

Bethel

Pulpit

The Eternal Throne of God

Sermon Number 482

**Sermon preached at Bethel Chapel, Luton,
by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom,
on Lord's day morning, 24th September, 2017**

Text: *"Behold, a throne was set in heaven, and One sat on the throne"*
(Rev. 4. 2).

Immediately after this verse, right through to the end of the Book of Revelation, we are going to be shown things that will happen in the earth – then, and now, and up to the end of time. Some of them are terrible things, and there is great sorrow, and much conflict, and great tribulation. But before any of these things, before any of them are spoken of, we have this wonderful view that there is a throne in heaven, and there is One who sits on it, and that One is true almighty God. He is in complete control, whatever happens afterwards in the rest of the Book – the opening of the vials, the sounding of the trumpets, the pouring out of divine wrath, the conflict. This is the foundation of it all: there is a throne that is set in heaven. It is set there. It is there this morning. It is not a precarious throne. It can never be shaken. It can never be vacated. "The Lord God omnipotent reigneth," and blessed be His name that He is still on the throne.

But the revelation that John had is not only the throne of God in heaven and this glorious Person sitting on the throne, but the whole of humanity is subject to His control, and the whole of history must be viewed in this light: that there is a throne set in heaven, and there is One who sits upon it. Nothing can happen by accident, nothing by chance – this great, this almighty God ordering everything according to the counsel of His will, overruling everything, even making the wrath of man to serve Him and restraining the remainder of wrath. As John Kent puts it:

"Great is the mystery, truly great,
That hell's designs should hell defeat;
But here eternal wisdom shines,
For Satan works what God designs."

Now that is it!

"A throne was set in heaven, and One sat on the throne." So really everything that follows – some of it very mysterious, much of it hard to be

understood – but one thing is clear: all along it is speaking of a conflict between the church and the world, between Satan and Christ, and the vital point is this: whatever things may seem, however they may appear, it is the church of God that is going to be victorious, not the world, and it is Christ who is going to have the honour and the glory, not Satan. You come to the end of it, and Satan is cast out into the bottomless pit for ever and ever.

I hope we as a congregation shall ever be blessed with clear views of the greatness of God, the greatness of this One who sits upon the throne. Once or twice in my life I have seen it, and I believed then that the Lord could do everything, He could do anything, that the most impossible thing with Him is easy. May we as a congregation ever be kept from having low views, false views of God. That is where wrong behaviour in the church always starts, when people have inferior views of God. The psalmist said, “O Lord my God, Thou art very great.” It is a simple statement, but it is profound, and there is everything in it.

But you young people, and you boys and girls at school, may you see it especially. You have your difficulties. People teach different things, believe different things. Lots of those who are with you go to different places; they do different things. Their behaviour is different. Their behaviour is wrong, and sometimes you must feel sad, but always remember this: that this great God who sits on the throne is on our side. He is with us. He is going to be victorious. It is the truth of God that is going to be victorious. “For ever, O Lord, Thy Word is settled in heaven.” Whatever people have to say or speak about evolution, or sex relationships, or so on, the Word of God stands, and it shall stand for ever.

You come to the last chapter of this Book, and there you read it: awful doom on those who deny the Word of God, who take anything from it, the doom which awaits them (Rev. 22. 18, 19). This God, if we have been brought up – even if it goes no further than that – if we have been brought up to believe that the Bible is true, this truth will stand and stand eternally.

So it is a glorious revelation that John had here. He saw a door opened in heaven, and he heard a voice saying, “Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter.” He was in the spirit, and he saw all these wonderful things, these strange things, these mysterious things, the conflict, all these things, but before anything else it was this: as if the Lord

said, John, this is the foundation. This is where we start. This is where you have to keep your eyes fixed: there is a throne in heaven, and there is One who sits on it.

“Thy throne eternal ages stood,
Ere seas or stars were made;
Thou art the ever-living God,
Were all the nations dead.”

“Behold, a throne was set in heaven, and One sat on the throne.” Well, recently we have been thinking a lot, everyone has been thinking a lot, the world has been thinking a lot, of all these arguments and plans and confusion about Brexit, and all these mighty people in the world, and all the plans, and the confusion, and people lacking wisdom, and only thinking from earthly wisdom, and some being afraid, and some wanting their own way, and some in confusion. Now may we quietly and calmly, as led by the Spirit, be able to view all that is happening at present, and all that is likely to happen, even if it is postponed until 2021, may we view it all in the light of this: there is a throne set in heaven, and there is One who sits upon it, and He is in control. All these great, these mighty people are just as blades of grass before Him, creatures of a day. However great they are in the eyes of the world or in the eyes of themselves, it is this One who sits on the throne who is in control. But the point for you and me this morning is: “This God is our God for ever and ever.” This One who sits on the throne, this is the One to whom we pray, and this is the One on whom we depend, and this is the One in whom we hope.

There is a *behold* here. I am constantly reminding you that when Almighty God says, “Behold,” it is our mercy if we are able to listen and taken heed. “Behold, a throne was set in heaven” – it is still there – “and One sat on the throne.” In these two very important chapters, this and the next, chapter 4 and chapter 5, the throne of God is mentioned seventeen times, and they are only short chapters. There is no vain repetition in Scripture. The eternal throne of God is brought before us seventeen times.

“Behold, a throne was set in heaven, and One sat on the throne.” During that last terrible war, there was a famous picture. It was a picture of five great men. The world counted them as great men. There was Hitler, there was Mussolini, and there were others. There was this caption on it: “The destiny of mankind is in their hands.” What a mercy that it was not!

It was in the hands of this One who sits on the throne, and He made bare His holy arm in mercy on behalf of our country, on behalf of justice. What happened to Hitler? What happened to Mussolini? The time came when the Lord said, “I will overturn, overturn, overturn, it: and it shall be no more.” The Lord will always have the last word.

“He holds all nature in His hand;
That gracious hand on which I live
Does life, and time, and death command,
And has immortal joys to give.”

“Behold, a throne was set in heaven, and One sat on the throne.” Well, may our thoughts change now from thinking about all these happenings in the world, and come down here right where we are at Bethel. “Behold, a throne was set in heaven, and One sat on the throne.” We come to chapel this morning. It is not just to sing hymns and hear preaching. It is to seek to worship in reverence, in humility, in godly fear, as sinful creatures, to worship this great, this almighty God who sits upon the throne.

Now when we come to chapel, it is beneath His all-seeing eye. It is to worship Him. It is to seek to hear His voice, to know His will. It is to seek to obey Him. It is to seek to honour Him. Now is this the way that we come to our services, or is it just going to chapel? Is it just another service? I know we are earth-bound creatures, and how often we slip into formality, but sometimes may we be lifted above all these things to see that we are going to the house of God with a desire to worship Him, to “worship Him in spirit and in truth,” to worship Him in the beauty of holiness, ourselves nothing, Him everything. But may we as a congregation have believing view of His greatness and His majesty, His glory, His justice, His holiness, His wisdom.

“A throne was set in heaven, and One sat on the throne.” Well, we are told, “He that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone.” As I take it, beloved friends, the great point here is His everlasting glory. I know those who understand these precious stones say this and that. Sometimes they contradict one another. I understand that the jasper was a beautiful, clear stone, and yet it radiated at times various colours. Some have interpreted that as the holiness of God, and these different colours His different attributes. The sardine stone was deep red, which most have interpreted as setting forth His divine justice and judgment. But leaving all

this, the point is His greatness, His grandeur, His glory. When we come to chapel, may we be blessed with believing views of this, and yet to see it in the gospel, to see this is the One who sent His beloved Son. This is the One who loves His people with an everlasting love. This is the One who pardons and forgives, and on this ground, what do we sing?

“Worship God, then, in His Son;
There He’s love and there alone.”

Now may we know that spirit of reverence and godly fear and that spirit of true worship. How easy it is to say, “How great Thou art!” but at times to be overwhelmed with the greatness of God, and then at times to see that mercy. He is on our side. He is the One who with heaven and earth at His command waits to answer prayer.

“A throne was set in heaven, and One sat on the throne.” But still lingering here at Bethel: our prayer meeting evening comes. We have many things we want to pray for. Some of them seem hard things. Some of them seem impossible things. But especially when we are praying for the Lord’s blessing, when we are praying that sinners might be wrought upon by grace, might be saved by grace, when we are praying for all these things, to be able to meet at our prayer meetings in the shadow of this word: “A throne was set in heaven, and One sat on the throne.” He is the One, when the brethren pray, who can do exceeding and far abundantly above all that we can ask or think, the almighty God, the ever-living God. Now may we remember these things the next time, if the Lord will, when we meet together at our prayer meeting.

“Behold, a throne was set in heaven, and One sat on the throne.” And next, let us come into our homes and our circumstances. Well, you have many things in your homes. You parents with children, you older ones with problems and illnesses and operations, all of you with things that you do not understand, that are too hard for you, the future before you, especially your sins and your soul and a never-ending eternity, may you prove in your little homes, “Jehovah-shammah” – the Lord is there. You know who Jehovah-shammah is. He is this One who sits upon that throne in heaven. Now you seek His help. I hope all of you pray, or try to, or seek to. “I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth.” That is it: it is this almighty One. The One who sits on the throne is the One who

made heaven and earth. That is what the elders sang in the last verse of this chapter: “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.”

“Behold, a throne was set in heaven, and One sat on the throne.” Well, venturing beyond our homes and all our circumstances, you see the mystery of divine providence. It is all in the hands of Him who sits on the throne. If you read chapter 5, there is a book in the hands of the One who sits on the throne. But it is a closed book; it is a sealed book. It is the book of God’s decrees. It is the book of divine providence. It is the book of what is going to happen. There is no-one in heaven and earth who could come forward to open the book. The Apostle John burst into tears and wept. Where are we? What about our hopes and fears and troubles, if no-one could take that book?

And then that glorious sight. There is One approaching the throne of God where this One sits. And John looks. He believes if he looks, he will see the Lion of the Tribe of Juda. He is almighty. And he looks, and he sees Someone he recognises, Someone he loves, Someone we love: “A Lamb as it had been slain.” O this is the One, the once-crucified but now risen Saviour, and He approaches the throne, and He is worthy to take the book, and it is in His gracious hands. The Father has put it there. “All must come, and last, and end” – not according to blind fate or chance – “As shall please my heavenly Friend.” All heaven bursts into that acclamation of praise, and I think you and I can join in with it this morning: “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain.”

But to see this One sitting on the throne. He is in control in our lives. We think of the church of God and our congregation. He is in control there. How the Lord Jesus repeats it, that this One who sits on the throne is His people’s Father and your heavenly Father. This One who sits on the throne, He knoweth. “Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things” – all of them. And that implies as the almighty God, the gracious God, He is going to supply them. It is “our life’s minutest circumstance.” This One who sits on the throne, the stars, the planets, the mighty seas, all are under His control. But you see your life’s minutest circumstance. This is the mystery of providence. Because He is in control,

He is ordering it all according to the counsel of His will, in infinite wisdom, for His honour and glory, but for your real, lasting, eternal good.

“There’s not a particle of dust can fly,
A sparrow fall, or cloud obscure the sky,
A moth be crushed, or leaf fall from a tree,
But in submission to His wise decree.”

“Behold, a throne was set in heaven, and One sat on the throne.” So it means He reigns. It means He is King. He reigns *for* His people, on their side, making all things work together for their real, lasting, eternal good. And He reigns also to overthrow all their enemies. You think of all these evil things, and evil people, and all that is in the world, and this One who sits on the throne shall laugh at them. “The Lord shall have them in derision.” One word, and they sink in everlasting destruction. O do you believe it? Do you believe the opposite – if He has ever shown you mercy through His beloved Son?

“Behold, a throne was set in heaven, and One sat on the throne.” So it was a terrible throne in one sense, as you think of all these judgments that follow, but in Christ, it is *a throne of grace*. “Let us” – whatever our concerns this morning, whatever you have tomorrow, or this week, or in the unknown way, what you have in your family, or in your old age, or your circumstances, in providence or in grace – let us come boldly to this throne of grace. We have often spoken about it. We have often spoken about the Saviour and His love. Let us come to this throne of grace this morning, seeing it as the eternal throne of God in heaven who is in complete control. Of course, we must venture on mercy’s ground, unworthy sinners through the Redeemer’s blood. But whatever your condition this morning, “let us come boldly” to this throne, to find it a throne of grace, a blood-sprinkled mercy seat. “That we may obtain” – well, what? That which we want? that which we need? “That we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.” We cannot seek better things than those, and we cannot receive better things than those.

“And, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and One sat on the throne.” So in many ways it was a terrible throne, an awful throne, but we are told – it is a beautiful word – “There was a rainbow round about the throne.” Most people love the rainbow. The old people used to love to see

a rainbow in the sky. It is the token of God's mercy, God's faithfulness, God's covenant, as made known to Noah, that this great God would never drown the world again. Joseph Hart in his wonderful hymn on the rainbow said, "There's something greater lies there yet." O to see it in Christ! "This is as the waters of Noah unto Me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed." This is all that is signified by the rainbow. So Joseph Hart says,

"Those lively colours shine
To show that heaven is surely mine."

Beloved friends, have you ever seen the beauty of this, that this throne of Almighty God in heaven is completely encircled by the rainbow – the Lord's covenant love and mercy, everlasting, unchanging, to poor, unworthy sinners, and His faithfulness? My covenant I will not break; My faithfulness shall stand for ever. O to see this completely embracing the throne of God, and really in mercy embracing every sinner saved by grace.

Well, beloved friends, John beheld it, and may you and I to our souls' comfort, by faith, through the Holy Spirit, behold it this morning. "Behold, a throne was set in heaven, and One sat on the throne."

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Great God! how infinite art Thou!
What worthless worms are we!
Let the whole race of creatures bow,
And pay their praise to Thee!

Thy throne eternal ages stood,
Ere seas or stars were made;
Thou art the ever-living God,
Were all the nations dead.

Nature and time quite naked lie
To Thy immense survey,
From the formation of the sky,
To the great burning day.

Eternity, with all its years,
Stands present in Thy view;
To Thee there's nothing old appears –
Great God! there's nothing new!

Our lives through various scenes are drawn,
And vexed with trifling cares,
While Thy eternal thought moves on
Thy undisturbed affairs.

Great God! how infinite art Thou!
What worthless worms are we!
Let the whole race of creatures bow,
And pay their praise to Thee!

I. Watts