***John – in Heaven

RV72-02***

Please open your Bibles to Revelation 4 as we continue moving into the portion of Revelation that deals with the tribulation era of human history. The sin nature of man responds quite readily to the appeals of Satan to produce an earthly millennium without the person of Jesus Christ, and without His authority. Of course, that's what the devil has been trying to do for these many centuries – to produce a millennial condition upon this earth, and to produce a utopia, in spite of the fact that in this particular section of the Word of God, we see clearly revealed that the destiny of mankind is anything but utopian. The destiny of mankind is tragedy, and suffering, and heartache, and increasing sin.

**The National Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches**

Sincere but evil men, however, are enraged by the biblical revelation of the destined failure of human good efforts. Satan's system of socialism, therefore, is championed by liberal religion in the name of Christianity. The reason liberal religion is so antagonistic to the prophetic Scriptures is because it counters their arrogant view of what man can do in improving his world. We have pointed out that in the forefront of this arrogance are two organizations, the National Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches, which are promoting a world dominated by Marxism/ Leninism, and they do this by taking money out of the offering plates of denominations which belong to these organizations, and contributing to terrorist organizations seeking to impose Satan's system of socialism.

We read you some documentation on that in the last session. You might be interested, in following that up, to know what some of the denominations are, which belong to the National Council of Churches. There will be many people who will be listening to what we have said here on tapes. Some of those people are in these denominations, and it would behoove us to be kind enough to alert them to the fact that their money is going for the kind of slaughter that we heard of in the last session, and the kind of imposition of a satanic system on humanity, all under the guise of improving the lot of the poor, and the helpless, and the weak, and the sick, but which is only going to result in a world that is swallowed up in terror, and heartache, and tragedy such as mankind has seldom seen.

Here are some of the members of the National Council of Churches, and of course, affiliated with the World Council as well: the African Methodist Episcopal Church; the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church; the American Baptist Churches in the United States of America; the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America; Armenian Church of America; Christian Church; the Disciples of Christ; Christian Methodist Episcopal Church; Church of the Brethren; Coptic Orthodox Church in North America; the Episcopal Church; Friends United Meeting General Convention; the Swedenborgian Church; Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America; the Hungarian Reformed Church in America; the Lutheran Church in America; the Moravian Church in America (Northern Province, and Southern Province); the National Baptist Convention of America; the National Baptist Convention USA Inc.; the National Council of Community churches; the Orthodox Church in America; the Patriarchal Parishes of the Russian Orthodox Church in America; Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends; Polish National Catholic Church of America; the Presbyterian Church in the United States; Progressive National Baptist Convention Incorporated; Reformed Church in America; Serbian Eastern Orthodox Church; Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch; Ukrainian Orthodox Church in America; the United Church of Christ; the United Methodist Church; and, the United Presbyterian Church in the USA. There are many more, but these are some of the biggest and the largest, and the most influential.

**The Inerrancy of Scripture**

You want to remember that, by and large, these denominations, almost uniformly, were once very biblically oriented, and were once very sound in basic doctrine relative to salvation; to what their calling was; with their view of where the world was going; and, to the quality of the sin nature which is in man. All of these groups had been siphoned off into terrorist activities through their money, because all of these groups, someplace along the line, permitted their pulpits to be filled by men who believed that the Bible had been written by God with mistakes in it – that God had permitted a Bible with errancy. Once you deny the inerrancy of Scripture, you will end up in the position of rejecting the contents of Scripture. Of course, that's why Satan leads people to reject the inerrancy of Scripture – so that then Satan can lead people very easily to reject the content of Scripture, because the content then just happens to be somebody's opinion. This list that I have read for you is recorded in the *American Opinion* magazine. ...

**Revelation 4**

In Revelation 4:1, with which we began in the last session, John enters a new vision which shifts from the church on earth to the church in heaven. John looks up into the sky and he sees a door standing open, leading into the third heaven. This door reminds us that entrance into heaven is restricted to a specific way. This is the way enunciated in the New Testament gospel by grace, apart from human efforts; human works; and, human ritual. There is no other door into heaven. Make no mistake about it. Heaven is entered by a single door, and that door alone. Either you're in through that door, or you're never in heaven and eternal life at all. The Lord Jesus Christ is the door into heaven, and into eternal life. There is no other way.

Funerals are prime places where people love to kid themselves, because they face the tough situation that somebody close and dear to them has died. And somehow they grasp at some kind of straws that maybe they made it into heaven in some way; somehow; or, in some possible way, because God is just going to be nice about this. The first thing to be aware of here, when we see this door into heaven that John sees, is that it is symbolic of the fact that the Bible makes it clear that only through Jesus Christ is a person able to come into heaven. The Lord says, "No man comes unto the Father, but by Me." Make no mistake about that. Whatever the tragedy; whatever the heartache; or, however sad it is that someone who is important to us has never cleanly made that commitment to Christ, you're whistling in the dark if you to hope that there's some other way that he's going to make it.

**Witnessing**

Please make very sure, when it is your turn to witness to the gospel, that you realize that you are teaching a doctrinal truth. The gospel is something that you teach to people. When you deal with unsaved people, there are two things that you must always keep uppermost in your mind if you are to be a witness for Jesus Christ in dealing with that person. First, you must tell him the gospel; and, secondly, you must tell him what he must do with it.

First, you must tell him the gospel. He needs absolute righteousness to go to heaven. He has to be as good as Jesus Christ. He can only receive that when his sins have been paid for. Jesus Christ has paid for those sins. That person that you're talking to could never have paid for them. Therefore, God offers him that absolute righteousness as a gift, and that's the only way you can receive it – as a gift. The moment you put any human effort forth to receive it, you have neutralized the ground of grace, and you will go to hell. You know, as well as I do, that there are many denominations today who are singing praises to God. They're meeting this very day. They're looking to heaven someday, but they're telling people that they must be saved by trusting in Jesus Christ and performing the ritual of water baptism. Those people are going to end up in hell. And what a horrible shock that's going to be. So, it's very important that you make clear to people what the gospel is. It's a grace gift offer. You don't do anything. You accept what God has already done.

Secondly, you must tell them how to accept it. That is by believing. It is a matter of receiving by believing. John 1:12 puts it all so neatly together: "But as many as received Him, to them He gave power to become the children of God, even to them that believe on His name." You couldn't say it more clearly than that. I know that preachers confuse this issue. I've heard that same famous evangelist, that all of you know, stand on national television, with his high-priced time, and belittle what he calls "believism," which the Bible exalts as the only means into eternal life. I've heard him quote John 1:12, and I notice that he always stops without quoting the last phrase: "That as many as received Him, unto them He gave power to become the children of God..."

Then he starts yelling. You know, when you don't have too much content, you start yelling. That's one of the things you can spot about a preacher. The guy who's always turning up the volume and shouting and yelling and screaming at you is trying to cover up that he doesn't have anything to say. Therefore, without content, he's trying to con you into the fact that he's forceful. So, this great evangelist will start getting very forceful: "You must receive Christ." And I wonder how many Christians are immediately alerted to be on their guard who happen to know that the rest of that verse says the way that you receive Christ is by believing on His name.

So, tell people what the gospel is, and then tell them what they must do with it. They must believe it. Then you have set them on the road that, with their positive volition, they may enter this door that John saw in the sky – that doorway leading into eternal life.

"After this, I looked and, behold, a door stood opened." A door was standing open in heaven – into the third heaven: "And the first voice that I heard was." The word "voice" looks like this in the Greek Bible: "phone." This is a noun. It is used here for the sound of a human voice speaking. John says, "This was the first voice which I had heard." What he is referring to is Revelation 1:10: "I was in the Spirit (I was in the state of spirituality) on the Lord's Day (on Sunday) on the Isle of Patmos, and heard behind me a great voice as of a trumpet." It is that same voice which, of course, proved to be the voice of the Lord Jesus Christ that he is now referring to. John is saying, "That first voice that I heard, I now heard it again, speaking to me, introducing this next dramatic vision."

"I heard" is the Greek word "akouo." "Akouo" refers to hearing a sound with the ear. In the Greek Bible, this is in the aorist tense, which means that, at some point in the past, John had heard. Of course, it was back in Revelation 1:10 that he had heard this voice. It is active. That means that John was actually hearing the voice of the Lord Jesus Christ. He really did hear this human voice speaking to him. The way we would translate this is, "And the first voice which I heard."

**God Speaks to us through His Word**

In the time that John was writing, God was still communicating with peoples directly through audible voices – voices that they heard from God speaking to them. Every now and then somebody comes along today and says, "I heard a voice speaking to me," and they imply that God has spoken to them: "I was lying on my bed in the middle of the night (or, 'I was lying on my face in the middle of the floor in prayer'), and I heard this voice above speaking to me." Now, if you have heard some voices speaking to you, I would suggest that you see your doctor as soon as you can, because you have some kind of a problem. Whatever you are hearing, I guarantee you, it isn't God. It's something else that's gone askew in the mechanism. God has completed his Revelation of Scripture, and it is through His Word that He speaks. However, He does lead us. God the Holy Spirit does lead us through the Word of God. This a very important distinction.

I heard another famous evangelist the other night saying that God still speaks to people. He didn't like the idea that the Bible was God's vehicle of communication. He said that God still speaks. That's dangerous ground. God leads us. That's what he meant, and his language could have been better. Evangelists are so sloppy about words. It is terrible. They're just sloppy. I'm glad that we don't chew tobacco anymore, and spit in spittoons, because they're the kind that would miss it every time, and just make a mess of things. They do that with words. They are sloppy about words. The Bible is very exact, and very clean-cut, and very definitive. And that's how we should be. This is, again, the devil's game to make us careless about the words of Scripture, and what words mean.

**The Sound of a Trumpet**

So, John actually did hear a voice, because it was the way God was communicating at that time, while the Scriptures were still being written. He compares this voice (the way it struck him) as the sound of a trumpet: "As it were" is just this little word in Greek: "hos." This is what we call a relative adverb of manner. It is giving us the manner of a voice. It's a comparison. He didn't actually hear a trumpet. God wasn't speaking to him in sounds of a trumpet. We have some real hot-lipped trumpet players in our band, as you know. Some of our trumpet players can make different sounds on their trumpet. They can neigh like a horse; they can laugh through the thing; they can wow out through the thing; and, they can really speak to us sometime. But that isn't what is implied here. This word "hos" tells us that, with John, it had the quality of a trumpet sound. It had the quality of (and this is the word for "trumpet") a "salpigx." A "salpigx" is a musical instrument. He's referring again back to Revelation 1:10, where he is referring to that first voice he heard; that is, the voice of Jesus Christ. He observed there that it was like the sound of a trumpet.

So, he is saying, "And the first voice which I had heard, like the sound of a trumpet." One thing that a trumpet does superbly is to convey the quality of authority. Historically, trumpets have been used in military situations to convey orders and directions. The sound of a trumpet is a sound that alerts people, and that draws forth the response of obedience.

This is illustrated in 1 Corinthians 14:8, where Paul says, "For if trumpet gives an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?" A trumpet has to make clean-cut sounds to give definitive orders. Here in 1 Corinthians 14, he is, of course, trying to explain the error of the gibberish tongues which were being spoken in the heathen temples of Corinth, and which were being imitated by some of the saints, mostly the women in the congregation at Corinth. Paul is saying that that kind of gibberish tongue has no definitive meaning. He compares it to a trumpet – that a trumpet (which ordinarily has authority and direction), unless it is clear in what it is sounding, will not have that authority. Therefore, when we hear a trumpet, we are aware that it is a sound to be listened to and to be obey. And to John, there was something about the voice of Jesus Christ, as he listened to it here, that reminded him of the authority of a trumpet sounding forth in order.

God has used trumpets in the past, at important times, when He has performed certain important acts. One of those, for example, was the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai when there were trumpets sounding. When God executes divine judgments, trumpets are sounded. When the resurrection of the church takes place at the rapture, there are going to be trumpets sounding. This is one of the sounds that you will hear when the rapture takes place. It will be the sounding of a trumpet, announcing in some glorious, tremendous way that the party is on.

The analogy to the trumpet carries the idea of clarity. So, when the Lord spoke, John said, "I understood. It was authoritative. I understood what He was saying, and the directions were clear." He says that this trumpet was talking to him. This is the Greek word "laleo." This trumpet-like clarity and authority is described by the word "laleo" because it is stressing the actual words uttered by Jesus Christ. This Greek word lay stress on the very words that Jesus Christ used. Those words are going to be enunciated here in a moment: "Come up here, and I will show you things which must be hereafter." God always speaks in understandable language. God never speaks in gibberish which is spawned by the emotions running amuck. It is very important to note this about the word "laleo." That goes with the individual words – the emphasis on those individual words in the sentence that Jesus spoke. John is stressing that not only was there authority, but there was intelligibility. The voice of Jesus Christ conveyed a clear message.

**The Charismatic Movement**

This is one of the great condemnations upon the fraud of the charismatic movement today – claiming to speak in tongues with their gibberish, because God never speaks in gibberish. There never were gibberish tongues, and there never will be gibberish tongues. That is a satanic, emotional convulsion of the speaking organs and of the human mouth. It has nothing to do with the gift of tongues that once existed. This word stresses to us that John was being spoken to by the Lord Jesus Christ in clear language.

"After this, I looked, and, behold, a door was standing opened in the sky into the third heaven. And the voice which I heard at first, that was like the sound of a trumpet, talking with me – talking in specific words." And then he adds, "Which said." Then he shifts gears, because this is the word "lego" in the Greek language. It is no longer "laleo." Right here, within this one little grouping of words, he shifts to "lego." This is another Greek word for conveying the idea of communication. But this one does not emphasize the individual words. This one emphasizes the concepts as a whole. So, John shifts from telling us, "I heard the voice of Jesus Christ. It had the authority of the sounding of a trumpet. I knew specifically what He was saying in individual words, and this is what He said." Now he wants to lay stress upon the meaning of those words rather than the words themselves. He is declaring here the concept (the main part) of the message at this point, which he received from Jesus Christ. That, of course, was an invitation to enter the third heaven to learn what the future history of mankind would be. So, here is the concept. Now, it is not stressing the words, but the idea of the content.

"Come up." This is the Greek word "anabaino." "Anabaino" is a word indicating "upward movement." That's what the word means. Here, it is indicating off of planet earth, and up into the third heaven where this door is standing ajar for John to enter into it. It's in the aorist tense, which is, of course, the point of John's ascension through the open door. It's active because John did this in a vision. His body is still on Patmos, but his spirit now moves through that open door into heaven itself. This time, the Greek is imperative. It is a command. God is saying to John, "Move up here. Come into my heaven."

This word, with its concept of upward movement, certainly reminds us of the rapture of the church, because what John did here in a vision, you and I someday, with all the other believers of the church age, are going to do in actuality, as will John, too, who will join us – in physical bodies. At that time, we will rise up and go through that door into heaven itself. The promise of Revelation 3:10 is to the effect that, "Because you have kept the word of My patience, I also will keep you from the hour of tribulation which shall come upon all the world to try them that dwell upon the earth." This promise to the Philadelphia church is indicative (one of those evidences) that the church will not pass through the tribulation. And the tribulation is about ready to begin. Here, symbolically, John is told to move off the earth into heaven, because that's the way it's going to be for us, before the events of the tribulation unfold before our eyes. John saw what was coming in a vision. You and I will someday have a front row seat to see these things actually taking place on the planet earth.

The word here, of course, when he says, "Come up here," refers to the third heaven. There have been other human beings in heaven (a few): Enoch, described in Genesis 5:24; Elijah, in 2 Kings 2:11; and, the apostle Paul, in 2 Corinthians 12:1-5. That is all the record we have of human beings who, in their physical bodies, entered into heaven. But not one of these three people have given us any information about heaven. Only one of them, Paul, ever returned, and he was explicitly forbidden to reveal what he had seen. So, the previous observers have told us nothing. We're going to get a little bit of a clue to what we will see in heaven now from John.

"Come up here, and I will show you." The word "show" is the Greek word "deiknumi." "Deiknumi" is a promise of revelation to John concerning the future events of the world. It is therefore in the future tense. As soon as John enters into the door, this is going to take place. It is active. Jesus Christ Himself is going to be the teacher who makes this revelation. It's in the indicative mood – a statement of fact. He's going to show him what He calls, "Things that must be." That's the Greek word "dei." This word means "it is necessary." This word refers to an absolute condition. It's a word which the Greek language uses to convey something that is going to take place. You can count on it. It has to be. The Lord Jesus Christ is going to describe for John the events of the tribulation era which must come to pass. This word "dei" in the Greek Bible is connected with another word: the word "ginomai." "Ginomai" means "to become." So, the idea is "what is necessary to become," or "what must absolutely take place." At some point in human history, this must take place. This is in the infinitive mood, indicating that it is God's purpose in the tribulation events for these things to come to pass.

So, the Living Creator God has a plan for human history which will inexorably be executed. Our job is to learn what that direction is; learn what that plan is; and, then coordinate with it. Do not be trying to bring about something on the face of the earth which is not compatible to God's plan – to where the world is going. That's very important. You will waste your life as a believer, and you will waste your opportunity to store treasures in heaven if you are trying to pursue something in terms of a ministry to bring about something on the face of this earth which is obviously out of keeping with what God's plan reveals to us is the direction that the world is going to move.

It's like trying to stop wars. Anybody who knows anything about the Bible knows that the Lord Jesus Christ made it very clear that there will never be a time when there will not be wars, or the threat of wars, or when conflict will not actually exist. The Lord made it very clear that that's how it's going to be. Anytime a peace movement comes along, usually it's communist-sponsored for a communist goal. Any pursuit of peace, and the idea that you're going to remove the threat of war from the world (that that is possible), is contrary to Scripture. If you cooperate with it, and if you help it, you're wasting your life. The Bible makes it very clear in the Bible doctrine of warfare that there is only one way that peace is maintained upon the face of the earth. History confirms this. Never in the history of the world has peace been maintained on the face of the earth through disarmament. Never! You do not maintain peace by getting rid of your weapons. The only time peace has been upon the face of the earth is when a nation has been strong enough to defend itself militarily so that its enemies did not dare attack. That is the principle that God taught Israel of old for its defense – to be so strong militarily that the nations roundabout would not dare attack them and break the peace. And while Israel was strong, there was peace. When Israel neglected that, and became weak, they experienced war. Their women were ravaged; their men were slaughtered; their homes were taken; and, they were driven into slavery.

So, know where God is going. Know what His plan is. Then, with these doctrinal principles that you learn in terms of the prophetic future, place your efforts in that direction. When somebody comes along and tries to tie up your money; your time; and, your effort in what you know the Bible says is not what is to be, or is not the plan of God, then don't get involved. Avoid it.

"Come up here, and I will show you things which must absolutely come to pass hereafter." "Hereafter" refers back to the expression "after these things" which we read in Revelation 1:19. That was the verse that gave us the outline of the book of the Revelation: "After these things" means after the church age.

So, John does what he's told. In spirit, he is caught up off the earth, and he moves into the sky; through that door; and, into heaven. Verse 2 says, "Immediately." That is the Greek word "eutheos." "Eutheos" means "instantaneously." This is again reflective. It's a picture of the way it's going to be for us when we are caught up through that door into heaven at the rapture. 1 Corinthians 15:52 uses the expression "the twinkling of an eye." Just a little flash of light off of your eye is all it's going to take – just that little passing glimmer of light flashing off the eyeball. That twinkling of your eye is all it's going to take for you to find yourself off this earth; through that door; and, into the Lord's presence.

John says, "Immediately, I was in the spirit." The word "spirit" is the Greek word "pneuma." "Pneuma" here does not have the word "the" in front of it. It is not "the spirit." It is simply the word "spirit" alone. That indicates to us that the stress is upon the quality of spirit, as such, rather than the person of God the Holy Spirit. The quality of the human spirit is what is in view here. Functioning in the area of his immaterial being, rather than in his physical body, John moves up through that door. It is in his human spirit that John leaves the earth and moves from Patmos into the third heaven.

**A Throne**

Now, John is in full command of his mind, and in what he is hearing. He fully understands what he hears. He's fully conscious of what he is seeing. So, in his human spirit (in the quality of spirit), he moves up from Patmos through the door: "And, behold." There is that word again that indicates announcing. That little word tells us to be alerted that something important is going to be declared: "Behold, a throne." This is the Greek word "thronos." This is a noun. This is a word for the seat of imperial authority. It refers here to the Father's throne in heaven. The Father's throne in heaven is shared by the Lord Jesus Christ at this point. Mark 16:19 tells us that. Hebrews 10:12-13 indicate that. Revelation 3:21 indicates that Jesus Christ is now sharing His Father's throne.

Now, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself has a throne. In fact, his mother was promised when He was born that He would inherit a throne. But the throne that He was promised was the throne of His father David, and that throne is on the planet earth. It is the throne that represents the rule of the Jewish nation over the nations of the world. The Lord Jesus Christ is the next king in line for the throne of Israel when God sets up that nation to rule the nations of the world. But now, Christ is not seated on His throne. Now, the Bible is very clear that He is in the third heaven, and He is sharing the Father's throne.

This is tell us something right off the bat. In a moment, you'll see that John sees the throne, and then, in symbolic fashion, he sees what he recognizes as God the Father sitting upon that throne. He sees this throne in heaven, and immediately, it reminds us of the fact that God does reign over the universe. God is still on the throne. He is the absolute certainty. So, no matter what our lot may be, we ought never forget that "The Lord God omnipotent reigneth" – those dramatic words in Handel's Messiah. That is true now as it was true when John first walked into heaven, and there, the first thing that made his heart skip a beat was to see that throne – that imperial authority of the sovereign ruling God, and the Father in His glory reflected, and John knew exactly what it was that he was seeing there.

This throne, we're told, was set ("keimai"). The word "keimai" means "was standing." It connotes the idea of firmly fixed. This is the imperfect tense. The imperfect tense is a tense that tells us that something is repeated and repeated. The point here is that this is a throne which is firmly fixed. It is in place, and it is not to be moved. This is in contrast to the thrones of the potentates on earth, which rise and fall regularly. So, it's not an insignificant thing that God the Holy Spirit says that John not only saw the throne, but one thing that immediately came through to John was that here was a throne that was never to be removed. It would never fall. It was established. John immediately thought about one of the qualities, no doubt, of the essence of God: sovereignty. He knew that he was looking at the Sovereign Creator God.

This throne was firmly fixed, and it was in heaven. John goes through the open door into the third heaven. This is a real place. The third heaven is a real place. Here, it is being portrayed to us as God's throne room. Heaven is a real place where real people go. Not everybody goes to heaven, but some people do go to heaven. Those who are born again go to this heaven. Those who go through this heaven will see that throne. Someday, you and I will see this throne. Someday, John's experience will be repeated by ourselves.

**The Throne of Grace**

I want you to remember that this throne, which is so firmly established, and so immovable, is that which Hebrews 4:16 calls the throne of grace: "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." What's the writer speaking about? He's talking about prayer. He's talking about that, when you and I pray as believers, we are coming to the throne of grace. Sometimes we say that. Sometimes we invite people to come out Wednesday nights to meet with us before the throne of grace. It's not a small expression which we should throw around lightly. Perhaps, with this which we have read here in Revelation 4, we'll realize that this is the throne of the sovereign God who makes everything go; who makes all the decisions; and, who can answer any prayer that is compatible with the name of Jesus Christ and all that He stands for in the will of God. The throne of grace is the throne that John was looking at. That's the same throne that you and I appeal to every time we turn to God in prayer. It's not an empty exercise. When you pray, you're not just blowing soap bubbles in the air that are going to burst. It is communication with a heaven that is fully equipped to receive your words, and a God who is ready to respond immediately to them.

"At once (instantaneously), I was in the spirit (in my human spirit), and, behold, a throne (an imperial ruling throne) was established firmly in heaven, and One sat on the throne." The word "sat" is the Greek word "kathamai." This refers to the natural posture of sitting. It refers to God the Father. The Lord Jesus Christ, in the vision of the throne room, we will see, is represented separately as the Lamb.

**God, the Father**

So, suddenly John walks in, and he's aware that someone is sitting upon this throne. Then, in verse 3, he tries to describe the one who sat upon this throne. When Moses gave the Law from Sinai to the people of Israel, Moses made it very clear, upon God's commandment, that the people were not to try to think of God in terms of a human being. They were not to envision that God in some way looked like us.

They were not to do exactly what the Mormons have done. The Mormons have transformed God into a human being. The Mormons are taught that the God who rules the world, that they call the Heavenly Father, was once a human being who was developing qualities and merit, and improving, and that finally brought Him to the place where he was the supreme God. Mormons are taught that all of them are in the process, following down the same trail of the human being God, which is now in heaven, who is the Father, and someday they too will be gods such as He is. This is a little bit of nonsense, again, out of the world of Satan's hell.

God is not to be thought of in terms of human figures. The reason that was so stressed to the Jews was that they were on the threshold of going into the Promised Land which was filled with pagan people who had gods made in their own image that they were worshiping. God made it very clear that they were not to think of Him in (what we call) anthropomorphic terms.

So, John is describing this person that he sees here that he is aware is sitting upon this throne. He said, "And He that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardius stone." The person on the throne is one of the questions that we are always interested in in the book of the Revelation. I think it is best to view this as being God the Father, because in Revelation 5:6, we see that Jesus Christ is distinguished from the One who is on the throne in this throne room scene, and we see that in Revelation 4:5, the Holy Spirit is also distinguished from the one who sits upon the throne. So, I think this is pretty good indication that the One that we see upon the throne is the ruling God the Father.

The Father's throne was once upon the earth, in the tabernacle and in the temple. We have this taught in Exodus 25:18: "And you shall make two cherubim of gold, of beaten work shall you make them, in the two ends of the mercy seat." The mercy seat was the throne of God, and in Revelation 25:22, we read, "And there I will meet with you, and I will commune with you from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim, which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give you in commandment unto the children of Israel." So, the throne of God, during the era of the tabernacle and the temple, was actually that mercy seat, and it was there directly among the Jewish people.

However, in time, as you know, the Jews rejected God the Father. They rejected His theocratic kingdom over them. The time came when they were so blessed; when they were so prosperous; and, when God was moving them ahead, that they decided that they wanted to be (and you have those sad words in Scripture): "like the other nations." Can you imagine that? Here was the God that has led them; blessed them; prospered them; made them rich; and, led them into this land of milk and honey. And the time came when finally Samuel was so crushed. He was God's last line of communication and direction over God's theocratic kingdom. The head (the king) of Israel was God himself. Samuel was so crushed because of the negative volition of the people. The Lord comforted His prophet, and said, "Samuel, look. They have not rejected you. They have rejected Me." The people wanted to be like the other nations.

It behooves us, as a congregation that has operated on a comparatively modest basis for some 30 years now, to be aware of the fact that we're under pressures of expansion in practically every area of our ministry. We're under pressures of expansion which are only being restrained now, practically, by one thing, and that's access to enough money to do it. What if the Lord supplies that money? What if the Berean ministry suddenly comes into expanded facilities that enable us to minister to more people? And those people are there. Every time we've had more facilities, God has filled them in this place, because the Lord knows that our orientation to doctrine in the souls of people as the primary calling of the local ministry is compatible to His plan. He knows we understand it, and he knows we're faithful to that.

However, there are a lot of things that we don't do that other churches do. There are a lot of things. We don't even tell funny stories from the pulpit. You're supposed to do that in preaching. We don't ask people to come down the aisles so that they can be saved. We don't even pass an offering plate. Now, what kind of nonsense is that? Whoever heard of a church that doesn't pass an offering plate? Our organizational structure is different. There are many segments that we don't engage in. And the reason that we don't engage in some of those is because, with over three decades past, we have gotten very burned with some of those, and we have learned our lesson. And we have seen that God has a plan for some things, and He has a plan for some things that we don't need.

I'll tell you right now the burden that's going to be upon us, and the pressures that I guarantee you will come, will be people who are rising up and they're looking out there at those other churches, and now we may have the facility and the means to be like them, because God has prospered us, and the pressures are going to be upon us to become like them.

We've gone through this before. When we gathered many, many years ago, to put a brick veneer on that academy building. That was all the building we had. That's where we met in church. That was the whole shebang. We came to the happy day where we could cover up those white wooden, peeling, paintless boards, and we could make it look like a fancy colonial building. The week we began that, I told this congregation that we had this day lost a very precious quality that we must be careful to preserve in another way.

Up to then, people had driven by, and they looked at that building, and they were sure that there couldn't be anything going on in there that was worth anything. That old wooden-sided, flattop building didn't even have a nice roof. Whoever heard of a roof that wasn't pointed? Most people have a roof to match their heads. These people should have had a pointed roof up there, and we didn't even have that. It was just a flattop roof. We had to replace it. I remember when I got some of my seminary helpers, and we spent all Saturday putting out black felt paper, and swabbing it down with tar from a machine down below that was melting the tar for us. I remember going home that night, with that whole gang, over to our house, which is now the first-grade building. We all lay out on the floor while Mrs. Danish was getting some supper ready for us. We were beaten. That was all the building we had.

I told this congregation that people were going to drive by, and they weren't drawn to come into that building because of its looks. But within that building was a gem of a congregation which was being formed, and which was being drawn, with a quality built in such that the dross was being knocked off periodically, and just flung out. I said, "Now, with this colonial look, we're going to have some dudes coming in here that are looking for a nice-looking church to come to, and they are not going to be motivated by the attraction of the Word of God. We're going to have to make it clear to those guys that if you are here, it is not because we are the friendliest church in town, or because we have people standing at the door with a mouthful-of-teeth smile to greet you. And you don't walk in here and give us the impression that you have done us a great favor by gracing us with your presence. There are some idiots who still think that – that if they come to Berean Memorial church, they have done us a great favor, and they expect us to drool all over them.

When you come to this ministry, or any other ministry where the Word of God is explained on the authority of the languages of Scripture, you do yourself a favor. And that's what we're going to have to preserve. We're going to have to see to it that we don't fall into the trap of wanting to be like the other churches. It's going to come, and it's going to be very subtle. This is the devil's way of working. And suddenly, we can be like Israel, where we were a prince in God's hands with a voice and a communication that was changing lives, and best of all, ensuring rewards for people in heaven – people who for all eternity will rise up and call you people blessed, because of what you have been a part of, and what you have invested your lives in. And we can blow the whole thing when we have the means to reach out in a bigger way, if we decide we have to be like the other churches.

God the Father once had His throne on this earth, but when the Jews had to be like the other nations, they rejected God as their king. And you know what the result was. Jehovah withdrew Himself. He removed His throne, and He put it into the place where John sees it now – in the third heaven.

1 Samuel 8:7: "And the Lord said unto Samuel, 'Hearken unto the voice of the people, and all that they say into you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them.'"

1 Samuel 8:5 is what was so crushing upon the prophet: "And said to him (the elders of Israel said unto Samuel), 'Behold, you are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations.'" And God said, "Samuel, let them have it. They're going to regret it. My, how they're going to regret it, but let them have it."

And when they got it, God the Father decided to remove His throne from among them, and no longer to dwell there as their God, and they as His people, and He removed that thrown into the third heaven. In Psalm 11:4, we read, "And the Lord is in His holy temple. The Lord's throne is in heaven. His eyes behold; His eyelids test the children of men." There you have anthropomorphic descriptions of God: God's eyes; and, God's eyelids. That's only to convey concepts to us in terms that we can understand.

Psalm 103:19: "The Lord has prepared His throne in the heavens, and His kingdom rules over all."

Matthew 23:22: "He that shall swear by heaven, swear by the throne of God, and by Him who sits on it."

So, Israel is a sad example of those who one time had God's throne among them, but who, because they rejected the Lord, that throne was transferred into the third heaven. After His ascension. God the Son sat down on the throne at the Father's right hand, on this throne which is in heaven. Mark 16:19 and Hebrews 10:12-13 tells us that. Revelation 3:21 says that, during the church age, the Son shares the Father's throne. Jesus Christ leaves the Father's throne after the rapture when He goes to meet the bride, the church. That's when he gets up from the throne, and He leaves the throne to meet us in the air to take us back into heaven.

Then John proceeds, in symbolic words that are very significant, to describe God the Father on that throne: not as a person with head and arms and legs, but he has to convey the fact that what he sees there is a magnificent display of glory – breathtaking, like a light show. Then John, under the inspiration of God the Holy Spirit, picks out certain symbolic words, which have important connotations in past Scripture, to describe what he sees on that throne. We shall look at that next time.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

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