

Truth for Today

The Bible teaching radio programme

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The Believer's Resources: The Throne of God

Good morning and welcome to *Truth for Today*, where, for the next twenty minutes or so, we will be thinking about the Throne of God. This is the last in a series of four under the general title of "The Believer's Resources in the modern world". Previously, we have considered the Word of God, the Spirit of God, and the Name of God, and I trust that you have noticed that all the believer's resources are located in the God who never changes. This means that everything that is needed by a Christian can be accessed at any time, and in any age, for our God is the same yesterday, today and forever (Malachi 3:6). It might be argued that the Throne of God does not fall into the category of offering immediate help in our spiritual life. I trust that, as we examine the Biblical statements about God's throne then, we will realise just how practical is this truth, and how such knowledge helps us to appreciate the greatness of the God who reaches down to deal with us in grace.

The first mention of a throne in the Bible is not concerned with God's throne, yet it does signify the truth of God's throne. We can find this statement in Genesis 41:40 and I read this from the Authorised, or King James, Version of the Bible. To provide the context I shall read Genesis 41:39-40: "And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art: thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou."

My first point is that the one who sits upon the throne, in this case the throne of Egypt, is greater in power and authority than any other person in the land. All are subject unto him. However influential and wise Joseph was while he was in Egypt, he could never be above the pharaoh. There are two more verses that I shall quote that confirm the authority of the throne. The first is from Psalm 103:19: "The LORD hath prepared his throne in the heavens: and his kingdom ruleth over all."

It is plain from such a statement that God is the supreme governor in the universe. None can exceed Him in authority, for as Daniel has written in his prophecy, "...the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men..." (Daniel 4:25). There are many other verses that would substantiate this point, yet time forbids us to expand.

A minute or so ago, I mentioned that there was a second aspect that I wanted to focus upon that arises out of the authority of the throne, as it appears in the Old Testament. Isaiah 66:1-2 says "Thus saith the LORD, The heaven is my throne, and the earth my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word."

When we learn the truth of the almighty greatness and power of the God who occupies the throne, then we also learn that He is looking for a response from each one of us. In Isaiah 66:1-2 He is asking for the hearers to have a humble, respectful reverence for His words. If we have been brought to believe in the authority of God we should have the demeanour of spirit that reflects our belief. From the verses that I have just read, Isaiah 66:1-2, there is yet another point I want to focus our attention on and that is that the throne of God is in the heavens. It might seem an obvious conclusion to arrive at, for we have many of the writers of Scripture who seek to encourage the faithful with the thought that God reigns. The Psalms, especially, are full of hope, so you may be asking why I focus on the obvious. It is because in a world where evil is present, and sometimes dominant, we need faith to accept that God is on the throne. One day, when the Lord Jesus comes to set up His kingdom, then peace and justice will fill the world. Until then, He reigns supreme in heaven, and in the heart and lives of His people on earth. Never let us doubt the eternal status of the throne of God, for as Psalm 45:6 tells us: "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever..."

We must not fall into the error of thinking that man enthrones God. Rather is it that we are brought to recognise the supreme greatness and authority of the living God, who reigns in majesty. The prophets never lose sight of the fact that, one day, when Messiah comes, the rule of the mighty God would extend to the whole earth. Most of us were taught, at a very early age, to pray, "Thy will be done, on earth, as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10)

Many years ago, Robert Grant, who was Member of Parliament for Inverness, in 1828, wrote some lines which set out this truth:

*“O worship the King,
All glorious above;
O gratefully sing
His power and His love;
Our shield and defender,
The Ancient of Days,
Pavilioned in splendour,
And girded with praise.”*

Another Scotsman, living at the same time, took up the same thought of the invisible God, immortal in the heavens. He was Walter Smith, and again I quote from one of his compositions:

*“Immortal, invisible, God only wise,
In light inaccessible hid from our eyes,
Most blessèd, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,
Almighty, victorious, Thy great Name we praise.”*

Notice that in both of these hymns the writers bring before us the mysterious figure from Daniel's prophecy, namely “the Ancient of days” Daniel 7:9, 13. If you are unfamiliar with the passage, it can be found in Daniel 7 and, because of pressure of time, I will only read Daniel 7:9-10: “I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened.”

What we must notice from these verses is the compelling authority of the dreadful and awe inspiring description of the throne and its occupier. When we read such words, we must come to the conclusion that we cannot treat God as if He is insignificant, or irrelevant, for He is not the plaything of man's imagination.

This, however, is not why I turned our attention to Daniel 7:9-10. Rather is it for us to notice that judgment is pronounced from the throne, as is further confirmed by the phrase “the books were opened” (Daniel 7:10). It is a searching and pertinent truth that nobody can hide from the all-seeing eye of God, meaning that every detail of our lives is known to the Almighty. Such an announcement is not popular in our free and easy world, where it seems as if anything, and everything, is allowed, with no moral boundaries. We need to acknowledge that when Scripture speaks of the throne it often has the judgment of man in view.

Psalms 89:14 also highlights the same thought: “Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before thy face.” A slightly different note is struck here, however, for comfort abounds in this verse. From it we see that judgment is encased in justice and it is the justice of the all-knowing God, who shrouds the truth with His wondrous mercy. We cannot fully grasp these concepts apart from the proclamation of the glorious Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ which we shall consider towards the end of this morning's talk. Meanwhile, if you have just joined us, can I welcome you to *Truth for Today* where we are considering the throne of God and how it affects the life and faith of a believer.

Our last point of justice and judgment being dispensed from the throne of God is beautifully illustrated in Isaiah 6:1-8. We, obviously, cannot read all of the passage at this time so, initially, we shall confine our thoughts to Isaiah 6:1, 3, and 5: “In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple ... And one [seraphim] cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory ... Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.”

When the judgment day comes, there will be complete acceptance of the verdict of the Lord for, as these verses illustrate, when the created stands in the presence of the glory of the Creator, he, or she, will be only too conscious of their sinful state. We stopped short of the conclusion of this incident, for Isaiah is not left wracked by thoughts of his uncleanness. If we had read further we would have seen how one of the seraphim touched his lips with a live coal and pronounced that his iniquity had been taken away and his sins purged (Isaiah 6:6-7). Surely, further confirmation of God's justice and judgment tempered with mercy. As the Psalmist wrote in Psalm 85:10, “mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.” To know that God abounds in mercy and grace, we need look no further than Calvary's cross.

So far, we have learned that God's throne is eternal in the heavens. It hardly needs saying that this does not mean that we could ever locate it with a spaceship. As the Lord Jesus said to the woman at Sychar's well (see John 4:1-42), “God is a spirit” (John 4:24) so, therefore, we are not dealing with a physical universe. That does not amend, or negate, the fact of the reality of the throne of God which, as we have seen from Scripture, is the symbol of His great

power and authority. We have also learned that such statements are not merely theory or theology, but living truths that demand a response in our lives. It will not have escaped your notice that we have concentrated our attention only upon verses from the Old Testament, and I want to look, for the last time today, at a short portion of Scripture from this section of the Bible.

I am writing these thoughts, about the Throne of God, just a few days before Christmas, but now, when you are listening to them, it is well past the festive season. That does not prevent me however, from reading Isaiah 9:6-7, which you will no doubt have heard as you attended services in the run up to Christmas: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this."

I intend to use Isaiah 9:6-7 as a link between what we have learned about the Throne of God, as it was revealed to His people of old, and what we know after the further revelation of the living God through the Person and Work of the Lord Jesus. As I have said, Isaiah 9:6-7 will have been read many times over the Christmas period, because Christians believe that they can be applied to Jesus as the long promised Messiah. I hope you noticed, from our reading, that this person will sit upon the throne of David, which is the destiny of the Messiah. When the Apostle Peter was preaching, early in the church's history, he claimed that God had made Jesus both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36). In fact most of his sermon, in Acts 2:14-39, is concerned with proving that Jesus is the rightful Messiah, raised up, after being crucified, to sit upon the throne of David. Whereas, it must be admitted that Jesus does not yet rule on the earth, we believe that one day He will. As that great composer of hymns, Isaac Watts, has written:

*"Jesus shall reign where'er the sun
Doth his successive journeys run;
His kingdom stretch from shore to shore,
Till moons shall wax and wane no more."*

We, who love the Lord Jesus, wait for that day when the whole earth will be full of His glory. Meanwhile, what of today? Where is the Lord Jesus now? Wherever we look in the New Testament there is a note of triumph and victory whenever it refers to the Lord. There are not as many references to the throne as there are in the Old Testament, yet no one can doubt that He is crowned and at the right hand of the Majesty on high as the victor of Calvary. The writer of Hebrews makes this point plain: "But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom" (Hebrews 1:8)

There is no uncertain note here regarding the One who occupies the throne today. Notice, also, that righteousness is a characteristic of that throne, a righteousness that was seen in its fullness on that first Good Friday. It is, however, another verse in the Letter to the Hebrews that I want to concentrate on, for a few minutes, as this brings before us a completely different aspect, which we have not touched upon yet. Owing to its importance in our consideration of the throne of God, I will read Hebrews 4:14-16: "Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities: but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

From Hebrews 4:14-16 we learn that, thanks to the Lord Jesus, the throne of God is nothing less than a mercy seat, to which we all have ready access. I trust that we all have the confidence to approach that throne so that we may receive all the grace and strength we need, whether in times of crisis, or for our everyday Christian life, or the needs of our fellow believers. I cannot press too much the importance of the priestly service of the risen and ascended Lord Jesus. Our quoted passage, from Hebrews 4:14-16, told us that He is not immune to our infirmities, as He walked this earth as a man amongst men. Nobody, therefore, can ever justly complain that He does not understand their situation. I linger for a little while on these verses to focus on the phrase, "great high priest" (Hebrews 4:14) which hints at the splendour of the enthroned Lord. Paul's letter to the Ephesians, and chapter 1, fills this out in no uncertain way: "[...God] set [Christ] at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come." (Ephesians 1:20-21).

The more we learn of the supreme excellence and greatness of Christ the more we should fall down in subjection and worship.

Hebrews 12:2 also tells us more about the Lord occupying the highest place in the heavens: "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

I trust you noticed that every aspect of the faith of Christianity finds its source in Him, or to quote another's phrase, "He is the trail-blazer and in Him faith has reached its perfection." Matthew, in Matthew 27:43, tells of how some people around the cross said in mockery that, "He trusted in God; let him deliver him now", their implication being that His faith in God was a waste of time. Hebrews 12:2, which we have just read, claims the highest honour for the Man who suffered at Calvary.

We have just about sufficient time to look at the last references to God's throne in the Bible. They are in Revelation 22:1-3, where the throne is spoken of as the throne of God and of the Lamb. Revelation 22:1 also speaks of a pure river of water of life, proceeding out of that throne. What a glorious and precious thought this is, as we draw to a conclusion this morning. Previously, we have seen that the throne speaks of authority, power and judgment, so we could stand in awe and even dread, before that august seat of majesty. Not so states the Bible, in its final picture of the throne, for now it is linked eternally with the Lamb. Once, the throne with its holiness and righteousness was a threat to man; now, because the Lamb has dealt with the "sin question", none can accuse the believer, for God has pronounced him clean. He now has access to the river of the water of life which flows from the seat of stability, authority and redeeming love.

I wish to close this morning's talk by quoting something that was written many years ago, in a time of political trouble and danger for the United Kingdom. The author, JT Mawson, was editor of *Scripture Truth*, a magazine that is still being published: "The Apostle John was caught up through an open door in heaven to see a throne with God sitting upon it. It was an evil day in which John lived; the ruling power was a pagan, persecuting power; all his brethren had suffered and he was an exile in Patmos for his faith. He saw, however, that God had not abdicated His throne; the sceptre of the universe was in His hand, and as it was then so it is now in this year of our Lord 1940. That sight must have greatly comforted John, and we need it if we are to be kept in peace and steadfast in our confession. God is still on His throne, almighty and absolute. This must be the foundation of all our faith, and the dominant factor of our lives." (*"A Throne was set in Heaven": an Address on Revelation 4 and 5*, by John T Mawson. Published in *Scripture Truth 32nd Annual Volume*, 1940.)

Those words, penned some seventy years ago, sum up the implications for us, this morning, as we have considered the Throne of God. May we all be encouraged in our service for the Lord and remain valiant in the faith.

Good morning and thank you for listening.

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