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THE TIME PRECEDING THE COMING OF THE LORD

by Paris Reidhead

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Summary: Paris Reidhead discusses the characteristics of the Laodicean church and emphasizes the importance of personal faith and relationship with Christ in a lukewarm environment.

Duration: 54:33 Topics: "Second Coming"

Scripture References: Psalm 119:18, Matthew 6:33, Hebrews 10:19-20, Revelation 1:1, Revelation 4:1-2, Revelation 4:9-10

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DESCRIPTION

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In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the unchanging nature of God's purpose and how it will ultimately prevail. He highlights the importance of being sensitive and open to God's leading, just as John was in the book of Revelation. The preacher encourages individual Christians to ask God to open their eyes to see His truth and the trends of the time. The sermon concludes with a reference to Revelation chapter 4, where John sees a door opened in heaven, symbolizing the ongoing relationship between God and His people.

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CONTENT

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Will you turn this evening to Book of Revelation, Chapter 4. We have just completed, in Sunday night's pass, the study of the seven churches.

At the outset of this study, we stated that these were seven churches that existed at the time. The problems were current problems, problems that had to be dealt with.

They represent probably most of the difficulties that will be encountered in any church, or in all churches, and probably the difficulties that have been encountered by churches across the

century.

So it was first, seven churches at the time. Secondly, characteristics of churches through the ages.

But also, there is something of a pattern that covers the period of all church history. And we would suggest that the Laodicean church, the last church, would be the church that characterizes the time preceding the coming of the Lord. Its general characteristic will be this.

I know that thou art neither cold nor hot, I would that thou wert cold or hot, so then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth. There's the tendency that's so apparent

today, even with such groups as were characterized by the great fire and

zeal of their earliest foundings. As, for instance, the Methodist church

that was characterized by great liberty and great freedom, great delight, great joy in the Lord.

The same was true of the Great Awakening, which included the Congregational Presbyterian churches here in this country. Down in the Southland, where the Brush Arbor meetings and the great revival meetings

in the country, in rural areas, characterized 100 years or more of the life of the people. And now all of that has passed, and a dignity has come, and a coldness has come.

Not that dignity and coldness are necessarily synonymous, but the tendency has been to reduce the fervor, reduce the warmth, reduce the heat, and to bring it to that state called lukewarm. Now, this is true in the individual's experience. You will find, if you've been long in the Christian way, that there's a tendency in your own experience to have a neutralizing effect because of the ones around you.

You are zealous and earnest. Well, you're a little different, perhaps, and soon someone is saying, well, I wouldn't do this or wouldn't do that, suggest this or suggest that. And the consequence, there's a constant pressure on all of us to adjust.

Now, we know that today in the 20th century, everything is geared around

adjustment. And adjustment means to fit into the group so that you are not conspicuous. We find it beginning with our children in grade school

that feel the pressure on them to take part in the earliest social life

of the ungodly community.

And Christian children have a problem there. Well, they're maladjusted if they don't take up ballroom dancing or ballet or some of the other things. And then as they get older, the teenagers speak their own language and wear their own uniform and have their own characteristic cut.

They submerge themselves in the group and find this security that comes from being accepted in their own group, at least. They are rather uncertain about the adult world that they're approaching and they're weary of the childish world they've left. And so they create their own pattern of living.

Well, adjustment characterizes all of our life. It's interesting to see that people that move from a city like New York where they haven't darkened the church door except Christmas Eve in 1954, well, they move out to one of the suburbs, to Suffern, for instance, and the first thing you know, they're members of a church. Well, why? Because being a member of a church is peripherally part of the life of the community.

And so they adjust by becoming a member of the church, not that they're any more interested in spiritual things, but since everybody in the suburbs belongs, they belong. This is what characterizes the church at Laodicea, an adjustment to each other instead of to the Lord. They are not cold in the sense that they've denied religion too much.

It's not an atheistic church. They're not hot in the sense that they're experiencing and enjoying all that's taught and all that's given to them, but they're lukewarm. And this perhaps characterizes our day and may characterize it as far as the church generally is concerned right up until the last.

It's interesting to note that the liberalism of 25 years ago, that blatant, hard-core liberalism that attacked the deity of Christ and attacked the inspiration of the Scripture and all the truths of our faith, that's pretty well passé now. You find very few people, very few preachers anymore that defend that. And even the ones that wrote most blatantly and severely 25, 30 years ago, now have, well, they call themselves neo-orthodox.

They've adjusted until it's neutral. And this neutral life characterizes

the Laodicean church. Well, now, the Lord is standing outside the door of this church.

It's the only church where the Lord himself says that he stands outside the door. I do not believe that in verse 20 and 21 of the third chapter that you have the second coming of Christ. Behold, I stand at the door and knock does not seem to me to be the Lord's coming.

I don't believe that when he comes, he's going to stand at the door and knock. He says, the heaven shall open and he shall descend with a shout, with a trumpet, with the voice of the archangel. Not much knocking there.

He's not asking anyone if he can come in. He simply puts himself in the center of history when he returns. But here is the Lord Jesus standing outside the door of this Laodicean church, and he is saying, I'm here.

I want you to meet me. I want you to know me. I want you to want me.

Notice now in this last verse, and this is relevant to the text of the evening. Behold, I stand at the door of the church and knock if any man open. Hear my voice and open the door.

I will come in to him and will sup with him and he with me. Entirely personal matter. And I believe that in the 20th century and in this period in which we now live, that the prospects of movement in the visible church, the larger area of ecumenical church life, I see very little prospects of anything heartening coming out of it because the pressure is always toward denominational integrity on the part of the individual denomination and then denominational cooperation, drawing closer together within itself and then on the upper level reaching out in an ecumenical relationship.

And I do not see anything in the word that indicates that the church, as we know it, that is the organized, visible church, generally seen and viewed as a social phenomenon, is going to experience a great revival at the end of the age. I don't see it in the Scripture. But I think that right here in verses 20 and 21, you have that which is going to characterize the last days, where the church is neither hot nor cold and doesn't particularly change in this as the time goes, but the individual

Christian hears the voice of the Lord knocking at the door and opens to the Lord and enters into an experiential relationship described by him as, I will come into him and will sup with him and he with me.

I believe that this is that which is going to be the characteristic dynamic aspect of Christianity as we approach the coming of the Lord. And it will be manifest in this way. You may be, I'm speaking to someone that's not regularly a part of this congregation, you may be from out of town, let's say from Harrisburg, and in the church that you attend in Harrisburg, there's very little spiritual fellowship.

But you personally have entered into a relationship with Jesus Christ, you've heard him stand outside the door and knock, you've opened to him and he's come in and supped with you and you with him, and you've entered into a glorious relationship with the living Christ. Now, you're still a member of that church where you were, it's perhaps unorthodox, let's assume it's an orthodox church, but it's neither cold nor hot. But you've entered into a relationship with the Lord which has made your heart hot for God, and you're consumed with a deep fire.

Well now, how is this going to be manifest? I believe it's going to be manifest in this, that God in his sovereign love is going to lead you in Harrisburg, or New York, or wherever you are, to that other person that's opened the door. And all apart from the organized expression of Christianity, you are going to find your fellowship with that individual that has the same relationship to the Lord you have. It's not going to affect your relationship, it's not going to change it particularly, but that the church of the Lord, that is that vehicle which he is going to use for the revelation of himself, does not seem to be that which is on the surface, so to speak, with the building and the spire, but it seems to be, just as you have it here, the individuals that have opened their heart to the Lord.

Now, it doesn't mean at all that there won't be churches that are hot for God, and that there won't be organized groups that are hot for God. But just as I could take you by description to certain churches, some in

the New York area, some in other parts of the country, where perhaps I know of one church that is Presbyterian. Now, the denomination doesn't share these things at all, but the pastor met God, he opened the door, God came in, he was brought on fire with God and with the love of God, and the people have joined him, and they're there, and it's unique.

And all over the nation, they talk about this particular church. I think of another case, I read about it in Chicago, just Friday evening, Robert Walker of Christian Life magazine said, Have you seen this? And he handed me the National Publication of the Episcopal Church, said, Read it. And I read about an Episcopal Church out in the West Coast where God had found the pastor's heart and the rector's heart.

He'd been born again, and then he'd entered into the experience of the fullness of Christ. And there'd been opposition raised in this large church that he had in a large city, and so he simply said, Well, fine, and he stepped out and went up to a little place. They were having 25 people on Sunday morning.

He's been there six months, and they've had to go to different larger buildings because he's been averaging 250 to 300 people that have had the same desire that he's had. A church in Illinois, Episcopal Church, the same thing has happened. So whether it's Alliance or Episcopal or Presbyterian or Methodist or Baptist, it doesn't seem to affect the denomination of the larger group.

It's the local situation. But there again, it's the individual and those individuals which have grouped around the particular testimony. That's what you seem to have here in these verses 20 and 21.

The Lord is looking for the individual. Now, if you wait until everybody does what God wants you to do, that is to open to the Lord, invite him into this relationship that he holds out as your privilege in this day, you'll wait a long time because everybody isn't going to do it anywhere, including here, undoubtedly. But that doesn't mean that you are deprived of anything because he'll meet you.

He'll meet you in terms of his purpose and your need. He'll meet you. God doesn't give you a hunger to mock you, and he doesn't taunt you by bringing you up to your need and his provision and say, now, look, this is what you need, this is what I have provided, but sorry, it's not

for
you.

No, no, this never happens. He says, you open the door and I will come in to him and I will sup with him and he with me. And this is going to characterize the period that now is and is to come as the Lord's relationship with us.

And I think it's going to continue right on until the day when he cleaves the sky. I do not see that it's going to, as I said before, it's going to take the form of a great revival in the organization that stands up, as it were, above the surface. But it'll be, if you can visualize it, something below the surface where the hungry of heart are drawn to each other.

And here and there, there will be an opportunity for a group to have such an expression. Well, now, after this, in chapter four, after this, said John, after he'd seen this one standing outside the door, 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.

Now, the thing I want you to see in this first verse is that God desires to reveal himself. You find this all through revelation. This is the revelation of Jesus Christ.

It is not revelations, as we've so frequently heard it. It's the revelation of Jesus Christ. God wants to reveal himself.

He wants to unveil himself, for that's what the word revelation means, apokalipson, the uncovering, the unveiling. Notice, I looked and behold, a door was opened in heaven. Now, first thing you need to know is this, that God didn't have to open that door.

There's no obligation on the part of God to show us anything about the present, the past, or the future. And then it says, and a voice was heard. God did not have to speak.

He owed nothing to John. John had no mortgage on the Lord. There was no reason for God to open the door, and there was no reason for God to speak.

No obligation was being met by his doing this. Then he gave an invitation, come up hither. Here is an invitation by God to enter into his presence to behold that which he wishes to reveal.

Now, God did not need to do this. And then he speaks as the voice of a trumpet and says, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter. This then is God's desire to reveal himself.

He wants us to know. Amos, it is, who makes a statement that is most interesting. He said that he does nothing, God does nothing, except he reveal it to his servants, the prophets.

And I think this is true. I think this is what we are to understand today. That God has a desire to speak, and he is speaking.

I respect the ministries, the gifts and the ministries of the Spirit of God as being absolutely necessary for the 20th century. You know how deeply I appreciate the ministry of Dr. Tozer, and quote him so often and speak of him so freely. I believe that God has given to the body of Christ, to the church in Dr. Tozer, a seer.

Now, a seer is someone who sees. That's what the word comes from. You pronounce it seer.

But really it is a seer, someone who sees. Who sees beyond where others can see. Someone who sees through the fog and the mist and the haze.

And tells you what's out there, and perhaps you look and all you see is haze. And he looks and he sees right through it. That unusual vision that enables him to pierce the impenetrable and see it.

Now, God has given to us seers. I think we are to recognize this. It's not that one claims by that infallibility by any means, and certainly Dr. Tozer doesn't.

But this is something that is given by the Lord to the body of Christ in the person of individuals who have the ability to see. I am sure that another that you are not familiar with to any degree, but I wish you could be, is Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones of England. I have his paper, the Westminster Echo or Chapel Echo, I believe it is, in which once a month one of his messages is given.

And he's written two or three books. Friends of mine from England are

frequently reporting on things that he's said. But I feel that here is a man that God has given to the body of Christ, especially to the church in England, to see.

And to say what he sees. Well, now, when I've named these two, I haven't by any means exhausted them, but simply to illustrate. Not everyone is going to see everything that everybody else does.

Now, not everyone is going to hear the Lord say, the door open and hear the voice of God saying, come up higher. John was there in the spirit on the Lord's day, and he saw the Lord, heard him speak about the churches, saw the open door, and heard the voice of God saying, I will show you things to come. Now, it's true that this happened with John.

But I believe that it's equally true that in every generation there are those that God gives to the body of Christ who relate the trends of the times to the days that lie ahead. And this has been the peculiar ministry of these men to whom I have referred. Now, God wanted to show some things, and so he had to find a man to do it.

He had to find someone that was in the spirit. Someone that was listening. Someone that was sensitive.

Someone that would report what he saw, no more, no less. Someone that was prepared not to be shocked by what he saw, not to be overwhelmed by it, but simply to share it. And he found it in John.

Now, I think you will do well, as an individual Christian, to ask God to open your eyes. Open my eyes that I may see wondrous things out of thy law. Open my eyes that I may see the trends of the time.

Open my eyes. Now, I say to you, when you do this, you ought to understand what you're doing. It's a terribly lonely thing.

It's a terribly lonely thing to see and have other people say, well, I don't see that at all. And you know you see it. But I think that for your service to the body of Christ, you ought to ask God to give you, to the degree that he can, spirit of discernment, that you can see and know and understand what's happening around you.

And this, I believe, is something that you have a reason and a right to ask the Lord to do. Oh, God, open the eyes of my understanding that I may know. I'm sure that John had peculiar gifts and abilities because of his long relationship with the Lord.

But I also believe that there is in this invitation, come up hither, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter. A general invitation to the Church of Christ in any time to ask God to open our eyes to the things that are taking place, that we are aware of them and can help others. Now, God not only desires to reveal himself through John and to us through John, and to us and through us to our generation, but God does reveal himself.

Verse 2, And immediately I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne. What was the first thing that John saw about the future? For that's what he was beholding, things which must be hereafter. He saw a throne, and he saw one that sat on the throne.

And what God was saying to John was this, that whatever else I have to show you about the future, remember the first thing you saw when the door was opened was that I sit on the throne. And the first thing God wants you to understand about the future is that he is the sovereign of the future. Now, from time to time I have related to you some of the things which are told by wise men and wicked men also, wise who are concerned about delaying it and avoiding it and wicked in their intention to pursue it, that we are told that by 1973 America will be communist.

Now, I hope it isn't so, but we've been so apathetic and so lethargic that I tell you this not to frighten you, not to prepare you for it, but to cause you to lay hold of God and say, Oh God, do something to make us worthy of having this stopped. But the first thing you have to understand about the future is this, that there's a throne and there's one that sits upon it. And if that should take place in America, let it never be thought that it took place because God wasn't able to stop it.

The God of the Bible is a sovereign God who holds the hearts of kings in his hands. Now, I think America today is ripe for judgment, ripe for it.

I agree with Stacey Woods completely who says that he cannot see in the American scene anything more than the fragment of reason why God shouldn't let anything desperate happen to a land that's had such a heritage of ours, that squandered it in such an indescribably wasteful manner.

Well, I do not think it's right for us to say, Oh God, stop communism. That isn't the answer. I think the thing to do is to say, Oh God, make us worthy to have the heritage that we possess preserved for another generation or two.

What right should someone that deserves the electric chair have to cry out, Don't put the power on me. He deserves it. In all honesty, it would show us that we're a nation that's given up to idolatry, to sensualism, to the worship of sex, to the worship of things, to the worship of position.

That it's not only in the world, the material world, but it's also infiltrated the church. My personal feeling about it is we should not say, Lord, spare poor us from such a horrible fate. We ought to say, if we're in all honesty taking our place as being part of it and being responsible in an intercessory capacity for it, we ought to say, Oh God, we deserve anything that can come upon us as a nation.

Make us worthy to be deserved, protected. Make us worthy to be spared. I submit to you that the one that sits on the throne is sovereign.

That's the first thing John saw, a sovereign God. You know, the trouble with most Christians is the God they worship isn't big enough for the problems that they have. They just don't have God enough.

You see, you can't have both God and a problem at the same time. Always when the problem is there, it's because God isn't big enough for the situation. You can't hang on to both the problem and to God.

That's why the Scripture is so explicit when it says, magnify the name of the Lord. What we do, you see, is we magnify the problem. We magnify

the difficulty.

We bring that up before our eyes, and the problem seems enormous, and God seems inconsequential. And what God wanted to do with John was to show him that there was a throne and someone that sat upon it. And tonight, you and I need to hear him say, come up hither, and I will show you a throne and one that sits upon it.

Some of you have personal problems in your life, difficult and real. Every problem that I ever have or you ever have is simply the doorstep into blessing, if we'll make it that way. It's just simply the vestibule into blessing, because it's in the problem that God reveals himself.

If you'll take the names of God, those seven compound names, you'll find that in every revelation of a further aspect of the character of God, there was a need. For instance, you have the word Jehovah-nese, I mean Jehovah-jireh, rather, a better illustration. Jehovah-jireh.

Well, what's the problem? God says to Abraham, take your son and slay him. And Isaac says, Father, where's the sacrifice? And he gives the name, never used before, Jehovah-jireh, the Lord who provideth. And it's in Abraham's desperation that God reveals himself as the provider.

Now, I suppose if it were us, we'd say, oh God, spare me from the circumstance that makes it necessary for me to discover another aspect of your character. But you see, God loved Abraham so much that he wouldn't cheat Abraham out of discovering that he's Jehovah-jireh. So he sets up a situation where Abraham must obey, and in obedience, with faith, and the two always go together, Abraham comes to its end corner, where only God can provide, and Abraham sees a throne and one that sits upon it, and he says, Jehovah-jireh, the Lord who provideth.

Well, another situation, Israel has come out of Egypt. They're thirsty. The Red Sea is salty.

They've had a lot of water around them, but it's not the right kind. And they come to a place where there's a pool, and they want a drink. And somebody tastes it, and it's poisons.

Well, here are three million people in a little water hole, and that water is poisons. Well, that's a desperate situation. They're at wit's

end corner.

They don't know where to go. And God has maneuvered them into a place where they must see a throne and one who sits upon it. And so, Moses is the one that's responsible.

Moses goes to the Lord and says, Now, Lord, what'll I do? And the Lord says, Cut the tree down, throw it in. Well, you see, the tree stands for the cross, and the water stands for that which is going to sustain the race, provided with life. And the only thing that God could do before the cross came was to bring death and judgment.

But by putting that tree in the midst of the stream, the water below the tree could be sweetened. And so, in their desperation, they have the revelation of Jehovah Rapha, the Lord who healeth. Well, now, that's what John saw, a throne and one that sat upon it.

And when you look at the future, remember that whatever the problem may develop in this unknown future, it may be unknown to you, but it's known to God. And in the wit's end corner and at your extremity, it's simply God's opportunity to give you a chance to see the throne and him that sits upon it. And so, as you look out, everything else in the book of Revelation has this as the first thing.

This is the first thing that he's to see about the future. And my friend, your heart is going to fail you for fear of things to come upon the earth. As all men who think are experiencing, it's good for you tonight to hear him say, Come up hither and see one who said, I have all authority in heaven and earth, this given unto me.

All power is mine. He's on the throne. And like John, you'll need to see it.

Nothing can happen in your life but what he permits it. Nothing can happen in circumstances but what he permits it. And therefore, since he's on the throne, it behooves us not to go to him and say, O God, since you hold the heart of kings in your hands, protect us from their wrath.

Remember, Nebuchadnezzar was God's servant. God's servant. He said, My servant Nebuchadnezzar, who broke down the walls of Jerusalem and scattered the people and drew them away into captivity.

God's servant. And consequently, it behooves you to understand that unless people are blessable, they have no right to ask for blessing because there's a throne and one who sits upon it. All right, now the next thing that he saw was that he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone, and there was a rainbow round about the throne and in sight like unto an emerald.

I'm so glad that he had to resort to precious stones with their brilliance and their beauty to describe God. You see, no man can see God and live. And the one that sat upon the throne was like unto a jasper and a sardine stone.

He couldn't see any, nothing else described him. Isn't that marvelous? I'm so glad that the one that sat there was beyond comprehension and beyond description and that this is the way John was led to talk about him. Exquisite, glorious.

But all God could give is just a little reflection of himself. But whereas God couldn't reveal his face, for no man can see God's face and live, do you see what's there? The rainbow around the throne. What's the rainbow? The covenant of promise.

Way back there when the flood came in Noah's day and the world was visited with destruction, God put a rainbow and he made a covenant. And he said, I'll never visit the world with a flood by water again, never again. Next time it'll be by fire but never by water.

And so John couldn't tell what he saw. It's like a jasper, like a sardine stone. But there was a rainbow.

There was the covenant. And it's like an emerald green. Green is the color of spring, the color of hope, of expectation.

And so whereas God could show the throne and him that sat upon it couldn't reveal his face because he is infinite and beyond description and comprehension, yet it was to be understood that this is a covenant keeping God. And as you hear the rainbow, listen to it. If my people, which are called by my name, will humble themselves and seek my face and turn from their wicked way and pray, then will I hear from heaven.

Then will I forgive their sin. Then will I heal their land. He's a covenant keeping God.

And for us to say, oh God, heal our land from the avenger before we've

done what he promised, no hope, no green there. But if my people, which are called by my name, will humble themselves and seek my face and pray and turn from their wicked way, then the rainbow and the emerald. He's a covenant keeping God.

That's what John saw, that he keeps his covenant. It can't be avoided. And that's why in your life you are to deal with sin, all sin, at the moment that it's discovered, at whatever cost it may entail, to deal with it.

Because God's a covenant keeping God. And if you don't deal with it, you give place to the enemy. If you give place to the enemy, he will take that place.

Then notice, 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. Out of the throne proceeded lightnings.

What's the purpose of lightning? What's the effect of lightning? Is it not to illuminate darkness? It's an interesting word, you know. Lightning, in the Hebrew, is the word Torah, shafts. Now, the word Torah, shafts, or shafts of lightning, is the word from which we get law.

They speak of the Torah, shafts, as of lightning. What's the idea? It is the law that proceeds from the throne of God into the heart of man that illuminates the cavern there with all the death that's in it. And so, John says, I saw lightning go down into darkness to illuminate it, so that men that are to be judged always first have the revelation of their sin.

Lightning came from the throne of God. And then we discover that there were thunderings. For with the illumination of sin comes the thundering voice that encircles thine eye, the soul that sinneth, it shall die.

Judgment is warned against, and God has promised it, and he said that he would do it. And out of the throne proceeded thunderings, that every sin will come into judgment, the lightning will reveal it, and thunderings

are the declaration that God will not let sin go unpunished. But then there's voices.

There's voices. The spirit and the bride say, Come, and let him that heareth say, Come, and whosoever is athirst, let him come. Voices, thunderings of judgment, lightnings of the revelation of sin, but voices, come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart.
Voices, entreating, whosoever cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.
Voices.

And all of this is performed by the seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which is the seven spirits of God, or the sevenfold ministry of God, the Holy Ghost. It's God, the Holy Ghost, that uses the shaft, the Torah, the lightning, to illuminate the heart. It's God, the Holy Ghost, that brings the dreaded fear of judgment.

It's the Holy Ghost in his full ministry that brings the voices of entreaty. And thus, when someone lives on in their sin and spurns the revelation of the guilt and rejects the voices, they're actually rejecting God. For it's the seven lamps of burning, and it's the sevenfold Holy Spirit, or the Holy Ghost in his perfect, complete ministry.

For the number of seven always means perfection. What a sad thing it is to resist the Holy Ghost, when the word, the shaft of the truth, of the law, has illuminated sin in your life, or my life, when God has shown us something, and then to close our hearts to it. We leave nothing but thunderings, for we've spurned the voices.

That's why sin is such a terrible thing in the life of a Christian. And oh, how horrible it is in the life of someone that hears the gospel and rejects Christ. Now in verse 6, Before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal, and in the midst of the throne and about the throne were for thee a sea of glass like crystal, pure, God can't be approached unto.

The inapproachable, the inaccessible God, infinitely holy. How can a man

who's laden with guilt and sin ever come before a God who sits on the throne in the sea of glass? How can anyone come to him? But ah, what did

John see? The living creatures, the beasts. And what do they have?

They

have the face of a lion, and the face of a calf, and the face of a man,
and the face of an eagle.

And what have you here? God, inaccessible and unapproachable because of

sin, but there is one, a living creature, became flesh and dwelt among us, the lion who reigned and ruled in splendor, by whom all things were

made, and without him was not anything made that was made, the lion who

will one day be the lion of the tribe of Judah. He became a man, became

flesh and dwelt among us, a man sinless, holy, and harmless, and undefiled, separate from sinners. He became a man in order that he could

become the calf, the sacrifice, that he might take away the sin of the world, that he might die as the offering, and the eagle, for he's ascended into heaven and sits there at the right hand of the throne on high, symbol of celestial splendor and grandeur.

And so God, sitting upon his throne in the midst of the sea of grass, glass, cannot be approached unto. Ah, but there's a man who's like a calf, who's been an eagle in the heavens and who's a lion to reign.

All

of this speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ, who's opened for us a new and a

living way, that we can come to the throne in the sea of glass, and be accepted in the beloved.

Years ago in Minneapolis, Luke Rader, the brother of Paul Rader, had a work at the River Lake Gospel Tabernacle, and people at River Lake used

to wear a little badge in their lapel, a figure of an eagle, of a man, of a calf, and of a lion. And the colors were there of blue and of white, of red, and of lavender purple, speaking of the one who dwelt in

the heavens, became a man that he might die and had been exalted to reign. And that's what John saw.

He saw that there was one who'd made a new and a living way through his

shed blood. But now notice, And these beasts give glory and honor and thanks to him that sat upon the throne, who liveth forever and ever.

In

verse 10, the four and twenty elders fall down.

You have to go back to verse 4. Around 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 the four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth forever and ever, and cast their crowns before him.

They cast their crowns. How many? Four and twenty. Well, you have the twelve tribes of Israel, you have the twelve apostles, and their seats for four and twenty.

And there were four and twenty there. Do you know what this speaks to me? This speaks that everyone in the foreknowledge of God that God saw would respond to the means of grace. Everyone, if you wish to call them the elect, are there.

No one's missing. They're there. And John saw that God's plan was going to be brought to perfect completion.

Nothing would be lacking. Nothing would fail. And the first thing that John saw on this first day the door was opened was that God's plan was going to be gloriously carried out.

And, beloved, I believe that with all my heart tonight. And everything they do in Moscow and anything they do at the other end of 44th Street in the United Nations, anything they do in Congo, anything that is done anywhere, will have to be done in the presence of the one who sits upon the throne. And that he has established that there are seats for four and twenty elders, and they will be there.

God's purpose in grace is going to be realized, and everything that God has planned to do is going to be done. Now, I don't know if you feel as good about that as I do, but I am delighted that I serve a God that reigns as sovereign. I'm so glad that the founder of this society was a Presbyterian before he began here, because it puts my heart right at home.

Right at home. He saw God that reigns in sovereign power and glory. And that's what John saw.

Four and twenty seats and four and twenty elders. God's purpose. For one day, when the body of Christ is complete and the last one is in, God is going to say it's finished, and the heavens are going to cleave, and Christ is going to come, and the dead in Christ will be raised incorruptible, and we which are alive and remain will be caught up, and we'll all be changed in a moment, in a twinkling of an eye, robed in celestial glory like unto the Son of God.

And then it tells us what we're going to do with our crowns. I hope you're working for a crown. You ought to, you know.

When you see what they do, you know some people make me a little weary when they say, oh, I don't want a reward. Look, if God offers it, you better want it. And God offers it, and He says you better work for one.

Why? So you can put it on the back of your head and strut all over heaven? No, honey. God takes all of the strut out of anyone before they get to heaven. That's not what crowns are for.

No, no, listen to it. And they cast their crowns before Him. Oh, to have something to lay at the one who sits upon the throne and say, thank you, Lord.

You, the eagle of eternity past, the eternal sun that became man, became the ox to go to the place of sacrifice, to wash away my sin in your blood, been exalted to be the lion of the tribe of Judah. Thank you, Lord, for saving my soul. Thank you, Lord, for making me whole.

Thank you, Lord, for giving to me thy great salvation, so full and free. What did John see? John saw that all the things that men could do would never hinder the purpose of God, and that everything that God had purposed to do for His Son was going to be done. I hope this encourages your heart.

It does mine. When I got into this and began to study it, I thought I was going to become a shouting Methodist again, though it's been nearly 30 years since I left them. I just could hardly hold myself down.

I was on a train. It was wise to do it. But I tell you, it was just unbelievable.

When I began to realize that no good purpose of our God will fail, and this is what he wanted John to see first when he said, Come up hither, and I'll show you things to come. For 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. God's purpose will prevail and will succeed, and all that He's intended to do is going to be done.

I worship that God. I bow before Him, lost in wonder, love, and praise.
I'll never forget being in the little study in 70 South Union in Chicago.

Dr. Tozer spent in my heart and so frequently comes back. We were in prayer. He said, Oh, God, how I could not have thee any other than thou art, for every attribute is necessary to win and hold the love of my heart.

And I'm so glad that our God reigneth, that He's on the throne, and that no king or council is going to hinder the outworking of His purpose, either in all of His purpose or in your life. The only thing that can hinder it is your unwillingness to open the door and invite Him in to sup with you and you with Him, because the lock is on the inside of the door. And the only thing that can hinder is you.

Oh, tonight, if you're here unsaved, why don't you sing the little children's chorus, Into my heart, into my heart, come into my heart, Lord Jesus. Come into day, come into stay, come into my heart, Lord Jesus. And if you're a Christian, make sure that you've invited Him to fill and possess and live His life in you, for this is what He wants to do.

Let's pray. How great Thou art! O God, Thou who art infinite in all Thine attributes, wisdom, justice, righteousness, holiness, love. Thou who art such that those who know Thee best, the four and twenty elders can fall before Thee and say, Worthy art Thou, God, to receive glory and majesty and praise and honor forever.

We bow before Thee. And we would let our little fear-filled hearts be lost in the fact that we, through that open door that John left ajar, have seen that Thou didst sit upon the throne of the sea of glass. And

no man could approach unto Thee, but that Thou hast given in Thy Son,
the one who is this celestial heaven-dweller, the eagle, became man
that
he might die as the ox and reign as the lion.

O how we thank Thee for so great a Savior and so perfect a salvation.
We
pray for those among us that may not know Him, those whose hearts
still
carry the awful weight of their sin and the woe of their guilt. We ask
Thee, Lord, that tonight might be the night that they'd invite Christ
in
to forgive and to pardon and to cleanse.

And we pray for Christians, I know, that have found loneliness in the
way because they've kept the Lord outside, neither cold nor hot but
lukewarm, and haven't opened the door to invite Him in to sup with
them,
to let Him be all to them that they desires. Tonight, Lord Jesus, we
too
find open doors here where Thou canst enter in and be all Thou dost
want
to be. With our heads bowed and eyes closed, are there those that
would
say, God has spoken to my heart? I want prayer, but I want to make
this
covenant with Him that I'm laying hold upon Him in a new way.

Would you put your hand up so we can remember you in prayer, minister
to
you. Anyone who would like to stay and have a time of prayer, please
speak to me. So glad to stay and pray with you.

Let us stand for the benediction. Now may the grace of our Lord Jesus
Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion and the
fellowship
of the Holy Ghost be and abide with each of us now and until we meet
again. Amen.

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