

AN OPEN DOOR IN THE HEAVENLY SANCTUARY

The church of Laodicea thus far has not responded to “The Knocking Bridegroom.” Her door remains shut. We are used to keeping our doors shut to strangers. We shut them to salesmen, the Jehovah’s Witnesses, Mormon missionaries, and any others we don’t want to be bothered with.

But Jesus is the God of the open door. Jesus is always seeking, finding, bidding to come hither. We read:

“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 show thee things which must be hereafter.” Revelation 4:1.

“The first voice” is a reference to the voice of Jesus. He welcomes us into His Father’s house via our representative, the prophet John. His voice is like trumpet tones, clear, powerful, harmonious without missing a note.

Jesus is going to show us things that are connected with what has just been revealed regarding the seven churches. He has given us church history from His perspective. There has been a sequence of seven periods throughout history characterized by each church. The things that He will now show us are connected with that same sequence of history, namely, the seven seals, only from a different perspective.

The door is opened into the first room of the heavenly sanctuary. This is the strategy room for all that transpires in the universe and on earth so far as God’s government is concerned. This is the nerve center which gathers intelligence and information from earth and relates it to the universe and the plan of salvation. This is where God’s cabinet meetings are held with His closest associates and inner circle. When the President holds a cabinet meeting only his appointees and secretaries of various departments are given security clearance to attend. Now Jesus gives John and us the privilege of observing His cabinet meeting with the Father and other heavenly intelligences.

“And immediately I was in the spirit; and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne.” Revelation 4:2.

There is no regularly scheduled air service from planet earth to God's capitol city. John was teleported from earth to the heavenly White House by the Holy Spirit so it was instantaneous. What he saw immediately upon entering into the holy place of the heavenly sanctuary was the throne of God. It was the focal point of attention. I have never been privileged to witness royalty either in public or in their private chambers. I did go to Buckingham Palace in London to witness the changing of the guard. That was indeed very impressive and quite ceremonial. But had I approached the entrance of the Palace, I'm quite sure that I would not have been welcomed. Most royalty is very secretive and do not wish anyone having any information about the quarters in which they operate on a daily basis. But God the Father and His Son are quite different. They want us to view their headquarters. They are very open about what transpires within their inner sanctum. They invite our prying eyes our intense scrutiny.

"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." Revelation 4:3.

The personal appearance of God is described as jasper and sardius stones. The jasper is clear white and the sardius is blood red. God is completely transparent without one flaw or imperfection. He is holy and just. His law stands forever.

Yet, as viewed from a different angle He is blood red. To me this indicates that He has given His life's blood, Himself, in the giving of His only begotten Son to die on the cross. The cross is the Father's heart.

Just as God's personal presence is manifested by the jasper and sardius, so His character is revealed by the rainbow encircled above His throne. Does it rain in heaven? On earth the rainbow is a diffusion of sunlight and the rain. The rain droplets enhance the spectrum of color existent in the white light by bending it. The three primary colors are red, blue, and yellow.

The origin of the rainbow was following the great Flood when Noah disembarked from the ark. The Lord promised that He would never again destroy the earth with a deluge. The rainbow was not only a reminder of God's protection, but a pledge of His everlasting covenant. "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." Genesis 6:19. God's

covenant is His promise. He has promised and given an oath on His very life that He has forgiven our sin. He has promised to remove the filth of our lives and fill them with His righteousness.

There is a rainbow in every cloud. We may not see it every time a cloud passes over because we are not in the right position for its observance, but we may rest assured that God sees it and remembers His promise. He is faithful. He has a constant rainbow over His heavenly throne to remind Him of His justice and mercy towards the children of men.

God's covenant is His promise. "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ." Gal. 3:16. Long before Abraham and Adam God and Christ covenanted together the plan of salvation should man fall into sin. This everlasting covenant was promised in the words God spoke to the serpent. Gen. 3:15.

God gave Abraham seven wonderful promises. Gen. 12:1-3. Abraham was promised a son through whom the Son of God would be born. Abraham believed God. Gen. 15:6.

Sarah became weary of waiting on God and suggested Abraham take Hagar. Ishmael became Abraham's hope for the promised seed, but God was not pleased with his lack of faith. This was the old covenant. Gal. 5.

When God finally gave Abraham and Sarah a son, Isaac, he required a sacrifice. This was a test of Abraham's faith in the promise of God.

Abraham's descendants went down to Egypt during the time of Jacob and Joseph. For 430 years they were oppressed as slaves. God brought them out of Egypt with a mighty hand to Mount Sinai in order to give them His covenant. Ex. 19:5, 6. They promised, All that the Lord hath spoken we will do. Ex. 19:8. That was the old covenant. There is no hope for forgiveness of sins and power to cleanse in the promise of the people.

"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." Revelation 4:4.

This is a spacious royal apartment accommodating many living beings, including twenty-four elders sitting upon their thrones. The fact that they are wearing "white raiment" which is the righteousness of saints and have "crowns of gold"—*stephenos* crowns of victory—indicates that they are redeemed from among men on this earth. The

twenty-four “elders” are some of the stars or leaders of God’s people from previous generations up until the time of John, including the Old Testament times.

These are some of the first-fruits resurrected at the time of Christ’s death. “And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.” Matthew 27:52, 53. He took them with Him when He ascended from the earth. “When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive.” Ephesians 4:8. This was to demonstrate to Satan and encourage us, that the fortress of the devil and the last enemy of man which is death, does not lay claim upon those who follow Jesus. We do not understand by this that all the saints are in heaven now. They are resting in their graves awaiting the first resurrection. The twenty-four elders were privileged to be part of a special resurrection at Christ’s death in order to witness the power of the cross for even in His eternal death power flowed forth from His endless life. There was an immediate benefit for Christ on His cross. “He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied.” Isaiah 53:12.

These human representatives are there in heaven now as our delegates who have been elevated by Jesus to cabinet status as witnesses to all that goes on within the inner sanctum of God’s White House. What John has written is all that we have for now as to the proceedings, but we shall soon be able to converse with these saints and receive from their perspective, a human viewpoint, a first-hand account from a heavenly-side view, of the great controversy from Christ’s ascension to His second coming.

They function as Jesus’ assistants. Jesus is our High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary. Here the first apartment ministry takes prominent place. “The four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of saints.” Revelation 5:8. The representatives of the church in heaven—the elders—are described as officiating in the temple above in behalf of the church still below, and as offering incense while the church is engaged in prayer. “The religious services, the prayers, the praise, the penitent confession of sin ascend from true believers as incense to the heavenly sanctuary, but passing through the corrupt channels of humanity, they are so defiled that unless purified by blood, they can never be of value with God. They ascend not in spotless purity, and unless the Intercessor,

who is at God's right hand, presents and purifies all by His righteousness, it is not acceptable to God. All incense from earthly tabernacles must be moist with the cleansing drops of the blood of Christ. He holds before the Father the censer of His own merits, in which there is no taint of earthly corruption. He gathers into this censer the prayers, the praise, and the confessions of His people, and with these He puts His own spotless righteousness. Then, perfumed with the merits of Christ's propitiation, the incense comes up before God wholly and entirely acceptable. Then gracious answers are returned." {1SM 344.2}

The twenty-four elders were just a sidelight to the main attraction—the throne of God. Again, John's attention is riveted upon the light and sound show proceeding from the throne.

"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." Revelation 4:5.

At Calvary and Sinai were lightnings and thunderings. God's Almighty presence was there. There is nothing that equals the light and sound of a storm cloud. In one lightning storm there is enough electricity to light the United States for twenty minutes. At any given moment there are 2000 storms on the earth.

Thunder is a sonic shock wave caused by the rapid heating and expansion of the air surrounding and within a bolt of lightning. The bolt changes the air into plasma and it instantly explodes, causing the sound known as a thunder clap.

And all of this combined with the voices of 100,000 people screaming for their favorite football team playing in the Rose Bowl gives some idea of what the Holy Spirit is like "before the throne." Now if that's the way the Holy Spirit acts in His own house when He rolls His bowling ball down the alley and it strikes the pins, then no wonder He has to tone it down when He comes to our house. We couldn't take it. We would be frightened out of our gourd. So the Holy Spirit comes to us respectfully and gentlemanly like the wafting breezes of the wind and speaks to us as the still small voice.

"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." Revelation 4:6.

We like the sea of Tahoe. When the sun is out the light refracted by the water brings out a deep, clear blue from its depths which go down over 1000 feet. But I have never seen it without a ripple. There is

always some slight breeze if not a strong wind whipping up the waves and whitecaps.

The sea that exists before God's throne is like glass. It is completely see-through. There is no disturbance whatsoever on the surface so that there is no distortion. You can see all the way down to the bottom of it. You can see the fish, the turtles, the whales and the crustaceans. This is amazing in view of the fact that the lightnings, thunderings, and voices are popping off all around it. These shockwaves do not cause a ripple on the sea of glass.

Now John's attention was drawn to four living beings that were adjacent to and round about God's throne. These sentient beings had eyes in the front of their heads and on the back. They didn't have to turn their heads like we do in order to gain a clear field of vision to see what was happening. They have perfect 20-20 vision.

Remember that when God created the animals and man in the beginning, He pronounced them good and very good. So nothing sinister or negative is to be projected upon these four living beings as portrayed here.

"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." Revelation 4:7.

The first like a lion had the qualities of strength and prowess. The king of beasts has majesty, courage and boldness. The second like a calf or ox has submissive, patient strength. The third "had a face as a man." Adam had brilliant powers of mind, love unadulterated and power to think and to do. The fourth "like a flying eagle" had the farsighted vision and swiftness to instantly accomplish its mission.

With the next sentence we know immediately who these four living beings are. They are angels; specifically cherubim.

"And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come." Revelation 4:8.

These angels are on duty 24-7. They never go to sleep. They are constantly in worship mode. This is not just a perfunctory worship with them. They are intensely engaged with their exclamations of "Holy, holy, holy." They are amazed at His eternity past, His presence, and His future to come. They do not forget God's history. They are engaged in His present workings. They expectedly anticipate and are amazed at what He comes up with for the future.

They never tire of His presence, His facial expressions, His words and actions. There is something new and creative all the time. It is with joy that they relay His communications to other angels and give directions for their execution. And when God wants to move they effortlessly make the arrangements for His transport. See Eze. 1.

When the four living beings worship God then the twenty-four elders take their cue and worship Him.

“And when those beasts give glory and honor and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever. The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.” Revelation 4:9-11.

The act of casting their crowns before the throne is out of respect and homage to the One who redeemed them from earth. The humility of these elders is something to behold.

The theme of their worship is creation. God created and re-created everything. For this He is worthy of glory, honor, and power. Glory signifies lifting up the voice in praise and thanksgiving. Honor denotes the intelligent and rational worship of His created beings. Power indicates that which lies within God’s created beings in terms of gifts and time and labor is to be returned to the Giver.

The purpose of this interlude between the sequence of the seven churches and the breaking of the seven seals is to encourage us by revealing the stability of God’s government amidst the great controversy both within the church and without in public affairs.