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THE THRONE OF GOD

(Revelation, chs. 4:1 to 5:6)

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In the fourth chapter of the Book of Revelation the apostle John gives us a wonderful vision of the Throne of God. The Book of Proverbs tells us that: 'Where there is no vision the people perish' (ch. 29:18). And thousands today are perishing because they have not this vision of the Throne of God, with the newly-slain Lamb in the midst of it: they do not know the crucified and risen Saviour as *their* Saviour and Lord.

Another translation of the prophet's statement is: 'Without vision the people lose self-restraint and self-control.' We have only to look around us to realize the truth of this. Standards of decency and morality have been cast down both in the personal life and through the printed page of daily papers and other literature.

A Throne implies a King or one who reigns. God's throne differs from earthly thrones because it is an *Eternal* Throne which nothing on earth can shake or destroy. God is working out His own divine purposes in spite of all the machinations of evil men. Amidst all the chaos and bewilderment of life today God has His own plans and will bring them to a glorious finality. We cannot understand why God allows Satan to be the 'Prince' of this world today, and to reign in the lives of millions. But we know that he is a Usurper and one day he will be dethroned and cast into the bottomless pit. Already he is a defeated foe at large. On the Cross the Lord Jesus Christ broke his power and dominion over men. He made it possible for men to be free from the bondage of sin and the Devil.

The challenge of the Throne of God to all of us is this: Is Christ reigning and ruling over our lives? Are we constantly falling before the besetting sins of our fallen humanity? If we are then Jesus Christ is not reigning as King in our lives: the Bible says, 'Sin shall not have dominion over you'. It says: 'Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believes that JESUS is the CHRIST?' If sin is gaining the victory in our daily lives then we have not enthroned Christ in our lives. Let us do so now,

for the Crowning Day is coming very quickly, and so is the Day of God's Judgment.

The Apostle tells us that a green rainbow encircled the Throne of God. A rainbow is not a circle. I have stood at the edge of the Rain Forest at the Victoria Falls in Rhodesia, and seen dozens of lovely rainbows, some of them coming almost full circle to my feet. But never have I seen one that was a *complete* circle. Pilots have seen a rainbow in a circle when they have been in the *air*, but from the *earth* we always see it as a bow. What is the lesson? It is to teach us to trust God. Now we see only in part, but then, around the Throne, we shall know even as we are known. The rainbow was green in colour, for in the language of the East, green speaks of *faithfulness*. 'Thy faithfulness, O God, reacheth unto the clouds', said the Psalmist (Psalm 36:5). Here then are the two great lessons from the green Rainbow that encircled the Throne of God. First we have God's faithful promises, and then man's response in faith and trust to those promises.

When God put the rainbow into the sky after the flood, He gave the promise to Noah that never again would He flood the earth. But how did men respond to that promise? In utter unbelief, for not long after, they began to build the Tower of Babel, which was to be a way of escape if another flood should come.

And so is it today. Men refuse to believe God's promise as to the way of escape from the coming judgment of fire (read Revelation, chaps. 19 and 20, for example). They are seeking to make their own way of salvation, and refusing to trust God's faithful promises. Think of some of the great promises of God given in Christ. John 3:16 says, 'God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life'. Here we find the source, the universality, the simplicity of God's way of escape from the coming judgment of God. If you are not sure of everlasting life in Christ it is because you have not believed God's promise and exercised your faith in Christ.

There is another great statement made by our Lord in John 6:37. 'All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him

that cometh to me I shall in no wise cast out'. In the first part of that verse you have the great doctrines of election and predestination, and man's wisdom will never be able to discover where God's sovereignty and man's freewill meet. Never think of election and predestination as teaching that God has chosen a certain number to be saved and the rest to be damned. The Gospel message is 'WHOSOEVER calleth on the name of the Lord *shall* be saved'. These great doctrines really apply to believers. The moment you trust Jesus Christ as your Saviour that moment you are chosen by God to become like His Son. God has predestinated *all* who receive His Son to be glorified with Him around the Throne of God. To make things quite plain our Lord *added*: 'and him that cometh to Me shall in no wise be cast out'. So none need fear that he is not among the 'elect'.

Here is another great promise made by the Lord Jesus Christ: 'He that heareth my word and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life' (John 5:24). God asks us to believe these promises and to trust His Son. The Bible does *not* say, '*understand* the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved'. That would be an utter impossibility. The Bible says: '*Believe* . . . and thou shalt be saved', and we can all do that, and have the assurance of salvation. Our Lord said 'Blessed are they who have not seen and yet have believed'. It is not a matter of one's intellect merely, but of your own free will. 'Ye *will* not come unto Me', said Christ, 'that ye might have life'.

Two Divine Principles

In this fourth chapter of the Revelation we read that the principles of God's Throne are two: There is first 'Government' and then 'Grace'. God, Who sits on the Throne, is holy and must judge and punish sin. The world thinks lightly of sin, but we see what God thinks of sin when we look at the Cross of Calvary, for there God made to meet upon Christ the iniquity of us all.

A little boy was with his mother in a service one morning in a beautiful church. Behind the altar of the church was a stained glass window with a ruby-red cross in it. As the sunlight shone

through this cross the little boy was fascinated with its beauty. After service, when they were outside, the little fellow turned to his mother and said: 'Mummy, God's kiss is a straight kiss'. 'What do you mean, dear?' she replied; 'Well Mummy when I write to you, the kisses I put on the paper go sideways like this **X X X**, but God's kiss is a straight one for it goes like this † † †.' The little fellow did not know that he was teaching a very deep theology. When God forgives our sins He does so in a righteous and holy manner. He does not wink at our sins. He brings the full weight of the guilt of our sins upon His Holy Son, and so He can forgive us in accordance with His holy character.

The second principle of the methods of God's Throne is that of Grace. This is symbolized in those two 'living creatures' that John saw surrounding the Throne of God. Who are they? They are a combination of Cherubim and Seraphim. The work of the Cherubim was the work of *judgment*. The first time in the Bible in which the Cherubim is mentioned is when God put him with the flaming sword at the entrance to the Garden of Eden. Even in His judgment God was showing His grace, for had Adam and Eve re-entered the Garden there would have been no hope of their eternal salvation.

The work of the Seraphim was the work of love, of pardon, of grace. In Isaiah 6 we read that the Seraphim flew from the altar with a live coal, to cleanse the prophet. His was a work of grace. The Cherubim and the Seraphim are united around the Throne of God because in the midst of that Throne there stands the newly slain Lamb. Because of His finished work on the Cross our Lord Jesus Christ has made it possible for God's judgment and God's grace to meet in pardoning love upon all who trust in His Son. The Lamb slain speaks to us of His precious blood; shed; and there is nothing more precious to God in all His universe than the blood of His Son. The blood stands for the life of His Son, and speaks to God of the supreme sacrifice made by His Son on the Cross in order that He might justly reconcile sinners unto Himself.

In Revelation 21:5 we read: 'HE that sitteth upon the Throne said, "Behold I make all things *new*". And begins in Man's

heart, the seat of all the disaster of sin and sinning; that is, man begins from without in trying to remedy the disease of sin, but God begins from within. When we trust the Lord Jesus Christ as our own personal Saviour God gives us Eternal Life, a new heart and a new mind: in other words we become 'a New Creation in Christ Jesus'.

In the Tate Gallery in London there is a striking picture entitled: 'The Two Crowns'. It shows an earthly conqueror clothed in armour of gold. On his head lies a glittering golden crown studded with jewels. Girls, dressed in white, are throwing flowers at the feet of his horse as he rides in triumph. For a moment you wonder at the title, for you only see *one* crown. Then away in the top right hand corner you see the Cross of Calvary and the *crown of thorns*. The genius of the artist is so great that he makes you feel that the real conqueror is CHRIST, and that His Crown of Thorns means far more than any earthly diadem.

The Day is coming when those who have trusted Him, who love that Crown of thorns, will cast the crown of their lives at His feet, as He stands in the midst of the glory of God's Throne. Will you be there? Let none of us forget that there will be another Throne set up: it is called 'The Great White Throne', whereon Christ will sit in judgment upon all who have rejected Him and His offer of love and salvation. To them He will say, in those terrible words,—'Depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire. I never knew you!' But it is still the Voice of God that calls erring souls to Himself: 'Now is the accepted time, and now *the Day of Salvation*. And to all who love Him as their own personal Saviour and Lord there is the divine promise: 'Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of Life' (Rev. 2:10, 11). Take the message of Christ also which was first given to the church in Philadelphia, but applies to all true believers as much today as in the centuries past: 'Behold I have set before thee a door opened, which none can shut . . . I come quickly: hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown' (Rev. 3:7-13).