

# KINGDOM BIBLE STUDIES

*"Teaching the things concerning the kingdom of God..."*

## FROM THE CANDLESTICK TO THE THRONE

Part 229

### THE GREAT WHITE THRONE JUDGMENT

“And I saw a *great white throne*, and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them” (Rev. 20:11).

When John first saw the throne of God, it was as a sunrise, flecked with crimson, as of a sardius, and in the midst was the Lamb, as it had been slain, showing us clearly that God is Love (Rev. 4:2-3; 5:6). He now sees this same throne, not as an altar of atonement, but *great* and *white* — the judgment seat of Him who, while He is Love, must be therefore also Truth and Righteousness. It is not a new or different throne, but the same, for God has only *one throne*; only men have become, as it were, color blind, unable to see in the heavens the Friend who died for them.

Men make a great mistake in viewing a great gap or separation between the “thrones” upon which the souls of the overcomers sit (Rev. 20:4), and the “great white throne” of our text. “And I saw *thrones*, and they sat upon them, and *judgment* was given unto them.” “And I saw a *great white throne*...and I saw the *dead stand before God*...and the *dead were judged*...” (Rev. 20:11-12). These are not literal thrones as men sit upon — these are word pictures teaching us great spiritual truths. Do you not recall that the Lord promised, “To him that overcometh will I grant to *sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne*” (Rev. 3:21). There is no difference or separation between these “thrones,” for the plurality simply points to the various spheres, operations, and administrations of those sitting with Him in His throne. We see another symbolical representation when the great throne of God is encircled by *twenty-four other thrones* (Rev. 4:4). The symbolisms differ in minute details, but are essentially the same — revealing the great truth that God’s Royal Priesthood also reigns with Him upon His throne. It is “the regeneration” of which Jesus spoke to His twelve disciples, “Ye that have followed me in my trials, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit upon the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon *twelve thrones, judging* the twelve tribes of Israel” (Mat. 19:28). One throne, twelve thrones, twenty-four thrones, a vast multitude of thrones — and what is the common denominator? **THEY ARE ALL THRONES OF JUDGMENT!** And all together, in all their meanings and expressions, they constitute the one GREAT WHITE THRONE!

In this instance John beholds the throne as a dazzling *white* throne. White bespeaks purity, righteousness. The wise man spoke of the very foundation or base of God’s throne when he wrote, “Thy throne is *established by righteousness*” (Prov. 16:12). The Psalmist reiterated this same truth, declaring, “*Justice and judgment* are the *foundation* of Thy throne” (Ps. 89:14). That is, God’s throne is unshakable, cannot be overthrown because it is based, established, on absolute righteousness — nothing contrary to the absolute perfection of divine holiness is permitted, where that throne is set up. Suppose then for a moment the possibility of this foundation being changed in its character, even to the smallest degree: suppose the slightest element of injustice, whether in punishing the innocent, or in refusing or neglecting to deal with the guilty, to be introduced; there can be no question but that the foundation would be destroyed — and the throne — even God’s throne could be shaken, for it has lost its base.

But now hear this! “Thy throne is *upholden* by *mercy*” (Prov. 20:28). Here the change of the word from “established” to “upholden” is not without its significance. The former speaks of the foundation, the latter of “support.” A building badly founded will surely fall; but a building simply constructed, even on a rock, if it has no support will also fall. The foundation is beneath the building whereas the support is within the building. The term “upholden” has within it the idea of “comfort.” “Comfort thine heart,” says the Levite’s father-in-law to him, using this same word in chapter nineteen of Judges; and the use of it here in Proverbs would suggest that if the king cannot exercise *mercy* his throne is practically of no use — his judgment is limited, restricted, confined, hindered, bound up, one-sided — he cannot judge in righteousness. Of what use is it to have a large fortune if we cannot spend it? Of what use to be rich in mercy if one cannot exercise it? Of what use to be a king upon a throne of judgment if one cannot show that quality of goodness and graciousness — *mercy*. “*Thy throne is upholden by mercy.*” Without question this reveals to us the great and eternal truth that mercy is a significant ingredient of righteousness! So put the two passages in Proverbs together and we learn that righteousness is the only foundation for God’s throne, whereas mercy is its only support!

There must therefore be no lack of either righteousness on the one hand, or mercy on the other, for the integrity and maintenance of the throne of God. Now we may see why the adversary ever seeks to drag his victims before the throne as criminals. Men *fear* the great white throne of God because the adversary sows into their minds the spirit of *condemnation*, magnifying man’s sin, accentuating his unworthiness, and distorting the great Judge’s character by amplifying and exaggerating God’s *wrath* without counter-balancing his wrath with His *mercy*! Nowhere does scripture state that God’s throne is upheld by wrath, harshness, exactitude, or implacableness — to the contrary, it is upholden only by *mercy*! If there is an inability to show *mercy* — I speak with all reverence — God’s very throne is of no value to Him. If He is powerless to save those He loves, and wills to bless, of what good is His throne or His judgment? It lacks power — strength to carry out His will, and he is no longer supreme. Can you not see Satan’s attack upon God’s throne of judgment? He misrepresents it, distorts it, deforms it, perverts it, by robbing it of its MERCY!

But if He pardons convicted criminals — is that righteousness? Is not the foundation gone? If He cannot pardon, where is the mercy? If He does, where is the righteousness? It is ever Satan’s subtle way to place in a dilemma; and this is a dilemma he loves to place even before God. Apparently there is no escape for, whichever horn of the dilemma be accepted, the throne is subverted. So what is the answer? ***Redemption!*** Show mercy until the poor sinner can be rehabilitated — *dealt with unto salvation!* God has processes to get men there — judgment, hell, the lake of fire, mingled with love, mercy, and power. God is not a God of eternal jails, penitentiaries, or eternal torture in fire. He is the God of all grace, the God of redemption, deliverance, salvation, restoration, and transformation! All hail His throne of judgment!

I love the story of the parrot who was trained to protect his master’s home. One night he got his chance to put his training to the test. A burglar entered the home. He moved through the darkness stealthily when suddenly he heard parrot say, “Jesus will get you.” The burglar stopped and thought, “I don’t believe in Jesus.” So he wasn’t worried. He walked through the kitchen and again the parrot said, “Jesus will get you.” Again the intruder ignored the warning and proceeded down the hallway into the library. All of a sudden the burglar found himself looking into the foaming, opened, bare-toothed mouth of a huge doberman. The dog was snarling just as the parrot cried, “Sic him, Jesus!” Oh, yes, that is just how millions of people think of Jesus sitting upon His throne of judgment! But I’ve got news for you, my friend, JESUS IS NOT OUT TO “GET” YOU! He is both your Judge *and* your Saviour. I have heard the preachers erroneously warning people, “Today Jesus is your Saviour, but tomorrow He will be your Judge,” as though the choice is one *or* the other. That is Satan’s subtleness again, attacking the throne of judgment. I have no hesitation in telling you that Jesus is your Judge today and He is your Saviour today; He will be your Judge tomorrow and He will be your Saviour tomorrow. He is always and eternally *both*. He would no longer *be* God should He cease being either Saviour or Judge. In the words of the old song, “You can’t have one without the other!” The foundation of the throne is righteousness, but the throne is upheld by mercy. That is the mystery!

A brother shared the following experience. “Recently a young man who was very troubled came to see me. A number of years ago he had broken the law and had been placed on probation. Now that his probation was almost up he had done a minor infraction. However, it was a breaking of his probation and now he was called to appear in court in another city. He was particularly concerned because he was going before a judge known as the ‘hanging judge.’ This is his reputation. And, indeed, it is well deserved! He has sentenced more people to severe penalties than any other judge in the state. The ‘hanging judge’ — a man who considers himself to be living the very letter of the law. This young man was going before him and he felt that he may well face five or ten or more years in prison as a result. He was petrified as, indeed, any one of us might be. He said that he did not want me to try to get him out of it; he simply wanted me to give him something to take with him. I told him that I could do better than that, I could give him *someone* who would go with him! I told him about Jesus and he received Him into his life. It will be interesting to see what happens with the ‘hanging judge’”

May I point out to you that Jesus Christ is in a very different sense the “hanging Judge.” He is the Judge who was hanging upon a tree; the One who was hanged, Himself, for the criminals’ crimes...the One who died for the sinners’ guilt...the One who was hanged upon the accursed tree. Jesus, indeed, is the “hanging Judge” — the Judge who came down from behind the bench, took off His robes of glory, and went to the execution on our behalf. That we may never expect a human judge to do!

The religious leaders brought a woman to Jesus, hoping that His response would give them something they could use to trap Him. “This woman is guilty of adultery — caught in the very act,” they said, “and the law says that she should be executed. What do you say, Jesus?” In Jesus’ day a judge would be seated as he heard a case. When it was time to give his verdict, he would stand to pronounce it. When the religious leaders brought this woman to Jesus, He was seated. Now they demanded that Jesus be a judge and pronounce a verdict. Jesus bent down and wrote on the ground with His finger. What did He write? We aren’t told. But the leaders kept questioning Him, so He “straightened up” (probably standing) and pronounced His verdict: “Let any of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.” Then Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground again. Perhaps the first time He wrote of *righteousness* and the second time He wrote of *mercy*. At any rate, everyone of those accusing the woman, being convicted in their own conscience, left. Jesus and the woman were now alone, and Jesus stood to pronounce His verdict on her. First He asked the question, “Woman where are your accusers? Who is accusing you?” She responded, “No man, Lord.” Jesus answered, “Neither do I condemn thee...go now and sin no more.” Amazing, isn’t it? Jesus, the only man who was without sin, the only man who could have righteously stoned her, did not condemn the woman.

But there is more to it than that! The scripture says that “Jesus *knew* what was in man.” By the wisdom of God He *knew* the true nature of all things. And *knowing* that, there was no vengeance in Him, no vindictiveness, no condemnation at all toward the woman caught in the act of adultery who, under the law, deserved to be stoned to death. He said, “There is no condemnation, I do not judge you in condemnation.” But that is not all He said! And there is mighty power in the words He next spoke to her. “Neither do I condemn thee, ***go and sin no more.***” It wasn’t merely that He forgave her sin; yes, He did indeed forgive her, but I tell you that when He spoke those immortal words, “Go and sin no more,” there was something that transpired in the spirit that transcended *all* that the law of Moses handed down. Jesus had said, “The words that I speak unto you, they are *spirit* and they are *life.*” Oh, yes! As He spoke His word of power into the life of this sinful woman there was an ***impartation*** of righteousness! It was not a suggestion. It was not a commandment. It was an impartation of righteousness into her life! When she departed from the presence of the Son of God she was no longer adulterous. Not only was she forgiven, she was cleansed, she was purged, she was delivered, she was changed, she was transformed by that living, creative word of the Lord! “***Go and sin no more.***” WHAT A JUDGE! ALL HAIL HIS THRONE OF JUDGMENT!

## THE JUDGMENT

And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were *judged* out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were *judged* every man according to their works” (Rev. 20:12-13).

The dead were judged “according to their works,” — not exclusively those of their former lives now long in the past, but those works, or deeds, now manifesting out of their lives as they are brought to “stand before God.” The Jewish world of Jesus’ day had some knowledge, though imperfect, of this great “Judgment Day” that God has appointed for all men. Jesus spoke of it on various occasions throughout His ministry. At one time, while teaching in the cities of Galilee He indicted three Galilean cities for their impenitent unresponsiveness to the marvelous works He had performed in their midst. “Then began He to upbraid the cities wherein most of His mighty works were done, because they repented not: Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable (bearable) for Tyre and Sidon at *the day of judgment*, than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land (people) of Sodom in *the day of judgment*, than for thee” (Mat. 11:20-24).

Jesus declared, in effect, that if He had performed the same miracles in Tyre and Sidon (two ancient Mediterranean coastal cities of the wicked Canaanites), they would have repented in sackcloth and ashes. Since these two cities of antiquity would have repented had Jesus performed the same mighty miracles in their heyday, it logically follows that this *day of judgment* which will go easier on them than with that generation who dwelt in Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum in Jesus’ day, will afford their peoples an opportunity to repent of their evil deeds and enter the kingdom of God. Only that could be both *justice* and *mercy*! Otherwise God becomes a respecter of persons, judging men by different standards without cause, which the scripture affirms He is *not*!

Jesus then jumps back in time from Tyre and Sidon to Sodom and Gomorrah. It was during the days of Abraham that these two cities reached the depths of moral degradation. God destroyed them by raining fire and brimstone upon them. Their destruction was total and complete! The spirits of those wicked men were swept into God’s prison house (hades) and the area of earth where they had lived became a desolate wilderness of drought and heat, salt and rock, to this day. The spiritual lesson is just this: If Jesus had come to even those two incredibly sin-filled cities as the humble preacher from Nazareth, but performing mighty works and miracles, the ancient inhabitants would have repented of their revolting perversions and the cities would have still been extant two thousand years later! That is what Jesus said. Again, it only makes spiritual sense that God will give even these ancient sinners the opportunity to enter into life and the kingdom of God. When He does, they will have an easier time of it under His dealings in the day of judgment than those during Jesus’ ministry who witnessed the glory of God in their midst and refused to repent. Truly, as the Lord said to the religious types of His day, “...the tax collectors and the *harlots* go into the kingdom of God before you!”

For the third time Jesus returns to the same theme of “the day of judgment” in relation to the non-repentance of His generation. “The men of Nineveh (an ancient Gentile city — the capital of Assyria) shall *rise in judgment with this generation*, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and, behold, a greater than Jonah is here” (Mat. 12:41). Now let’s ask a question: How much did those ancient Assyrians, who heard Jonah’s preaching, know about Jesus’ generation prior to their death? The answer is, of course, absolutely nothing! They lived hundreds of years prior to the coming of Christ. Perhaps they still don’t know anything about Jesus’ generation, although we don’t know all of Father’s times in relation to His judgments. Obviously they won’t be able to condemn Jesus’ generation until ALL stand before God’s great judgment process in the full light of divine revelation of all things.

The story does not end with the Ninevites. Jesus caps off the subject with a final comparison. "The queen of the south (or, Sheba) shall *rise up in judgment with this generation*, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here" (Mat. 12:42). Prior to this one, all the other examples in antiquity which Jesus gave did not center in an individual; the Lord had reference to large groups of people — citizens of Tyre, Sidon, Sodom, Gomorrah, Nineveh — cities whose ancient inhabitants' personal names have long since been forgotten. The queen of Sheba, on the other hand, was an individual Sabaeen monarch who journeyed to Jerusalem in the tenth century B.C. to test King Solomon's wisdom. She went away very impressed, giving glory to the God of Israel. Oh, yes! She, too, will rise up in the day of judgment to condemn the people of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum for their unbelief! The scene John beholds in our present text, people standing before God and before His throne of judgment, and the books being opened, and also the book of life, speaks powerfully to us of God's wonderful processes of judgment. Yes, God must deal with every man! He will also deal with groups of men! The process of judgment is not the same as sentencing. Sentencing is merely the final act of the process of judgment. But the sentence itself, whatever it is, is not *the end*. The sentence is UNTO SALVATION! Why else would all the "books" and *also* the "book of life" be opened before the judgment throne? A decision must be rendered, based on how each individual responds to the dealing of God. Some don't get their names "written in the book of life" at that point in their judgment — and at the end of the judging process we find that "whosoever was not found written in the book of life was *cast into the lake of fire*" for a further work of purging and purification. The point Jesus makes is that it will be more tolerable or bearable for some peoples than others — some will need to be dealt with more drastically than others to obtain the same result. How could it be more tolerable or bearable for some than for others unless God is doing exactly "what it takes" to change and raise up His salvation in each one! What a plan!

What a judgment seat! What a Judge! What reality! Oh! what an unspeakably glorious and awe-inspiring scene John the beloved beheld as from his vantage point in the heavens of God's Spirit he saw "a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from whose face the heaven and the earth fled away, and there was found no place for them" (Rev. 20:11). Who is it that sits there? It is clearly the Lord Jesus Christ, for He Himself proclaimed that "the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed *all judgment unto the Son*" (Jn. 5:22). And how does He sit there? In and through His body, the saints, unto whom **judgment is given** (Dan. 7:22; Rev. 20:4). A throne is a seat of authority. The throne is called "great" because of its vast magnitude, its awful sovereignty, and the majesty of the One who fills it. It is called "great" because it is a many-membered One. It is called "white" because of the absolute purity and righteousness of its Judge and His judgment. White also denotes *light* — that which reveals. So we see a seat of authority and great majesty, power, purity, and revelation!

Observe, the heaven, and the earth, fly from the face of Him that sits upon the throne! "From His face (intelligence, illumination) the earth and the heaven fled away." Consider the scene! In its symbology the "earth" is that earth **which we are**, the carnal, soulical, earthly, and even humanly religious nature of old Adam. "The first man is **of the earth, earthy**" (I Cor. 15:47). "As we have borne the image of the **earthy**, we shall also bear the image of the **heavenly**" (I Cor. 15:49). "Heaven" means height, eminence, elevation, exaltation. God dwells in heaven, the invisible realm of spirit that transcends this gross material realm. When you touch God by the spirit, you touch heaven. When you experience God in the spirit, you experience heaven. When you know God in the spirit, you know heaven. When God is revealed to you by the spirit, heaven is opened and you behold heavenly things. There are many heavens, for there are many "mansions," many realms, dimensions, and levels on which God can be touched, experienced, and known in the spiritual world. Most saints have passed through several heavens in their UPWARD WALK of progressive spiritual experience. But Jesus is greater than them all! For He has "ascended up FAR ABOVE A-L-L H-E-A-V-E-N-S!" (Eph. 4:10). God is so great in His fullness that even "the heaven of heavens" (the super-heaven containing all other heavens) cannot contain Him!" (I Kings 8:27). Christ accommodates us by meeting with us and revealing Himself to us in the heavens of our spiritual experience, where we sit together with Him in these heavenly places. But that is not *His true position*. He has ascended up *far above all heavens* so that His true position and state of being is in that exalted realm FAR ABOVE THE HEAVENS. Oh, yes, there is a realm above all heavens,

and it is there that our Lord Jesus Christ has been exalted. It is the realm where God dwelt before there were any heavens. This is a truth that few have understood.

The highest hope of untold millions of Christians is to go to heaven and spend eternity with Jesus. I've got news for you — heaven is not eternal. Nobody will spend eternity in heaven. If heaven is your hope then you will one day wake up homeless. It matters not how many heavens there are or how many heavens we have dwelt in or passed through, none of them is eternal. How can we know this? Because the heavens are *created*. "*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth*" (Gen. 1:1). Yes, in the Hebrew text it is "*the heavens*" — plural. In that long ago beginning God created *all the heavens*! I can hear someone saying, "But God Himself dwells in the heavens." That is true, my friend, but the question follows, "Where did God dwell *before* He created the heavens?" God does indeed dwell in the heavens, but He also dwells in the earth. Surely you don't think that God dwelt in the earth before the earth was created! What does it mean to you, my brother, my sister, when the Lord Jesus says, "Heaven *and* earth shall pass away..." Oh, yes, God dwells in the earth, for the earth is full of His glory, but God existed before there was an earth and the passing away of the earth will not discomfiture Him in any way! Nor will the passing away of the heavens!

What revealing light of revelation shined when Jesus said just prior to His death, resurrection, and ascension, "And now, O Father, glorify Thou me *with Thine own self* with the glory which I had with Thee *before the world was*. Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given me, be *with me where I am*; that they may behold my glory, which Thou hast given me, for *Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world*" (Jn. 17:5,24). Before the foundation of the world, before that long ago beginning when God *created the heavens and the earth*, Christ existed *in the Father in a glory that transcends the glory He revealed on earth and also transcends the glory He has in the created heavens*. And now our Lord prays for His many brethren, that they may be with Him in that glory which He had before the world was, and know the love the Father had for Him before there were ever any heavens or an earth.

It is wonderful to know God in His heavens! Each heaven bespeaks a sphere of life, a plane of relationship, a level of experience in God by the spirit. When the Lord unveils Himself to you on a higher plane, in deeper measures, in richer and fuller dimensions of His life and glory, and you experience Him in it, you ascend in Him to a higher heaven. But, thank God! there is a realm of HIS FULLNESS which lies **above** and **beyond** all heavens! When the Christ appears on His great white throne of judgment its effulgence exposes the darkness of the carnal mind, uncovers the deceitfulness of the wicked heart, revealing in stark reality the man of sin sitting in the temple of God "which you are." For us to become the manifest sons of God, the image and glory of God, this thing — self, carnality, and all that pertains to the fleshly nature — must be destroyed by the brightness of His appearing, removed, taken out of the way. Blessed be God! Before the face of Him whose countenance is as the sun shining in its strength, none of the things of the flesh can stand, so they flee away, and no place is found for them! Our "earth" flees from before the face of HIM who sits upon the throne!

Before the face of Him who sits upon the throne in the higher-than-all-heavens, the limitations of our present "in part" knowing of the Lord, every heaven of spiritual experience which is less than HIS FULLNESS, stands revealed as falling short of the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ — the image and glory of God. As God leads us onward and upward in Him from one glory to another we must realize that before the majesty of His great white throne, in the searching illumination of His eyes of flaming fire, none of our religiousness can stand, none of our spiritual immaturity can remain, none of the lesser realms of spiritual experience can abide — so **all** our **heavens** flee away, and no place is found for them! Is it not true that some of our heavens, or the exalted realms of spiritual experience we have known in God, have already passed away in our lives? Some of us first met God in a Baptist heaven, or a Catholic heaven, or a Pentecostal heaven, or a Mennonite heaven, or some other heaven, a spiritual place, realm, or dimension where we knew and experienced God on a certain level. But one day the moving of God came in our lives, we heard the voice of the Lord beckoning us to move on into a *higher place (heaven) in Him* and the

heaven we had been living in with great joy and contentment suddenly rolled up like a scroll, passed away with a great noise, and no place was found for it within us anymore!

In the sovereignty and fullness of His throne there are no more “heavens,” no more companies, groups, classes, with various levels of servants, friends, apostles, prophets, pastors, bride, priests, or kings; no more traditional churches where people know the Lord through catechisms, liturgies, rituals, ceremonies, and sacraments; no more Fundamentalists who know Him only as Saviour, and Pentecostals and Charismatics who know Him also as Baptizer in the Holy Spirit; no more Word of Faith people who know Him as Healer and Provider; no more Deliverance people who know Him in the gifts of the Spirit, in signs, wonders and miracles; or still others who know Him in other glorious dimensions of truth and reality. John beheld the heaven and the earth fleeing away from before the *face* (full revelation) of Him who sits upon the throne. When all of our heavens and our earth have passed away we will find ourselves IN HIM — **PLUS NOTHING!** Oh, the wonder of it!

The message is just this — the wonderful work of the great white throne of judgment is not to condemn men and banish them to unending damnation in eternal fire. Oh, no! It is, rather, to bring God’s dealings of fiery judgment into men’s lives in such a manner and with such intensity as to finally roll up all their heavens and banish all their earth until they find themselves at home again IN HIM! And yet — there is a truth beyond this. Just as we are a “*new creation* in Christ Jesus,” so is there a new realm of manifestation of His glory, so that we are not to understand that when our heavens and our earth have fled away there is neither a heaven nor an earth to be found. It is specifically the one that fled away that will not be found! But notice, it is only the old earth and old heaven that are spoken of; and almost immediately afterwards the Seer exclaims, “I saw a *new heaven* and a *new earth*: for the first heaven and the first earth are passed away” (Rev. 21:1). The change is part of that “restoration of all things” of which the apostle Peter spoke when he wrote of the passing away of the present heavens and the present earth, and then said, “But, according to His promise, we look for *new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness*” (II Pet. 3:13).

The whole purpose of the great white throne judgment is to clear away all the old religious heavens that have ruled us, and the earth of the flesh and the works of the flesh that have bound us, to make way for God’s new order — the new heaven and earth of CHRIST’S KINGDOM. I do not say that even that heaven and earth are an eternal order, for Paul tells us of a reality beyond all this: “Then cometh *the end, when He shall have DELIVERED UP THE KINGDOM to God, even the Father; when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power...*and when all things shall have been subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, **THAT GOD MAY BE A-L-L I-N A-L-L!**” (I Cor. 15:24,28). That is certainly beyond the new heaven and the new earth of the kingdom of Christ! We experience these things more and more in our lives as we walk with the Lord. This is the ongoing process by which Christ is “making everything new.” By it He transforms us into a new creation in which God can live, work, express, and manifest Himself in the totality of His life, glory, and power. When our old earth and heavens flee from before the Lord’s face, when we allow no room for them in our experience, God’s judging and refining has at last destroyed all carnality, sinfulness, religiosity, and all immature spirituality from our lives. Aren’t you glad!

High above the earth realm, and far beyond all the heavens of spiritual experience lies the GREAT WHITE THRONE — and the invitation is extended: “To him that overcometh will I grant to **sit with me in my throne**, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne” (Rev. 3:21). But you will never know Him in the majesty, power, glory, and all-surpassing eminence of His throneship, my beloved, until YOUR EARTH and ALL YOUR HEAVENS have fled away, and you have put on the Lord Jesus Christ in the fullness of His divine nature, to manifest Him in all His wondrous beauty and majesty. Those who share His throne are like Him, *exactly like Him*, so that should they number in thousands, or in millions, there is only ONE who is seen upon the throne! Can you not see that this process is going on all the time, as we are changed progressively into His likeness from one glory to another; day by day our flesh-life is fleeing away, and day by day our lower heavens are passing away. Isn’t it wonderful!

“And I saw a *great white throne*, and Him that sat on it...and I saw the dead, small and great, *stand before God*, and the books were opened...and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works” (Rev. 20:12-13).

In the passage above is the picture of the judgment of God upon all individuals who now live, who have ever lived, and who shall yet live on earth — both saint and sinner. Most Christians believe that it is a judgment that follows a physical resurrection because John says that the “dead,” small and great, are caused to “stand” before God. According to the popular teaching, one day soon Jesus is going to appear in the sky, and immediately all the dead saints will be physically resurrected out of their graves and the living saints will be caught up in the clouds of the sky with them to meet Christ and then soar away through the universe to a far away planet called heaven. Some believe that the unsaved dead will have to wait another thousand years to be resurrected. At that time ALL, saint and sinner, will be called to appear before the Great White Throne of judgment to have their lives reviewed out of God’s heavenly record books in which everything they ever thought, said, or did has been meticulously recorded. Thunder rumbles and lightening bolts ricochet through the heavens. The Son of man is seated there in all His august glory, majesty, and holiness, in serious and somber contemplation of each person who appears before Him. Myriads of angels surround Him. All eyes are upon the Great White Throne!

We are considering a subject upon which there has been a fathomless sea of misunderstanding and a world of carnal conjecture. The idea generally entertained is of Christ coming to earth, seated upon a dazzling throne, and He summons everyone in rank and file before Him, to be judged. Adam would stand there, with mother Eve, and look in wonder upon his offspring. It would be the first time in which he has ever had the opportunity of seeing all his children together. What a sight he would then behold — far stretching, covering all the globe which they inhabit, enough not only to people all earth’s plains, but crown her hilltops, and cover even the ways of the sea, so numberless must the human race be if all the generations which have ever lived, or shall ever live, shall at once “appear” before the great white throne of judgment! Everyone from before the Flood, from the days of the Patriarchs, from the times of Moses, and the Judges, and David, and from the Babylonian kingdom, all the legions of Assyria, all the hosts of Persia, all the multitudes of the Greeks, all the vast armies and citizens of Rome, the masses of Asia and Africa, the barbarian, the Scythian, the bond, the free, men of every color and of every tongue — what a vast assemblage would be mustered, what a spectacle would be held! I do not hesitate to say that though good and holy men have conceived the foregoing picture, it is, nonetheless, a myth, a religious superstition, entirely out of harmony with the whole Biblical portrait of judgment. This distorted picture arises from a carnal-minded and too-literal interpretation of a few obscure verses of scripture which were supplied merely as *symbols*, to be understood by the spiritual mind and interpreted by the spirit of wisdom and revelation from God.

A tough store manager was walking through the packing room one day when he saw a young man lounging on a shipping crate, whistling and relaxing. He asked how much he was paid. The young man answered, “\$200 a week.” At that, the manager took out his wallet, grabbed some bills and said, “Here’s a week’s pay. Get out!” The manager immediately found the department head and demanded to know who had hired the young man. He replied, “We didn’t hire him. He was just here to pick up a package.” The message of this little story is this: *Assumptions can be costly!* We’d better find out what’s going on before we jump into the fray! In like manner, men who read the Revelation and try to interpret the visions John describes with human reasoning and carnal minds, often make dreadful and grotesque *assumptions* that have nothing to do with *spiritual reality!*

It reminds me of the story I read of a man who, diligently working at his desk in his sixth-floor office, realized that he was struggling to see what he was doing. He looked up and, sure enough, the seven-foot fluorescent light bulb above his desk was not producing any light. Calling maintenance produced no help, so he scrambled up on his desk and took a closer look. The bulb was clearly burned out. He very carefully removed it from its fixture and took it down. He then

measured its length and walked down to the hardware store a couple blocks away. The store had what he thought he needed, so he bought it, took it back to his office, climbed back up on his desk, fastened the new bulb in, and his office was immediately flooded with light. The man had a good feeling of accomplishment and worked productively the rest of the day.

At five o'clock he was getting ready to leave. Just before walking out the door, he noticed the burned-out fluorescent bulb standing forlornly in the corner where he had leaned it. He didn't think it was a good idea to leave it there, so he impulsively took it with him. He thought he remembered a construction site near his house with a large dumpster in front of it where he could deposit the burned-out bulb. So the man carried the seven-foot tube down the street, into the subway station, and onto the train. But then he realized he would have trouble sitting down with the long tube in his hand. He therefore remained standing, holding the tube upright. As the train went further, it began to get crowded. All the seats were taken and people were forced to stand. At the next stop a large number of additional people got on and four of them grabbed hold of the tube the man was holding, thinking it was a stabilizing pole for standing passengers. Now what? Pretty soon it occurred to him that all he needed to do was get off at his stop and leave the "pole," in the hands of others. And that's exactly what he did!

We smile as we think of the last person left holding onto that wobbly "pole." The lesson is just this — when a number of people have grabbed hold of something it often looks as if it is genuine and can really hold us up. It appears to be truth when it's not. We assume it is truth because so many people firmly believe it and are seriously counting on it! But in things spiritual, it is actually just a carnal-minded and erroneous understanding of God's plan and purpose. The last person left holding the "pole" probably looked and felt very foolish and truly embarrassed — as I'm sure multitudes of Christians and preachers will also when they are brought face to face with the realities of God's great judgments and processings, and His wonderful restorative, reconstructive, redemptive, and transformative purposes for His creation!

Consider the scene! According to Peter Jennings on ABC News September 20, 1996 scientists estimate that (at the time of that program) more than 20,000,000,000 have lived on earth since the dawn of civilization. Now, should all of these 20,000,000,000 people appear before the Great White Throne, standing in a line to be judged one by one, can we even imagine how long that line would be? If each person occupies two linear feet of space the line would stretch 40 billion feet — 7,575,758 miles — across the horizon! Now, let us suppose that it took only one minute (I am just speculating — such a judgment could take much longer than that, and certainly it would take longer on account of everybody's sins having to be read out of "the books") to review the record, deliver the verdict, and pass the sentence on the twenty billion people under consideration. But let us say it would take but one minute. At that rate it would take...

20,000,000,000 minutes, or  
333,333,333 hours, or  
13,888,888 days, or  
38,052 years!

That is a long time if that is the way it is going to happen. When you stop to think about it, this is not a very efficient system. But the average person doesn't stop to think about such things. That's the way it is going to happen, we are told, so that is what we believe. We firmly grasp hold of our "pole." Of course, with God the time involved is no issue, for, after all, He has all eternity to get the job done! And the poor sinners at the end of the line would probably relish the 38,052 years of standing in line — that time would push the inevitable doom far into the distant future! Yet, even that amount of time would be infinitesimal when compared to the billions upon trillions of years and ages of time that poor, lost sinners would spend in the scorching, ever-burning, red-hot lake of fire as they burn and suffer excruciating pain and scream hysterically in conscious torment and agony through the endless ages of eternity. I am telling it like it is, or will be, *if* the common perception of these things is to be taken seriously.

As you can see, there is something wrong with this *literalistic* interpretation of John's vision. Something is very wrong with the whole picture — not that the numbers and calculations are inaccurate — but something is missing from our human reasoning and understanding. Could there possibly be a scriptural alternative to such a scenario as we have just conjured up in our minds? Or does the Bible really teach that the great white throne judgment is going to happen something like we have imagined? Ah, the missing ingredient is the fact that the book of Revelation is a *spiritual book* which reveals *spiritual truths* and *spiritual realities* communicated to us by means of visions given in *signs* and *symbols*! GOD IS SPIRIT, and so are we! The vision is not about natural things and events, but spiritual! That is what we need to think about. All judgment comes from God, who sees and knows all things at the same time, even as He fills all things and is present everywhere at the same time.

God is not a limited physical being that can sit on a tangible throne in one restricted locality somewhere on earth or out beyond the blue. God is spirit and God is everywhere and thus His throne is a spiritual throne and is everywhere. The one grand truth that even the theologians do not dispute is that God is *omnipresent spirit* who not only created, but upholds and *fills* the whole universe and all things! And our scientists tell us that in the universe there are more worlds than individual grains of sand on the beaches of all the earth. Astronomy informs us of the enormous distances that separate the stars of the physical universe. So remote are the nearest ones that four years are required for light traveling 186,000 miles a second to traverse the distance. Yet speaking astronomically, such are our very near neighbors! Galaxies have been discovered which are billions of light years away.

You cannot put a God who is that great and everywhere present and bottle Him up on a physical throne in one limited spot. Oh, no! *He is everywhere and His throne is everywhere*. The throne of the God who is omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent **spirit** is not a material one at all, but bespeaks the REALM OF HIS SUPREME AND UNIVERSAL AUTHORITY AND DOMINION, and our Lord Jesus Christ has been exalted to the glory of that rulership. **“All power is given unto me, in heaven and in earth.”** The throne of God is a sphere of power and authority *in the spirit*, a position of eminence, a condition and a state of being. The reign of God's Christ is the assumption of the almighty power and dominion of the Father. It is the dispensing of HIS POSITIVE ENERGY FORCE into His creation in specific ways. Exalted to that high realm Jesus no longer walks in a limited physical body, but He now indwells the church, **which is His body**, the FULLNESS OF HIM THAT FILLETH ALL IN ALL (Eph. 1:22-23).

If heaven were a “place” out beyond the galaxies somewhere, can you imagine how long it would take for God to hear a prayer, how long it would take to *get* to heaven were we to travel there, how long it would have taken Jesus to get from heaven to earth when He descended to dwell among us? Why, bless your heart, after two thousand years Jesus would still be on His way back to the throne even if He traveled at the speed of light! And He would need billions of more years to get there! The angel Gabriel was dispatched from heaven *while Daniel was praying* and was able to reach the prophet Daniel *while he was yet in his prayer* (Dan. 9:20-23). Do you suppose he made that kind of speed by flapping those “wings” everybody says angels have?! Real distance is measured not in miles or light years, but rather in time required to reach a destination. Heaven, therefore, is **not far away!**

The scriptures use many terms that are suited to our understanding. When God speaks to us He uses terminology that is comprehensible to us, in order to convey concepts that are beyond us. These are called “terms of accommodation” or “anthropomorphic terms” if I might use a \$20.00 word. It means simply this — there are certain attributes that belong to us as human beings that are attributed to God and they are used of God in order that you and I might understand God better. For instance, the scripture says, “the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the earth.” Now God doesn't have physical eyes! And frankly, I don't understand how you can see without eyes, and therefore the only way that I can understand it is for God to say to us, “The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the earth.” And now I understand that in some mysterious way God *sees!*

Not only do I understand that God sees, but I also understand that God sees everything, everywhere. Nothing is hid from His sight! The “eyes” of God are *spirit eyes*. God is

omnipresent, that is, present everywhere at the same time. The spirit eyes of God, or His ability to see by Spirit, are as omnipresent as God is omnipresent! That is, the eyes of Spirit are not localized — God doesn't have two remarkable eyes somewhere in His head with wonderful X-ray vision that can pierce the vast distances of the universe and see everything, everywhere at will. Oh, no! His eyes are omnipresent — He sees everything, everywhere at the same time and He sees it from right there where He is, not from some distant vantage point. His Spirit is right there present with you as you read these lines and He sees you there by His Spirit that is there. Because He “fills all things” His Spirit is at the same time in Moscow, Cairo, Beijing, Washington, Caracas, Johannesburg, and Paris and He sees everything there by His Spirit there. Omnipresent eyes! It is indeed wonderful! And yet they are not eyes as we know eyes, but just His *universal ability to see* by His Spirit. The One who made the eye can see without an eye! I don't understand it — therefore the term “eye” is given to us as a symbol standing for the reality in God the Spirit.

Again the scriptures say that the heavens are the “handiwork” or “fingerwork” of God. God doesn't have fingers like we have, but He can do the work of fingers, therefore the Holy Spirit speaks of the creation as the work of His fingers. So the One who made the fingers, the hand, and the arm can do the work of the fingers, the hand, and the arm, *by His Spirit*. The hand of the Lord is not localized, it does not exist in some specific spot somewhere in the universe from whence it moves out through time and space to perform some action. Oh, no! God is omnipresent Spirit — therefore the hand of God is as omnipresent as God Himself. His hand is a spirit hand and speaks of His great ability to act, perform, do, make, and create. God acts by His Spirit in every place at the same time. Therefore “His arm is not short that it cannot save.” God's hand is right there in the room where you sit this very moment. And His hand is everywhere else in all the unbounded heavens at the same time!

Furthermore, Christ is now seated on the right hand of God — He is seated there on that right hand right there where you are, yea, even in the deepest depth of your being, so that the throne of God is nearer to you than the air that you breathe! Christ is seated at the right hand of power, that is, in the position where God acts, does, works, and creates, so that all God does He does in and by and through the Son of God. And He does it right there where you are! Can we not see by this how simple yet profound is the knowledge that we have been raised up and made to sit in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus! The spiritual dimension of God's abilities in Christ have been awakened and quickened within us, our spirit joined to His Spirit, so that we sit in that spiritual dimension by spiritual consciousness, and we haven't moved one inch to get there! Somehow I understand that today and it makes the reality clear to my own dull human way of thinking.

The “ears” of the Lord are not huge elephant-like ears possessing such super-sensitivity that they can hear sounds from billions of light years away. Oh, no! The ears of the Lord are spirit ears, equally present in every place His Spirit is; He hears you not from a distance but from right where you stand in His presence. The ears of the Lord permeate all places and all things by His Spirit and they are all about you and within you. He hears every thought of your mind, every desire of your heart, every cry of your soul! And His wonderful omnipresent *spirit mind* is able to instantly and efficiently assimilate, process, compute, utilize and respond to all these untold trillions of bits of information with the same ease that you and I can drive our car while talking on the phone and be conscious of the weather all at the same time! God is all He is everywhere, and He can do all that He does everywhere. The mouth of the Lord is an omnipresent spirit mouth, His ability to speak in every place at the same time. Out of His Spirit He can speak within your own heart or ears, while at the same instant He is speaking to millions of other people around the world and to holy angels and creatures of all kinds in far distant worlds. He speaks to each by His Spirit present within them, not from some distant “place” where His “mouth” is! In like manner the creative power of God is an omnipresent power and God creates, not in one locale, but out of the infinity of Himself.

The dwelling place of God cannot be any smaller or more limited than He is! The whole vast realm of the heavens is His throne. The Lord spoke through His anointed prophet, declaring,

“Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool” (Isa. 66:1). He fills the entire immense extent of the heavens, which is the realm of the Spirit. The heavens are His throne, which means that He rules and reigns in the realm of the Spirit and by His Spirit. If we could measure the extent of the Spirit, from one end of the heavens to the other, we would then be able to estimate the extent or bounds of His throne. Just as scientists cannot discover the extremities of the physical universe, so is it impossible to know the expanse of the Spirit. Neither the heavens, nor the earth, nor the whole universe can contain Him. Solomon said that the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him. Our Father is greater than all! He and His throne are limitless and boundless! And He shall reign until all principalities and powers, all creatures and men, and all things of all orders everywhere throughout the unbounded heavens have acknowledged Him, and being reconciled in their hearts come to love, adore, honor, and obey Him with willing hearts. He shall reign until all things everywhere both perceive and resonate with the glory that He is!

Truly the throne of God is a **spiritual throne** and is as omnipresent as God is! God is everywhere, and His throne is everywhere, for His throne is naught but THE REALM OF HIS ALMIGHTY AUTHORITY AND OMNIPOTENT POWER. There is no need to go anywhere physically to relate to God’s throne. The journey is a spiritual one! The throne is all around you, within you, and present equally everywhere within the realm of Spirit in which God exists and dwells. You can either experience or ascend that throne within yourself through union with Christ and the release of His power. The Greek word *thronos* means “the place and seat of authority” and refers to all executive authority that is committed into the hands of God’s Christ, Head and body. Understand that the throne is here now, here is infinity; here is eternity; here is omnipotence. There is nothing to keep God from judging all men at any time or at the same time — in a second of time! And He doesn’t have to go anywhere, nor do you have to go anywhere! God is omnipresent — everywhere present throughout the unbounded universe! So is His throne! And so are His judgments!

To be continued...

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