

STANDING BEFORE JESUS

At the end of his life the great Reformer and servant of the Lord, Martin Luther shared what kept him going through such lifelong adversity and hardships. He said he lived by this simple truth:

"I have but two dates on my calendar today and the day of the judgment seat of Christ!"

In other words he lived each day like he was on his way to explain what he did with his life to the One who gave him life – Jesus Christ.

Jonathan Edwards, one of the greatest minds ever produced in an American had this as his constant plan:

"Resolved, never to do anything I would not want to be found doing--by Christ, at His Return."

Are you ready this evening to appear before Christ's Throne? The Throne we will appear before was described by the Apostle Paul in several places, none is clearer than 2nd Corinthians 5:10. Turn there with me as we begin this evening.

When we take pilgrims to Greece, the most moving spot of all is in the city of Ancient Corinth. I have seen travelers who were just tourists the whole trip until they reached that spot. And there beneath the raised stone platform called in Greek the **bema** suddenly the awesomeness of the moment overtakes them and they see themselves at a future day standing at Christ's Throne. Often tears, often deep silence – and always reverence fills each one as the scene unfolds before their eyes.

Are you ready?

What will matter when you stand alone right in front of Jesus?

What do you wish to have in your hands to give to the One who loved you and gave Himself for you?

What ever that is – that is what we need to live for TODAY!

Tonight will you come with me to that Throne? Will you let the Holy Scriptures transport you out of this world and into God's?

Please open to our church memory verse that we began to learn this morning. In 1st Peter 3:10-11 we learn what God says really matters in life. Listen to the voice of that wizened old fisherman, with a glowing heart of hope and joy--named Peter. He is speaking to us by the power of God's Spirit.

2 Peter 3:10-11 *But the **day of the Lord** will come as a thief in the night, in which the **heavens will pass away** with a great noise, and **the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.** 11 Therefore, since **all these things will be dissolved**, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,*

In the not too distant future, God is going to invade His world. Last time He did it disguised as a baby, and He died a sacrificial death for the sin of the world. This time He is not going to hide. That invasion is called Christ's Second Coming. At Christ's return everyone will be seen for what they really were.

"When that happens, it is the end of the world. When the author walks onto the stage the play is over.

God is going to invade, all right, but what is the good of saying you're on His side then, when you see the whole natural universe melting away like a dream and something else--something it never entered your head to conceive--comes crashing in; something so beautiful to us and so terrible to others that none of us will have any choice left?

For this time it will be God without disguise; something so overwhelming that it will strike either irresistible love, or irresistible horror into every creature. It will be too late then to choose your side.

There is no use saying you choose to lie down, when it's become impossible to stand up. That will not be the time for choosing; it will be the time when we discover which side we really have chosen, whether we realize it or not.

Now, today, in this moment, is our chance to choose the right side. God is holding back to give us that chance. It will not last forever; we must take it or leave it."¹

For believers that exposure that revelation of what we really were takes place earlier.

It is called Christ's Judgment Seat or Bema Seat. Are you ready? Our future is all about little choices we make that reveal what we really are in the sight of God.

Open with me to Romans 14:10b-12

¹ C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*.

“ . . . For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. 11 For it is written: “As I live, says the Lord, Every knee shall bow to Me, And every tongue shall confess to God.” 12 So then each of us shall give account of himself to God.”

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Tonight will you come with me to that Throne? Will you let the Holy Scriptures transport you out of this world and into God’s?

Watch with me as God pulls back the veil. Through John’s eyes in Revelation we see Heaven as he seems to rise on the wings of angels to get his guided tour of Heaven. His inspired words portray for us a scene of angels—hundreds of millions of angels—“ten thousand times ten thousand”—all clustered about the smooth crystal sea that reflects awesome images from its mirror like surface. Our senses are besieged by so many different sensations. The colors of the materials surrounding God’s Throne are beyond description.

First, ANGELS capture our attention. These countless white robed angels standing like living walls of pure white robes rising in circular rings reflecting the light of God. They rise and fall to the sounds of the four creatures crisscrossing the expanse on the four corners of the Throne. They move as one – falling down on their faces as they speak the wonders of God’s Glory.

*Revelation 5:11-12 Then I looked, and I heard **the voice of many angels around the throne**, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, 12 saying with a loud voice: “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, And strength and honor and glory and blessing!”*

Next, the FLOOR if it can be called that, is an ocean of completely clear and reflective glass. In this crystal sea we can see all the colors, lights and objects are reflected and amplified.

*Revelation 4:5 And from the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices. Seven lamps of **fire were burning before the throne**, which are the seven Spirits of God. 6 **Before the throne** there was **a sea of glass**, like crystal. And in the midst of the throne, and around the throne, were four living creatures full of eyes in front and in back. 7 The first living creature was like a lion, the second living creature like a calf, the third living creature had a face like a man, and the fourth living creature was like a flying eagle. 8 The four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying: “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!” 9 Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him*

*who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever, 10 the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and **cast their crowns before the throne**, saying: 11 "You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created."*

Then we see, central to Heaven is the Throne of God. Completely encircled by the emerald green rainbow that is over, around and beneath the Throne – we are overwhelmed by the massive rumble of power, as endless peals of thunder and flashes of lightning seem to radiate outward from within. Listening carefully we hear with John the loud voices like roaring waterfalls rolling past the seven blazing pillars of flame that burn in a circle around God's Throne. An exiled Jewish prophet named Daniel writes these words in chapter 7: 9-10:

*"I watched till thrones were put in place, **and the Ancient of Days was seated**; His garment was white as snow, And the hair of His head was like pure wool. **His throne was a fiery flame**, Its wheels a burning fire; **A fiery stream issued And came forth from before Him**. A thousand thousands ministered to Him; Ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. . ."*

Then the BURNING ONES, that is what seraphim means, capture our focus. As our eyes turn to follow the four glistening living beings each with four distinct faces – lion, calf, man, eagle – and completely covered with eyes as they move like flashes of light with fire passing between them, gliding through the expanse around the Ancient of Days in theocentric orbit always facing the Almighty One.

*Isaiah 6:1-7 In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw **the Lord sitting on a throne**, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple. 2 **Above it stood seraphim**; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. 3 And **one cried to another** and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory!" 4 And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke. 5 So I said: "Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, The Lord of hosts." 6 Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a live coal which he had taken with the tongs from the altar. 7 And he touched my mouth with it, and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; Your iniquity is taken away, And your sin purged."*

Now as we watch, 24 ELDERS rise and fall, under the awesome expanse of space over the Throne that sparkles like pure on the crystal blue pavement as it is called in Exodus. Then we see a circle just beyond the burning pillars of fire, and the four living creatures that surrounds God's Throne--made up of 24 small thrones seated with white robed celestial men. An exiled Jewish prophet by the name of the Apostle John wrote to us from Patmos at the end of the 1st Century in Revelation chapter 4:4:

“Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads.”

*Revelation 5:8, 14 “Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the **twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb**, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. 14 Then the four living creatures said, “Amen!” And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever.”*

Each man holds a harp, wears a crown, and holds a golden bowl. These golden bowls contain the worship offered by God’s saints on Earth. And repeatedly we see those twenty-four elders fall on their faces pouring out to the Lord, the collected worship of the saints as the hosts of Heaven loudly chant the Glory of God. With the mighty sound of seraph wings we hear the voices, thunders, and sounds of the entire Universe blending into one crystal clear affirmation:

*Holy, holy, holy
Is the Lord God Almighty,
who was, and is, and is to come.
(Revelation 4:8)*

Finally, at a special moment every angel and every elder and every saint fall prostrate before him—those four great angels, those twenty-four elders, the hundreds of millions around the sea—and most of all, us! And we all join together to sing with them:

*Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain,
to receive power and wealth
and wisdom and strength
and honor and glory and praise! (5:12)*

So what is valuable here? What is the currency of Heaven? Today -- you and I are God’s priest’s on earth, offering to Him our worship that He receives in Heaven. This is what I would be trying to do as much of as possible if I really believed that I would stand in front of Jesus Christ some day—and I do believe that. Do you? Does your life look like you believe this to be true?

Your devotion can be a burnt offering:

Mark 12:33 And to love Him with all the heart, with all the understanding, with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love one’s neighbor as oneself, is more than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.”

Have we offered our devotion up to Him irretrievably, completely, and lovingly—by giving Him time each day because we love Him; by giving Him our complete attention as we focus upon Him in His Word and in prayer?

Your life can be a sacrifice:

Romans 12:1 *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. Romans 15:16 that I might be a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.*

Have we recently renewed that offering of all we are to Him? Have we repeated those simple words of the child Samuel, that the Lord so delights to hear from us, "Speak Lord, for your servant is listening!"

Your service can be a drink offering:

Philippians 2:17 Yes, and if I am being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. 2 Timothy 4:6 For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand.

Are we pouring out what we cannot keep--to Him so we cannot lose? Each time you serve look up in your heart from the classroom, nursery, choir room, AWANA room or where ever you offer that service, and say to the Lord, "I am giving this time to you. I can't keep it, I could selfishly squander it, but instead I give it to YOU as an act of devotion and worship!"

Your gifts can be fragrant worship offerings:

Philippians 4:18 *Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God.*

What is the aroma ascending from our living before Christ's eyes today? Make more of your offerings by praying over each check, hold it in your hand as you mail it or place it in the offering and breathe out to God, "I give this to YOU as an offering of love and gratitude!"

Your worship can be praise offerings:

Hebrews 13:15 *Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.*

When is the last time we stopped and launched a wave of praise filled worship toward His Throne? Plan to burst forth in your car, or on a walk, or when you are all alone into a cry of love to the Lord. Say something like you sing, "I love YOU Lord and I lift my voice to WORSHIP you...!"

Your deeds can be spiritual sacrifices:

Hebrews 13:16 *But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased. 1 Peter 2:5 you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*

What acts of kindness have we premeditated and carried out this week? Plan to do intentional sacrificial acts of kindness for others. Do things unasked, unseen, and unexpectant of any thanks. As you do that act (like the trash, laundry, sweeping, mowing, what ever) lift you eyes above and say, "I am doing this in YOUR Name Oh Lord because I love YOU and I want to serve like You served!"

Your prayers can be incense offerings:

Revelation 8:3-4 *Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar, which was before the throne. 4 And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel's hand.*

What do we have in the bowl of our collected prayers? If God loves our prayers so much that He collects them all (like notes from my wife & kids) why don't we send more? Up your times of prayers. Invite God into every praise and problem, every fear and frustration...your life will be revolutionized as you say to the Lord, "I need YOU in every part of my life!"