

REVELATION – SERMON 26

GOD IS ON HIS THRONE

Revelation 4:1-3

INTRODUCTION

- There have been many books written in recent years with accounts of people who claimed to have visited heaven.
- Yet they are lies, fabrications, false and they should not be trusted.
- Only a handful of men in the Bible have been permitted to view a vision of heaven – Isaiah (ch.6); Ezekiel (ch.1 and 10); Micaiah (2 Chronicles 18:18); Stephen (Acts 7:55); Paul (2 Corinthians 12) and John (Revelation 4-5) and out of them, only three (Isaiah, Ezekiel and John) were allowed to give a report of the glory and majesty of God on His heavenly throne.
- Revelation 4:1 is a key verse in the book, marking a major transition from present events to future events; from earth to heaven.
- The broad outline of the book is found in 1:19:
 - ✓ The things which thou hast seen (1)
 - ✓ The things which are (2-3)
 - ✓ The things which shall be hereafter (4-22)
- The Greek word for “hereafter” in 1:19 (*meta tauta*) is used at the beginning and end of 4:1
- Chapters 4 & 5 reveal what will take place in heaven following the rapture
- What follows in chapters 6-18 is a description of the wrath and judgment of God poured out upon the world.
- Hence, chapters 4 & 5 form a central and pivotal position in the book.
- They link with the previous chapters, showing the happy state of the *overcomers*, now resurrected and with their Lord in heaven, offering their worship to the Lamb.
- These chapters serve also as an important precursor to the terrible judgments on the earth that follow; we are shown the origin of these judgments – from the throne of heaven, from the Lamb who takes scroll and opens the seals of it, unleashing the Day of the Lord’s anger
- The key word in these chapters is “throne”.
- The Greek word (thronos) is found nineteen times here, and forty-six times in the book of Revelation.
- The power, glory, majesty, authority and dominion of God are emphasised here.
- Many of the churches were suffering persecution, and assaulted by false teaching.
- What a comfort these words must have been to them, and remain so to us today, to know that in our tribulation, God remains on the throne, that the Lion of the tribe of Juda has prevailed and will deliver His people, and exact His wrath upon the unrighteous.

I. THE OPENED DOOR OF HEAVEN (1)

- A. This is the third “door” in Revelation
 - 1. The door of opportunity (3:8)
 - 2. The door of salvation (3:20)
 - 3. The door of heaven (4:1)
- B. This is the door of access between God and man
 - 1. Before the fall, this door was wide open
 - 2. Man’s sin shut this door, closing off our access to God and heaven
 - 3. Christ’s death opened the door for man to be reconciled to God (1 Peter 3:18; Matthew 27:51)
 - 4. Christ is the only door to God (John 10:9)
 - 5. God graciously calls us to enter the door today (2 Corinthians 6:2; Revelation 22:17)
 - 6. The time will come when the door of heaven will be shut to us (Matthew 25:1-13)

II. THE GREAT VOICE FROM HEAVEN (1)

- A. John’s translation into heaven is typical of the rapture of believers
 - 1. There will be a voice from heaven (1 Thessalonians 4:16)
 - 2. The trumpet sound will be heard (1 Corinthians 15:52; 1 Thessalonians 4:16)
 - 3. The destination is heaven (John 14:1-3; 1 Thessalonians 4:17)
 - 4. The timing is before the tribulation
 - a. There is no mention of the word church from 3:22 until 22:16 indicating that the present church age ends before the tribulation on earth begins
 - b. Church age believers are promised to be kept “from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth” (Revelation 3:10)
- B. The identification of the voice
 - 1. It is the same voice as in 1:10, which is the Lord Jesus Christ
- C. The nature of the voice
 - 1. It was like a trumpet – loud, clear, authoritative, arresting, summoning (cf. John 11:43)
 - 2. Christ’s voice is clear and unambiguous, easily understood by those who are willing to receive it
 - 3. His voice is heard and recognised by His sheep (John 10:27)
 - 4. The ungodly refuse to hear

- D. The message of the voice
 - 1. Come up hither
 - 2. John had heard this same voice many years prior, calling to him
 - a. Come and see (John 1:39)
 - b. Come and dine (John 21:12)
 - c. Now he hears, "Come up hither"
 - 3. The call is for the purpose of showing John "things which must be hereafter"

III. THE GLORIOUS THRONE OF HEAVEN (2-3)

- A. God's throne is in heaven (1 Kings 8:39; Isaiah 66:1; Matthew 5:34)
 - 1. This is the same throne that Isaiah saw (Isaiah 6:1)
 - 2. God's heavenly throne room is not a *palace* but a *temple*
 - a. The heavenly temple is frequently referenced throughout Revelation (8:3; 11:19)
 - b. The throne and the temple are described as being the same place (Revelation 7:15; 16:17)
 - c. Central to this throne therefore is holiness and worship
- B. God's throne is established
 - 1. The throne is *set* in heaven
 - a. It is permanent, fixed and unmovable
 - b. The LORD himself prepared his throne, not men or angels (Psalm 103:19)
 - 2. God *sits* on the throne
 - a. The tense of the verb for "sat" is present participle here and indicates a continuous sitting
 - b. Unlike all other thrones, God's heavenly throne is never vacated
- C. This is God the Father's throne
 - 1. John does not name the Person sitting on the throne
 - 2. It is hardly necessary to specify who He is, as He could be none other than God Almighty
 - 3. The description John gives of Him clearly identifies Him with Isaiah's and Ezekiel's visions of Jehovah (Isaiah 6; Ezekiel 1)
 - 4. Furthermore, the Person on the throne is distinguished in chapter 5 from the Lamb and the Spirit of God (Revelation 5:6ff)
- D. The splendour of God's throne

1. Note that though John gave a description of the form of God the Son (Revelation 1:13-16), he gives no description of the Father's form
 - a. While the Son has a body, the Father is a spirit and does not have a physical body
 - b. God did not show Himself to Israel in any similitude to prevent them making likenesses of Him (cf. Deuteronomy 4:15-19)
 - c. The closest that the scriptures come to describing the Father in human form is in Daniel 7:9
2. John's vision was so glorious and indescribable, that he could only use comparisons to relate it
 - a. Jasper is a clear gem (Revelation 21:11), it was the last of twelve stones on the high priest's breastplate (Exodus 28:20); some have suggested it is the same as diamond; it indicates purity
 - b. Sardine is a fiery blood red gem (Ezekiel 1:27), it was the first of the twelve stones on the high priest's breastplate; it indicates judgment
 - c. The use of both the first and the last gemstones from the breastplate of the high priest shows completeness, the beginning and end, and since those gems represent the tribes of Israel, it encompasses all of God's covenanted people
3. The rainbow about the throne (cf. Ezekiel 1:28)
 - a. This is a complete circle, indicating the eternity of God
 - b. The seven colours of the rainbow point to God's perfection
 - c. Green is the central colour of the rainbow, and predominates the rainbow about God's throne
 - d. The rainbow is a token of God's covenant with Noah (Genesis 9:11-17)
 - e. It is a reminder of God's judgment upon the world & His faithfulness to His covenant
 - f. The rainbow is visible after the storm

CONCLUSION

1. Heaven should be where our affections are set, not this world (Colossians 3:1-4)
2. The greatest joy of heaven is the presence of God
3. Like Paul, we ought to have a desire to depart and be with Christ (Philippians 1:23)
4. As Christ called John to "come", so He calls each of us to come unto Him
5. It is possible for us, even now, to enter into heaven and come before God's throne in prayer (Hebrews 4:16)
6. God is enthroned in heaven; is He enthroned in your heart?
7. He is Lord over all; is he *your* Lord?
8. Will you devote your entire being – body, soul and spirit – to God's glory alone? (1 Cor 10:31)
9. "Soli Deo Gloria"