

Chapter 14 And I Saw Thrones

Thrones: God's Governmental Structure

The idea of people being placed in positions of authority in the Kingdom, as shown in Matthew 19:28 and Luke 22:28-30, presents a very significant factor as we think practically about preparing the way for the Kingdom of God to appear. When we read about thrones in the scriptures, we are essentially reading about the governmental structure of God's Kingdom. [1] In Rick Joyner's book, *The Final Quest*, he writes about a series of dreams and prophetic experiences that he had. Part of his experience involved seeing the Throne of God and many other thrones surrounding it. These thrones were positions of authority. Some of these positions were occupied by Christians who had died and gone to heaven, but many were yet to be filled.

I have no doubt that people receive such experiences and insights from God. I have had similar experiences myself. But I am very aware that such experiences can be validated only when compared to and found to agree with the written Word of God. Therefore, I looked to the scriptures on this issue of thrones and found the concept to have scriptural basis. Revelation Chapter 4 speaks of thrones surrounding the Throne of God.

Revelation 4:4 (KJV)

And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold.

Chapter 20 of Revelation describes the millennium that begins at Christ's return. It also speaks of thrones, more specifically the responsibility given to those holding these positions.

Revelation 20:4 (KJV)

And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them...

Psalms gives us another prophetic picture of Jerusalem in the age to come and also speaks of these thrones.

Psalms 122:3-5 (KJV)

Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together: Whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the Lord. For there are set thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David.

Below is an excerpt from Joyner's book that describes some of the thrones he saw and their different ranks.

As I approached the Judgment Seat of Christ, those in the highest ranks were also sitting on thrones that were all a part of His throne. Even the least of these thrones was more glorious than any earthly throne many times over. Some of these were rulers over cities on earth who would

soon take their places. Others were rulers over the affairs of heaven, and others were over physical creation, such as star systems and galaxies. However it was apparent that those who were given authority over cities were esteemed above those who had even been given authority over galaxies. The value of a single child surpassed that of a galaxy of stars, because the Holy Spirit dwelt in men, and the Lord had chosen men as His eternal dwelling place. ¹

Positions Are Still Available

One of the things that struck me most as I read about Joyner's experience was the fact that many thrones were occupied, but many were empty.

At one point the Lord looked toward the galleries of thrones around Him. Many were occupied, but many were empty. He then said, "These thrones are for the overcomers who have served Me faithfully in every generation. My Father and I prepared them before the foundation of the world. The Lord then looked at those galleries [of thrones] and said, "Those empty seats could have been filled in any generation. I gave the invitation to sit here to everyone who has called upon My name. They are still available."²

Daniel's vision of the coming Kingdom of God is very similar to the picture we see in Revelation, Chapter 19.

Daniel 7:9 (NASB)

I kept looking Until thrones were set up, And the Ancient of Days took His seat; His vesture was like white snow, And the hair of His head like pure wool. His throne was ablaze with flames, Its wheels were a burning fire.

This particular passage is significant because it corroborates the idea of thrones (positions of authority) needing to be filled before the Kingdom appears. [2] Jesus had told the twelve that they would be judges over the twelve tribes of Israel and they properly understood this to be a literal governmental assignment and saw the need to find one to replace Judas. They also knew from prophecy that someone needed to fill the office left vacant by Judas' betrayal (see Acts 1:20). [3] Jesus is filling staff positions for His administration which will take effect at His appearing and the establishment of His Kingdom government. This was addressed in Chapter 2, *Politics of the Kingdom*.

Thinking from a strictly practical viewpoint, how many people would it take to fill all the positions of leadership and responsibility in Christ's one-world government? After all, that is what the Kingdom of God is, one government that will rule the world. The current estimate is that there are about 7 billion people on the planet. If Jesus returned today, how many of those would remain as mortals? Even after the initial war to subdue the earth (see Rev 19:11-21), I suspect it would require a very big number!

Since not all people will be Christian, government will be necessary. Governors or overseers will be needed for every nation, province, tribe, state, county, city, etc. And that doesn't even take into consideration positions of responsibility for physical things like energy, utilities, natural resources, law enforcement, logistics like mail and shipping, etc.

For those who are already governed by the Holy Spirit (something we currently call self-government) and are joyfully submitted in their hearts to Jesus, His coming will simply be a promotion. But for those who have resisted the Church and its message, the Kingdom of God will be a totalitarian regime. How ironic! Those who want big centralized government are going to get it, but it certainly isn't going to be what they imagined. [4]

Rank in the Kingdom

We have already touched upon the issue of kingdom rank in previous chapters. The twelve disciples were told that they would be judges over the twelve tribes of Israel (Matt 19:28) and the parable of stewardship in Luke 19 indicates that some will rule cities. We also see this issue in Revelation, Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 where there are seven references to those who overcome. There appears to be different levels of reward associated with overcoming, which suggests that some overcomers will qualify at a higher rank than others.

The overcomer in Revelation 3:5 is promised eternal life which, being a very wonderful reward, is an entry level position in the Kingdom. But the overcomers in Revelation 2:26 and 3:21 are promised power over the nations and the privilege of sitting with Jesus on His throne, which reminds me of Joyner's description above: "...those in the highest ranks were also sitting on thrones that were all a part of His throne." Revelation Chapter 20 also provides some insight to the issue of rank in the Kingdom of God.

Revelation 20:4-5 (KJV)

And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.

John saw a company of overcomers being raised from the dead who were made up of those who had been martyred for Christ, who had not worshiped the beast and had not received the beast's mark on their foreheads or hands. Some have interpreted this verse to mean that only those who lost their physical lives (martyrs) will be raised at this time, which is the first resurrection. But the next verse gives more clarification and implies that all Christians are raised at the first resurrection.

Revelation 20:6

Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

Here we see that the rest of the dead are not raised until the end of the millennium, which is the second resurrection. Those in the first resurrection are exempt from judgment and the second death (see Rev 20: 14-15) which indicates that the first resurrection is for *all* who are justified by faith and the second resurrection is for the unrighteous for the purpose of judgment. This is also confirmed by the fact that those who are alive and remain on earth at Jesus' coming, the first resurrection, will not see death, but will also put on immortality with those who are

being raised (see 1 Thess 4:14-16; 1 Cor 15:51-53). It is likely that the thrones John saw in verse 4 were the higher ranking positions which belong to those who have sacrificed the most by being martyrs.

Nevertheless, endurance and suffering for Christ does play a part in determining one's rank in the Kingdom. Paul wrote to the Romans saying, "... we are children of God, and if children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together" (Rom 8:16-17). Jesus said, "A servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you" (John 15:20).

Whether we suffer in a small way, like being ridiculed by a classmate for one's faith, or something extreme like being beheaded for sharing Christ in a Muslim country ruled by Sharia Law, genuine Christians will suffer to some degree for their faith. The issue is whether or not we will have the character to endure hardship as good soldiers of Christ.

How To Qualify

Those who qualify for thrones are called overcomers. Three keys to overcoming are given in Revelation Chapter Twelve. The context of this verse is a divine proclamation announcing that the Kingdom of God and the power of Christ has come. Then verse eleven tells us how the saints overcame their enemy:

Revelation 12:11 (KJV)

And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.

These three things, the blood of the Lamb, the word of our testimony, and loving not our lives even unto the death, seem to represent three levels of overcomers or possibly a progression in overcoming. [5]

First, we overcome by the blood of the Lamb. It is only by the blood of Jesus that our sins can be washed away and we can be counted among the righteous. Because of the blood, those who put their trust in Jesus are found "not guilty" by the Judge of the Universe and are able to stand in His presence holy, blameless and above reproach without any fear of judgment. This is grace through faith. This is entry level for the Kingdom.

Secondly, we overcome by the word of our testimony. Those who continue as disciples are expected to give testimony. Jesus tells us that we will be justified or condemned based on our words (see Matt 12:37) and this principle is also presented in Romans where it says that we believe with our hearts unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation (see Rom 10:10). In fact, it is our Christian testimony that shows we are genuine Christians and activates Christ's intercession for us before the Father. Jesus said that if we confess Him before men, he would confess us before the Father, but if we deny Him before men, He will deny us (see Matt 10:32:33). However, giving accurate testimony is part of being a teacher and winning souls which are works that have rewards (see 1 Cor 3).

Thirdly, we overcome by loving not our lives unto the death. The context of Jesus'

statement about confessing Him before men shows that when we are vocal about our faith, persecution will be the result. They said Jesus was of the devil (Matt 10:25) and they will treat us the same way. Jesus said He did not come to bring peace, but a sword (Matt 10:34). Nevertheless, he tells us to shout it from the housetops and do not fear men, who can only kill our bodies, but fear God who can destroy both body and soul in hell (Matt 10:27-28).

Jesus said, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it” (Luke 9:23-24). That is why Paul says that the message of the cross is the power of God to those who are being saved (1 Cor 1:18). Laying down our lives for Christ is not an option. It is the message of the cross. This doesn't mean that all must be killed for the sake of the gospel, but it does mean that all must reckon themselves dead to sin and self—loving not their lives until the day they die.

Its Not A Competition

The concept of qualifying for varying levels of authority in the Government of God raises the issue of motive. Should achieving a high rank be our goal? At least two of the twelve disciples wrestled with this issue and even sent their mother to Jesus to lobby for their positions in the kingdom (see Matt 20:21-23). Jesus indicated that 1) high positions would require suffering similar to what He would endure and 2) positions are determined by the Father. [6] It is not a wise thing to seek a position we are not called to. Jesus addressed this when He noticed how his disciples sought the best places:

(Luke 14:7-11 NKJV)

7 So He told a parable to those who were invited, when He noted how they chose the best places, saying to them:

8 "When you are invited by anyone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in the best place, lest one more honorable than you be invited by him;

9 "and he who invited you and him come and say to you, 'Give place to this man,' and then you begin with shame to take the lowest place.

10 "But when you are invited, go and sit down in the lowest place, so that when he who invited you comes he may say to you, 'Friend, go up higher.' Then you will have glory in the presence of those who sit at the table with you.

11 "For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

Paul also instructed the Ephesians to walk worthy of their calling “...with all lowliness and gentleness...” (See Eph 4:1-2). Therefore, we should not be preoccupied with achieving a rank, but to be counted worthy of our calling. [7] It is not a competition. The of concept of rank is presented in this chapter to simply help us grasp the practical nature of the Kingdom God and to encourage us in preparing for it. [8] May we each experience sufficient grace to fulfill our calling.

Paradigm Builder:

When we read about thrones in the scriptures, we are essentially reading about the governmental structure of God's Kingdom. Qualifying for positions in His government is one of the ways we prepare the way of the Lord and for the appearing of His Kingdom.

Before reading this chapter, how would you describe your position regarding this concept?

1 Strongly Disagree - 2 Disagree - 3 Neutral/Unsure - 4 Agree - 5 Strongly Agree

How would you describe your position regarding this concept after reading this chapter?

1 Strongly Disagree - 2 Disagree - 3 Neutral/Unsure - 4 Agree - 5 Strongly Agree

¹ Joyner; The Final Quest, Morning Star Publications, 1996, p. 116

² Ibid, p. 117, 118