

The Church in Heaven

by John F. Walvoord

John F. Walvoord's sermon explores the vision of the church in heaven as depicted in Revelation 4, emphasizing God's sovereignty and the prophetic future of the church.

Scripture: Revelation 1:19, Revelation 4:1-2, Revelation 4:5-6, Revelation 4:9

Topics: "Eschatology", "Revelation"

Description

John F. Walvoord preaches on the heavenly vision in Revelation 4, where a door is opened in heaven, revealing future events to John. The chapter marks the beginning of the section focused on the consummation of the age, contrasting with the messages to the seven churches in chapters 2 and 3. The futuristic view of Revelation from chapter 4 onward is supported by the promise of things 'which must be hereafter.' The chapter unveils prophetic events related to the end times, including the time of tribulation following the church age, as summarized by C. A. Blanchard.

Transcript

4:1 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 shew thee things which must be hereafter.

Beginning with chapter 4, the third major section of the book of Revelation is introduced following the divinely inspired outline of 1:19 and fulfilling the promise of revelation of "the things which shall be hereafter." Bleek, almost a century ago, stated the futurist view of Revelation beginning in 4:1 much in the fashion of contemporary futurists.¹¹⁹ This section is in contrast to what John saw in chapter 1, his vision of the glorified Christ described in the clause, "the things which thou hast seen," and in contrast to the revelation of chapters 2 and 3, messages to the seven churches designated as "the things which are." Beginning in chapter 4, things to come are unfolded which have to do with the consummation of the age.

The concept that the book of Revelation beginning with 4:1 is future, from the standpoint of the twentieth century, is a broad conclusion growing out of the lack of correspondence of these prophecies to anything that has been fulfilled. A normal interpretation of this section which understands these prophecies as literal events would require that they be viewed as future. The futuristic concept is supported by the similarity of the expression in 1:19, "the things which shall be hereafter" (Gr., *ha mellei genesthai meta tauta*) to the clause in 4:1, "things which must be hereafter" (Gr., *ha dei genesthai meta tauta*).

Chapters 4 and 5 are the introduction and background of the tremendous sweep of prophetic events predicted in the rest of the book. If chapter 4 and succeeding chapters relate to the future, they provide an important clue concerning the interpretation of the vision and the prophetic events which unfold in those chapters. One of the principal reasons for confusion in the study of the book of Revelation has been the failure to grasp this point. If Revelation has no chronological structure and is merely a symbolic presentation of moral truth, its prophetic significance is reduced to a minimum. If, as others hold, the predictions of this section of Revelation are already fulfilled in the early persecution of the church, it also robs the book of any prophecy of the future.¹²⁰ (For discussion of the various systems of interpretation of the book of Revelation, see the Introduction.)

A literal interpretation of the prophecies beginning in chapter 4 is not fulfilled in any historic event and must therefore be regarded from the futuristic viewpoint if it is indeed valid prophecy. The events anticipated in the angel's promise to "shew thee things which must be hereafter" (4:1), should be regarded as a prediction of events which shall occur at the end of the age.

C. A. Blanchard summarized the futuristic position in 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. From the fourth chapter through the nineteenth, speaking generally, there seems to be an account of this time of trouble.¹²¹

The expression "after this" (Gr., *meta tauta*), with which verse one begins, identifies the revelation as subsequent to that of chapters 2 and 3. John, having been the channel of revelation to the seven churches existing in the first century, now is being introduced to a new field of prophecy. As he beheld, he saw a door opened into the very presence of God in heaven. The reference to heaven is not to the atmospheric heavens nor to the starry heavens but to that which is beyond the natural eye which the best of telescopes cannot reveal. This is the third heaven, the immediate presence of God.

John also hears a voice described as "the first voice which I heard," that is, a reference to the same voice he heard in Revelation 1:10 and following. It is described as the voice of a trumpet (cf. 1:10), and he understands it to say, "Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter." The command does not anticipate any self-effort on the part of John to enter heaven but is rather an announcement of the purpose of God to show him that which will "be hereafter" or, better translated, that which will "be after these things." The implication is that the prophecies now to be unfolded will occur after the events of the present age.

The invitation to John to "come up hither" is so similar to that which the church anticipates at the rapture that many have connected the two expressions. It is clear from the context that this is not an explicit reference to the rapture of the church, as John was not actually translated; in fact he was still in his natural body on the island of Patmos. He was translated into scenes of heaven only temporarily. Though there is no authority for connecting the rapture with this expression, there does seem to be a typical representation of the order of events, namely, the church age first, then the rapture, then the church in heaven. Though the rapture is mentioned in letters to two of the churches (cf. 2:25; 3:11), the rapture as a doctrine is not a part of the prophetic foreview of the book of Revelation. This is in keeping with the fact that the book as a

whole is not occupied primarily with God's program for the church. Instead the primary objective is to portray the events leading up to and climaxing in the second coming of Christ and the prophetic kingdom and the eternal state which ultimately will follow.

From a practical standpoint, however, the rapture may be viewed as having already occurred in the scheme of God before the events of chapter 4 and following chapters of Revelation unfold. The word church, so prominent in chapters 2 and 3, does not occur again until 22:16, though the church is undoubtedly in view as the wife of the Lamb in Revelation 19:7. She is not a participant in the scenes of the tribulation which form the major content of the book of Revelation. The familiar phrase "what the Spirit saith unto the churches" found in 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22 is significantly absent in 13:9.

It seems that the church as the Body of Christ is out of the picture, and saints who come to know the Lord in this period are described as saved Israelites or saved Gentiles, never by terms which are characteristic of the church, the Body of Christ. Saints mentioned from this point on do not lose their racial background as is commonly done in referring to the church where Jew and Gentile are one in Christ. At the beginning of chapter 4, then, the church may be considered as in heaven and not related to events which will take place on the earth in preparation for Christ's return in power and glory.

The Viewing of God's Throne (4:2-3)

4:2-3 And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne. 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.

From the beginning of verse 2 John finds himself in heaven "in the spirit" in much the same way as he indicated in 1:10, only this time his location is changed. Though actually on the Isle of Patmos, he is experiencing being in the presence of God and seeing these glorious visions. The first object which appears to his startled eyes is a throne in heaven with one sitting upon it. The primary impression received by John is that of color, and he describes the presence of the One on the throne as "like a jasper and a sardine stone." The sight of a rainbow around the throne like an emerald further enriches the color scheme.

Without reference to other portions of Scripture, this verse would be more or less meaningless except as a general expression of the glory of God. The details furnished, however, though not explained by John, undoubtedly have a deep significance. It is first of all important to note that this is a throne in heaven, a reminder of the sovereignty of God who is far removed from the petty struggles of earthly government. Here is the true picture of the universe as being subject to the dominion of an omnipotent God.

The precious stones mentioned also seem to have meaning. The jasper stone is described in chapter 21 as a precious stone which is clear like crystal, which would seem to indicate that it may be what we would today call a diamond. The sardine stone, or the sardius, is a familiar stone in color like a ruby, a beautiful red.

The significance, however, goes far beyond the color. Though the clear jasper might refer to the purity of God and the sardine stone to His redemptive purpose, according to the Old Testament these stones had a relationship to the tribes of Israel. Each tribe of Israel had a representative stone, and the high priest had stones representing each of the twelve tribes of Israel on his breast when he functioned in his priestly office before the altar. This symbolized the fact that he as the high priest was representing all twelve tribes

before the throne of God.

Significantly, the jasper and the sardine stone are the first and last of these twelve stones (cf. Exodus 28:17-21). The jasper represented Reuben, the first of the tribes, since Reuben was the firstborn of Jacob. The sardine stone represented Benjamin, the youngest of the twelve sons of Jacob. In other words the two stones represented the first and the last and therefore may be regarded as including all the other stones in between, that is, the whole of the covenanted people.

Furthermore, the names Reuben and Benjamin have significance. The word Reuben means "behold, a son." The word Benjamin means "son of my right hand." In both cases these terms seem to have a double meaning: first, the fact that though Christ is the representative of Israel, He is also the Son of God. Like Reuben, Christ is the first begotten son. Second, like Benjamin, Christ is also the "son of my right hand" in relation to God the Father. The person whom John sees on the throne looking like a jasper and sardine stone is, therefore, God in relation to the nation Israel.

It is of interest that these same stones are used to describe the majesty of the king of Tyrus (Ezek. 28:13) where, in a list of nine precious stones, the sardius (sardine) is mentioned first and the jasper is sixth in the list. In the description of the foundation of the new Jerusalem in Revelation 21:19-20, the jasper is first and the sardius is sixth. The emerald is listed as eighth in Ezekiel and fourth in Revelation 21:19. It is evident that these stones have a peculiar significance of glory and majesty which are characteristic of God on His throne. Coupled with the brilliant reflections of the jasper and the deep red of the sardine stone, the rainbow described as all of green like an emerald forms a rich background for the glorious scene which John beheld.

The question has been raised as to the identity of the One who was on the throne. In chapter 4 it appears that He is to be identified as God the Father because Christ is represented separately as the Lamb. Alford states that the One seated is "The Eternal Father ... for He that sitteth on the throne is distinguished in ch. 6:16; 7:10 from the Son, and in [ch. 4] ver. 5 from the Holy Spirit."¹²²

The difficult problem of identification has been solved in various ways. Actually both the Father and the Son are properly on the throne as Christ Himself mentioned in Revelation 3:21. One explanation would have Christ on the throne in chapter 4 and the Father on the throne in chapter 5. Another point of view is that both chapters picture God the Father on the throne in the special character of the God of Israel. The seeming contradiction may also be resolved in the doctrine of the Trinity as Christ expressed it in John 14:9: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." It is significant that God is not given an anthropomorphic figure in this revelation and does not appear as a man. Apart from the fact that He is said to sit on the throne, no description is given except the colors which impressed John. It is evident that the glory of God was the intent of the vision rather than an anthropomorphic representation.

The Twenty-four Elders (4:4)

4:4 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.

In addition to the glory of the throne and the One who sat upon it John's attention is next directed to twenty-four thrones upon which the twenty-four elders are seated. The term "seats" is properly "thrones." The elders are represented as in a situation of repose, sitting on their thrones, clothed in white raiment and having on their heads crowns of gold. Considerable discussion has arisen concerning the identity of

these twenty-four elders, and three principal views have been advanced. Some regard them as a representative body of all the saints of all ages. Others regard them as representative only of the church, the Body of Christ. Still a third view is that they represent an order of angels.

The fact that they are a representative group, however, seems to be clear from the parallel of the Old Testament where the priesthood was represented by twenty-four orders of priests. There were actually thousands of priests in Israel's day of ascendancy under David and Solomon, but they all could not minister at the same time. Accordingly, they were divided into twenty-four orders, each of which was represented by a priest. When these priests met together, even though there were only twenty-four, they represented the whole priesthood and at the same time the whole of the nation of Israel. In a similar way the twenty-four elders mentioned in the book of Revelation may be regarded as a representative body.

The text itself does not give a specific statement concerning the identity of these elders. In chapter 5 additional information is given, and our later study of this chapter will throw further light on the problem. Some help, however, is afforded in the description given here.

The elders are described as being clothed in white raiment and having on their heads crowns of gold. There are two kinds of crowns in the book of Revelation, involving two different Greek words. One is the crown of a ruler or a sovereign (Gr., diadem), which is a crown of governmental authority. The other is the crown of a victor (Gr., Stephanos), such as was awarded in the Greek games when a person won a race or some contest. This crown was usually made of leaves.

The word here is the crown of a victor rather than that of a sovereign. It was made of gold, indicating that the elders had been rewarded for victory accomplished. It is significant that the passage states the twenty-four elders already have their crowns of gold as victors. If this passage is regarded as chronologically before the time of the tribulation which succeeding chapters unfold, it would seem to eliminate the angels, as at this point they have not been judged and rewarded since their judgment seems to come later. For the same reason the elders do not seem to be a proper representation of Israel, for Israel's judgment also seems to come at the end of the tribulation, not before. Only the church which is raptured before chapter 4 is properly complete in heaven and eligible for reward at the judgment seat of Christ. In that case, the crowns of gold on the heads of the twenty-four elders would be fitting at this point and would seem to confirm the idea that these may be representative of the church in glory.

Alford states,

These 24 elders are not angels, as maintained by Rinck and Hofmann (Weiss u. Erfull. p. 325 f.), as is shown (not by ch. 5:9, as generally argued,--even by Elliott, vol. I, p. 81 f.: see text there: but) by their white robes and crowns, the rewards of endurance, ch. 3:5; 2:10,-- but representatives of the Church, as generally understood.¹²³

Alford continues with a long discussion designed to prove that the church includes the saints of the Old Testament.¹²⁴ This, of course, is not taught here but rests on other grounds.

Recent New Testament scholarship has tended to abandon the traditional interpretation in favor of identification of the twenty-four elders as angels. Typical is the discussion of N. B. Stonehouse who dedicates a whole chapter to this in his work *Paul Before the Areopagus*. He offers several important arguments in favor of interpreting the elders as angels. Stonehouse holds that the revised text is definitely to be preferred and that the tendency to cling to the interpretation that the elders are redeemed and

translated saints is largely because this view has been considered the traditional orthodox interpretation. Stonehouse concludes,

The late expositors do not appear to do justice to the implications of the current critical text which records a song celebrating the redemption of a diverse multitude, but which evidently ascribes the song to beings who are distinguished from the redeemed.¹²⁵

Stonehouse supports his conclusion by endeavoring to prove that Revelation 5:11 does not necessarily distinguish "many angels" from the elders, which would imply that they are not elders, and holds that unless it is clearly otherwise stated celestial spirits should be classified as some kind of angel. While Stonehouse does as well as anyone could to support the identification of the elders as angels, it is evident that he does not have any final or conclusive proof, and the controversy cannot be resolved. Identification of the twenty-four elders should not be dogmatically held, but such evidence as there is seems to point to the conclusion that they may represent the church as the Body of Christ. See chapter 5 for further discussion.

The Seven Spirits of God (4:5)

4:5 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.

The all-inspiring scene described by John in this verse is in keeping with the majesty of the throne and the dignity of the twenty-four elders. The lightnings, thunderings, and voices which proceed from the throne are prophetic of the righteous judgment of God upon a sinful world. They are similar to the thunders, lightnings, and voice of the trumpet which mark the giving of the law in Exodus 19:16 and are a fitting preliminary to the awful judgments which are to follow in the great tribulation as God deals with the earth in righteousness.

John's attention is also directed to seven lamps of fire which are seen burning before the throne. These are identified as "the seven Spirits of God" mentioned earlier in 1:4 and 3:1. These are best understood as a representation of the Holy Spirit in a sevenfold way rather than seven individual spirits which would require that they be understood as seven angels. Ordinarily the Holy Spirit is not humanly visible unless embodied in some way. When the Holy Spirit descended on Christ on the occasion of His baptism, the people saw a dove descending. If it had not been for the dove, they could not have seen the Holy Spirit. In a similar way on the day of Pentecost, the coming of the Spirit would not have been visible if it had not been for the "cloven tongues like as of fire" (Acts 2:3). The seven lamps of fire therefore are the means by which John is informed of the presence of the Holy Spirit. The number seven is characteristic of the perfection of the Spirit and is in keeping with the revelation of Isaiah 11:2-3. In the heavenly scene it may be concluded on the basis of both chapters 4 and 5 that all three Persons of the Trinity are in evidence, each in His particular form of revelation.

The Four Living Creatures (4:6-8)

4:6-8 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. 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. 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.

Occupying an important part of the scene before John is a sea of glass described as "like unto crystal," and in the background are four living creatures. Apart from indicating that the sea of glass is like crystal, John gives us no explanation of the meaning of this sea. As in other portions of the book of Revelation, however, John expects the reader to draw conclusions from similar scenes elsewhere in the Bible. There seems here to be an analogy or comparison to the sea of brass in the Tabernacle in the Old Testament or the molten sea in the Temple. Both were lavers, or washstands, designed for the cleansing of the priests, and contained water used for various ceremonial rites. This may represent typically the sanctifying power of the Word of God.

No sure interpretation of the sea of glass may be advanced. As Alford states, "All kinds of symbolic interpretations, more or less fanciful, have been given."¹²⁶ Alford supports this by citing a long number of complicated and conflicting interpretations. He prefers the following view:

The primary reference will be to the clear ether in which the throne of God is upborne and the intent of setting this space in front of the throne will be, to betoken its separation and insulation from the place where the Seer stood, and indeed from all else about it.¹²⁷

The fact is that no explanation is given in the text.

John, however, is not occupied at this point with the sea of glass, but rather with the four living creatures described as in the midst of the throne and round about the throne. He records that they are full of eyes, before and behind, and each of them has six wings. Further, each of the four beasts is to be distinguished according to verse 7. They are described respectively as like a lion, a calf, a man, and a flying eagle. Their ministry before the throne of God is that of ceaselessly ascribing holiness to the Lord.

The translation "beasts" is quite inaccurate and should be changed to "living ones." In the Greek the word used is *zoon*, which means "living ones." An entirely different word, *therion*, meaning "a beast," such as a wild animal, is used in Revelation 13 to speak of the beast coming out of the sea. The emphasis here is on the quality of life and the attributes that relate to it.

There has been much speculation concerning the identity of these living ones and the significance of their presence and ministry in this heavenly scene. As Alford states, "In enquiring after their symbolic import, we are met by the most remarkable diversity of interpretation."¹²⁸ Four important explanations are among the possibilities. Some interpret the four living creatures as representative of the attributes or qualities of God presented to John here as living entities. This is probably the best interpretation. Just as the Holy Spirit is represented by seven lamps, so the attributes of God in general are represented by the four living ones. The fact that the creatures are full of eyes is taken as significant of the omniscience and omnipresence of God who sees all and knows all.

In a similar way the four beasts as respectively a lion, a calf, a man, and an eagle are considered different aspects of divine majesty. All of these are supreme in their respective categories. The lion is the king of beasts and represents majesty and omnipotence. The calf or ox, representing the most important of domestic animals, signifies patience and continuous labor. Man is the greatest of all God's creatures, especially in intelligence and rational power; whereas the eagle is greatest among birds and is symbolic of sovereignty and supremacy.

Comparison has also been made of the four living creatures to the four Gospels which present Christ in four major aspects of His person. As the lion, He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah, represented as the king of Matthew. As the calf or ox, He is the Servant of Jehovah, the faithful one of Mark. As man, He is the human Jesus, presented in the Gospel of Luke, and as the eagle, He is the divine Son of God presented in the Gospel of John. Alford thinks that this has the least to commend itself of all of the many diverse interpretations. He states, after quoting at length Victorinus who championed this view,

I have cited this comment at length, to show on what fanciful and untenable ground it rests. For with perhaps the one exception of the last of the four, not one of the Evangelists has any inner or substantial accordance with the character thus assigned.¹²⁹

In support of his objection he points out how many commentators disagree as to what Gospel is represented by each of the living ones.

Scott observes that ancient rabbinical writers declared that the tribes of Israel pitched their tents and standards on the four sides of the Tabernacle in this same order; namely, the tribe of Judah, a lion; the tribe of Ephraim, an ox; the tribe of Reuben, a man; the tribe of Dan, an eagle¹³⁰ (cf. Num. 2:2). The fact that there are four living creatures is also noteworthy. It seems to be indicative of the relationship of God to the material universe or the world in general.¹³¹ Taken in general, the four living creatures are representative of God; they are, as in the case of the seven lamps, a physical embodiment of that which would be otherwise invisible to the natural eye.¹³² To John the scene was unmistakably one of majestic revelation.

An alternative explanation is that the four living creatures are angels whose function it is to bring honor and glory to God. Angels as seen in the Scriptures vary widely in their appearance, and this explanation is a plausible one. Angels are frequently seen in the Bible especially in apocalyptic books of the Bible such as Ezekiel and Revelation. The fact that the living creatures have six wings as do the seraphim of Isaiah 6:2-3 adds weight to the interpretation that they are angels. The living creatures in Revelation 4 and the seraphim of Isaiah 6 have a similar function in that both ascribe holiness to the Lord of hosts (cf. Isa. 6:3). The ministry of the living creatures is designed to emphasize the holiness of God and His eternity, in that according to the Scripture, "they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come." Their presence in the heavenly scene contributed much to the overall impression of the majesty, holiness, sovereignty, and eternity of God.

The Worship of the Living Creatures and the Elders (4:9-11)

4:9-11 And when those beasts give glory and honour 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 honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

Though it is stated earlier that the living creatures do not rest in their ascription of holiness to God, according to verse 9, periodically they give special glory and honor and praise to God sitting on His throne. On such occasions, according to verse 10, the twenty-four elders join with them in worship and fall down before God on His throne. In their worship, they cast their victors' crowns before the throne declaring that God is worthy of glory and honor and power because all things have been created by Him and for His pleasure.

The closing scene of chapter 4 brings out several important truths. It is evident that the living ones are designed to give glory, honor, and thanks to God sitting upon His throne. The emphasis of their praise is on the divine attributes and worthiness of God.

The worship of the twenty-four elders has a more particular note. They not only worship and recognize these attributes of God but support their worship by recognition of the fact that God is the sovereign Creator of the universe and, as such, is sovereign over it. In other words they recognize not only the attributes but the works of God which reveal the attributes. Further, in casting their crowns before the throne they testify that if it had not been for God's grace, salvation, and goodness, they could not have had victory over sin and death. Here the creature honors His Maker and accepts the dictum that man necessarily must be subject to his Creator.

The world today does not give such honor to the Lord God. Though men benefit from His goodness and live in a universe of His creation, they tend to neglect the worship of God. One of the important aims of the book of Revelation is to trace the divine movement of history toward the goal of universal recognition of God. This purpose of God, especially as related to the Son of God, is also spelled out in Philippians 2:9-11:

Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth: And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of Cod the Father.

As if anticipating the ultimate consummation where all will recognize the exalted name of Jesus whether in heaven or hell, Revelation 4 reveals this intimate glimpse of heaven where all created beings join in a symphony of praise and give their honor and worship to the Almighty God. The worthiness of God to receive such praise is related to His sovereign right to rule as the One who sits upon the throne. The twenty-four elders bear witness to His majesty and glory, His holiness and power, and the eternity of the One "which was, and is, and is to come." All creatures owe their very existence to Him as their Creator, "for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created." Chapter 4 is a fitting introduction to that which follows in the next chapter, where the glory of Christ as Redeemer, as the "Lamb that was slain," is an added reason for praise. Wise is the soul who finds in the Scriptures the revelation of such a God and who bows now in this day of grace in faith and worship before the God whom he will serve in eternity.

119 Friedrich Bleek, Lectures on the Apocalypse, pp. 6 ff.

120 Edward H. Home, for instance, although a premillenarian, interprets Revelation 4:1--16:17 as belonging to the present age, with the millennial age a literal period beginning with Revelation 19:11, and the eternal age introduced at Revelation 21:2. Though a follower of the historical school, Home recognizes dispensations, namely the Mosaic in the Old Testament, the dispensation of the Spirit in the present age, the future millennial kingdom, and the eternal age (The Meaning of the Apocalypse, p. 23).

121 Light on the Last Days, pp. 25-26.

122 Henry Alford, The Greek New Testament, IV, 594.

123 Alford, IV, 596.

124 Ibid., 596-97.

125 Paul Before the Areopagus, p. 92.

126 Alford, IV, 598.

127 Ibid.

128 Ibid., IV, 599.

129 Ibid., IV, 600.

130 Walter Scott, Exposition of the Revelation of Jesus Christ, p. 126, note, quoting F. Brodie, Notes on the Revelation.

131 Ibid.

132 J. L. Martin offers the somewhat fantastic explanation that the four beasts represent the four quarters of the earth; the first, Asia; the second, Africa; the third, Europe; the fourth, America. He bases this on the fact that John is invited by these four beasts to come and see but not invited to behold the contents of the fifth, sixth, and seventh seals. This is another product of the historical interpretation (The Voice of the Seven Thunders, pp. 81-82).

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