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W. O. Vaught

Ouachita Baptist University

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A DOOR OPENED IN HEAVEN

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION
NUMBER 9
REVELATION 4:1-7

Dr. W. O. Vaught, Jr.
Immanuel Baptist Church
Little Rock, Arkansas

REVELATION 4:1-7 "After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which 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. And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was 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 sight like unto an emerald. And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold. And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God. And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind. And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle." The Book of Revelation is the unveiling of Jesus Christ. This is a sermon Jesus preached one Sunday morning in 96 A.D. on the Isle of Patmos to one man, John. This sermon was written down and sent to the seven churches. Revelation is a dispensational book. These seven churches picture all the churches of the Church Age, and show us trends that will develop in the churches. Here in Chapters 4 and 5 we have a picture of the church in Heaven. Chapters 6 through 19 outline the events of the Tribulation. Chapter 20 depicts the Millennium and Chapter 21 gives a picture of the Eternal Kingdom.

Please remember that the church does not go through the Tribulation. The church is taken out of the world before the Tribulation comes. It is very important to distinguish between the church and Israel. We will see a Greek word here that lets us know definitely that the church was already out of the earth when the Tribulation came "Tereo ek" is the word and it means "to be kept from something". So the church will be kept out of the Tribulation.

In Revelation 3:22 we see emphasis on the churches, but after we move from this history of the church we move into a section of Revelation where the church is not mentioned. The church is gone, and does not figure in the Tribulation at all. Rev. 13:9 says, "If any man have an ear, let him hear" but the church is not mentioned.

These two Chapters 4 and 5 outline the activities of the church in heaven. This is a picture of heaven following the rapture, the departure of the church. It is a picture of grace before judgment.

REVELATION 4:1 "After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which 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." This is the door opened in heaven. "After this" means after the Church Age is over. In 70 A.D. the Jews went under the 5th cycle of discipline and were scattered all over the earth. At that time the church took over and spread the gospel throughout the earth until the time of the Lord was finished with the church, and he then removed the church from the earth. The words "I looked and behold" suggests that John was in almost a state of shock from this vision. A door was opened in heaven and John was permitted to take a peek into heaven and see what heaven was like after the rapture of the church. Let us see what had happened up there. So the church, which is the bride of Christ, is being prepared in heaven for her work.

1. The bride receives a resurrection body.
2. The bride loses all her human good.
3. The bride loses her old sin nature.

Never again will a member of the bride perform any human good. John gets a peek into heaven and gets a little look into the bride's dressing room, for that is what heaven will be at that time. (I suppose that woke two or three people up, when I mentioned looking into the bride's dressing room.) "The door was opened" is in the perfect tense and that means the door stayed open until all the information John needed was given. Remember, there are four doors in Revelation--

1. Rev. 3:8 - The door of service.
2. Rev. 3:20 - The door of salvation.
3. Rev. 4:1 - The door of Heaven.
4. Rev. 19:20 - The door of the Second Advent.

"Hearing a voice like a trumpet" means that he heard a voice clear and strong and musical. This is the voice of Jesus Christ. Back in Acts 12 we have the story of Paul being stoned in Lystra and he entered heaven and received some special heavenly instruction and then was resuscitated. So here is John being taken up to heaven, transported up there so he could look into the future. John looked through the door and saw seven things. The first thing he saw was God in heaven. The one John saw was Jesus Christ. The Father and The Spirit are invisible, but present.

In verses 2 and 3 we see a picture of God.

REVELATION 4:2-3 "And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was 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 sight like unto an emerald." In order to be able to appreciate and understand God and see God, one must be spirit filled. The Holy Spirit helped John at this point. The one that sat on the throne was Jesus Christ. We have a number of passages that tell us when God is seen, the one seen is Jesus Christ. John 1:18, John 6:46, 1 Timothy 6:16 and 1 John 4:12. Each of these scriptures lets us know that the revealed God is Jesus Christ. God The Father is also sitting on that throne.

The words "To look upon" are not a verb but a noun and this means that his eyes almost popped out of his head. Jasper is a translucent stone, another kind of diamond. "A sardine stone" came from the hills behind Sardis and was a famous blue diamond. These are only found in that part of the world. These are the first and last stones in the breastplate of the High Priest.

The rainbow being around the throne had great significance.

The Significance Of The Rainbow

1. The significance of the rainbow is given in Genesis 9:12-16.
2. No one ever saw a rainbow before the flood because of anti-deluvian weather conditions. A Ph.D. candidate in M.I.T. wrote a thesis on weather conditions before the flood. No rain ever fell before the flood. Don't make light of a rainbow for it means "God keeps his word". God has never welshed on a promise and he never will. There was no rain for almost 2,000 years on the earth. Water came from within the earth.
3. The first rainbow was the sign of a promise from God. This was a promise before the written word existed. It means that God would never again destroy the earth by a flood and the race would be perpetuated without being destroyed by water.
4. The color of the rainbow is caused by the refraction of light hitting the drops of rain and the mist. The bow always forms when the rain lessens and the mist forms.

5. Since the rainbow is caused by refraction of light from the sun's rays, it became a token of the principle of God's promise. A ray of light hits the mist and there is color. It is white light broken down into the various colors. Red, yellow, and blue are the primary colors. When other colors are absorbed, one comes through. It is all reflected and the color is white. It is all absorbed and it is black.
You don't see all the color in light at the same time. So every time you see a rainbow it speaks of the perfect character of God. In the rainbow God is saying, "This is my perfect character. You can count on me". So John saw something that was fantastic. God keeps his word. So don't look at a rainbow and say, "Isn't it beautiful" but rather say, "Isn't God wonderful". The beauty of the rainbow is nothing to compare with the character of God which is behind the promises.
6. In this particular case the colors are a little different from other rainbows. Green in nature speaks of life, eternal life. Are the promises of God good for just a hundred years until the liberal theologian breaks them up? No. The Word of God abides forever. We get through the door because we become like God. His life, which is in his Son, Jesus Christ, becomes our life. 1 JOHN 5:11-12 "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life."
7. Just as a rainbow is the joint production of a storm and sunshine, so the eternal life of the believer is a production of storm and sunshine. The sins of the world poured out on Christ is the storm. Salvation provided for all men is the sunshine.
8. The rainbow is therefore a token of the grace of God.

So the first thing John saw in heaven was Jesus Christ in all his glory. Green is a combination of blue and yellow. Green, a secondary color, is a combination of two other colors. Yellow reminds us what Christ was in eternity past, his deity in eternity past. But God cannot die. Deity cannot die. But Christ was physical also, a perfect man without an old sin nature, minus the imputation of Adam's sin, minus any acts of sin. So this color green stands for Christ, and all that he is in his perfect character.

REVELATION 4:4 "And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold." John also saw the 24 elders. The word is "presbuteros". There were four and twenty thrones and four and twenty elders. "Presbuteros" always means leadership, the one in charge, the one with high rank. It shows rank among the angels and among humans also. He is the overseer of the church. It is often translated "Elder". These twenty-four elders are sitting there dressed in white raiment, even translucent. They had crowns on their heads. These are "stephanoes" or "diadems". These are 24 saved angels, 24 special angels. White raiment is said to be imputed righteousness in Revelation 7. "Stephanos" was a victor's crown. "Diadem" is for the ruler. So these twenty-four are victors and wore victor's crowns. This is to remind us that there is reward in heaven.

REVELATION 4:5 "And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God." Now we have two signs of judgment. These are signs from nature. Lightning and thunder and voices. Nature gives the warning of the coming storm by thunder and lightning. This is the warning of the coming storm of the Tribulation. Voices refers to the sound of the wind. The storm is the coming judgment of God, coming from heaven to earth, and that is the Tribulation. The seven lamps and seven spirits remind us of the perfect essence qualities of God. Zechariah 3:9, Zechariah 4:10, Rev. 4:5 and 1 Peter 3:12 all refer to the essence of God. So judgment comes from the perfect character of God.
The next thing that is seen is the church at rest.

REVELATION 4:6 "And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind." This is the church at rest. The sea of glass like unto crystal. This is the church in heaven. The sea on earth is very unstable and changes often. But heaven here is a sea with perfect stability.

Now in verses 6b through 11 we see the four living creatures. The word translated beast here is "Zoa" and it is used for creatures in the angelic kingdom. It is the highest of the living creatures. The eyes before and behind indicate intelligence. It is a combination of Cherubim and Seraphim. In Ezekiel 1 and Ezekiel 10 we have a clear picture of the Cherubim. These are the highest of all the angelic beings. These are the most beautiful beings ever created by God. Remember, originally Satan was a Cherub. He was the anointed cherub but was thrown out of the throne room of God. These four living creatures also belong to the Seraphim. They should be called the four living creatures. They are there to take Satan's place. Cherub is the glamorous type angel and Seraphim are the reflectors. So these creatures reveal the glory of Jesus Christ.

REVELATION 4:7 "And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle." The first Zoa, or living creature, was like a lion. This refers to the lion of the tribe of Judah. Picture of Jesus Christ as a King as revealed in the Gospel of Matthew.

The second living creature was like an ox, a serving type of an animal, a burden bearer. Mark pictures Jesus as the servant.
 The third living creature was like a man. The Gospel of Luke presents Jesus as the Son of man.
 The fourth living creature was like an eagle. The Gospel of John presents Jesus as the Son of God and reflects the glory of God.