

The Throne Is Moving in Relation to the Divine Purpose

by T. Austin-Sparks

The sermon explores the significance of the Throne in relation to creation and redemption through the symbolism of the cherubims and Christ's representation.

Scripture: Ezekiel 1:26

Topics: "Divine Purpose", "Christ as the Center of Creation and Redemption"

Description

T. Austin-Sparks emphasizes the significance of recognizing the Throne of God and the Man upon it, which is essential for the strength and ministry of the Lord's servants. He draws parallels between the cherubims in Ezekiel's vision and Christ, illustrating how they symbolize various aspects of creation and redemption. The four living ones represent the fullness of creation and the divine purpose, with each likeness reflecting Christ's roles as King, Servant, Heavenly Man, and Redeemer. Sparks highlights that the Throne is central to God's creative and redemptive plans, and that true life is found only in the new creation through Christ. Ultimately, he calls for believers to align themselves with the goings of God to fully experience His support and purpose.

Transcript

We are still occupied with the preparations of the Lord's servant for his ministry, and yesterday morning we were considering the Throne above the firmament and the likeness of a Man upon it. As you will remember, we concluded yesterday by pointing out the importance to the servants of the Lord of seeing that Throne - what it means to the Lord's servants to recognize that there is a Throne, and that there is a Man upon that Throne. We passed on into the New Testament, and we saw that it was that that accounted for everything in the first days: they were able to sing and to pray and to preach and to suffer and to die because they knew the Man was on the Throne! So that part of the vision came first and was of very great importance to Ezekiel.

I think you know what the name Ezekiel means; but if you do not, let me tell you what it means: "God shall be my strength." And Ezekiel had to have vision and experience that made his own name true. All this that Ezekiel was seeing was just establishing the meaning of his own name, "God is my strength." We shall only have strength as we see the Man on the Throne! That is a very important thing for ministry.

So we come to the next part of "the visions of God" which were the preparation of the Lord's servant; that is, what was directly under the firmament. And the first part of this was "the four living ones," which are known to us as the cherubims. And, of course, we do recognize that these cherubims are symbols of spiritual things. And one thing about them is this - that in different places they are different in representation. For instance, here in Ezekiel they have four wings; in Isaiah, they have six wings. That is only to emphasize particular spiritual principles, and you will notice that there are other differences in the references to the cherubims. This means that at one time, in one place, certain things are emphasized. At another time, in another place, certain other things are emphasized. It is the spiritual principles which are to be taken note of., therefore, the cherubims are symbols of spiritual realities. The Bible right from the beginning to end is just full of symbolism - things taken up by God to teach spiritual truth.

Now then, we look at these "four living ones." First we take account of their number; their number is four. Everything about them speaks of the number four. Each one of the four has four likenesses, and there are four of them. They have four wings. Their characteristic number is four; and as you may know, four is the number of creation. If we want to cover all the dimensions of the creation, they are covered in the number four: north, south, east, and west cover the whole world. There are the four seasons of the year: spring, summer, autumn, and winter. In the Bible the four winds are referred to, four winds as coming from "the four corners of the earth" (Rev. 7:1). Now we know that the world is not square, it does not have four corners, but this is a symbolic way of speaking; "the four corners of the earth" means the whole world. It, therefore, represents the whole creation; it is the number of creation. Keep that in mind as we move on to the four likenesses of the cherubims.

You see, the cherubims had four likenesses: the likeness of a man, the likeness of a lion, the likeness of an ox, the likeness of an eagle; and those four are representative of four parts of the creation. The lion represents the wild creation, the ox represents the domestic creation, the eagle represents the flying creation, and the man represents the human creation. All creation is represented here.

But then, what is the spiritual symbolism? The lion is the symbol for royalty and government. The ox is the symbol of service and sacrifice. The eagle is the symbol of heavenliness and mystery. And the man is the symbol for representation. That is the spiritual symbolism.

We may ask, "What is the meaning of all that?" In the first place, we see that this is a symbolic representation of Christ. It is Christ in His four-fold capacity. The Lion is "the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah": - out of Judah came the Ruler, so that the Lion is the symbol of the government or royalty of the Lord Jesus. You probably know that the Gospel by Matthew corresponds to that. It is the Gospel of the King! The Ox is the symbol of service and sacrifice, and again that is the representation of the Lord Jesus as the servant of Jehovah sacrificing Himself: - "the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life." The ox corresponds to the Gospel by Mark! It is in the Gospel by Mark that, more than anywhere else, Jesus is seen in service giving Himself. The Man aspect of the cherubims is very clear, "the Son of Man has come." That is the message of Luke, Jesus the Man! And the Eagle, is the symbol of heavenliness and mystery, and that is clearly seen in the Gospel by John! The Lord Jesus so often in that gospel speaks of His having "come down from heaven," and yet there is a mystery about Him that no one can understand. He is a Man, but He is more than a Man. This is the eagle symbolism. So I think it is quite clear by these references to see that the Lord Jesus is represented by the cherubims.

The cherubims are called "the living ones." In our translation, a word is introduced that is not there in the original. In the King James' translation, it is "living creatures"; in another translation, it is "living beasts," the

four living beasts. Well, of course, to begin with, man is not a beast; and an eagle is not strictly a beast. However, those words, creature and beast, are not in the original. What is here in the original text is "the living ones," which is just the plural form of the word "life." - It simply means the plurality of "life." The key characteristic of the cherubims was life: - "In Him was Life." What was the life for? - The Life of the creation, Jesus Is The Life of The Creation. Of course that is now the new creation!

We go back to the first appearance of the cherubims. Man has sinned, God has cursed the race and the earth. He has driven man out of the garden, in which there was "the tree of Life"; and He has placed the cherubims at the gate to guard the way of the tree of Life. What does all that mean? The sinful and fallen creation can never have that Life. That Life can only be had by "a new creation." Between that which represents the fallen creation and that which represents the unfallen creation stands Christ as "The Door." Christ says, "There is no life for that sinful creation; there is only Life in a new creation." So the cherubims stands between. Thus Christ always stands between an old creation and a new. There is no Life outside of Christ. There is only Life inside of Christ. Christ as "The Life" stands at the door. He says "No" to one creation, and "Yes" to another. Well, I think we can say that the cherubims represent Christ. They represent Christ as The Life.

Now it is also very clear to see that the cherubims in relation to the Throne affect the whole creation. The Throne is linked with the creation - in creation and redemption. On the one side, it relates to the creation; on the other side, it relates to the redemption of the creation! God's Throne governs those two things. The Chariot-Throne of God is linked with God's creative and redemptive power. This Throne says that God is concerned with the redemption of the Creation. You notice that over the Throne there is "a rainbow." The rainbow is the symbol of God's covenant of redemption. You will find that rainbow again in the Book of the Revelation, and presently we shall see its connection in that book, but let us be quite sure of what we have just said.

Here is the Chariot-Throne of God! Underneath are the symbols of the whole creation! The whole question is the question of Life for the creation, but we have seen the tremendous energies and power of those movements of the Throne! All the energies and movements of God are in relation to a new creation, a redeemed creation. So we see that the Throne is moving in relation to Divine Purpose - the Divine Purpose in creation. That movement is by way of the Lord Jesus. That new creation is to have Him as its King. That is by way of His service and His sacrifice. That will be an expression of His Heavenly Character, and it is all summed up in "a man after My (God's Own) heart!"

In the fourth and fifth chapters of the Book of the Revelation - a great multitude of redeemed ones are displayed to the whole universe; and when that comes to pass, the creation itself shall be delivered. It will not be long before God says: "I create new heavens and a new earth... the former things are passed away." (Isaiah 65:17a; Rev. 21:1, 4b; NASV; KJV). All that is here in Ezekiel in principle. But here is a very significant thing - in chapters four and five of Revelation, you have the four living ones. In chapter four, they are connected with the creation. The song in chapter four is "For Thou didst create all things, and because of Thy will they existed, and were created." The living ones are there in connection with that. The Divine purpose in creation - "God created all things in Jesus Christ." The living ones are a representation of Jesus Christ - King, Sacrifice, Heavenly Man, that gives the meaning to the creation. "All things were created in Him," and the living ones are there in the presence of the song of creation, but in a special way - now it is the song of a new creation.

In chapter five of the Book of the Revelation, another song is being sung, and the living ones are there. This is the song of redemption, "Thou... hast redeemed"; that is the new song, and the living ones are there. The purpose of creation in Christ Jesus - Jesus as The Purpose of creation, and when the new creation is secured, the living ones are there. It is a new creation in Christ Jesus. The song of redemption is "Thou... hast redeemed us," - and The Redemption Is In Christ Jesus.

You see, that takes us back to Ezekiel - the cherubims, in the first place, are a representation of Christ. On the one side, they are related to creation; on the other side, they are related to redemption. And all these mighty energies of God concentrated upon that. All the goings of God are unto that. One creation has failed; God is going to have a new creation. One representation of God has failed; God is going to have a new representation. Israel has failed as a representation of God, He will have His Church. That is what comes out later in these prophecies.

Now I must leave it there. That is only half of it. The other half is the wheels, and I think we must leave that for this morning. This is all not only interesting but very instructive. It ought to help us to see one thing: The Throne of heaven is concentrated upon a full and perfect representation of the Lord's Mind. When we sum up this whole section, we shall see more of what that means for us. But it is a tremendous thing to be right in the way of the goings of God! Not alongside of the goings of God, not in some little bit of the goings of God, but right in the full Way of the goings of God! That is where we shall find the support of the Throne!

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