

(Through the Bible) Revelation 4-6

by Chuck Smith

The sermon explores the themes of the church rapture, the throne of God, and the redemption of the earth through the blood of Jesus Christ.

Duration: 45:25

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Romans 3:23, Revelation 1:19, Revelation 3:21, Revelation 4:2, Revelation 4:5, Revelation 5:3

Topics: "Through The Bible"

Description

In this sermon on Revelation chapter 4, the speaker begins by explaining the significance of the phrase 'after these things' which marks the start of the third section of the book. The scene described is one of awe, with God sitting on the throne and being worshiped by cherubim and twenty-four elders. A scroll is introduced, and a strong angel asks who is worthy to open it, but no man is found worthy. This realization brings John to tears, as the scroll represents the title deed to the earth and the possibility of redemption. However, an elder reassures John that the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, is worthy to open the scroll and loose its seals.

Transcript

Shall we turn now to Revelation chapter 4. Revelation chapter 4 begins with the Greek words *metatauta*, and it, the first verse begins and ends with the same Greek words. The words literally from the Greek are, after these things. So as we come to this phrase, after these things, our minds should flash back to chapter 1 verse 19, where the book of Revelation was divided into three basic divisions.

Write the things which you have seen, the things which are, and the things which will be after these things, *metatauta*. So obviously we are coming into the third section of the book of Revelation, after these things. After what things? Well, it seems to me it would be quite apparent and obvious, it would be after the things that he was just talking about.

And the things he was just talking about were the things of the church. So after the things of the church, for we had in chapters 2 and 3, the messages of Jesus to the seven churches of Asia, which as we pointed out represent seven periods of church history. So after these things, the things of the church, I looked and behold, a door was open 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 show you things which must be after these things. I believe that when the church has completed its

purpose upon the earth and has finished its witness, or as Paul describes, when the fullness of the Gentiles is come in, that the Lord is then going to catch away his church into heaven. Paul said, behold, I show you a mystery.

We're not going to all sleep, but we're all going to be changed in a moment, in a twinkling of an eye. The trump of God shall sound. The dead in Christ shall be raised incorruptible.

1 Thessalonians 4, 16 and 17, Paul said, for the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with the voice of the archangel, the trump of God. Dead in Christ shall rise first. We who are alive and remain shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

So I believe that the church is to be raptured. And I believe the point of the rapture in the book of Revelation is here in chapter 4, verse 1. I believe that John was taken by the Spirit unto the day of the Lord and experienced through the Spirit the rapture of the church. When the Lord had completed his messages to the church, or to the churches, then the call to John was come up hither, and I will show you things which must be after these things, after the things of the church.

So as we enter then into the fourth chapter, we enter into the post-church era upon the earth. We will be coming back to the earth in chapter 6, but it is the post-church era when God now judges the world for its ungodliness and unrighteousness and for its rejection of his Son. But the church, with John here in chapter 4, caught up into heaven.

And immediately I was in the Spirit. And behold, there was a throne set in heaven, and one sat upon the throne. And he that sat upon was to look upon like a jasper and sardine stone.

And there was a rainbow round about the throne in sight, like unto an emerald. And so the basic color that emanates from the throne is a green, along with the sardine red, along with the jasper, which is a clear crystalline type of a stone, a purple hue. Now, Paul told us in Timothy that God dwells in a light that is unapproachable by man.

And here in heaven, even in our glorified bodies, we only see the radiance of the glory of God as it emanates from his throne, like a brilliant light, the predominant color being green, the rainbow about the throne like an emerald, green in color, with the sardine red color and the jasper stone in brilliance, in coloring, in light. And around about the throne, there were twenty-four lesser thrones, thronas in Greek translated seats. And upon these thrones, I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white raiment, and they had on their heads crowns of gold.

The twenty-four elders clothed in white raiment are representative of the Church, according to most Bible scholars. These twenty-four elders are representative. The fact that they're in white robes, the Church is to be clothed in white robes, the righteousness through faith in Jesus Christ.

Jesus said to the Church of Thyatira, to him that overcometh, not to Thyatira, the one where he promised them to sit upon his throne, even as he sat upon his father's throne. One of the churches has that promise. Laodicea, an unlikely church to give the promise to.

Yes, thank you. Verse 21, chapter 3, to him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame and sat down with my father in his throne. The twenty-four lesser thrones, now we see the heavenly scene, sitting upon the white, sitting in white robes upon their thrones.

And out of the throne, that is the throne of God, there proceeded lightning, thundering, voices. And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven spirits of God. Now again, it is important that we place in our mind the tabernacle that Moses built in the wilderness.

Because we are told in the book of Hebrews that the tabernacle was actually a model of heavenly things. If you want to know basically what heaven is going to look like, you can go back to the tabernacle and you can get an idea of what the throne of God is like in heaven. And there in the tabernacle, we remember when the priest came into the holy place, on the left-hand side there was the seven candlesticks coming out of the one base.

And these seven golden candlesticks, we now know from the book of Revelation, are representative of the Holy Spirit and the presence of the Holy Spirit there before the throne of God. The seven-fold work, or the complete work of the Holy Spirit. We remember that in the Holy of Holies, there was that Ark of the Covenant that Moses made, covered with the golden, which was the mercy seat, upon which there was carved these golden cherubim with their wings touching the corners of the Holy of Holies, of the tabernacle.

And so, as we go on in the reading of the description here of heaven, we next come to these cherubim, these angelic beings created by God, who seem to be the highest order of angelic beings. Before the throne, there was a sea of glass likened to crystal. In the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, there were four living creatures, full of eyes, in front and behind.

And the first 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. Now, there are those Bible scholars who see in this the four phases of Christ, as represented in the Gospels. The first, Matthew, presents Jesus as the lion of the tribe of Judah.

The lion, of course, is known as the king of the beast. The second, like a calf, as Mark presents Jesus as the suffering servant. And the ox is considered the top of the domesticated animals.

The third, like a man, as Luke presents Jesus as the son of man. And man, the crowning order of God's creation. And the fourth, like an eagle, as John presents Jesus as the son of the living God.

And the eagle being the greatest of the flying fowls. These cherubim were first mentioned in the book of Genesis, when God drove Adam out of the garden after his sin. He put the cherubim at the gate of the garden to guard it, lest man should return to the garden and eat of the tree of life and live forever in a sinful state.

The cherubim are again mentioned in the book of Ezekiel, as in chapter 1. And in chapter 10, Ezekiel had a vision of the throne of God, which parallels the vision of John here in the book of Revelation. As Ezekiel saw the cherubim, each of them had the four faces. And so on each side, a face.

And the faces of the ox and the lion and the man and the eagle in the vision that Ezekiel had. And for background, you probably should read Ezekiel 1 and Ezekiel 10 to find parallel passages to John's vision here of the throne of God in heaven. And it is Ezekiel that names these creatures as the cherubim.

Now, from the book of Ezekiel also, we know in the 28th chapter that that was the position that was once occupied by Satan. That the Lord speaks of him declaring that he was one of the anointed cherubs. So he

had a place that was very close to God, for the cherubim are about the throne of God in their worship of God.

And Ezekiel tells us that at one time Satan was of these anointed cherubs. Again, in a parallel passage, Isaiah 6, Isaiah also saw the throne of God. And when he got the vision of the throne of God, he said, woe is me.

I am a man of unclean lips. I dwell amongst the people of unclean lips. And he saw a seraphim, which is probably in the order of the cherubim.

And a cherubim is only the plural of cherub. So you've heard of cherubs. And so the plural of cherub is cherubim.

As the plural of seraph is the seraphim. And the I am is a plural in the Hebrew. So he saw the seraphim who came from the altar of God with a live coal and touched his lips and said, now are you clean? But we find here in John's vision of them that each of them had six wings and they were full of eyes and they rested not day and night saying, holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was and is and is to come.

And so they are there, a throne of God, declaring the holiness of the eternal God. And when these living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who lives forever and ever, the eternal God, the twenty-four elders fall down before him that sat on the throne and they worship him that liveth forever and ever. And they cast their crowns before the throne saying, thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power, for thou has created all things and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

And so here we see the first scene in heaven, and this will probably be one of the first scenes that you'll observe in heaven as John did. The throne of God, the cherubim about the throne of God, the worship of God as he sits upon the throne. And then the response to the declaration of the holiness of God made by the cherubim are the twenty-four elders responding saying, thou art worthy to receive glory and honor and power.

Why? First of all, because you've created all things. Not that, you know, you've allowed all things to evolve. You created all things.

And not only that, it is for your pleasure they are and were created. Here's a statement of fact that is important for us to accept. I was created for God's pleasure.

That means I wasn't created for my own pleasure. Thus I should not seek to please myself, because then I'm not answering the purpose of my existence. I should seek to please God.

Then I am answering the purpose of my existence. But the interesting thing is, is when I live to please God, I find great pleasure myself. Therein is happiness.

Therein is satisfaction. Therein is fulfillment when I live to please God. If any man seeks to save his life, he's going to lose it.

But if you'll lose your life for my sake, Jesus said, you'll find it. And to really find what living is all about, you've got to just live for his pleasure. Thus you're answering the purpose of your existence and thus your life is fulfilling and rich.

And I saw in the right hand of him that sat upon the throne a scroll that had writing both within and on the backside, and it was sealed with seven seals. And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, who is worthy to open this scroll and to loose the seals thereof. And no man in heaven or in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon.

And so I began to sob convulsively, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon. What is this book that has such a strong reaction upon John, when no one is found worthy to open it? This book is nothing other than the title deed to the earth. Under Jewish law, whenever you sold property, in the deed there was always a redemptive clause.

You always had the right to buy the property back within a specified period of time. Providing you could fulfill the terms and the requirements that were written in the deed. So whenever there was the sale of property, there was always two deeds that were drawn up.

One deed was sealed and it was put away in a safe deposit. The other remained open and was kept by the person who sold the property. And in the time of redemption, you would bring both deeds, the one that was open and the one that was sealed.

And by the open deed, you would prove that you were the one that had the right to redeem it. And in the redeeming of it, you would break the seals of the closed deed. And you would fulfill the requirements therein, and thus the property would revert to you.

In the book of Jeremiah, chapter 32, we find Jeremiah is in the prison. He has predicted that Jerusalem is going to fall to the Babylonians. He has encouraged the people not to resist in order to spare their own lives, because resistance will be suicide, the Babylonians are going to conquer them, and so capitulate.

Well, he was arrested for treason, and he was thrown into the dungeon, because of his encouraging of the people to not to try to resist the Babylonian invasion, but to surrender because Babylon was going to conquer them. He also prophesied that after 70 years of Babylonian captivity, they were going to come back and they were going to occupy the land again. They were going to be carried off to Babylon, but after 70 years you'll come back and occupy the land.

Now, here you are, the Babylonian army is outside of the city. It has now put the siege around the city. They're about ready to conquer the city, and here's Jeremiah sitting in the prison, because he has encouraged the people not to resist because they are going to fall.

But he has also prophesied, we're going to have this land again. So, the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah and said, look, your uncle's property is coming up for redemption, go ahead and redeem it. Now, there was this clause in these contracts that if you personally could not redeem your property again, then one of your relatives could step in and redeem it for you, so that the property remained in the family.

And so, the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah, you know, Hannah Neal's field is coming up for redemption, go ahead and redeem it. His uncle was unable to do it himself. So, in order to show his faith to the people in the promise of God that they were going to come back and have this land again, Jeremiah went ahead and redeemed the field.

The next day, as he was there in the dungeon, his cousin came in and said, hey, my dad wants you to redeem the field. The right of redemption is yours, he can't do it. He wants you to redeem it.

Jeremiah said, then I knew it was the word of the Lord that came to me saying, redeem the field of Hannah Neal. And so, he said, I took the instruments and I sealed the one, and he gave them to his scribe, and he said, now bury these in a jar, so that when we finally come back into the land, you know, keep the two documents, the one that is sealed and the other, and bury them both together in the jar, and when we come back into the land, we'll claim this field which is ours. So, you can read that in the 32nd chapter, the two deeds that were written up, the one that was sealed and the other that was open.

So, here we find, in the scroll of the right hand of him who is sitting upon the throne, a scroll that is sealed with seven seals. It's a title deed, it's the title deed to the earth. Originally, the earth belonged to God by creation.

The earth is the Lord and the fullness thereof, and all they that dwell therein. When God created man, God gave to man the earth. He said to Adam, have dominion over the fish of the sea, the fowl of the air, over every moving and living, creeping thing, for I have given it unto thee.

It is yours. So, God gave the earth to man. But Adam turned the earth over to Satan.

When he disobeyed God and obeyed the suggestion of Satan, he forfeited the earth over to Satan, and it became Satan's. We sing, this is my Father's world. Yes, in a technical sense, but in a very practical sense at the present time, it's Satan's world.

Paul said he is the God of this world. He has blinded the eyes of the people. Jesus, twice or three times, called him the prince of this world.

You remember, when Jesus came, what was the purpose of his coming? It was to redeem the world back to God. And what was the first thing Satan did? Took him out into the wilderness and tempted him. The first was, of course, turn the stone into bread, but the second, he took him up into a high mountain and he showed him all of the kingdoms of the world.

And he said, look, I will give all of these to you, and the glory of them, if you will bow down and worship me, for they are mine and I can give them to whomever I will. Ooh, what a boast Satan is making. Hey, the whole world is mine.

I have the capacity to give it to whomever I will. And Jesus did not dispute that claim. Knowledge, it's right.

The world is in Satan's control. The world is in rebellion against God. Satan indeed is the God of this world, and when you receive Jesus Christ, you become an alien to the world.

Jesus said, if you were of the world, then the world would love you, because the world loves its own. But you are not of the world. This world is under Satan's power and control.

That is why it is so obviously wrong to blame God for all of the problems that exist in the world today. And yet, man wants to blame God for all of the suffering that is going on in the world. If God is God of love, why are people starving in Ethiopia? Why over in Cambodia are they going through such horrors? If God is God of love, why are children suffering here and there and in other places? And why this and why that? If God is God of love, because the world belongs to Satan in rebellion against God, and man has joined in Satan's rebellion.

And I am certain that if we could have a vote and we place on the ballot who do we want to rule over the world, God or Satan, Satan would win by a landslide. Now, you may challenge that statement, but just put Satan in the guise of the flesh in which he comes, living after the flesh or living after righteousness. And people, you don't have to go to the ballot, people express their vote by the lifestyles that they live.

And I dare say that those that are living after the flesh far outnumber those that are living after the Spirit. So, the person casts his vote by his lifestyle and obviously Satan has won by a landslide. Living a righteous life, living after the Spirit is not the popular life.

It isn't the life that is applauded by the world or even admired by the world. And so, Jesus came to redeem the world back to God, pay the price of redemption. And what was the price of redemption? His blood shed upon the cross.

And whenever you read of redemption in the New Testament, it's always related to the blood of Jesus Christ. That was the price that he paid to redeem the world. When Adam died, he died for his own sin because God declared, the soul that sinneth, it shall surely die.

He said to Adam, in the day that you eat thereof, you're going to die. When he died, he died for his own sin and so with every other man since Adam, with the exception of one. There was only one man who died for the sins of others, not for his own.

Jesus was without sin. Peter said, we are redeemed not with corruptible things like silver and gold from our empty manner of living, but with the precious blood of Jesus Christ who was slain as a lamb without spot or blemish. So in the innocent one dying, his death then was the price paid for the redemption of the world.

Jesus said the kingdom of heaven is likened to a man going through a field and discovering a treasure. And who for the joy thereof immediately goes out and sells everything that he has in order that he might buy that field so he can obtain the treasure. And in the parables, the field represents the world.

Jesus said now the field is the world. Who gave then everything to purchase the world? Jesus Christ. And for what purpose did he purchase the world? That he might take the treasure out of it.

And what is the treasure? His church. The body of Christ. You who have come to trust in him.

And he redeemed the whole world that he might take you out of it. So, as we come now to the heavenly scene, we're coming to now that time of redemption. There was always the appointed time when the property was to be redeemed.

And of course, there was another specification within the law. If you or your family members were unable to redeem the property at the time of redemption, then you lost the rights of the property forever. It remains now perpetually in the new family ownership that is taking control.

You've lost your rights forever. You had the one chance to redeem it and that was it. In most cases, the redemption period that was set was that of seven years.

Which corresponded also to the time of redemption for a man who was sold into slavery. You could not remain there for more than seven years. Interesting to me that just about six millennia ago, man was sold into slavery to sin.

And the world was sold over to Satan and he took control and has had control for almost 6,000 years. For Adam forfeited the earth just about 4,000 years B.C. And we are coming out to the 2,000 years A.D. I personally believe that this year of redemption is coming up very soon. And what we are reading about here in the book of Revelation will take place within 25 earth years.

I believe that God has established that 6,000 years, the six in one pattern, and that it will be fulfilled in the big overall view when Satan will have had his reign for the 6,000 years and the earth is now coming up for redemption. And here is the heavenly scene. And we observe it here with John.

An awesome scene. There on the throne, God sits with all of his glory as the cherubim worship him. And as the 24 elders respond to the worship, declaring the worthiness of God to receive it.

And now the scroll in his right hand. And the angel proclaiming with this strong, loud voice, Who is worthy to open this scroll and to loose the seals? And then the notation, No man was found worthy. What does that mean? No man has the capacity to redeem the world.

Now every four years, we have men stand up and tell you that they can save the world. And if you'll just vote for them, they've got a program and a plan of redemption. And man has been trying to redeem mankind.

But no man is found worthy. No man can redeem himself, much less the world. And so no man was found worthy.

And this, of course, then brings on John's weeping. Why? Because if nobody redeems it, it stays Satan's domain forever. That thought is more than John can bear.

It wipes him out. He begins to sob convulsively with a horrible contemplation that the world will forever be under Satan's control and power. And the misery will reign on and on through that.

I wept much. Literally, I sobbed convulsively because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon. One of the elders said unto me, Weep not.

Behold, the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, hath prevailed to open the book and to loose the seven seals. Don't wait, John. It's not all loss.

The lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, has prevailed. And I beheld, and lo, in the middle of the throne, and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders there stood a lamb as it had been slain, or literally slaughtered, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God, sent forth into all the earth. And he came and took the book or the scroll out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne.

Interesting to me that the elder declares to John, Behold, the lion of the tribe of Judah, when John sees him, he sees him as a lamb that hath been slaughtered. Which would indicate that John perhaps sees him still bearing the marks of the cross and his suffering for us. It could be that your first view of Jesus in heaven will be a very shocking experience.

For in our minds, we have envisioned in looking upon the face of Jesus of seeing someone who is just perfect in beauty, glory, standing in awe of that beauty. I do. But in the prophecy of Isaiah, chapter 52 and 53, he said as many as looked upon him were astonished.

They were shocked. For his face was so marred you could not recognize him as a human being. And we hid, as it were, our faces from him.

In other words, it was so shocking we couldn't bear to look. But then he went on to say, But he was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities.

These wounds that he bears are the wounds that he suffered for you when he paid the price of your redemption, when he took the judgment for your sins, when he died in your place. And it could very well be that our first view in heaven prior to this redemptive completion of the redemptive act, that our first view of Jesus will be a very shocking experience as we see him with the marks of the sufferings that he bore for us in order to redeem us. I turned and I saw him as a lamb that had been slaughtered there in the midst of the throne among the living creatures, the cherubim, and in the midst of the twenty-four elders.

There stood the lamb. And when he had taken the book, the four cherubim living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the lamb, having every one of them their harps and golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of the saints. When, in the Old Testament, the priest went into the holy place of the tabernacle each day, he bore a little golden bowl that was attached to these chains, golden chains, and he would have incense in this little golden bowl, and when he would come past the altar where the sacrifices had been offered, he would take a coal from the altar, a burning coal, and he would place it in this little bowl of incense.

And, of course, the smoke then of the incense would begin to rise, and he would go into the holy place where they had the altar of incense, and he would wave this little golden bowl of incense before the altar, and the smoke of it, the sweet savor of smoke would ascend up before the veil behind which dwelt the presence of God. And it was the offering of the incense unto God which was representing the prayers of the people. And there are scriptures that refer to our prayers ascending as sweet incense before God.

So, at this point, these 24 elders act as do the priests when they take these little golden bowls full of odors, which are the prayers of the saints, and they offer them at this point before God. Now, our redemption is not yet complete. The price is complete.

It's been paid. Jesus died once and for all. But, Paul the apostle in Romans 8 said, and we and all creation do groan and travail waiting for our redemption to wit the redemption of this body.

So, in the meantime, my body is not yet redeemed. I'm longing for that day. I'm waiting for that time.

In the meantime, God has given to me the Holy Spirit as a down payment, as an earnest of my inheritance until the redemption of His purchased possession. So, God has shown that He's earnest in His intentions of redeeming you and to show you that He gave to you the Holy Spirit. He has sealed you with that Spirit of promise until the day of redemption.

And Paul talks about that in the first chapter of the book of Ephesians. One of the glorious blessings that we have in Christ in heavenly places is that after we believe, we were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession. The Lord has purchased you.

He's paid the price. He hasn't yet picked you up. He's paid the down payment.

But He's coming to get you one of these days. Say, hey, they're mine. I paid the down payment.

This is it. Now, we are told in Hebrews that God has put all things in subjection unto Him, but we don't yet see all things in subjection. That isn't yet the reality.

We still see a world that is in rebellion against Him. It's not submitted to Him. The world is in rebellion against Him.

So we do not yet see all things in subjection unto Him, but we do see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor, and He is waiting until the Father brings all things in subjection. He's resting in His finished work, and now the Father is going to bring all things in subjection unto Him, and He is going to establish Him then as the King of kings and the Lord of lords. But the redemption is not yet complete, for He hasn't yet laid claim to that which He purchased.

It's like you going in to buy something from the department store, and you realize you don't have enough money for it right now. Oh, you want that, and you desire that, and so you say, I'd like to put a down payment on that, and I'd like you to hold it for me. Put it on hold, and so they'll write up the contract, they'll put it on hold, and you have a specified period of time to come in and pick it up.

In the meantime, it belongs to you technically. No one else can come in and buy it. Someone else could come in and say, Oh, I like that, I want that.

Well, we're sorry, we sold the last one. Well, did they pick it up yet? No, no, but, you know, it's there and it's sold. They put the down payment on it, you know, and so that's the earnest.

You showed that you're earnest. You're intending to buy it. That's what it's all about.

You just haven't picked it up yet. And so we have the Holy Spirit, the earnest of our redemption, until, the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession. So, as they offer these little bowls, orders, before the throne of God, the prayers of the saints, how many times have you prayed, Thy kingdom...

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