



Be still.

*“May we be able
to spread our Bibles
on the mercy-seat,
and read them by
the light of the
cloud of glory.”*

**“I AM A STRANGER IN THE
EARTH, HIDE NOT THY
COMMANDMENTS FROM ME.”
PSALM 119:19**

The Throne above the Sea

Excerpts from “The Days of Vengeance” by David Chilton

Being “in the Spirit” was the special privilege of the Biblical prophets. The critical event in the formation of a prophet was a transforming encounter with the Glory-Spirit from which the prophet emerged as a man reflecting the divine Glory... To be caught up in the Spirit was to be received into the divine assembly, the heavenly reality. The hallmark of the true prophet was that he had stood before the Lord of Glory in the midst of this deliberative council of angels.

But, with the coming of the New Covenant, what was once the special prerogative of the prophetic class within the Covenant community has become the privilege of all. The desire of Moses—“Would that all the Lord’s people were prophets, that the Lord would put His Spirit on them!” (Num. 11:29)—has been fulfilled in the Pentecostal outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:17-21). Just as Moses (the prophet par excellence of the Old Covenant) was uniquely privileged to speak with God face to face (Num. 12:6-8), partaking of His glory (Ex. 34:33-35), so now “we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit” (2 Cor. 3:18). Every believer has received the prophetic anointing (1 John 2:20, 27).

In order to receive the Revelation, St. John is caught up to heaven, where he sees a Throne and One sitting; John is going to view the coming events from the true vantage point, the Chariot-Throne of God in the glory cloud. God is the determiner of all things, and a right



St. John on the Island of Patmos

understanding of the world must begin from a right understanding of the centrality of His Throne.

“In the infinite wisdom of the Lord of all the earth, each event falls with exact precision into its proper place in the unfolding of His eternal plan; nothing, however small, however strange, occurs without His ordering, or without its fitness for its place in the working out of His purpose; and the end of all shall be the manifestation of His glory, and the accumulation of His praise.”

And He who was sitting was like a jasper stone and a sardius in appearance: God is seen as in a blaze of unapproachable light (cf. 1 Tim.

6:16), for St. John has been caught up into the heavenly holy of holies, the inner Sanctuary of the cosmic Temple in the Cloud of glory. Underscoring this is the fact that John sees a rainbow around the Throne, like an emerald in appearance. It is worth noting that these three stones, jasper (perhaps an opal or diamond), sardius (a reddish stone), and emerald, represented three of the twelve tribes of Israel on the breastplate of the high priest (Ex. 28:17-19); they are also mentioned among the jewellery that littered the ground in the Garden of Eden (Ezek. 28:13). Compare John’s vision with that of the prophet Ezekiel:

...there was something resembling a Throne, like a lapis lazuli in appearance; and on that which resembled a Throne, high up, was a figure with the appearance of a man. Then I noticed from the appearance of His loins and upward something like glowing metal that looked like fire all around within it, and from the appearance of His loins and downward I saw something like fire; and there was a radiance around Him. As the appearance of the rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so was the appearance of the surrounding radiance. Such was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord. (Ezek. 1:26-28)

St. John is thus in the true Temple, the heavenly archetype that formed the pattern for Moses’ construction of the Tabernacle (Ex. 25:40; Heb. 8:1-2, 5; 9:23-24). He sees the Throne, corresponding to the Mercy-Seat; the Seven Lamps, corresponding to the Seven-Branched Lamp; the Four Living Creatures, corresponding to the Cherubim; the Sea of

Glass, corresponding to the Bronze “Sea”; and the Twenty-Four Elders, corresponding to the Twenty-Four Courses of Priests (1 Chron. 24). That these elders are both priests and kings shows that the Aaronic priesthood of the Old Covenant has been superseded and transcended; the New Covenant priesthood, with Jesus Christ as High Priest, is a Melchizedekal priesthood. John tells us that these priest-elders are wearing crowns, for the crown of the high priest has been given to all. St. John describes the heavenly court in terms of the familiar acoustic and visual effects which accompany the glory cloud, as at Sinai (Ex. 19:16-19): From the Throne proceed flashes of lightning and voices and peals of thunder. Again, as in Rev. 1:4-5, the imagery is shown to be the heavenly original of the Tabernacle structure (Heb. 8:5; 9:23).

Then, before the Throne, St. John sees, as it were, a sea of glass like crystal. This is another point at which this vision intersects with that recorded in Ezekiel 1. **But the Throne is seen from two different perspectives.** Whereas St. John is standing in the heavenly court itself, looking down upon the “sea” of glass (which corresponds, in regard to Tabernacle furniture, to the Laver, also called the “sea”: Ex. 30:17-21; 1 Kings 7:23-26), Ezekiel is standing at the bottom of the glory cloud, looking up through its cone, and the “sea” at its top appears as a blue firmament* above him:

And, as I looked, behold, a storm wind was coming from the north, a great Cloud with fire flashing forth continually and bright light around it, and in its midst something like glowing metal in the midst of the fire. And within it there were figures resembling four living beings... Now over the heads of the living beings there was something like a firmament, like the awesome gleam of crystal, extended over their heads... And above the expanse that was over their heads there was something resembling a Throne... (Ezek. 1:4-5, 22, 26).

Another similarity to Ezekiel’s vision is that St. John sees four living creatures standing in the middle of the Throne and around it, supporting the Chariot-Throne in its flight (cf. Ps. 18:10), as do the four cherubim in Ezekiel. (Note the close connection between the Throne and the living creatures in Rev. 5:6.) These creatures are full of eyes in front and behind, and appear in the forms of a Lion, a Bull, a Man, and an Eagle. The cherubs of the Bible are very far from being chubby infants with wings and dimples. They are awesome creatures, visible indications of the presence of God. So, when we are told (Ps. 18:10) that the Lord travels both on a cherub and on the wings of the wind, we may begin to see a link between the four living creatures of 4:6 and the four winds of 7:1. We might call these cherub-creatures “nature” so long as we remember what nature really is—an immense construction throbbing with the ceaseless activity of God... Perhaps their faces (4:7;

Ezek. 1:10) represent his majesty, his strength, his wisdom and his loftiness, and their numberless eyes his ceaseless watchfulness over every part of his creation.

St. John describes the worship carried on by the four living creatures, using a choral section to interpret for us the meaning of the symbols in his vision of the Throne—a device he repeats throughout Revelation. He draws our attention to the living creatures’ six wings, in order to associate them with the seraphim of Isaiah’s vision:

In the year of King Uzziah’s death, I saw the Lord sitting on a Throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the Temple. seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings; with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called to another and said: Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory. (Isa. 6:1-3)

Similarly, the living creatures in Revelation have it as their chief end to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever, praising Him—apparently antiphonally, as Isaiah’s seraphim did—for His holiness, His almighty power, and His eternity: Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come.

But the heavenly praise does not end with the song of the living creatures; for when they give glory and honour and thanks to God, the twenty-four elders join in with antiphonal (or responsive) praise themselves. They will fall down before Him... and will worship Him... and will cast their crowns before the Throne, acknowledging that their authority and dominion derive from Him. They go on to praise Him for His works in creation and history: Worthy art Thou, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power; for Thou didst create all things, and because of Thy will they existed, and were created.

What about the issue of God’s sovereignty and independence. Did God need to create? Is God lonely? Does He stand in need of His creation? Let the Scriptures speak:

All the nations are as nothing before Him: they are regarded by Him as less than nothing and meaningless. (Isa. 40:17)

I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things which have not been done, saying, My purpose will be established, and I will accomplish all My good pleasure. (Isa. 46:9-10)

The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all life and breath and all things. (Acts 17:24-25)

In their divinely sanctioned worship, the elders have proclaimed the truth: The creation

exists, not because God needed to create, or is dependent upon His creation in any way, but simply because it was His will to create; it pleased Him to do so. God is sovereign, utterly independent from the creation. The Scriptural distinction between the Creator and the creature is absolute.

The heavenly worship service here shows us what God wants in earthly worship.

Worship must be corporate. Biblical worship is not individualistic, quietistic, or solely internal. This is not to say that there is no place for private worship; but it does mean that the Biblical emphasis on corporate worship is a far cry from the bastardised “worship” of many evangelicals, who see individual worship as having a priority over corporate worship, and who even conceive of corporate worship as simply an aggregation of individual worshippers. Another forgotten aspect of the need for corporate worship is the fact that the so-called “worship services” in modern churches are, in reality, either lecture halls or three-ring circus entertainments. In both cases there are star performers, and there are spectators—but the Church, as the Church, is not worshipping corporately. In contrast, the pattern of Biblical worship is the corporate worship service, with full participation among the united members of the congregation, demonstrating a harmony of unity and diversity.

Also, worship must be orderly. The elders and the living creatures do not interrupt each other or attempt to upstage one another. While worship should be corporate, involving the entire Church, it must not be chaotic. A basic standard for worship is laid down in 1 Cor. 14:40: “*Let everything be done decently and in order.*” Charismatics tend to have certain correct instincts—that worship should include the whole congregation—but their actual practice tends towards confusion and disorder, with everyone individually “worshipping” all at once.

Biblical public worship is very different from private or family worship; it is radically different from a mere Bible study group, as important as that may be. The Sunday worship of the Church is qualitatively unique: **It is God’s people coming into the palace for a formal ceremony before the Throne, an official audience with the King.** We come to confess our faith and allegiance, to take solemn oaths, to offer up prayers, to be instructed by God’s officers, to eat at His table, and to render thanksgiving for all His benefits; and we are to respond to all of this with music and singing. All of this is corporate. This may mean certain complex and involved changes in our habits and patterns of worship. **But God should have nothing less than the best. He is the King, and worship means serving Him.**

*(To Moses and the elders of Israel, the firmament-sea appeared as a sapphire-coloured (blue) pavement (Ex. 24:10).

Awed by the Presence of God

from “Whatever Happened to Worship” by A. W. Tozer

Isaiah 6:1-8

Through the years, I have quite often heard educated and intelligent persons say, ‘Let me tell you how I discovered God.’ Whether these discoverers went on from there to a humble and adoring worship of God I cannot say. I do know, however, that all of us would be in great trouble and still far from God if He had not graciously and in love revealed Himself to us.

I am a little irritated or grieved at the continuing hope of so many people that they will be able to grasp God—understand God, commune with God—through their intellectual capacities. When will they realise that if they could possibly ‘discover’ God with the intellect, they would be equal to God?

We would do well to lean toward the kind of discovery of God described by the prophet Isaiah:

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 (6:1)

Now, that which Isaiah saw was wholly other than, and altogether different from, anything he had ever seen before. Up to this point in his life, Isaiah had become familiar with the good things God had created. **But he had never been introduced to the presence of the Uncreated.**

To Isaiah, then, the violent contrast between that which is God and that which is not God was such that his very language suffered under the effort to express it.

Significantly, God was revealing Himself to man. Isaiah could have tried for a million years to reach God by means of his intellect without any chance of succeeding. All of the accumulated brainpower in the whole world could not reach God.

But the living God, in the space of a short second of time, can reveal Himself to the willing spirit of a man. It is only then that an Isaiah, or any other man or woman, can say with humility but with assurance, ‘I know him.’

Unlike men, God never acts without purpose. Here God was revealing Himself to Isaiah for eternal purposes. Isaiah has tried to give us a true record, but what actually happened is greater than the human mind. Isaiah confesses that he had never before seen the Lord sitting upon a throne.

Modern critics of this record by Isaiah warn us of the danger of anthropomorphism—the attempt to bestow upon God certain human attributes.

I have never been afraid of big words. Let them call it what they will, I still believe that God sits upon a throne, invested with self-bestowed sovereignty. I believe, too, that God sits upon a throne determining all events, finally, according to the purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus before the world began.

Now, because we are dealing with worship, let us consider the joys and delights of the heavenly creatures, the seraphim, around the throne of God. This is Isaiah’s record:

*Above it stood the seraphim:
each one had six wings;
with two he covered his face,
and with two he covered his feet,
and with two did he fly.
And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory (6:2-3).*

We know very little about these created beings, but I am impressed by their attitude of exalted worship. They are close to the throne and they burn with rapturous love for the Godhead. They were engrossed in their antiphonal chants, “Holy, holy, holy!”

I have often wondered why the rabbis and saints and the hymnists and those of olden times did not come to the knowledge of the Trinity just from the seraphim’s praise, ‘Holy, holy, holy.’ I am a Trinitarian—I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth. I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the Father, begotten of Him before all ages. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life, who with the Father and Son together is worshipped and glorified.

This is a very moving scene—the seraphim worshipping God. The more I read my Bible the more I believe in the Triune God.

In Isaiah’s vision the seraphim were chanting their praises to the Trinity 800 years before Mary cried with joy and her Baby wailed in Bethlehem’s manger, when the second person of the Trinity, the eternal Son, came to earth to dwell among us. The key words then and the keynote still of our worship must be ‘Holy, holy, holy!’

I am finding that many Christians are really not comfortable with the holy attributes of God. In such cases I am forced to wonder about the quality of the worship they try to offer Him.

The word ‘holy’ is more than an adjective saying that God is a holy God—it is an ecstatic ascription of glory to the Triune God. **I am not sure that we really know what it means,** but I think we should attempt a definition.

Complete moral purity can only describe God. Everything that appears to be good among men and women must be discounted, for we are human. Not one of us is morally pure. Abraham, David and Elijah, Moses, Peter and Paul—all were good men. They were included in God’s fellowship. But each had his human flaws and weaknesses as members of Adam’s race. Each had to find the place of humble repentance. Because God knows our hearts and our intentions, He is able to restore His sincere and believing children who are in the faith.

Much of our problem in continuing fellowship with a holy God is that many Christians repent only for what they do, rather than for what they are.

It should help us to be concerned about the quality of our worship when we consider that Isaiah’s reaction was a feeling of absolute profaneness in the presence of the moral purity of the divine Being. Consider that Isaiah was a commendable young man—cultured, religious and a cousin of the king. He would have made a good deacon in any church. Today he would be asked to serve on one of our mission boards.

But here Isaiah was an astonished man. He was struck with awe, his whole world suddenly dissolving into a vast, eternal brightness. He was pinned against that brightness—red and black, the colours of sin.

What had happened? Isaiah, only human, had glimpsed One whose character and nature signalled perfection. He could only manage the witness: ‘Mine eyes have seen the King.’

The definition of ‘Holy, holy’ must certainly have room for ‘mystery’ if, in our attempts to worship, we are to have an effective appreciation of our God.

There are leaders in various Christian circles who know so much about the things of God that they will offer to answer every question you may have.

We can hope to answer questions helpfully as far as we can. But there is a sense of divine mystery running throughout all of the kingdom of God—far beyond the mystery that scientists discover running throughout the kingdom of nature.

There are those who pretend to know everything about God—who pretend they can explain everything about God, about His creation, about His thoughts and about His judgments. They have joined the ranks of the evangelical rationalists. They end up taking the mystery out of life and the mystery out of worship.

When they have done that, they have taken God out as well.

The kind of 'know-it-all' attitude about God that we see in some teachers today leaves them in a very difficult position. They must roundly criticise and condemn any other man taking any position slightly different from theirs.

Our cleverness and glibness and fluency may well betray our lack of that divine awe upon our spirits, silent and wonderful, that breathes a whisper, 'Oh, Lord God, Thou knowest.'

In Isaiah 6 we see a clear portrayal of what happens to a person in the mystery of the Presence. Isaiah, overpowered within his own being, can only confess humbly, 'I am a man of unclean lips!'

I remind you that Isaiah recognised the 'strangeness'—something of the mystery of the Person of God. In that Presence, Isaiah found no place for joking or for clever cynicism or for human familiarity. He found a strangeness in God, that is, a presence unknown to the sinful and worldly and self-sufficient human.

A person who has sensed what Isaiah sensed will never be able to joke about the 'Man upstairs' or 'Someone up there who likes me'. I confess that when I hear these things I feel a great pain within. My brother or sister, there is something about our God that is *different*, that is beyond us, that is above us—transcendent. We must be humbly willing to throw our hearts open and to plead, 'God, shine Thyself into my understanding for I will never find Thee otherwise.'

The mystery, the strangeness is in God. Our Lord does not expect us to behave like zombies when we become Christians. But he does expect that we will have our soul open to the mystery that is God. I think it is proper for us to say that **a genuine Christian should be a walking miracle**. Through the leading and the power of the Holy Spirit, the Christian is involved in a daily life and habit that cannot be explained. A Christian should have upon him an element that is beyond psychology—beyond all natural laws and into spiritual laws.

God is a consuming fire. We are told that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Do you recall the first chapter of Ezekiel? The dejected prophet saw heaven opened. He was given a vision of God. And

he then witnessed four-faced creatures out of the fire.

I think in our witness and ministries, we Christians should be men and women out of the fire. Because our God is holy, He is actively hostile to sin. God can only burn on and on against sin forever. In another passage Isaiah asked, 'Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?' (33:14).

Isaiah was not thinking about those who would be separated from God. He was thinking of a company who would live for God and dwell with God. He answers his own questions: 'He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly;...he shall dwell on high' (33:15, 16).

The Salvation Army has always had as its slogan 'Blood and Fire'. I am for that in the things of God. We know of cleansing by the blood of Christ. The reference to God's workings often have to do with a holy flame. John the Baptist pointed to Christ's coming and said, 'I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: ...he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire' (Matthew 3:11).

When Isaiah cried out, 'I am undone!' it was a cry of pain. It was the revealing cry of conscious uncleanness. He was experiencing the undoneness of the creature set against the holiness of the Creator.

What should happen in genuine conversion? What should a man or woman feel in the transaction of the new birth?

There ought to be that real and genuine cry of pain. That is why I do not like the kind of evangelism that tries to invite people into the fellowship of God by signing a card.

There should be a birth from above and within. There should be the terror of seeing ourselves in violent contrast to the holy, holy, holy God. Unless we come into this place of conviction and pain, I am not sure how deep and real our repentance will ever be.

Today, it is not a question of whether we have Isaiah's cleanness, but a question of whether we have his awareness. He was unclean and, thank God, he became aware of it. But the world today is unclean and seems to be almost totally unaware of it.

Uncleanness with unawareness will have terrible consequences. That is what is wrong with the Christian church and with our evangelism. Our problem is the depravity still found within the circle of the just,

among those called to be saints, among those who claim to be great souls.

We like Isaiah's vision and awareness. But we do not like to think of the live coal out of the fire being placed on the prophet's lips. Purification by blood and by fire. Isaiah's lips, symbolic of all his nature, were purified by fire. God could then say to him, "Thine iniquity is taken away" (6:7).

That is how the amazed and pained Isaiah could genuinely come to a sense of restored moral innocence. That is how he instantly found that he was ready for worship and that he was also ready and anxious for service in the will of God.

With each of us, if we are to have that assurance of forgiveness and restored moral innocence, the fire of God's grace must touch us. It is only through the depths of the forgiving love of God that men and women can be so restored and made ready to serve him.

In the same vein, is there any other way in which we, the creatures of God, can become prepared and ready to worship Him?

I can only remind you of our great needs in this terrible day when men and women are trying their best to cut God down to their size. Many also believe that it is possible to gain control of the sovereign God and to think Him down to a place where they can use Him as they want to.

Even in our Christian circles we are prone to depend upon techniques and methods in the work that Christ has given us to do. Without a complete dependence upon the Holy Spirit we can only fail. If we have been misled to believe that we can do Christ's work ourselves, it will never be done.

The man whom God will use must be undone. He must be a man who has seen the King in His beauty.

Let us never take anything for granted about ourselves, my brother or sister.

Do you know who gives me the most trouble? Do you know who I pray for the most in my pastoral work? Just myself. I do not say it to appear to be humble, for I have preached all my lifetime to people who are better than I.

I tell you again that God has saved us to be worshippers. May God show us a vision of ourselves that will devalue us to the point of total devaluation. From there He can raise us up to worship Him and to praise Him and to witness. ♦

W THE GLORY OF HEAVEN

We are told that "*eye hath not seen, neither hath ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.*" Yet the eye has seen wonderful things. There are sunrises and sunsets, Alpine glories and ocean marvels which, once seen, cling to our memories throughout life; yet even when Nature is at her best she can not give us an idea of the supernatural glory which God has prepared for His people. The ear has heard sweet harmonies. Have we not enjoyed music which has thrilled us? Have we not listened to speech which has seemed to make our hearts dance within us? And yet no melody of harp nor charm of oratory can ever raise us to a conception of the glory which God hath laid up for them that love Him. As for the heart of man, what strange things have entered it! Men have exhibited fair fictions, woven in the loom of fancy, which have made the eyes to sparkle with their beauty and brightness; imagination has revelled and rioted in its own fantastic creations, roaming among islands of silver and mountains of gold, or swimming in seas of wine and rivers of milk; but imagination has never been able to open the gate of pearl which shuts in the city of our God. No, it has not yet entered the heart of man.

— SPURGEON