

Revelation 4: The Open Door and the Rapture

Revelation 4:1–2 | Sunday, February 8 | Revelation Series

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OVERVIEW

This message finishes Hal's case for the turning point, and for most of it he is not in Revelation at all. He gathers the passages he says run parallel to chapter 4, verses 1 and 2, and reads them one after another. 2 Corinthians 5, for the believer who dies before the event. John 14, for the place being prepared, and for a Lord who is not building all of it to stand unoccupied. Matthew 25, for the separation of sheep and goats, which he argues the Church cannot be part of. Then 1 Corinthians 15, where the mystery is not resurrection — the Old Testament hoped in that already — but that some will never die at all, changed in atomos, a piece of time too small to be divided. Then 1 Thessalonians 4, with the shout, the voice of the archangel and the trumpet of God. Only then does he lay the parallels alongside Revelation 4: a voice like a trumpet, come up here, a man transposed from earth to heaven in an instant. He ends on the fear of death and why its sting is gone.

KEY SCRIPTURES

2 Corinthians 5 — To be absent from the body is to be face-to-face with the Lord

John 14:1 — Let not your heart be troubled; I go to prepare a place for you, and I will come again and receive you to myself

Matthew 25 — He gathers all ta ethne before him and divides them as a shepherd divides sheep and goats

1 Corinthians 15 — Behold, I tell you a mystery: we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed

Verse 56 — The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law

1 Thessalonians 4:15 — The Lord himself will descend with a shout, and the dead in Christ shall rise first

Revelation 4:1–2 — A voice like a trumpet saying come up here, and John instantly in heaven

KEY TERMS

Atomos — the Greek behind “the twinkling of an eye” — something so small it cannot be divided; the word that gave us atom

Sleep — in Scripture, the word for the death of a Christian's body; the soul and spirit, the real you, go consciously to be face-to-face with the Lord

The mystery — not resurrection, which Old Testament believers already hoped in, but that some will not die at all and will be changed

Ta ethne — in Matthew 25, translated “nations,” but meaning Gentiles — nations cannot be judged for eternal destiny

The kingdom age — the next age in the history of this world, lasting a thousand years, which the mortal sheep enter and repopulate

The great snatch — Hal's name for the moment every living believer is caught up; if you are in it, you are already a sheep

The faith barrier — the lifelong habit of facing everything by your own ability to cope, which has to be cracked through to God's viewpoint

REVIEW QUESTIONS

Answer from the message itself. Every answer is in the teaching.

1. What does 2 Corinthians 5 say about the believer who dies before this event?

2. What does Jesus say he is doing in John 14, and how does Hal put it?

3. What did Walter Martin believe, and how did the two of them handle the disagreement?

4. What happens in Matthew 25, and what does ta ethne mean there?

5. What happens to the sheep and to the goats?

6. Why does Hal say the Church cannot be in that scene?

7. What does the word "sleep" mean in Scripture, and what does resurrection apply to?

8. What is the mystery of 1 Corinthians 15 — and what is not the mystery?

9. What is atomos, and how would Hal translate it today?

10. Where does the fear of death come from, and what removes its sting?

11. What does 1 Thessalonians 4 add to the picture?

12. What are the parallels Hal draws with Revelation 4:1–2?

DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION

1. Hal says we are all born with a basic fear of death and cover it up in different ways. How do you cover yours?

2. He tells his own father's death as a comfort rather than a tragedy. What has shaped the way you think about the death of someone you loved?

3. Walter Martin and Hal argued this doctrine hard and then went to dinner. What is the difference between a conviction worth holding and a conviction worth dividing over?

4. "Comfort one another with these words." Who around you needs that comfort right now, and what would it look like to actually give it?

5. Hal says faith has to be developed on a daily basis, in little things, before it can be leaned on in big ones. What small thing is God asking you to trust him with this week?

6. He calls it cracking the faith barrier — moving from what you can cope with to what God can. Where are you still doing the coping?

MEMORY VERSE

"Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord."

— 1 Thessalonians 4:17, as Hal reads it in this message