

The Book of Revelation

By

Russell I. Humberd

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CHAPTER FOUR (Note: chapter three is combined with two)

THE THRONE SCENE

"AFTER THIS I looked and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me: which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter" (Revelation 4:1).

At the very beginning of this fourth chapter, we are aware of an entire change in the subject matter.

In chapters two and three, every word was **"what the Spirit saith unto the churches."** But the word **"church"** does not again appear in any of the remaining chapters of this book. From chapter four to nineteen we are dealing with the seventieth week of Daniel.

GOD had promised Israel a Messiah who would rule the world in righteousness. Because of disobedience, GOD took Israel into Babylonian captivity where they were to remain for seventy years, after which He would bring them again into their land. Toward the end of this seventy year period, Daniel read in the book of Jeremiah, that GOD would accomplish the desolation of Jerusalem in seventy years (Jeremiah 25:11). Naturally, Daniel looked for the Messiah to immediately appear and bring in **"everlasting righteousness."**

The Seventy Weeks

An angel was dispatched from Heaven to inform Daniel that a period of seventy weeks must run its course before that glad day would arrive. There were weeks of seven years as well as seven days in the Hebrew mind. Jacob must **"fulfil her week"** of seven years before he could take Rachel to be his wife (Genesis 29:27-28), and so in the book of Daniel; these seventy weeks are four hundred ninety years.

There would be sixty-nine weeks, or four hundred eighty-three years **"from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem, unto the Messiah the Prince"** (Daniel 9:25). This was fulfilled to the very day. Once and only once did our Lord offer Himself as Israel's king. On that day He rode into Jerusalem on a little ass, as Zechariah had prophesied so many years ago (Zech.9:9).

But this was no triumphal entry, for **"when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept**

over it saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day" (Luke 19:41-42). What did he mean by "**thy day**?"

Ah, just four hundred eighty-three years ago that day, Nehemiah had stood before the king and had received the commission to rebuild Jerusalem. It was the very day that Daniel said He would come - sixty-nine weeks "**unto the Messiah the Prince.**"

But our Lord was not deceived. He well knew that only a few short hours and that same crowd would be howling for His blood, and crying out "**Crucify Him, Crucify Him.**" Our Lord well knew that after the sixty-nine weeks had run their course, He, the Messiah would "**be cut off, but not for himself**" (Daniel 9:26). And true it was that Christ was crucified not for His own sins but for the sins of the whole world.

The Great Gap

The church age is passed over by the Old Testament prophecies as though it did not exist. When CHRIST entered the synagogue at Nazareth, He read from Isaiah sixty-one, closed the book and said, "**This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears**" (Luke 4:21). When we look in Isaiah we find He stopped at a comma.

"**To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord**" might apply to His first coming, but "**the day of vengeance of our God**" must find its fulfillment in His second coming. Thus the entire church age of over nineteen hundred years is passed over by a comma.

"**Behold I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me**" (Malachi 3:1). This was John the Baptist, at CHRIST's first coming, but beyond that semi-colon the words await His return.

And so with Daniel nine, between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks, there is a gap of over nineteen hundred years during which the church must run its course. After that time the antichrist will "**confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease**" (Daniel 9:27). This is the time of which CHRIST warns, "**When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place**" (Matthew 24:15).

It is this last week of Daniel that we are to study about in the remaining chapters of the book of Revelation, and truly a time will come when "**then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be**" (Matthew 24:21).

The Heavenly Scene

John heard a voice as of a trumpet; a door opened in Heaven and John was ushered in. The first thing that drew his attention was a throne and from the throne there issued a flaming crystalline purplish red light - the indescribable Deity.

John sees a "**sea of glass like unto crystal**" stretching far out before the throne, Although this scene is in the heavens, it rests upon something solid. Imagine if we can a great diamond

pavement, miles and miles in extent. Moses describes it as a "**paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness**" (Exodus 24:10).

The Rainbow

There also proceeded lightnings and thunders and voices. Judgment is soon to issue from that throne but circling it all is a rainbow. When GOD brings rain upon the earth, He paints a bow in the clouds in remembrance of His mercy, so when the dark clouds of judgment roll high, God hangs out a rainbow. It is judgment with mercy.

In the latter part of this book is another throne but no rainbow speaks of mercy there. It is the Great White Throne. Not white with the whiteness of ivory, but white with the white heat of GOD's wrath. There is judgment without mercy for those who have spurned mercy.

The Cherubim and Elders

John also saw four living creatures. These cherubim have always had much to do with the redemption of the human race. They kept the way to the tree of life; they were present on the ark of the covenant and here they thunder out the command that brings the judgments of the seals upon the earth.

Surrounding this great throne, John sees twenty-four smaller thrones and on them twenty-four elders. An elder is a leader and a representative in GOD's order. The elders seem to represent redeemed humanity. They ascribe glory to the Lamb who redeemed them to GOD by His blood (ch. 5:9). The twelve tribes and the twelve apostles are represented in the New Jerusalem, so here these twenty-four elders may represent the redeemed of all ages. In the old priesthood there were just twenty-four orders of priests (I Chronicles 24:19).

Angelic Interest

There are also here present another great company so vast and innumerable, and yet so real and so interested in the events at hand. There are "**ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands**" of bright winged angels (ch. 5:11). For ages these angels have been watching the movement of GOD among mankind. They have seen men turn from darkness to light and have rejoiced; they have seen GOD seal them with the "**Holy Spirit of promise,**" "**unto the day of redemption**" (Ephesians 1:13; 4:30).

They saw God send Cain to torment and take Abel, although a sinful man, to paradise. Someone has said the government of GOD was a scandal before the cross. How could He be righteous and pass over the sins of some men and not pass over the sins of others? Even the angels were mystified at things the prophets wrote (I Peter 1:12). But when God set forth JESUS CHRIST "**to be a propitiation through faith in his blood**" the mystery was cleared, and GOD thus "**[declared] his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past**" (Romans 3:25, 26).

Throughout the church age, GOD has been using the church as an object lesson of His "**manifold wisdom**" to the "**principalities and powers in heavenly places**" (Ephesians 3:10).

The angels are "**ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation**" (Hebrews 1:14).

Thus indeed might the angels gather around this throne, for great indeed has been their interest in the redemption of mankind. And now the great day has arrived; the day of redemption, and from far out in the depths of space these mighty sons of light will wing their way to the coronation of these "**kings and priests**" who are to reign upon the earth (Revelation 5:10).

Creation's Interest

But the interest widens as another company so vast and innumerable, cries out in glory and power and blessing to "**him that sitteth upon the throne.**" It is "**every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea**" (ch. 5:13).

And what mysteries here. We might well realize the interest of the cherubim, the angels, redeemed mankind and all the intelligent beings of the universe. But here are the cats and dogs, the lambs and the birds, all rejoicing that the great day has arrived.

All was peace in the Garden of Eden. But when men sinned, GOD said, "**cursed is the ground for thy sake**" and today the "**whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.**" The cat eats the bird; the wolf eats the lamb; the cow lows in a minor key, while the very wind groans about our house with a mournful tune.

But some day creation "**shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God**" (Romans 8:21).

In that glad time "**the wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid... they shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain**" (Isaiah 11:6, 9). And here in Revelation the day of redemption has arrived and even the lower creation has sensed the glorious truth.

If dead stones could cry out when our Lord entered Jerusalem (Luke 19:40), most certainly the living creatures of earth could ascribe glory, and honour, and power to our Lord when their deliverance from the bondage of corruption is assured.

~ end of chapter 4 ~

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