't have the vocabulary to even discuss it. When we get to heaven, we are in for things that we cannot imagine. Paul tells the Corinthian church, ⁹ *But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him." (1 Corinthians 2:9, NKJV).* Guys, it is all going to be more magnificent than any of us can imagine.

⁹ Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever, ¹⁰ 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:

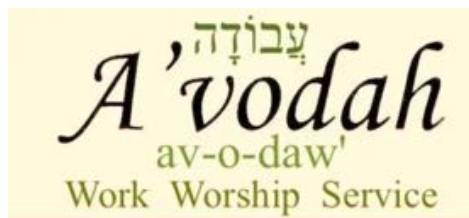
***¹¹ "You are worthy, O Lord,
To receive glory and honor and power;***

***For You created all things,
And by Your will they exist and were created.” (Revelation 4:9-11, NKJV).***

As I read this, I received a little bit of the idea of worship of the Lord. Many of us don't really worship much because we don't really understand what it means to worship. This morning we sang verse two of the hymn Holy, Holy, Holy.

Holy, holy, holy! All the saints adore Thee,
Casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea,
Cherubim and seraphim falling down before Thee,
Who wert and art, and evermore shalt be.

But how can we truly worship God? How do we shift the focus from ourselves onto another. I have heard it said that the cure for narcissism is Savior worship. Worship begins when we move our attention beyond ourselves onto the God Who made the universe. The English word comes from an old Anglo-Saxon conglomeration of two words focused on "worthy." Perhaps we might render "worship" as "Gazing or focusing on that which you find to be most worthy and holy." THAT IS JESUS!



Worship is one of the activities you do now that you'll do when you get into heaven. **Worship happens when we get our eyes off of ourselves and onto God. It involves the emotion and the mind.**

Worship occurs when we declare the truths of God.
Worship occurs when we think on His character.

Worship is not working yourself up into a frenzy like the ancient pagans did. Worship is simply getting your mind OFF of yourself and getting your mind ON HIM. I want to end by reminding you of God's word for worship. It is *avodah*. *Avodah* is Hebrew and it means worship, service, or labor. God is telling us in this word that real worship happens in all kinds of places in all kinds of circumstances. But it ALWAYS INVOLVES GETTING THE FOCUS AND ATTENTION OFF OF OURSELVES AND ON TO GOD. When we do what we do for His glory, that is worship. When we do physical or mental work for His glory, that is worship. This week let's try to get the focus off of ourselves and onto Him.

Let us pray.

Union Grove is one of the oldest Baptist communities of faith in the State of Texas dating back to 1844. Pastor Faber McMullen may be reached by email at uniongrove362@gmail.com or by snail mail at: 15301 FM 362, Navasota, Texas 77868. Tel: 936-825-1227 (Edited and proofed by Amanda Neese- Webster, Texas.) All financial gifts to this ministry are tax-deductible as a 501 (c) (3) Corporation.