

**Revelation 4: 1-5; "A Throne Set in Heaven"; Sermon # 30 in the series -
"The Faithful and True Witness", Delivered on September 3rd, 2006,
by Pastor Paul Rendall in the Afternoon Worship Service.**

Here we have reached the 2nd vision of the Book of Revelation. The vision of the Lord Jesus Christ which John saw in the first chapter preceded and it included the messages to the 7 churches of Asia which we have studied. Those seven churches and the things which our Lord found in them were representative of what churches all through the church age could be like. The messages are pertinent and relevant to every generation since, and will be until the Lord comes again in His glory. But now, after these messages are given, and the 1st vision subsided in John's mind, another vision came to Him. It is not about any local church. Rather it is about the scene in heaven, and it is about the Jerusalem which is above. This vision, as well as the first one, is pertinent and applicable to the whole church age, but its vantage point and perspective is what is taking place in heaven itself. If we are to understand the scene in heaven during this whole church age, it could not be pictured in a symbolic and spiritual way any better than it is here in these verses. It was essential in the mind of our Lord that all of His saints would understand that God rules in heaven and earth and that nothing comes to pass apart from His sovereign decree. It was and is essential that each suffering saint, especially, would understand this; that the progress of Christ's kingdom will suffer much opposition, but that God's dominion over all creatures, all things, and all nations will not cease or be overturned at any time during the Church age. All of His Elect will be brought savingly to Himself. God, our God, is to be worshipped and adored and His Name magnified forever and ever, and this will be so, no matter what happens upon the earth.

But this passage teaches us something else as well. It shows us heaven as a place of strategic command where God's wisdom, and power, and dominion are seen by and in His church. And so we have some things to learn this afternoon about God, about what our God is like in relation to all that would and will take place in Christ's Church. The Church needs to look steadily at this vision in order that the hope would be instilled in her that she will come to rule with Christ, not only in heaven as she is presently, but also eventually upon the earth. Certainly only God can do this great and glorious thing. But I believe that He will do it, but not without great oppositions which will have to be overcome by His people down through the generations until the Millennium, and even toward the close of the Millennium down to the second coming of Christ, which we will study more about as this book goes on. It is essential that we know that God rules in heaven and earth, which we shall see in our study of this chapter. And in chapter 5 we will see that it is essential that we know that all of human history and the outworking of God's providence will be done in relation to Jesus Christ Himself, and the advancement of His kingdom. He is the only one "worthy to open the scroll and break its seals." And the triune God will be worshipped all through the church age, no matter whether Christ's kingdom is prospering and advancing, or whether darkness is covering many places in the world. The worship of God in heaven remains constant, and in the gathering of the Elect to glory, it is increasing. God's glory will be seen in heaven and upon the earth. So as we look into the details of this vision of heaven we find 4 things that are important for us to seek to understand. 1st is the Throne itself; verses 1 and 2.

The 2nd is the Person seated on the Throne and His appearance. (Verse 3) The 3rd is the thrones that are around the Throne and those seated on them. (Verse 4) And 4thly- We will consider what proceeds from the Throne and is before the Throne. (Verse 5)

1st- It is important for us to seek to understand the Throne. (Verses 1 and 2)

John says, "After these things." He means after he had finished receiving the first vision, which was of the present state of the churches of his day with their application to all churches in all generations. He now "looks", and "beholds a door standing open in heaven." Then he hears a voice, which he calls "the first voice." This is the first voice in the sense of it being the same voice that he had heard when he received the first vision in Revelation 1: 12. "Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me." Notice that John at that point attempts to turn physically to "see the voice" in that place. As he does that, the vision begins immediately. So too, in this place, when John looks up, "immediately he was in the Spirit." The voice that he heard, "was like a trumpet speaking with him." He is probably losing track of his physical surroundings in this vision and sees with the eyes of his heart and mind. He is lifted up in his mind's eye to behold heaven in a visionary way. The voice which is like a trumpet, impresses itself upon him in a clear and penetrating way, and he is drawn up through the door into heaven where he beholds a "throne set in heaven." God, it must be observed, is spirit; and as such He does not need a throne to sit upon, but all this is a vision which is intended to accommodate the minds of men. This throne is intended to picture to us in our minds, the sovereignty of God in His righteous rule in heaven and earth and especially in relation to the Church of His son. James Durham says, "Thrones are used as seats for Judgment, and for places where they appear in their Royalty; so the same similitude is borrowed here, to set out the Sovereignty of God in Heaven, and in Earth, and in His Church (especially His Gospel church) which is called His Throne." We need to see this truth because it will bear on the further understanding of prophetic truth in this book.

Turn with me to Jeremiah 3: 17. After reproving Judah for her many sins of idolatry, committing spiritual adultery against Him, God calls His people to return to Him in repentance in verse 14. He says, "Return, O backsliding children says the Lord, for I am married to you." "I will take you, one from a city and two from a family, and I will bring you to Zion." "And I will give you shepherds according to My heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding." "Then it shall come to pass, when you are multiplied and increased in the land in those days, say the Lord, that they will say no more, "The ark of the covenant of the Lord." "It shall not come to mind, nor shall they remember it, nor shall they visit it, nor shall it be made any more." "At that time Jerusalem shall be called the Throne of the Lord, and all the nations shall be gathered to it, to the name of the Lord, to Jerusalem." "No more shall they follow the dictates of their evil hearts." These verses speak to us of the time when Judah and Israel will be gathered together in Christ, a time when the ceremonial law would be abolished, and when Jerusalem would be changed from the literal physical city which was where the temple was built and where worship was conducted, to be "the Throne of the Lord." That is, that those who would follow and live according to the apostolic "shepherds" which were according to Christ's heart, which are spoken of in verse 15; when they would live under His good and righteous rule in accordance with the Bible, they should comprise a spiritual city whom God ruled over. His Throne would be in that city, the Church. God now exercises his rule over the gospel New Testament church, this "Mt.

Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem" it says in Hebrews 12: 22, in which this throne is set in the temple of, in spiritual terms. This is the truth of the matter during the whole church age, the time from Christ's resurrection and Ascension, until the time when He literally, physically returns. And there seems to be every indication from the verses that we read in Jeremiah that there will yet be a greater fulfillment of national Israel being converted in the future and being brought into this heavenly Jerusalem, their being brought into the church of Jesus Christ. The Throne of God is in heaven, but heaven in this vision and the Throne in it are related to God's having the government and the rule over the church of Jesus Christ as we shall further see in verse 4.

2ndly- The 2nd thing which we should seek to understand from our text is the One seated on the Throne and His appearance. (Verse 3)

"And He who sat there was like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, in appearance like an emerald." Now this is not the Lord Jesus Christ that is being spoken of here. He is described for us in chapter 5 as, "a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth." He comes and "takes the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne." (Chapter 5, verses 6 and 7) So this must be referring to God the Father. The descriptions that are given of both the Father and the Son are spiritual and figurative because God the Father cannot be described in a literal physical sense at all; He is spirit, and because the Lord Jesus can be described best in His current ministry of intercession by the figurative description given in this way. The spiritual realities of God and Christ and their purposes in relation to the Church are understood to the finite human mind better by pictures and symbols and figurative language. They should not be understood literally as we would normally understand them in our human observation and experience. Christ does not have seven eyes or seven horns. He is not a literal lamb. God the Father is not a literal jasper or sardius stone, but He is like a stone in the spiritual sense which we find written here. He is "like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance" in this vision of Him. Why is God the father described in this way? Because men, as they look at precious stones such as the ones mentioned here, see the beauty and excellency, the glory and the radiance of them and are impressed. They consider not only the appearance, but the reality of what that appearance represents. And what the jasper stone represents is the brightness, the glory, and the majesty of God. Lenski thinks of it as a diamond. Gill says that it is "a stone of various colors, and spotted with divers spots; that which is most valued is the green, spotted with red or purple." It was found in the fourth row of Aaron's high-priestly breastplate and the name of the tribe of Benjamin written on it, as is said in Exodus 28: 20. He believes that God the Father is to be compared to a jasper "for the brightness, glory, and majesty of His countenance, and for his being light itself, clothed with it, and dwelling in it." Also for "the various perfections of his nature, as eternity, infinity, immutability, omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence, wisdom, power, goodness, truth, love, grace, and mercy." All of the various colors within it correspond to these qualities and perfections in Him.

The Sardius is a deep blood red colored stone something like a ruby. The commentators are generally agreed that it represents God as a God of judgments. He is, Gill says, "a consuming fire to the wicked, his enemies, and the enemies of his church and people." It was found in the first row of stones on Aaron's breast-plate on which

the name of Reuben was written. Gill also mentions that "Some jaspers being white and sky-colored, and the white color being most agreeable to deity, and the sardius being red, and a gem of the ruby kind, make up the description of the church's beloved in Canticles 5: 10 and may denote in general his purity, glory, and excellency, and in particular good will to his people, and wrath to his enemies." Albert Barnes says in his commentary, "the sardius corresponds with the jasper, and thisconveys in the mind of John, that the exact appearance of him who sat on the throne was that of a prince in scarlet robes." He further says, "It is well adapted to impress the mind with a sense of the majesty of Him who cannot be described, and of whom no image should be attempted."

We find also that there was a rainbow around the Throne, and in appearance it was like an emerald. When we think of the rainbow, our minds naturally gravitate to Noah and the covenant that God made with him after He had destroyed the world with a flood; that He would never again do so. The rainbow was the sign of that covenant promise never to judge the world that way again. This rainbow around the Throne indicates to us that God the Father is a covenant-keeping God. He will not overlook sin and transgression, He will judge the wicked. But He is full of mercy and grace toward His Elect, all who will come in faith to His Son the Lord Jesus Christ. The green appearance to the rainbow shows us that He is favorable to sinners who come to Him looking for forgiveness, for Jesus' sake. The one who believes in Jesus shall not come into judgment but has passed from death into life. There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. God will never bring you into eternal judgment O sinner, if you will hide yourself from the wrath of God in Him. Will you not seek refuge there today, and find out how propitious God can be to you. All of His wrath and anger turned away from you because the Father has poured it out on Christ. God will judge all of His enemies but He will never destroy the body and soul in hell of the one who has come into covenant relationship with Himself through Jesus Christ our Lord. It is a green rainbow around the throne of God which is just as much as if there was placed a green light there. You can come to God and you will be delivered from the wrath to come.

Well, I wanted to get farther into this exposition this afternoon, but time will not permit me. We will have to save the description of the thrones around the Throne and what proceeds from the Throne until next week. What can we take away with us from this study of the Throne? We need to understand that it is very important to God and ourselves to perceive the greatness of the majesty, the power, the beauty, and the glory that is in Him. He is a God who rules in heaven and earth. But how can we reverence Him, worship Him, and delight in Him as we ought if we do not see Him in this glorious way? And how can we endure and hope in times of difficulty and persecution if we do not see Him in the way we have just described? But we can glorify and honor Him at all times if we will by faith see Him just in this way.