

The Man Upon the Throne Governs Everything

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Now we return to the prophecies of Ezekiel. You will remember that yesterday morning we began to consider the preparation of the prophet for his ministry, and we spoke about the opened heaven: "the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God." Now this morning we come to the second half of the statement, "visions of God," and we take this first great vision that was given to the prophet. This occupies verses four to twenty-eight of chapter one. You have carefully read these three chapters so that it is not necessary for us to read this section again this morning.

The first thing that we must note is that this vision is all one thing; it has various parts, but it has just one object in view. The last verse of the chapter tells us that this is so. Verse twenty-eight, the second part of the verse, reads: "This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord." Everything in the chapter is included in that, "the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord."

The inclusive factor of this whole vision was the Throne of the Lord. All the other things in the vision are just a part of the Throne; they all go to make up the Throne of the Lord. It is very important for you to recognize that. You are not dealing with a number of different things in this vision: you are dealing with only one thing which is made up of many parts. There is fire, there is lightning, there is terrible power, there is irresistible progress, there are the living ones, there are the wheels, there is the likeness of a man. All these things are parts of the Throne. They all go to make up the meaning of the Throne of the Lord. They are all included in this final statement: "This (all this) was the appearance of the glory of the Lord."

Now I do want you to grasp the appearance as we have it in this chapter. We must not think of the Throne as something separate, away up in heaven, and then the cherubims as down here. What we must see is that these are all one. Here is the Throne above, then under the Throne there is a firmament, and then immediately under the firmament there are the cherubims. But they are all one, and they are all moving together. It seems that the Throne and the cherubims move together. You will see that they come from the north. This is all one thing, and that is the point that I want to make just now. Now, before we consider what is under the firmament, we will consider that which is above. Perhaps we had better read verse twenty-six again:

And above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a Throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone; and upon the likeness of the Throne was a likeness as the appearance of a Man upon it above (ASV).

So we begin by noting that the all-governing factor is the Man upon the Throne. Until you have grasped the meaning of that, you do not understand the whole of the prophecies of Ezekiel. ALL that is in this book, both of history and the future, must be viewed in the light of the Man on the Throne. There is a Throne above the firmament, and there is the likeness as of a Man upon it. ALL government is vested in the Man on the Throne. That is not only the key to the Book of Ezekiel, that is the key to everything in history, and particularly to this dispensation. It is government vested in the Man on the Throne. That is the key to everything. From that everything else comes, up to that everything else goes.

We asked a great question when we started these studies, "Has this book a message for the present dispensation?" The answer can be given in THREE fragments from the New Testament. One is found in John 6:62 (ASV), from the lips of the Lord Jesus Himself, "What then if you should behold the Son of Man ascending where He was before?" You see, that introduces the question about THE RIGHT PLACE OF THE SON OF MAN. "What... if ye should behold the Son of Man ascending where He was before?" The second passage comes from the lips of Stephen in Acts 7:56: "I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God." This reveals that the words of the Lord Jesus have been fulfilled: - "I see... the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God." The question has been answered.

Now the third passage includes both of those and goes beyond them. That is in Hebrews, chapter one, verse eight: "...of the Son He says, 'Thy Throne, O God, is for ever and ever.'" You see, that passage goes back to where He was before, the Son of Man ascending where He was before. Thy Throne is from evermore, and it carries on to eternity - "Thy Throne... is for ever and ever." This is said of the Son, but Jesus speaks of Himself as the Son of Man, THE SON OF MAN UPON HIS ETERNAL THRONE - "Above the firmament a Throne and the likeness as of a Man upon it above."

The Man In His Rightful Place

First of all, God has His Man. We spell that with a big "M." God has His Man, The Man that He ever wanted and intended to have, and now that Man is in His rightful place, The Man is where God intended Him to be. Just keep hold of those two things because, as I have been saying, they govern everything. At last God has His Man. There is a sense in which God has been seeking for that Man all through the past. God created Adam to be such a man, and God has been in quest of the man after His Own heart all through history. God has found The Man in His Own Son. That is the full meaning of the Incarnation. God has provided Himself with a Man, and that Man is now in the place of God's appointment. He is in His right place. He is in the place of government. This answers to Psalm 8:6, "Thou madest Him to have dominion." All the dominion and authority is vested in this Man! He is the Son of God, but He is also the Son of Man. Now we must note that **EVERYTHING IS GOVERNED BY THAT!** The preparation of the servant of the Lord is governed by that! The ministry of the servant of the Lord is governed by that! All ministry must take its character from that Man in the Throne!

Then you move right through this great book, and you come into the judgments of God, the judgment upon the Lord's people first and then the judgments upon the nations; and all these judgments are governed by the Man in the Throne. After the judgments, you come to the recovery of God's testimony. The recovery of His testimony is according to The Man in the Throne. Now we could stay a long time with that, but we must leave its greater fullness until later on.

But this question arises, "What is the testimony that God wants, and that God wants to recover?" - It is the testimony of Jesus. It is the testimony that God has The Man after His heart, and that The Man after God's heart is a certain kind of Man, a Man that is different from all others, and that all authority is vested in that Man Jesus Christ. That is the testimony that God wishes to recover. We shall find later on that the House of God is the place where that testimony is to be found. The House of God is constituted according to that Man, and it is the meaning of that Man that is expressed in the House of God. That is what we shall come to, for, you see, it is the testimony of God in Jesus Christ in the House of God.

So the work of recovery, as we have it in the prophecies of Ezekiel, is governed by The Man in the Throne. And when I speak of it being governed, I do not mean just official government - I mean that it is the character of that Man that governs everything. Then we do move to this House of God. It occupies a very important place in these prophecies. It is a very wonderful House. When we come to it, we shall see that this House is governed by The Man on the Throne. Then we shall come to the river, beginning in the House, flowing by way of the altar out through the court and down through the country, with everything where the river cometh being made to live. We shall see that that corresponds to what we have in the Book of the Acts, for there we see the river flowing out of the sanctuary from spiritual Jerusalem to all Judaea to Samaria and to the uttermost parts of the earth. Everything where the river comes is made to live. That is a very long river. It is the longest river in the world. It has reached to China. It has flowed through India. It is a river that flows over the whole earth, and wherever the river comes it makes things live. But remember, this river takes its rise from The Man in the Throne. It is all governed by God having His Man in His right place.

Then we shall see the people of God coming into their inheritance. That is another great truth of the New Testament, the Lord's people coming into their spiritual inheritance. That is one of the last things in these prophecies. Again, the Lord's people only come into their inheritance when the Lord Jesus is in His right place. Let us put that around the other way. When Jesus is in His right place, the people of God come into their inheritance. We can never come into our inheritance until He has His right place!

Now look at the Book of the Acts - what fullness the Lord's people came into! What a large inheritance came to them! Why did it come, and how did it come? Because the great message of that book is Jesus Christ is Lord! God hath raised Him far above all rule and authority! When Jesus has His place, the Lord's people get their inheritance.

The last thing in these prophecies is the city. We know that the last thing in the Bible is the city, and there is the river flowing out of the city; but it flows from the Throne of God and the Lamb. Jesus at last is in His Full Place, and the city is the vessel of His fullness, and that fullness goes out as from the city to all the nations. All this is here in type and symbol in the prophecies of Ezekiel. Have I answered our first question? - "Has this book a message for the present dispensation?" I think we can now see that it has, but our point just now is that all this is governed by The Man in the Throne.

We see **TWO** things about that, for God to have His Christ in heaven is a very great thing. I would have you think much about that! What a great thing it is for God to have His Christ in heaven! That could occupy us for a long time. We are told by Paul that God exercised the exceeding greatness of His power to bring Christ there. That meant that every other power in this universe had to be **OVERCOME** to get Christ there. It is a very great thing

to God to have Christ in heaven! And then, secondly, it is a very great thing for the people of God - that Christ is in heaven.

Judgment Comes From The Throne Of Christ

Now let us come back to what we were saying a minute or two ago. All judgment comes from the Throne of Christ, and He is judging His people and the nations from His Throne. You notice that judgment begins with the people of God in the prophecies of Ezekiel. That brings us to the beginning of the Book of the Revelation. It is the churches which are first judged by the Lord Jesus in glory. It is a principle with God 'that judgment must begin at the House of God.' Of course, that is necessary for the very character of God. Supposing God were to judge the world, and then the world could point to Christians and say, "But look at them, look what a contradiction they are; and, yet, You let them go on. You come and judge us but You do not judge Your Own people." That would be all wrong. So as a matter of principle, "judgment must begin at the House of God." We, as the Lord's people, must come under the judgment of that Throne.

Let me take great care to explain what that means. I have said it more than once already this morning. You see, it is a kind of Man that is in that Throne, and God judges everything according to the character of that Man. That is what you have at the beginning of the Book of the Revelation. You have a full-sized portrait of the Lord Jesus at the beginning of that book. His Person and His Appearance are described in detail. He presents Himself like that to the churches; and then it is as though the Holy Spirit was saying, "I am going to judge you according to that Man." So the message to every church is: "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says." The Holy Spirit's work is all related to Christ. You know that as a great New Testament truth. Now the challenge to the churches is "How do you measure up to that Man? How does your life, your character, and your work answer to that Man?"

The Man is the basis of the judgment. The churches are judged according to The Man; that is the meaning of judgment - the measuring line of God is His Son. The question is always "How do we MEASURE UP to Christ?" That is the meaning of judgment. When the Church has been judged, then God turns to the nations. That is what we have in Ezekiel, and that is what we have in the Book of the Revelation. All judgment of the people of God and of the nations is according to The Man.

The Recovery Of The Testimony Of Jesus

Then you will see the second movement of God. It is so clear in the Book of the Revelation. It is the movement for the recovery of the testimony of Jesus. John says, "I was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the Word of God and for the testimony of Jesus." And that phrase, the testimony of Jesus occurs several times in the Book of the Revelation. It is that which is the basis of God's activity.

Now in the churches the one issue is this: "to him that overcometh..." The overcomers represent the recovery of God's testimony. The recovery movement of God is found in the overcomers. The overcomers are those who have put away what is not according to Christ and are now an expression of that Divine Man, so that when we come to the end of the book, both Ezekiel and Revelation, we have the city. We all know that this is not a literal city; it could not possibly be that. You would have to get rid of a great deal in order to have this city on the earth. This city, of course, is a figure. It is a figure of the Church, and now that Church, as the city, answers to the Divine description. Paul put it in this way, "Christ... loved the Church, and gave Himself up for it... that He might present the Church to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing" (Eph. 5:25,27; ASV). That fully describes the city at the end of the Book of the Revelation: "The Spirit... showed me the holy city Jerusalem... having the glory of God: - a glorious Church - her light was like unto a stone most precious" (Rev. 21:10,11). Light is always the symbol of purity - "Not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing." "Christ... loved the Church, and gave Himself up for it" - in the midst of the city is the Throne of the Lamb. You see the symbolism. You see the spiritual meaning - this final state corresponds to the Man in the Throne!

The Book of the Acts is the great beginning. It begins with Christ in the Throne. Before we get to the end of the apostolic age, things have begun to go wrong. We can detect that in the letters of Paul, and especially in his last letters which were to Timothy - things have begun to go wrong. The testimony is being lost. We come then to the Revelation, and God begins judgment at the House of God as seeking to recover that testimony; and in the end of the Revelation, we see it fully recovered!

The Energies And Goings Of God

Now we come back to Ezekiel. In this book, as we have already said, we see the energies and goings of God.

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This first vision is a representation of that. Look at the symbols that are used. Firstly, "burning fire" - who can stand before the burning fire? When the fire begins to sweep across the earth, no one can stop it. Fire is irresistible. And then, "flashing lightning" - it is like a great electric storm here. It is a terrible thing. Who can stand before the great electric storm? You cannot resist that, you cannot sweep that aside. In this book, you have all the symbols of tremendous energy, and all this is connected with the movement of God, for it was that Throne that conquered in the long run!

I say that the great consciousness of the Church at the beginning was that Jesus is in the Throne. Satan is not on the throne, Caesar is not on the throne - JESUS IS ON THE THRONE! The Church moved forward in the energy of that great fact! The Church prayed on the basis of that fact! Its appeal was to the Throne, and it prayed in confidence because it knew that He was on the Throne! You remember one instance of that - they were in a time of great opposition, the rulers had risen up against them; and the Church gathered together for prayer, and in their prayer they quoted the Second Psalm. You know what is in the Second Psalm: "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, are gathered together, against the Lord, and against His Anointed... He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: The Lord shall have them in derision... I have declared the decree. I have set MY Holy One upon My holy hill of Zion." And then the kings and the rulers are appealed to: "You had better kiss the Son lest He be angry." You can see that that was what they used in prayer in the Book of the Acts (4:25,26). What confidence it shows that they had in that Throne and in that Man on it! They prayed on that basis! They preached on that basis! They sang on that basis!

Yes, they were a singing people. Listen to two men singing. Where is the singing coming from? It is coming from a prison! There are two men who have been beaten and bruised, and they have been cast into an inner dungeon. Their feet had been made fast with chains, and they are singing. How could they sing in such a situation? Only because they knew and believed that Jesus was on the Throne! Their song was a song of faith and confidence; and in a few minutes there was a great earthquake, and all the doors were opened and their chains fell off. Jesus is on the Throne, and they sang because of that!

They suffered because of that! Yes, they suffered very much, but the strength to suffer came from their consciousness that Jesus was on the Throne. And they died on that basis! Stephen is dying, and he says, "I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God." That was his testimony, he died on that basis.

Now I have got to stop there this morning because our time is gone. We have only come to the beginning of this great vision, but I am sure you see that this book has a message for our time. But I cannot close without reminding you of this - all this had to do with the preparation of a man for his ministry. If Ezekiel had not seen that, he would never have been able to fulfill his ministry. Everything in his ministry came from that first vision. We must see the meaning of this. There must be that which grips us as it gripped him. The thing that grips us must be "Jesus is Lord, Jesus is on the Throne; therefore, I can go on. I can meet the difficulties, I can suffer, I can die, I can pray, and I can sing!"