

THINGS WHICH MUST BE HEREAFTER

TEXT: REVELATION 4

Introduction:

1. Last week we finished Revelation 3, and tonight we will move on to chapter 4. Chapters 4 and 5 take place in heaven so we may want to stay there for awhile.
2. I have mentioned that the key verse to the book of Revelation is Revelation 1:19:
 - the things which thou hast seen (Chap. 1)
 - and the things which are (Chap. 2, 3)
 - and the things which shall be hereafter (Chap. 4--22)
3. Therefore we will be in the third section (the future section) for quite some time. Maybe till the rapture, and we hear the shout, "Come up hither" (4:1).
4. Revelation 1:19b and 4:1 are similar:
 - "the things which shall be hereafter" (1:19b)
 - "I will shew thee things which must be hereafter" (4:1).
5. Revelation 1:19 says, "the things which shall be hereafter," and Revelation 4:1 says, "things which must be hereafter."
6. These Scriptures do not say, "things which *might* be hereafter," but "things which shall be hereafter," and "things which must be hereafter."
7. Charles Dickens published his famous novel (or "novella"), *A Christmas Carol* on December 17, 1843, just in time for Christmas.
8. The story is about a stingy old miser named Ebenezer Scrooge, and his wonderful and remarkable transformation after the supernatural visits of his deceased partner Jacob Marley, and then the ghosts of Christmas Past, Present, and Yet to Come.
9. Scrooge realizes he cannot alter the past or the present. But when he is confronted with a horrible future, he says to the spirit of Christmas Yet To Come, "Before I draw nearer to that stone to which you point, answer me one question. Are these the shadows of the things that Will be, or are they shadows of things that May be, only?"
10. It is a good question, and it is a fascinating story, but it is fiction. Ebenezer Scrooge was able to change his future, but nothing in the book of Revelation (or in the book of Daniel or any other prophecy in the Bible) can be altered or changed.
11. Speaking of the book of Daniel, the Roman Josephus the historian wrote (in his *Antiquities of the Jews*) that when Alexander the Great

- entered Jerusalem in 332 BC, he spared it because he was impressed when the priest met him outside Jerusalem and showed him to be the one prophesied in Dan. 8:5, 21 (the “notable horn”).
12. Alexander may have been impressed with the fulfilled prophecies, but it did not stop him from drinking himself to death at the age of 32.
 13. The voice from heaven said to John, "Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter" (4:1).
 14. Revelation 1:19 says, "Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter."
 15. "Beginning in chapter 4, things to come are unfolded which have to do with the consummation of the age" (John Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*).
 16. Immediately after the rapture, the tribulation period will begin. Revelation chapters 4 through 19 describe the events which will unfold after the rapture.
 17. Not events which *may* follow, but events which *must* follow the rapture.
 18. Nearly one hundred years ago, C.A. Blanchard wrote these words, "What will follow the church age? Evidently in some form or other the time of the tribulation. Why must the time of tribulation follow the church age? Because when the church has been withdrawn, while Satan, godless governments and Christless religions remain in the world there *must be* tribulation, and such a time of tribulation as the world has never known in the mixed state which has been from the beginning until now" (*Light on the Last Days*, cited by John Walvoord, *Revelation*).
 19. The word "throne" is found 39 times in the book of Revelation (cf. 1:4; 3:21; etc.), and it is found 17 times in chapters 4 and 5 where the emphasis is on God seated on His throne in heaven (4:2 twice, 3, 4, 5 twice, 6 thrice, 9, 10 twice; 5:1, 6, 7, 11, 13).

I. GOD IS ON THE THRONE (4:1-3).

1. God the Father is on the throne (4:1-3). This is a throne "was set in heaven" (4:2), a reminder of the sovereignty of God who is far removed from the petty struggles of earthly government.
2. This is the true picture of the universe as being subject to the dominion of our sovereign and omnipotent God.
3. John said he "was in the spirit" (4:2; cf. 1:10). Though actually on the Isle of Patmos, John experienced being in the presence of God and seeing these wonderful visions.

4. First and foremost, John saw the throne of God, and he describes the presence of God as “like a jasper and a sardine stone.” The sight of a rainbow around the throne like an emerald further enriches this beautiful, colorful picture (cf. 10:1).
5. The emerald is the green variety of the beryl, and is the most famous and valuable green gemstone.
6. This is the first reference to a rainbow in the New Testament (cf. 10:1). The first reference in Scripture to a rainbow is way back in Genesis 9, when after the flood God said, "I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth. And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud: And I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh. And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth. And God said unto Noah, This is the token of the covenant, which I have established between me and all flesh that is upon the earth" (Gen. 9:13-17).
7. It is a shame that the perverted homosexuals have taken the rainbow, a beautiful token of God's glory and grace and majesty, as one of their symbols.
8. Whereas, the throne represents the judgment of God and the sovereignty of God, the rainbow represents the grace of God and the glory of God. And the jasper and sardine and emerald stones (4:3) also have significance.
9. The sardine (or the sardius) stone and the jasper stone were the first and last stones in the breastplate of the high priest (Exodus 28:17-21). The emerald was also part of the breastplate.
10. In Ezekiel 28:13, the sardius stone, the jasper stone, and the emerald are mentioned along with other precious stones, such as the topaz, the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, the sapphire, the carbuncle, and gold, as being in the garden of Eden.
11. Revelation 21:11 describes the new Jerusalem as, "Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal."
12. A precious stone which is "clear as crystal" suggests that the jasper stone may be similar to a diamond, but Ezekiel 28:13 makes a distinction between the two.

13. The sardine stone, or the sardius, is ruby-colored, a beautiful red, signifying our Lord's blood. All throughout the book of Revelation, the Lord Jesus Christ is referred to as the Lamb who has redeemed us by His blood (cf. 5:6-14).
14. It is clear from Revelation 5 that God the Father is seated upon the throne (cf. 5:6, 7).

II. THE FOUR AND TWENTY ELDERS ARE SEATED AROUND THE THRONE (4:4).

1. There has been speculation over the identity of the twenty four elders. Some say they are angels, but that is not possible. In Revelation 5:9, 10 these four and twenty elders worship God and sing, "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth."
2. Some say they are representative of both Old Testament believers and New Testament believers -- twelve each.
3. That is unlikely because the Old Testament saints will not be resurrected until the end of the tribulation period (cf. Daniel 12:1-3; John 11:24).
4. The elders are wearing crowns, indicating this scene follows the judgment seat of Christ but before the opening of the seals (cf. Rev. 6:1).
5. In the Old Testament, twenty four represents the entire priesthood. King David divided the priesthood into twenty four orders or courses.
6. Here twenty four represents the entire New Testament church (cf. 1:6; 5:10; 20:6).
7. First Peter 2:5 says we are a "holy priesthood," and I Peter 2:9 says we are "a royal priesthood."
8. The four and twenty elders are seated (on thrones - see margin) round about the throne of God (4:4). This is in accordance with the promises of our Lord in Matthew 19:28 and Revelation 3:21.

9. "And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matt. 19:28).
10. "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne" (Rev. 3:21).
11. These elders are "clothed in white raiment" (4:4). Revelation 3:4 and 5 says, "Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy. He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels" (cf. Rev. 19:7-9, 14).
12. The elders are wearing "crowns of gold" (4:4). Some of the crowns given at the judgment seat of Christ include an incorruptible crown, mentioned in I Corinthians 9:25; a crown of rejoicing, mentioned in I Thessalonians 2:19; a crown of righteousness, mentioned in II Timothy 4:8; the crown of life, mentioned in James 1:12 and Revelation 2:10; and a crown of glory that fadeth not away, mentioned in I Peter 5:4.
13. In Philippians 4:1, the apostle Paul says to the church at Philippi, "Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved."
14. This indicates seeing them at the judgment seat will be part of Paul's reward. This is similar to I Thessalonians 2:19, where Paul says, "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?"
15. Revelation 3:11 says, "Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy

crown." This reminds us that some believers will lose their reward (not their salvation).

16. First John 2:28 says, "And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming."

17. Some Christians will be ashamed at the judgment seat of Christ. Second John 8 says, "Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward."

III. THE HOLY SPIRIT IS BEFORE THE THRONE (4:5).

1. The triune God is pictured in Revelation 4 and 5. God the Father is seen seated upon His throne in heaven (4:2, 3).
2. God the Son, referred to as "the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David" (5:5), and "a Lamb as it had been slain" (5:6) is seen in chapter 5 coming and taking the book with the seven seals out of the right hand of God the Father, who is seated upon the throne (5:1-7).
3. God the Holy Spirit is referred to in Revelation 4:5 and 5:6 as "the seven Spirits of God" (cf. 1:4; 3:1).
4. This is a fantastical scene in heaven. "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" (4:5).
5. Fire is an emblem of the Holy Spirit. He is called "the spirit of burning" in Isaiah 4:4.
6. The Holy Spirit guided the Israelites by night in a pillar of fire to give them light (Exodus 13:21). Psalm 78:14 says, "In the daytime also he led them with a cloud, and all the night with a light of fire."
7. Acts 2:3 and 4 says that on the day of Pentecost, "There appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."
8. Seven is a number that figures very prominently in the book of Revelation (4:5). The number seven symbolizes perfection and completion.
9. There are seven letters to seven churches; seven Spirits of God; seven lamps of fire; seven golden candlesticks; seven stars; seven angels; seven horns and seven eyes; seven seals; seven trumpets; seven vials; seven thunders; seven thousand men slain in the earthquake in

- Revelation 11:13; seven crowns upon the dragon's head; seven heads on the beast that rises up out of the sea; seven last plagues; seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth; and seven kings.
10. Furthermore, the tribulation period will last for seven years.
 11. Therefore, "the seven Spirits of God" signifies the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

IV. THE FOUR LIVING CREATURES ARE ROUND ABOUT THE THRONE (4:6-11).

1. Our Authorized King James Bible says, "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" (4:6).
2. Their eyes symbolize the omniscience and omnipresence of God. Second Chronicles 16:9 says, "For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth."
3. Proverbs 15:3 says, "The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good."
4. In Zechariah 4, the prophet Zechariah was shown "a candlestick all of gold, with a bowl upon the top of it, and his seven lamps thereon, and seven pipes to the seven lamps, which are upon the top thereof" (4:2).
5. In Zechariah 4:10, an angel explained the vision to Zechariah. He said, "They are the eyes of the LORD, which run to and fro through the whole earth."
6. First Peter 3:12 says, "For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil."
7. I prefer to refer to these four beasts as "living creatures." The margin in the *Scofield Study Bible* says, "*living creatures*, See Ezekiel 1:5."
8. Under Ezekiel 1:5, the *Scofield Study Bible* says, "The 'living creatures' are identical with the Cherubim. The subject is somewhat obscure, but from the position of the Cherubim at the gate of Eden, upon the cover of the ark of the covenant, and in Rev. 4., it is clearly gathered that they have to do with vindication of the holiness of God as against the presumptuous pride of sinful man who, despite his sin, would 'put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life' (Genesis 3:22-24). Upon the ark of the covenant, of one substance with the mercy-seat, they saw the sprinkled blood which, in type, spake of the perfect maintenance of the divine righteousness by the sacrifice of Christ (Exodus 25:17-20)...The living creatures (or Cherubim) appear

- to be actual beings of the angelic order...The Cherubim or living creatures are not identical with the Seraphim (Isaiah 6:2-7). They appear to have to do with the holiness of God as outraged by sin; the Seraphim with uncleanness in the people of God. The passage in Ezekiel is highly figurative, but the effect was the revelation to the prophet of the Shekinah glory of the Lord. Such revelations are connected invariably with new blessing and service."
9. Because the antichrist is often referred to as "the beast" in the book of Revelation, most translations refer to the four "beasts" in Revelation 4 as four "living creatures."
 10. For example, the New King James Version says, "Around the throne, were four living creatures full of eyes in front and in back" (4:6).
 11. John Nelson Darby's translation says, "Around the throne, four living creatures, full of eyes, before and behind."
 12. Noah Webster's translation says, "And around the throne, were four living beings full of eyes before and behind."
 13. *Strong's Concordance* says the word "is fitly rendered *living creature* in contradistinction to the *beast* of Revelation 11:7, 13:1, etc."
 14. In fact, a different Greek word is used for "beast" in Revelation 11:7 and 13:1, etc.
 15. Also, there are two beasts in Revelation 13 -- the antichrist and the false prophet (cf. 13:11-18; 19:20; 20:10).
 16. "And the first beast was like a lion" (4:7). In Revelation 5:5, the Lord Jesus Christ is referred to as "the Lion of the tribe of Juda." The lion is the king of the jungle, and the Lord Jesus Christ is King of kings and Lord of lords (I Tim. 6:15; Rev. 17:14; 19:16).
 17. "And the second beast like a calf" (4:7). The calf represents the most important of all domestic animals, and represents service. Our Lord said in Matthew 20:28, "Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."
 18. "And the third beast had a face as a man" (4:7). Man is the greatest of all God's creatures. Job said, "What is man, that thou shouldest magnify him? and that thou shouldest set thine heart upon him?" (Job 7:17).
 19. Our Lord often referred to Himself as "the Son of man." He said to the high priest, "Nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven" (Matt. 26:64).

20. The high priest responded to this statement by tearing his clothes and saying, "He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy" (Matt. 26:65).
21. "And the fourth beast was like a flying eagle" (4:7). The eagle is the greatest among the birds, and symbolizes sovereignty and supremacy.
22. Proverbs 30:18 and 19 says, "There be three things which are too wonderful for me, yea, four which I know not: The way of an eagle in the air..."
23. This portion of Scripture is very important:
 - The "eyes" (4:6, 8) represent the omniscience and omnipresence of God.
 - The "six wings" (4:8) indicate the four living creatures are angels, not merely symbols of God's majesty.
 - The four living creatures "rest not day and night" (4:8), indicating ceaseless service and praise.
 - Their ministry is to ascribe holiness to the triune God -- "Holy, holy, holy, LORD God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come" (4:8).
 - God is eternal -- "And when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever" (4:9).
 - The four and twenty elders will "cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created" (4:10, 11).
 - God is worshiped as our Creator (4:11). Evolution is a wicked attack on God and on the Bible, which says, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Genesis 1:1).

CONCLUSION:

1. Dr. Mark Hitchcock is one of the best Bible prophecy teachers today. He pastors a Bible church in Oklahoma, and has written over twenty books on end time biblical prophecy.
2. Pastor Hitchcock has said that the number one question in Bible prophecy is, "Where is America in the end times?"

3. He says he has been asked that question so many times that he decided to write a book about it.
4. The book is entitled, *The Late Great United States: What Bible Prophecy Reveals about America's Last Days*.
5. The thesis of the book is that America is not mentioned in the Bible, either directly or indirectly and that this silence is significant.
6. Moral dry rot is undermining America
7. Iran is very close to getting a nuclear bomb.
8. America's national debt now stands at a staggering \$14 trillion dollars!
9. Major financial institutions and corporations, such as Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, AIG, and General Motors have been nationalized. Many have noted that America is on the fast lane to socialism.
10. Greece and the other European nations are in even worse shape.
11. This severe economic recession is being used by various world leaders as an opportunity to move the world to a global economy and one world currency.
12. The pope recently came out in favor of this.
13. Former British Prime Minister Gordon Brown said that the days of U.S. primacy are gone and that "global problems require global solutions."
14. More and more Americans are looking to the government for support. That is what is behind this OWS nonsense.
15. Thomas Jefferson warned many years ago: "A government big enough to give you everything you want is strong enough to take everything you have."
16. According to the Bible that's exactly where this all is ultimately headed under the Antichrist.