

PLACES OF HONOR PART 1

A SERMON

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“And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them.” Revelation 10:4

ONCE more let it be said that the thousand years spoken of in this chapter mean the whole of the New Testament dispensation and must evidently be understood in the same way that we understand the 8th verse of the 105th Psalm, “He has remembered his covenant forever, the word which he commanded to a thousand generations.” So that the thousand generations there and the thousand years here, to my mind, commence with the New Testament dispensation, and go on down to the end of time, and therefore, mean a period the duration of which is known to none but God himself: as it is written, “It is not for you to know the times and the seasons, which the Father has put in his own power.” This period, then, began with the birth of Christ, went on with the life, death, and resurrection of Christ; and this period seems to have been completed in the commencement of it, on the Day of Pentecost. For you will perceive that the first verse of this chapter, and indeed all this chapter, as might easily be proved, is taken from the Old Testament. Hence the first verse of this chapter is evidently taken from the first verse of the 27th of Isaiah. The language, the imagery, and the form in which things are represented differ, but the subject is the same. In the 27th of Isaiah it is said, “In that day” the Lord referring specially to the Day of Pentecost, and to the day when the apostles should, east, west, north, and south, by the sword of eternal truth cut the adversary down, and so restrain and bind him, that thousands and thousands of souls should be unbound, and should come out from the bonds of darkness, sin, and death, into the life and light of the everlasting gospel. “In that day the Lord with his sore and great and strong sword shall punish leviathan the piercing serpent, even leviathan that crooked serpent; and he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea.” the sea there meaning the same thing that the word “bottomless pit” means here; for while you have the word “bottomless pit” mentioned seven times in this Book, there is nothing in the original about a bottomless pit, there is nothing in the original about a pit at all. The sea there means the world. The world is a stormy sea, deceitful and destructive to thousands and thousands; yes, even all that trust in it; for he that lies down in the world, and in human hopes, that man is like a man that would attempt to sleep on the top of a mast or to lie down in the midst of the sea. The dragon, therefore, in the sea means Satan in the world. And here we have in this chapter the descent of the Angel of the covenant by his Spirit, with a great chain in his hand. We must not take this chain literally, we must take it figuratively; for a literal chain could not bind an immaterial spirit like Satan. We must therefore take the chain figuratively. “And he laid hold of the dragon, that old

serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years;" that is, restrained him, limited him, put him under the statute of limitation; so that Peter, referring to this statute of limitation in relation to Satan, said, "He goes about seeking whom he may devour;" "and cast him into the bottomless pit," or, as it should be rendered, "the abyss," the same word that is sometimes used to denote the sea, as where the swine were driven into the sea. Therefore, Satan is cast into the abyss of this world. The word translated, "bottomless pit," has more allusion to the deep mystery of iniquity than it has to the place of the lost. The place of the lost is not referred to by the term translated "bottomless pit;" the place of the lost is referred to in the 10th verse, where it is called "the lake of fire and brimstone." Now Satan is thus cast down and shut up, that he cannot deceive the nations any more. Before we enter upon our subject let us clear our way, for these things are not so hard to be understood as some might think. "That he should deceive the nations no more." What were the nations that he deceived? We will take the Jews, for it certainly alludes to them. The word "Nations" and the word "tribes," as used in the Bible, are kindred terms. Satan deceived the tribes of Israel by leading them into idolatry; by which they thought they should please God, by which they thought they should save everything, but by which they lost everything. And then, after the captivity of Babylon, when Satan could no longer lead them to gross idolatry, he then led them away from God's truth into human tradition, and by which human tradition they hoped and thought they should save everything, but by which they lost everything, their temple, their city, their land, their all. Now, in the New Testament dispensation, the antitypical tribes, the antitypical nations, the nations which the Lord has promised to bless, "In you shall all the nations of the earth be blessed," that is, the chosen order of nations, for there are two orders of nations, two manners of people; one shall be stronger than the other, one, the elder, shall serve the younger; these antitypical tribes, these antitypical nations, being brought by the Spirit of God to know the truth, they shall not be led away from the gospel to idolatry; they shall not be led away from the truth of God to human tradition. The Savior said, "If it were possible, they should deceive the very elect." So, Satan destroyed the first heaven, namely, the Jewish heaven, and the first earth, namely, the Jewish earth; but now he is cast down into the abyss of this world; and nowhere is a people whom he cannot lead astray or destroy; now here is a city that he cannot touch; now here is a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, to which Satan cannot approach; now here is an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and which fades not away, altogether out of his reach. Thus, he shall not deceive the nations as he deceived the Jews, for the new covenant has secured its own objects; and though Satan has destroyed the bodies of such numbers, yet, as the apostle Paul said, while we are killed all the day long, while we are counted as sheep for the slaughter, are we, in being thus slain, are we, in being thus martyred, conquered? No; "for in all these things," not Satan or his agents, but "we are more than conquerors through him that loved us." So, then, Satan is thus cast down and the 12th chapter says (and it is no credit to us not to understand it) that he was cast down from heaven: there was a place found no more for him in heaven. He could get into the Jewish heaven, but he cannot get into our heaven. Hence when John speaks of the Christians spiritual life, he says of the Christian that "he abides, and that wicked one touches him not." Thus, then, Satan is limited and shut up in his own territories, namely, the world; a seal is set upon him, by which he is to be distinguished from all others; and you know what his seal is; we have so often named the seal or the mark that is put upon him, that I scarcely need repeat it; the seal, as you are aware, is twofold, liar and murderer. Wherever I meet with false doctrine, that is the seal, the distinguishing mark of Satan; and by lies, as you are aware, he brought the whole human race into the condition in which it is by the fall of man; and by lies he has carried on his work, the father of lies, a liar, from the beginning, and a liar he ever will remain. Hence the necessity of the Almighty

Spirit of God to convince us of what and where we are, and to guide us into all truth. Thus, if you will look at the first verse of the 27th of Isaiah, where this dragon is said to be slain, that is, as to his power over the saints, that is the same language as in the 2nd of the Hebrews, "that Jesus Christ might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;" not destroy the person of the devil, not destroy the existence of the devil, but destroy his dominion over the saints of God. Therefore, that 1st verse of the 27th of Isaiah and the 1st verse of this chapter have substantially the same meaning. And I need scarcely say that our text is taken from the 7th chapter of the book of Daniel, to which we may perhaps presently have to refer.

Now John, looking at this new state of things, this new heaven and new earth, says, "I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them;" and the 7th chapter of Daniel and the 4th chapter of this book will explain all this matter to us. I just remark, before I enter upon the subject before us, that the subjects of this book are ranged in columns, side by side, so that this book is very much more syn-chronical than it is successive. For instance, at the end of this chapter we have an account of the judgment day; and then the next chapter commences with declaring that the former heavens and the former earth were passed away. Now the next chapter does not mean a dispensation to succeed that which is spoken of in this chapter; but the next chapter, the 21st, is only another representation of the same dispensation. So that the subjects are not chronologically, but rather syn-chronically ranged in columns, side by side. So, when the Holy Spirit has given you one phase or aspect of the New Testament dispensation, he goes back to the beginning, or nearly to the beginning, sometimes almost, and gives you another view of the same dispensation. If ministers could but see that this book of the Revelation is the testimony of Christ as much as any other book, I am sure it would not remain what it does, untouched, and scarcely any profit thereby. Thus, then, you have the downfall of Satan by the exaltation of the Savior; you have Satan under restraint, and so under restraint that he shall not be able fatally to deceive one of God's elect. And John now saw those places of dignity which the saints were to inherit; "I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them." These thrones are easily explained; the 2nd of Ephesians explains them; "raised up to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Now in the 4th chapter of this book you read of there being twenty-four seats around the throne of God, and upon them sat twenty-four elders. Now it ought not there to have been called "seats," for in the original it is "thrones," just the same as in our text; four and twenty thrones, and four and twenty elders that sat upon those thrones, and those elders represent all the people of God.

Now what are the doctrines that we have to work out as concisely as possible this morning? The first doctrine that our text presents is *the oneness of the saints with the Savior in his freedom and glory*; for these thrones mean that they are enthroned with him. The second doctrine we have to make clear is *the individual character in which they are thus enthroned*. And the third and last will be *the two orders of judgment which are given to these saints of God*.

The first doctrine is *their oneness with the Savior in his freedom and glory*. The apostle Paul, in the 6th of Romans, says of Jesus Christ, "In that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he lives, he lives unto God. Likewise reckon you also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Now let us be careful in this matter. Is there one of you that doubts these two things: first, that Christ did take upon him the sin of sinners? There is no doubt about this, that the Lord laid on him the iniquities of us all; that is the all spoken of in the 53rd of Isaiah, "Who has believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord", that is, his saving

power, "revealed." It is the "all," them that thus believe the report, and to whom the power of Christ to save is revealed; for the gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes. None of us doubt, then, that the sins of the people were laid upon him, and moreover, that the sins of the people were laid upon him by the infinite prescience of the great God, so that not one sin could escape the notice of the Most High. It was the Lord did this, he laid them upon the Savior. And then, Jesus Christ, being God as well as man, he knew when he had got them all; he knew when he had gathered them all; he knew when he had all this wind in his fists, he knew when he had all these waters in the hollow of his hand; he knew when he had received the whole. None of us doubt this, that Jesus Christ was the great sin bearer. Then we go on to something else quite as clear, and that is that he did endure the penalty; that he did so endure the penalty that there is no occasion for him to die anymore; there is no occasion for him to suffer any more; he has endured the curse, put an end to the whole. Now, to be enthroned with Christ is to receive him as our own freedom from sin; for John said, "As he is, so are we in this world." It is by faith in him, as we stand in him, that we are free even as he is free. I have within me sin enough to condemn my soul to the lowest hell, yet by faith in him, and as I stand in him, I am just as free from sin as he is; there is no difference whatever; just as free from the curse as he is; just as free from death as I stand there as he is; just as free from trouble as he is; just as free from Satan's power as he is; just as free in every sense of the word; there is no difference whatever, for he is our representative. And let me say, for almost the ten millionth time, that the work was not for himself, but for us; he, as the Surety, met everything, shall I say honored every bond, honored every vow, that was upon him; he is free, and his freedom is our freedom. Therefore, the Father said to the Savior, "By the blood of your covenant I have sent forth your prisoners out of the pit wherein there is no water." Here then is oneness with Jesus. Oh, my hearer, how shall I describe this? What a sweet life it is to live! heaven always smiling upon you; God at all times pleased with you, at all times accepting you, at all times with you, at all times watching over you. Hence that beautiful scripture in the 27th of Isaiah, which is the same thing, only in another form, "In that day sing you unto her," attribute unto the church. "A vineyard of red wine," entirely and exclusively in the keeping of the Most High God; "I the Lord do keep it, I will water it every moment, lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day." Oh, my hearer, do you know Jesus in this way, and see him, and is this the way you are flying to God for refuge? If so, you will not be rejected, you will not be cast out, you will not be despised. Ah, then, the man who has once been blessed to know these things, must it not be the very depth and height of Satanic madness to depart from such freedom as this, and to substitute some puerile, childish doing of the creature in part in the place thereof? Is it any wonder the apostle should give, as he evidently does, such emphasis to the words, "O foolish Galatians," to run away from this wondrous freedom and to substitute a little bit of ceremony in part in the place thereof? Oh, he said, "do stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made you free." And where is the difficulty of understanding our text? John saw the thrones, the places of dignity; he saw the saints thus in oneness with Christ in his wonderful freedom. It is a sweet thought, as I have said, and you can have peace in no other way; you can have access to God and rejoice in God in no other way. The Savior, in the 19th of Matthew, refers to the same things and to the same dispensation; "You which have allowed me in the regeneration;" the regeneration there means what the apostle calls reformation, from the Old to the New Testament dispensation; and the regeneration there means the resurrection of Christ; for Christ is the regeneration, he is the resurrection; "You which have followed me in the regeneration" in his resurrection state, for he died, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God, that we, being as we stand in him, dead to sin, might live unto his righteousness, and live unto God; "you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

That must be understood first of the apostles, as representatives of all the people of God. And then, hear what the Savior says upon this same subject of dignity in the 22nd of Luke, "You are they which have continued with me in my temptations." And shall you be sorry for it, shall you be grieved about it? You have been sneered at, and pointed at, and scoffed at, and laughed at, and hated, and cast out as evil; but you shall never have to regret it; for "I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father has appointed unto me; that you may eat and drink," ah, what a feast will that be; what an eternal drinking in of the Spirit of God; what an eternal feast upon the infinite provisions of everlasting love; what a banqueting house will heaven be; with what emphasis will each say, "He has brought me into the banqueting house, and his banner over me is love" that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. That judgment we shall have to come to presently. What a blessed doctrine, then, is this doctrine of oneness with Christ. There is nothing that can be any real good to us but this great truth of oneness with Christ in his freedom. I do not wonder at what is said in the 1st of John, "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." What does the Savior say upon this subject? "Go and, tell my disciples I ascend to my Father and to your Father;" he is as much your Father as he is my Father; and he will no more part with you or cease to love you than he will part with me or cease to love me. "I ascend to my God and to your God;" he is as much your God, as indissolubly, as eternally, as gloriously your God, as he is my God: "for you have loved them as you have loved me; and you loved me before the foundation of the world." Ah, my hearer, if we obtain pardon, if we lose our burdens, lose our troubles, and gain the victory, it must be by oneness with this wondrous Person. "If the Son make you free, you shall be free indeed." And his people are not only one with him in his freedom, but also one with him in his ruling power. We can never cease to reign while he shall reign. Whatever he can conquer, we can conquer by him; whatever he can overcome, we by faith in him can overcome too; and if there is anything he cannot rule or overcome, then we may hang down our heads, begin to despair, and look for another king. Now, "behold a king", here comes the ruling power, "shall reign in righteousness." Is there any danger of his righteousness failing? Adam's righteousness failed; therefore, he could reign no longer, but dragged in chains as a criminal, the crown fallen from his head, stripped of his glory; from being Lord of all, he fell to be the slave of all. But shall Jesus' righteousness fail? Shall his perfection become imperfection? Jesus shall reign by virtue of his own divine, perfect, and eternal righteousness. The Jews, why did they cease to reign? Because they ceased, in the sense of their covenant, to be righteous. Their righteousness consisted in conformity to their covenant; and "the man that does these things shall live in them;" but they became unrighteous, and ceased to reign; they boasted they were free, when they were in bondage all the time; boasted that they were in bondage to no man when they were in bondage to Caesar, to Satan, and to enmity, and to the powers of darkness, all the time. But shall Jesus' righteousness fail? "A king shall reign in righteousness, and princes," meaning the apostles first, and then all his people, "shall rule in judgment;" so that from their judgment there was to be no appeal. And then just see what this righteousness makes Jesus Christ; this righteousness which he has wrought, and this atonement which he has made, ah, see what it makes him; "an hiding place from the wind, a covert from the tempest, rivers of water in a dry place." The poor, parched, trembling soul, all its hopes and everything scorched up; Jesus comes in like a gentle river, does away with all the desolation; there shall be no more death nor barren land; the soul is made as a watered garden, whose waters fail not; and he is as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. This is a king indeed; this is what his righteousness makes him. "And the eyes of them that see shall not be dim." Ah, can you not most of you bear testimony to this, that your eyes are not dim? You can as clearly see

how he reigns as you can see your own existence; you can as clearly see that grace reigns, I was going to say, as regards the fact of it; you do not see the glory of it as you will do by and by, but you see the fact of it as clearly as though you were in heaven. Hence, "the wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err therein." "And the ears of them that hear shall hearken;" that is, to the truth. When I hear anything that would tend to legalize or secularize the gospel, I put my hands to my ears directly. I cannot find language to express the detestation I feel to anything and everything that would in any shape or form take the place of my dear, Almighty Savior, where he appears in this glorious rule. It is the rule of a loving Husband, it is the rule of a loving Father, it is the rule of a loving Brother, it is the rule of an almighty, eternal, immutable Friend. "The heart also of the rash shall understand knowledge." Oh, I once rashly said that I was sure the Lord intended two hells for me; he had made me sensible of my state that while I lived I might have a hell in myself, and that when I died I might be lost at last, that was my rash conclusion. I did not know Jesus then; now I so know him as to bear testimony that if my state had been ten million times worse than it was, yet he could have saved me. Now I know that in him is omnipotence, in him is power to save to the very uttermost all that come unto God by him. "And the tongue of the stammers shall be ready to speak plainly." You may prefer the marginal reading, but I myself like both readings. "The tongue of the stammers shall be ready to speak plainly." Now free will made you stammer once, "I believe it is of grace, sir, but it must have a little free will in it; I believe it is of grace, but it must have a little bit of duty faith;" and so you went stammering on. By and by you got rid of this Ashdod; the free will and duty faith are gone; now you come right out with, "It is all of grace; it is of your mercy that I am not consumed." "The tongue of the stammers shall be ready to speak plainly." It is all of grace from first to last, and therefore we will use great plainness and boldness of speech; for he has said, "I will never leave nor forsake you;" so that we may plainly and boldly say, "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear what man can do unto me." The marginal reading is, "They shall speak elegantly." I have heard two old women in different parts of the country several times speaking upon these things, and to me there was more elegance in their speech than in the speech of the most learned and the most eloquent in all the land. I am fond, too, naturally, of elegant, superior language and good speaking; but when they in simplicity have testified of the soul trouble into which they were brought, and how the Lord lifted them out of that soul trouble, how they were brought into the liberty of the gospel, how they had been tried, and how dear a covenant God was to them; how dear the truth was to them, and the brotherly love they felt to the saints, and to those that stood manifest to them as ministers of the gospel, that is elegant speaking. I could listen to that for almost any time, and there is a savor attending the same. One with Jesus, then, in his ruling power; he ruling and reigning by his own eternal righteousness. And think you there is not a meaning in that scripture in this same Book of the Revelation? "He that overcomes" and who is he that overcomes but he that is one with Christ in Christ's freedom and ruling power; "and keeps my works unto the end;" ah, once throw away his works, once part with his works, and you are a slave directly; "to him will I give power over the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers; even as I have received of my Father. And I will give him the morning star;" that is, I will give him to be like me. As Christ will go shining on forever, so these victors by faith in him shall go shining on together to all eternity; for "they that be wise shall shine as the stars for ever and ever." And so, there is no power can so rule over us as to separate us from the love of God, or from the truth of God.

Here, then, there were seats or thrones. Let us have one word about the thrones. Our text is taken from the seventh of Daniel. I am not going to preach sermons consecutively upon this chapter, but

have one now and then, and creep along by degrees; and I hope in a few months to be able to show that all this chapter, every part of it, is taken from the Old Testament. In the seventh of Daniel, he says, "I beheld till the thrones were cast down." What was put into their place? The 23rd of Matthew will show you. These seats or thrones, therefore, represent the truths of the gospel, and these truths were cast down. "Truth is fallen in our streets;" until the ancient of days, in all his purity and perfection, came forward; until "the ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool; his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels," the circles of eternity, another representation of the eternal truths of the gospel, "as burning fire." When he comes forward, he raises up these thrones. See the beatitudes, what are they but the bringing forth of the blessed truths that men had cast down? And then Daniel saw the majestic progress of the Savior. "A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him;" and if you had been at Pentecost you would have said so. There was a spiritual, fiery stream; "There appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them;" heavenly fire, that burned up every sorrow, delighted, charmed, and warmed every heart: "they did eat their bread in singleness and gladness of heart, walking in the fear of God, and the comfort of the Holy Ghost." Such was the fiery stream, the baptizing of the Holy Ghost, immersing them in the living, fiery streams of the everlasting gospel, and the burning and unquenchable love of the blessed God. "Thousand thousands ministered unto him, that is where his servants and served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him;" that is, the whole human race; for he says, "You have given him power over all flesh." After dying on the cross, I sit now upon the circles of the heavens; I view the whole human race as grasshoppers; and yet among those grasshoppers there is one springs up sometimes and says, I cannot manage these grasshoppers if they do not hop to me; I cannot manage them; and so some will be lost for whom I died! This is the nonsense that some of our fellow-creatures advocate and advance. But no "ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him; the judgment was set;" that is, not the judgment of the last day; it doesn't refer to the last day at all, but to the gospel dispensation; and the judgment was, and the judgment is, "He that believes shall be saved, he that believes not shall be damned." "And the books were opened." Hitherto they had been closed. "You have taken away," said the Savior to the lawyers, "the key of knowledge; you entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in you hindered."

Thus, the books were opened. Just so here, he saw the thrones, and saw the progress of the dear Savior. Here, then, they are one with Christ in his freedom, ruling power, and possession, for whatever he possesses he possesses for them. "The glory which you gave me", wonder, O heavens, and be astonished, O earth, "I have given them that they may be one, even as we are one." There shall be no room for envy, there shall be no room for any unpleasantness, there will be no complaining throughout the heavenly streets; not one citizen will be able to say to another, You have got a better house than I have, a better garden, you are dressed better than I am, your health is better than mine, you have got more money than I have, you are better off than I am, no one will be able to say that; for whatever he possesses is theirs; he is heir of all things, you cannot have more than all, and they are joint heirs with him.

Secondly, *the individual character in which they are thus enthroned.* In the fourth chapter they are spoken of as sitting on these thrones, "clothed in white raiment, and they had on their heads crowns of gold." Here we get their individual character. Let us have a fourfold representation of them. Why are they said to be arrayed in white? To denote, first, their innocence by the blood of the Lamb. "What are these which are arrayed in white robes, and whence came they?" Ah, "these are

they which came out of great tribulation.” How come they to appear thus innocent? “They have washed their robes;” that is, their characters, their persons, “and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” This is one feature of the individual character, free from sin by the blood of the Lamb. Secondly, their justification by the righteousness of Christ. Hence, in the 19th chapter, “To her was granted” here is something granted, what the apostle calls the gift of righteousness, “that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white; for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints;” righteousness granted to her, given to her, received by her. You must, therefore, be an individual believer in the atonement and righteousness of Christ. Thirdly, it is called the wedding garment; they are called to “the marriage supper of the Lamb” and nothing but this wedding garment can give them a welcome there. If we have not that we shall not be received there; if we have that, we want nothing else. Let us have one of our great teachers to help us out. “That I may be found in him, having my own righteousness, which is of the law, and that which is by the faith of Christ, even the righteousness which is of God by faith.” Now if the apostle had spoken in this way we should have looked rather strangely at him. But he puts a negative here; he says, “That I may be found in him, *not* having my own righteousness;” I do not want it; I have no use for it; I should be cast out if that were the case. “Not having my own righteousness, which is of the law.” Why not, Paul? Because it is filthy rags; it is all leprous from first to last; and so, like the man in the gospel, I arise, cast away such a garment, and come to Jesus for clothing; “the righteousness which is by the faith of Christ, even the righteousness which is of God by faith.” Lastly, they are represented in this way because the righteousness in which they appear is the best robe. “Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him.” It is the best robe, Grace has made them the best people in existence.