There is great excitement in the heavens and on my mountains for what I the Lord am about to do. Many of my people have been without hope and joy and know no expectancy but have walked in darkness. The key to the light in this time of preparation and birth pangs is faith. You must believe that I am going to do what I tell you, that I am the author and finisher of the promises and even the faith words in your own spirit. Wait upon me and see what lies ahead!

Anonymous

REVELATION CHAPTER FOUR

THE THRONE OF GOD

Handout 10

Prayer Study #409

First Love Ministries of Perry, Georgia USA

In Chapters 2 & 3 Jesus, our Lord, was in the midst of the golden candlesticks, which represent the seven churches and their witness to the world. Here the scene dramatically changes. Instead of the emphasis on the earth, the emphasis now changes to the heavenly realm. The door in heaven is standing open so that the Apostle John can see what is going on there. Instead of earth from a heavenly perspective, we have heaven from an earthly perspective. Don't fall in a trap of thinking these are visions. John was actually transported in time to heaven, which is a real, material place, and not just a state of mind.

1 *After this I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven! And the first voice, which I had heard, addressing me like [the calling of] war trumpet, said, Come up here, and I will show you what must take place in the future.*

This first verse begins and ends with the same Greek phrase *meta tauta,* which means *after these things.* John is thus talking about future events.

The sounds John hears are not that *still, small voice* but loud sounds. The voice is like a trumpet, which reminds us of 1st Thessalonians 4:16: *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.*

This is a very auditory and visual experience. *I will show thee* is in Revelation 4:1 &21:10. *I looked* appears 70 times in Revelation. *I saw* appears 35 times and *I beheld* appears 7 times. *I heard* appears 23 times.

William Barclay's analysis of Chapter four is excellent. He points out that these first few chapters of Revelation contain three specific doors:

a) **The door of opportunity**-Christ Jesus tells the church at Philadelphia in Revelation 3:8: ***"…See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it…"*** This door was the door of opportunity whereby the

Philadelphians all the way down to the present followers of Christ can take the message of the Cross to the whole world. What a wonderful opportunity in our day to share Jesus with a lost and dying world!

b) **The door of the human heart-**Jesus speaks a very personal, deeply felt message to the hearts of the Laodiceans in Revelation 3:20: ***"Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come into him an dine with him and he with Me."*** As Barclay puts it, "At the door of every heart there comes the knock of the nail-pierced hand, and we may open or refuse to open." I fervently believe that this is a season here at First Love, when the Lord is knocking at our hearts wanting to have more intimacy with Him. Are we too busy to open the door? Are we putting other things and people in the way?

c) **Then there is the door of revelation in Chapter 4 verse one-***After this I saw, and, behold, a door in heaven was standing open…*The purpose of the open door was to reveal future events to the Apostle John so that he could write the vision and share with the Body of Believers.

This last door was a *door to heaven*. There are several scriptures that deal with the open door or window or portal or gate of heaven. For example, Jacob's ladder went all the way up to heaven where Jacob saw angels descending and ascending and even the Lord stood above the ladder (Genesis 28:10-22). In Genesis 28:17, Jacob says, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!" Jacob thus had a revelation of the glory of heaven through this open portal.

Ezekiel also had a vision in which there was an opening in heaven. It was through this opening that he saw a vision of God: Ezekiel 1:1 - "The heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God." Throughout history people have seen visions through an open door of the heavens. (But again, John was not seeing a vision. He was actually caught up into heaven.)

As I sure you will remember, when Jesus was baptized by John in the Jordan, the heavens opened, and the Spirit descended: Mark 1:9-11: *It came to pass in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And immediately, coming up from the water, He saw the heavens parting and the Spirit descending upon Him like a dove. Then a voice came from heaven, "You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."*

Another example of this open door is the introductory meeting of Jesus and Nathaniel. At that time Jesus promised Nathaniel that he would see the heavens open and angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man (John 1:51: ***"…Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you will see heaven open and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man,"*** thus revealing to Nathaniel the glory of Christ.

We will see one more open door in heaven when we get to Chapter 19, verse 11. This will be the door from whence Jesus comes at His Second Coming.

Again, John makes it clear in this verse that he both saw and heard and thus was an accurate witness of this vision. The voice, which sounded like a trumpet, was no doubt the voice of Jesus. Paul in 1st Thessalonians 4:16-17 wrote of this voice: *For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first; Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so, shall we ever be with the Lord."* Hal Lindsey calls this *"the great snatch."*

The Throne of God

2 *At once I came under the [Holy] Spirit's power, and behold, a throne stood in heaven, with One seated on the throne!*

3 *And He Who sat there appeared like [the crystalline brightness of] jasper and [the fiery] sardius, and encircling the throne there was a halo that looked like [a rainbow of] emerald.*

The Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians that we would be caught up "*in a moment, in a twinkling of the eye"* (1st Corinthians 15:51-52) at the Second Coming of Christ. Verse 2 is another illustration of how quickly things will happen in the heavenly realm where time, as we know it, will be no more. *At once* could be translated *straightway* or *immediately.* I believe that we are going to see people in this ministry immediately come under the Holy Spirit's power, have revelations almost unspeakable, similar to John and the Apostle Paul, and operate in power causing great destruction to the kingdom of darkness. Those who have had such experiences have changed lives. His very presence changes everything.

God is on the throne, and His Son is seated on God the Father's throne by the Father's right side. He is not wringing His hands or nervous that the Body of Christ will be overcome by the power of darkness. He is the Lord God Almighty. As we said last week, one day Jesus will sit on His own throne, the throne of David, but for now He is by His Father's side.

The New Testament speaks of "thrones" 58 times. Forty-three of those times are in Revelation and 14 of those times are in Chapter 4. This is known as the Throne Room Chapter. In addition to His Father's throne (Psalm 110:1 and Revelation 3:21) and the Throne of David (Isaiah 9:7 and Luke 1:32), Jesus will also sit on the "Throne of His Mercy" (Hebrews 4:16). Some believe this final throne will be the Mercy Seat of the Ark of the Covenant.

In addition to Jesus, others will sit on thrones. The 12 apostles will sit on 12 thrones and judge both the 12 tribes and angels (Matthew 19:28 & 1st Corinthians 6:3). The 24 Elders will sit on thrones (Revelation 4:4). There is another prominent throne in Revelation, the Great White Throne of Judgment. Here God will judge non-believers (Revelation 20:12).

Notice that John does not describe God in a human way, although we know that we were made in the image of God, not in the image of monkeys and apes, regardless of what the evolutionists tell us! The way John describes God is through beautiful colors and brilliant precious stones, the jasper stone (which is a many-colored stone with purple predominating and which is thought by some to be the diamond), the sardius stone (which is a fiery red), and the emerald (which is green). J. Vernon McGee tells us that the jasper stone was the last stone identified in the breastplate of the high priest (Exodus 28:20) and the first in the foundation and wall of New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:18-19). This stone represented the tribe of Benjamin, whom Jacob said was *the son of my right hand.* This stone represents Christ who is seated at the Father's right hand and also represents the Glory of God.

The sardius stone was the sixth stone in the foundation of New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:20) and the first in the breastplate of the high priest and represented Reuben who was the first born of Jacob. Christ is the first born from the dead.

The rainbow is normally several colors but here is referred to as green. Green is the color of the earth.
This might be a reference to the glories of the saints of God on earth.

At any rate each tribe had a specific stone in the breastplate that the High Priest wore. Since the sardius stone is the 1st stone and the jasper the last stone, this is an allusion to the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, or to Jesus.

William Barclay gives his opinion of these stones: "It may be that the jasper stone stands for the unbearable brightness of the purity of God; that the blood-red sardian stands for His avenging wrath; and that the gentle green of the emerald stand for His mercy, by which alone we can meet His purity and His justice."

The Twenty-Four Elders

4 *Twenty-four other thrones surrounded the throne and seated on these thrones were twenty-four elders the members of the heavenly Sanhedrin), arrayed in white clothing, with crowns of gold upon their heads.*

This is another of those controversial verses which scholars love to disagree on and debate. Just who are the twenty-four elders? We don't know, but they frequently appear in Revelation, and we thus know this about them: They sit around the throne and wear white garments and golden crowns (Revelation 4:4, 14:3). They cast their crowns before the throne (Revelation 4:10). They continually worship and praise the Lord in heaven

(Revelation 5:11; 5:14; 7:11, 11:16, 14:3, 19:4). They bring to God the prayers of the saints (Revelation 5:8) They sing the song of the redeemed (Revelation 5:9-10). They are called Elders and Kings and Priests (Revelation 5:10). One of them encourages John when he is sad (Revelation 5:5); and one of them acts as an interpreter of one of the visions (Revelation 7:13).

There are five major explanations of who these elders might be:

a. It may be that the idea of God's council surrounding Him, (i.e. the sons of God who, in Job, came to meet with God,) is being meant here.

b. Probably influenced by the Babylonian religion which had 24-star gods, the Jews came up with 24 angels who surround the throne of God. This theory is disputed from the Word in Revelation 7:11: *ALL the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures and fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God…*

c. Some believe the twenty-four elders represent the tribulation saints. This seems to be refuted by Revelation 7:13-14: *Then one the of elders answered, saying to me, "Who are these arrayed in white robes and where did they come from?" And I said to him, "Sir, you know." So, he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."*

d. The only other place in the Bible where you find 24 elders is when King David organized the Levitical priesthood. There were 24,000 priests (1st Chronicles 24:1-19). They were divided into twenty-four groups with a leader or elder for each group. Each group served one week at a time on a rotation basis.

e. The twenty-four elders might be a combination of the 12 patriarchs (Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Joseph, and Benjamin) and the twelve apostles (Simon Peter, Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew or Nathanael, Matthew or Levi, Thomas Didymus, James the son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot, Judas son of James or Thaddeus or Jude, and Matthias, who replaced Judas Iscariot). In the New Jerusalem, the names of the twelve patriarchs are on the twelve gates and the names of the twelve apostles are on the foundational stones of the wall.

f. Barclay believes the most likely explanation is that the twenty-four elders are the symbolic representatives of the faithful people of God. Their white robes are the robes promised to the faithful (Revelation 3:4), and their crowns are those promised to those who are faithful even to death (Revelation 2:10). He believes that there are twenty-four because the Church is composed of Jews and Gentiles. There were originally twelve Jewish tribes. With the edition of the Gentiles, the number has doubled thus representing the Church in its entirety.

Around the Throne

5 *Out from the throne came flashes of lightning and rumblings and peals of thunder, and in front of the throne seven blazing torches burned, which are the seven Spirits of God [**[c]**the sevenfold Holy Spirit];*
6 *And in front of the throne there was also what looked like a transparent glassy sea, as if of crystal. And around the throne, in the center at each side of the throne, were four living creatures (beings) who were full of eyes in front and behind [with intelligence as to what is before and at the rear of them].*

To the Jews lightning and thunder were often symbolic of the presence of God (Ezekiel 1:13, Psalm 77:18, Job 37:4). We have already seen the seven Spirits of God in Revelation 1:4 and 3:1. Theologians differ on just exactly what these seven spirits are. For the purpose of this study, I prefer to see them as the attributes or roles of the Holy Spirit as Comforter, Counselor, Helper, Intercessor, Advocate, Strengthener, and Standby.

There is no need for water in the glassy or crystal sea, which we will walk on, because water symbolize cleansing from sin, and there will be no sin there. According to Barclay, this crystal sea symbolizes three things: *preciousness*, because glass in the ancient world was dull and glass as clear as crystal was as precious as gold (Job 28:17); *dazzling purity,* because blinding light reflected from the glassy sea would be too much for the eyes to look upon, like the purity of God; and finally, *immense distance*. The throne of God was in the far distance, as if the other side of a great sea. Swete writes of "the vast distance which, even in the case of one who stood in the door of heaven, intervened between himself and the throne of God."

The Four Living Creatures

7 *The first living creature (being) was like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature had the face of a man, and the fourth living creature [was] like a flying eagle.*
8 *And the four living creatures, individually having six wings, were full of eyes all over and within [underneath their wings]; and day and night they never stop saying, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty (Omnipotent), Who was and Who is and Who is to come.*

These four creatures are a great mystery but are found frequently in the heavenly scene and are often thought to be cherubim. We know from the descriptions in Revelation and other parts of the Bible, especially in Ezekiel 1, that these creatures are always found near the throne and the Lamb (4:6, 5:6, 14:4). They have six wings, and they are full of eyes (4:6, 4:8). They are constantly engaged in praising and worshiping God (4:8, 5:9, 5:14, 7:11, 19:4), and one hands over bowls full of wrath of God (15:7).

The first is like a lion, the second like an ox, the third has the face of a man, and the fourth is like an eagle. Swete points out that the lion is the king of beast, the ox is supreme among cattle, man is superior among all creatures, and the eagle is greatest of birds.

In AD 170 the early church father Irenaeus taught that the four living creatures represent the four aspects of the work of Jesus Christ, which in turn represented the four Gospels. The lion symbolized the power of the Son of God. The ox represented the priestly side of his work for the ox was the animal of sacrifice. The man represents His incarnation, i.e. the Word became flesh, and the eagle represents the gift of the Holy Spirit, hovering with His wings over the Church.

Chuck Missler expands this idea, as follows:

MATTHEW

1. Jesus is presented as the Messiah.
2. His genealogy begins with a legal genealogy, beginning with Abraham, the first Jew.
3. Matthew emphasizes what Jesus SAID.
4. Matthew was written with the Jews in mind.
5. The first miracle in Matthew was the cleansing of a leper, which a Jewish audience would recognize as a symbol of cleansing from sin.
6. Matthew ends with the RESURRECTION.
7. The LION represents the book of Matthew.
8. The tribe of Judah (Issachar, Zebulon) also took the ensign of the Lion as they camped on the east side of the camp.

MARK

1. Jesus is presented as the Suffering Servant.
2. No genealogy was given because no one is interested in a servant's background.
3. Mark emphasized what Jesus DID.
4. Mark was written with the Romans in mind.
5. The first miracle in Mark was the expelling of demons.
6. Mark ends with the Ascension.
7. The OX represents the book of Mark.
8. The tribe of Ephraim (Benjamin, Manasseh) took the ensign of the Ox as the camped on the west side of the camp.

LUKE

1. Jesus is presented as the Son of Man.
2. Luke gives Jesus' bloodline genealogy starting with Adam.

3. Luke emphasized what Jesus FELT.
4. Luke was written with a Greek audience in mind.
5. The first miracle in Luke was the expelling of demons.
6. Luke ends with the Promise of the Spirit and continues this theme in his sequel, The Book of Acts.
7. The MAN represents the book of Luke.
8. The Man also represents the tribe of Reuben (Simeon, Gad) which camped on the south side of the camp.

JOHN

1. Jesus is presented as the Son of God.
2. John does not give a genealogy of Jesus because He is the eternal pre-existent one (John 1:1-3).
3. John emphasizes WHO Jesus WAS.
4. John was written to the Church.
5. The first miracle in John was the changing of the water into wine.
6. John ends with the Promise of Jesus' Return and continues this in his sequel, The Book of Revelation.
7. The eagle represents the book of John.
8. The eagle also represents the tribe of Dan (Asher, Naphtali), which camped on the north side of the camp.

The places where the tribes were commanded to camp is fascinating, proving once again that the Word always points to Jesus, even in the Old Testament. In the center of the camp was the Tabernacle where resided the presence of the Lord. on the upper or western side were the 108, 100 members of the Tribe of Ephraim. On the bottom or Eastern side were the 186,400 members of the Tribe of Judah. On the South side were the 151, 450 members of the tribe of Reuben, and on the North side were the 157,600 members of the tribe of Dan.

They camped this way throughout their wanderings in the wilderness. Thus, if we had been able to fly over the camp, what we would have seen is a giant cross with the presence of God in the very center.

God, the Lord and Creator

9 *And whenever the living creatures offer glory and honor and thanksgiving to Him Who sits on the throne, Who lives forever and ever (through the eternities of the eternities),*
10 *The twenty-four elders (the members of the heavenly Sanhedrin) fall prostrate before Him Who is sitting on the throne, and they worship Him Who lives forever and ever; and they throw down their crowns before the throne, crying out,*

11 *Worthy are You, our Lord and God, to receive the glory and the honor and dominion, for You created all things; by Your will they were [brought into being] and were created.*

This is a beautiful picture of the praise and worship of heaven. The creatures, representing all of creation, enter into worship of our God with the elders who, no matter who specifically you think they are, represent the Church.

The elders do something that all first century people would understand. They threw their crowns at the Lord's feet. When one king surrender to another, he cast his crown at the victor's feet. This was a sign of complete submission. These elders are showing that they are completely surrendered and in total submission to the Lord.

There are at least five crowns in scripture. The first is the CROWN OF LIFE, given for those who suffer for His sake (James 1:12, Revelation 2:10); the CROWN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, given for those who love His appearing (2nd Timothy 4:8); the CROWN OF GLORY, given to those who feed the flock (1st Peter 5:4); the CROWN INCORRUPTIBLE, given for those who press on steadfastly (1st Corinthians 9:25); and the CROWN OF REJOICING, given to those who win souls (1st Thessalonians 2:19).

This beautiful praise and worship chorus which the elders cried out was especially meaningful to those in John's day. The Greek phrase for Lord and God was the same phrase that was the official title of Domitian, the Roman emperor, who wanted to be worshiped as a god. It was because the Christians refuse to call Domitian *Lord and God* that they were persecuted and killed.

Also, here the elders acknowledge that only God can create something out of nothing and thus everything in the world, including you and me, belongs to God.