

## BEHOLD, GOD IS SITTING UPON THE THRONE

*Hebrews 3:13—But encourage yourselves each day, as long as it is called To-day, that none of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.*

*Isaiah 6:1-8—In the year of the death of king Uzziah, I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and his train filled the temple. Seraphim were standing above him: each had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he flew. And one called to the other and said, Holy, holy, holy is Jehovah of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory! And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. And I said, Woe unto me! For I am undone; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, Jehovah of hosts. And one of the seraphim flew unto me, and he had in his hand a glowing coal, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar; and he made it touch my mouth, and said, Behold, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin expiated. And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? And I said, Here am I; send me.*

*Revelation 4:1-11—After these things I saw, and behold, a door opened in heaven, and the first voice which I heard as of a trumpet speaking with me, saying, Come up here, and I will shew thee the things which must take place after these things.*

*Immediately I became in [the] Spirit; and behold, a throne stood in the heaven, and upon the throne one sitting, and he [that was] sitting like in appearance to a stone [of] jasper and a sardius, and a rainbow around the throne like in appearance to an emerald. And round the throne twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones twenty-four elders sitting, clothed with white garments; and on their heads golden crowns. And out of the throne go forth lightnings, and voices, and thunders; and seven lamps of fire, burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God; and before the throne, as a glass sea, like crystal. And in the midst of the throne, and around the throne, four living creatures, full of eyes, before and behind and the first living creature like a lion, and the second living creature like a calf, and the third living creature having the face as of a man, and the fourth living creature like a flying eagle. And the four living creatures, each one of them have respectively six wings; round and within they are full of eyes; and they cease not day and night saying, Holy, holy holy, Lord God Almighty, who was, and who is, and who is to come. And when the living creatures shall give glory and honour and thanksgiving to him that sits upon the throne, who lives to the ages of ages, the twenty-four elders shall fall before him that sits upon the throne, and do homage to him that lives to the ages of ages; and shall cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O our Lord and [our] God, to receive glory and honour and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy will they were, and they have been created.*

Shall we have a word of prayer:

*Dear Lord, as we gather here our hearts are in worship. We want to thank Thee and praise Thee because Thou art our God and Thou art sitting upon Thy throne. Thou art in control of all*

*things. Thou art working out Thy purpose in each one of our lives. We thank Thee for Thy glorious thoughts about us. Thou hast not only saved us but Thou dost desire to use us for Thy purpose and glory. Dear Lord, we bow in worship. We give ourselves totally over to Thee and pray that Thy will be done in us as it is in heaven. We offer ourselves to Thee as a living sacrifice and pray that Thou wilt use us for Thine own glory and purpose. We commit this time into Thy hands. May Thy Spirit speak deep into our hearts, change and transform us, bringing each one of us into Thy perfect will. Glorify Thyself even in us. We give Thee all the praise and glory; we ask in Thy precious name. Amen.*

Every time God's people gather together it is an opportunity for us to hear from Him and to be prepared for His imminent return. I am thankful in my heart that our Lord really loves us and wants to prepare us. I often feel it is not we who are waiting for our Lord Jesus; it is our Lord who has been patiently waiting for us because He wants His bride. He wants to prepare us for Himself. So He has given this opportunity once again. In this late hour He is still thinking about us and desires us to be ready. So may we open our hearts to Him. Whatever He wants to say to us let us respond to Him.

### **An Exhortation from the Holy Spirit**

The theme of this conference is from Hebrews 3:13: "But encourage yourselves each day, as long as it is called Today, that none of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." This is an exhortation given to us by the writer of Hebrews, but as a matter of fact, it is the Holy Spirit of God who is exhorting us. Now we know that exhortation has two sides—on the one hand it is to encourage us; on the other hand it is to warn us. He wants to encourage us to go on according to His will, and He wants to warn us against anything that may deter His will. I do not know how you react to this exhortation, but today is the gift of God. We do not live forever; our life on earth is very short. But thank God, every day is given to us by God.

I often think how good it would be that as soon as we are saved we would be raptured to heaven. Why is it that even after He has saved us He still leaves us on this wretched earth? Is it because He does not love us enough? No, there is a purpose for it. God leaves us on earth in order that we be matured. He cannot come back to receive a bride that is not mature; therefore He has been waiting for over twenty centuries. He wants to mature each one of us for Himself, and in order to do that He gives us time. Time is used by God to do His work. Every day is a blessing of God because as long as it is today, there is hope. He wants us to be ready for Himself. As Moses said in Psalm 90: "The life of a man is seventy, and if he is strong he may reach the age of eighty." For that reason he prayed that God would give us wisdom to know our days that we may use every day to accomplish God's purpose. So today is a very important day. It is a day of hope, and it is a day of encouragement for us to use every day for God's glory.

### **A Need For Vision**

My assignment is "seeing God on His throne." In other words, if we want to use our days in the right way we need to have a vision of God on the throne. If we do not have that kind of vision we will find it very difficult to live upon this earth. Before we believed in the Lord Jesus we felt that it was very

difficult to live on this wretched earth. After we believed in the Lord Jesus we had hope that from then on it would be smooth sailing to heaven. But unfortunately, we have found it to be different; and not only that, it is even harder for us to live on this earth. Because of this, sometimes we begin to murmur; but we need to thank God because as long as it is today there is hope. Nevertheless, we need a vision, and that is the vision that Isaiah saw; it is the same vision that John the apostle saw, and I believe that it is the vision that God wants each one of us to see.

### **The Death of King Uzziah**

When King Uzziah died, Isaiah went into the temple of God to pray. Now we know that Uzziah was one of the good kings in Israel and he served the Lord in the days of Zechariah who knew the will of God. And because of that God blessed King Uzziah and made him prosperous, but unfortunately, his prosperity began to make him proud of himself. One day he even entered into the temple to burn incense before God who had forbidden this; it was the work of the priests. However, when the priests tried to hinder him from doing that, he got angry and suddenly leprosy appeared on his forehead, and he quickly retreated.

### **Isaiah's Vision**

Isaiah was very familiar with Uzziah, so when he died, Isaiah wondered what would happen to the nation, and for this reason he went to the temple to pray. As he was praying he saw a vision of God sitting on the throne, and the seraphim were crying, "Holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty."

Now we know that even before the day he had that vision we read of in chapter 6, he was already prophesying according to the previous five chapters in Isaiah. But we discover in these five chapters that his prophecies are more negative than positive. Although he did prophesy that one day Israel would be revived, most of his prophecies were negative in nature. However, when he went into the temple and caught that vision of God on the throne, everything changed. After he saw that vision he gave himself to God and his prophecies seemed to change. In the sixty-one chapters after that vision Isaiah prophesied and became the prophet of the Messiah. In spite of all the situations in the nation of Israel and all they would pass through, yet there was the Messiah. Isaiah was *the* prophet who prophesied about the Messiah more than anyone else.

In chapter 7 Isaiah prophesied that a virgin would give birth to a Son. In chapter 9 he prophesied that a Child is born and a Son is given. In chapter 11 he prophesied the Spirit of the Lord would be upon Him and He would bring this earth into the millennium peace. In chapter 40 he prophesied about the forerunner of the Messiah. In chapter 42 Isaiah prophesied Him as the Servant of God. And we know in chapter 53 he prophesied that our Lord would be crucified, yet one day He would come back. So we can see that the vision of God on the throne changed the prophecy of Isaiah. Instead of a prophet of doom he became a prophet of hope.

### **John's Vision**

We find the same thing with the apostle John. We know that of the original twelve apostles John was the last one alive, and he lived to his nineties. At that time he was serving in Asia

Minor, but because of the testimony of Jesus and the Word of God he was exiled by Emperor Domitian to the island of Patmos. And you remember that on the Lord's day he was sitting on a stone facing the Aegean Sea because he could see faintly the outline of Asia Minor. More than likely he was thinking of the churches that he had ministered to before he was exiled and wondering what was happening to these churches. Then he heard a voice behind him and when he turned around, he saw a vision of seven golden lampstands and in the midst One like the Son of man. In other words, John was most familiar and very close to the Lord while He was on earth; yet here the Lord gave him a vision of the Lord in heaven.

### ***John Saw the Lord Ministering To the Churches***

John had been ministering to these churches in Asia towards the end of the first century. But here he was shown by God that it was not only he who had ministered to these churches; actually, the risen Lord Himself was ministering and serving His churches as High Priest in heaven. John was most familiar with the Lord on earth. He knew Him as the Apostle of God, the One whom God had sent to fulfill and finish the work of salvation. But he was not familiar with the Lord as the High Priest. But after our Lord was risen and ascended, He was anointed by God as the High Priest. John saw the Lord ministering to these churches and immediately he realized what a difference it was. We believe that John must have been very faithful in serving these churches, but he was not aware that it was the Lord Himself who was faithfully ministering to them. And John fell down as if dead and the Lord raised him up and told him who He Himself was. The Lord said, "Fear not; I am the first and the last, and the living one: and I became dead, and behold, I am living to the ages of ages, and have the keys of death and of hades" (Revelation 1:17b-18). That vision must surely have comforted John.

### ***John Sees the Throne***

In chapter 4 we find that in the spirit he was called up to heaven. What did he see? He saw a throne and One sitting on that throne surrounded with glory and honor. This is the vision of God on the throne, and when John saw that vision, I believe it solved all his problems. He must have been wondering what would happen to the church. What would happen to the world? And what would happen to the Jewish nation? But when he saw God on the throne, he began to understand how God would regain this world, how He would use the church to bring in that change, how He would raise up overcomers through the ages, and how He would have His bride. Here again we see what a difference it made in John when that vision was given.

It is the same thing with every one of us. We find that our life on earth is difficult, and it is harder and harder to press on because we are running against the course. I think the young people especially feel it even more than when we were young: How can we press on towards the goal? How can we fulfill God's purpose in our life? If we look at our environment we will be discouraged. If we look at ourselves we will be disappointed. As the Bible says, "We look not at the things that are seen but at the things that are not seen" (see II Corinthians 4:18a). If we are governed by what we can see we will be quickly deceived by sin, but thank God, by His grace we can see the unseen. We can see that God is still on the throne and He is working out His purpose.

## **The History of Israel**

I think it will be a help if we consider a little of the history of Israel. We know that Israel became slaves in Egypt with very little hope to live. However, when they cried to the Lord, He sent Moses to lead them out. Now the usual way to go from Egypt to Canaan is through the land of the Philistines, but God led them a different way because He said: "If I should lead them by the way of the Philistines and they meet problems, they will want to return to Egypt." So God led them through the way of the sea, and after crossing the Red Sea, God led them for forty years in the wilderness.

Deuteronomy 8:1-2 says: "Every commandment which I command thee this day shall ye take heed to do, that ye may live, and multiply, and enter in and possess the land which Jehovah swore unto your fathers." God wanted to lead them to the land of Canaan and He was preparing them for that day.

"And thou shalt remember all the way which Jehovah thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thy heart, whether thou wouldst keep his commandments or not." Even after we are saved we do not know ourselves. We think that since God has saved us everything is okay. We do not really know who we are.

What do we mean by being saved? Our sins are forgiven. Thank God for that! We once thought that we were better than other people, but when the Holy Spirit began to convict us, we began to realize how sinful we are.

## **Personal Testimony**

As a young person, I had been brought up in a Christian family, and we had a family altar every day. My father served the Lord, and before supper he would gather us seven children in a room, and I can still see vividly that big Bible he would read from. We would all kneel down and he would lead us in prayer. That left a deep impression in me. I had been brought up in a mission school, so I knew the Bible and how to pray, but I was not saved. I believed that Jesus is the Savior of the world; that was no problem in my mind. My problem was that I felt I was too good to be saved because in high school I was friendly with everybody. So I thought to myself: let the Lord save those sinners but I really do not need Him. (That was my condition until the Lord did something in my life and the Spirit of God began to touch me. I felt that I was a person full of sin and I would sometimes sit by myself and weep.) I sought the Lord earnestly. For a whole year I went to every revival meeting that I knew of. At that time there were famous preachers coming to Shanghai and I heard them all. I went to the altar and wept a number of times, but nothing happened. That went on for a whole year.

In 1930 I went to a summer conference with only one hope—I wanted to get saved. I heard a young man preaching who had just graduated from Asbury College. And when he spoke I knew all about it, so nothing happened. After a few days I was alone in the room. I do not know whether I was praying or just speaking to myself. I told the Lord: "I want to be saved. Why is it that other people get saved very easily and it is so hard for me to get saved?" I heard someone say, "You can be gospel hardened because you know and do too much." Before I was saved not

only did I lead prayer meetings, I also preached. Now I had no message, but it was easy to get a sermon because in my father's library there was a book on sermons by a famous preacher in the United States. I chose a sermon and translated it into Chinese and memorized it. I believe it was Noah's Ark. After preaching that sermon I was very proud of myself. My only regret was that nobody praised me. That was the way I preached before I was saved, but when the Lord really convicted me, I felt that I was the greatest sinner in the world.

So that morning I was speaking to myself or praying and I said, "Lord, if You want to save me, save me now. If not, then I will say good-bye to You. That's it!" In the afternoon I went to the meeting again and the preacher spoke on John 3:16. I could have preached the same thing; it was nothing to me. So after the meeting was over the preacher wanted everybody to kneel down and pray. So I knelt down at my bench and I remember a preacher coming to me and kneeling by my side. Then he asked me to go to the altar. I had been doing that many times but in order to please him I went forward again and wept and prayed until the meeting was over. There was nothing. As I was walking out a Chinese preacher noticed me and came over and point blankly asked me one question: "Are you saved?" I had to be honest; so I said that I really wanted to be saved. Hundreds of people had left the auditorium, and it was just the two of us there, and he asked me another question: "Do you believe the Bible is the Word of God?" I said, "Yes, I have believed this from my childhood." So he asked me to turn to I John 1:9: "If we confess our sins, God is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and cleanse us from all our iniquities." He said, "Do you believe this?" I said, "Of course I do." He said, "Put your name there and read it twice." Then he said, "Let's pray." So we knelt down. Because I knew how to pray I started to pray, but there was a difference. I really prayed from my heart. I told the Lord all the sins I could remember and then said, "Lord, there are many I have forgotten but You know." Now this is what You have said: "If we confess our sins You are righteous to forgive." I have done my part; it is Your part now." And in my heart I felt that if I died I would die in Him.

A great thing happened. Immediately, I felt a burden fall away from me. There was such peace in my heart, and I stood up. The preacher asked me again: "Are you saved?" I said, "I am." He said, "How do you know?" I said, "I have such peace in my heart." He said, "No." Immediately the word came to me and I said, "I know I am saved because God has said so." He said, "That's right. Your feeling may change but God's Word is eternal." I went to my room, opened the Bible and read II Peter 1. It was as if God was speaking to me. The Bible became a living Book. Thank God.

### **My Will or His Will**

Sometimes I think how good it would be if the Lord had taken me to Himself immediately after I was saved. But God knows better. He knows that I do not know myself. It is as the Bible says, "He wants to humble me." He wants me to know exactly who I am and what I am. Even though in my spirit the Lord is there, in my soul my old self still rules. Even though I began to serve the Lord right away it was according to my will. We do not know ourselves. God has to humble us. He has to reveal to us what is in our soul. He wants to prove us, not because He does not know us; it is because we do not know ourselves. How often He arranges situations in our lives just to reveal what really is in our heart. As the Bible says, "Know what is in thy heart" (see Proverbs 22:17).

Do we really keep His commandments? Do we really love Him more than anything else? Are we still guided by our own mind, our own thought? Are we willing to yield ourselves completely to Him? Are we willing to deny ourselves, take up the cross and follow Him? Whenever God's will and our will conflict with each other, do we continue to press on with our will? Are we willing to give up our will and allow God's will to be done? He is worthy to have our complete obedience.

### **The Lord Leads Us Through the Wilderness Into the Promised Land**

This is the way that the Lord will lead us in the wilderness. This world is a wilderness to us but thank God He is bringing us through it. On the one hand, He is proving us; on the other hand, He is showing us how loving and concerned He is for us. As we go through these experiences we realize that we are being chastised. Nevertheless, He is our heavenly Father and He loves us. And whomever He loves He chastises because if He does not discipline us we will never grow up spiritually. This is the problem with the world today and this is also our problem. Nobody loves to be disciplined but it is the only way to maturity. If we are willing to receive God's discipline we will be walking in His way and we will be used of God to fulfill His mission. So as long as it is today there is hope; therefore let us encourage one another. If you find your way is too hard look away from yourself and see God on the throne. He knows what He is doing and He is guiding and perfecting us that we may enter into the Promised Land and inherit our inheritance. So may the Lord help us that we may press on towards the goal.

### **The Lord Is At the Door**

I always feel we are a privileged people because we are living very, very close to the return of our Lord. The Bible says that He is already at the doors and that began when He said: "When you see the fig tree begin to blossom." The fig tree is the symbol of the nation of Israel, and when the Lord Jesus was on earth, the only thing He cursed was the fig tree. This happened at His last entry into Jerusalem as He came from Bethany, and He was hungry. He saw a fig tree with leaves, which usually indicated there would be some early fruit on it. However, He could not find any and strangely the Lord cursed the fig tree. Throughout His life He had always blessed but this time He cursed the fig tree, and it withered.

He had been carrying the nation of Israel for three years, but it had yielded no fruit for God. But the Lord continued for another half year, nurturing it that it might produce fruit. But it did not yield any fruit; therefore, the Lord cursed it. And we all know that in AD 70 Jerusalem was broken into and the temple was destroyed. But here the Lord said, "When the fig tree begins to grow again, then you know He is at the doors." In the western world when you are at the door (door is singular number), and the door opens you are inside the house. But in the Orient it is different. There are a number of doors—the outward door, then the door that goes into the garden, and if you are from a rich family there may be two or three more doors before you reach the family. So the Lord said, "When you see that I am at the doors"—that was the revival of the nation of Israel in 1948. Suddenly a nation that had no territory, no government, and a people scattered around the world, was revived. That was in 1948, and now we are in the

21<sup>st</sup> century. Our Lord Jesus is already at the doors, so we know that His return is very, very near.

### **The Blessed Hope**

It is my hope that the Lord will return in my lifetime. Think of the blessed hope before us. There is very little time. Now is the time. Let us be prepared before Him, give ourselves totally to Him and allow Him to work out His full salvation. However difficult life may be the Bible says, "Look up for your redemption draws nigh." May the Lord help us.

Let us pray:

*Dear Lord, as we bow before Thee may Thy Spirit reveal to us God on the throne. However difficult it may be in our lives we praise and thank Thee that Thou art using it to perfect us. Teach us how to be guided by the unseen rather than the seen. Bring us the vision of God on the throne. You are in charge and You are perfecting us. Here we are. We give ourselves to Thee. Thy will be done. We ask in Thy name. Amen.*