**VOLUME 2; CHAPTER 04 - THE PREACHING OF G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

**SANCTUARY by G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

*A glorious throne, set on high from the beginning, is the place of our sanctuary.*

*Jeremiah 17:12*

JEMIAH'S PROPHECIES WERE UTTERED WHEN THE religious and moral conditions of the ancient people of God had become idolatrous and profligate. They are full of the sorrow of his heart, and yet thrill with vehement denunciation of sin. Notwithstanding these facts, it is quite evident as one reads this book that in common with all the messengers of God Jeremiah lived and spoke with strength born of a perpetual consciousness that however chaotic the circumstances of the hour may appear, the foundation is secure. In our text we have a radiant revelation of the prophet's conception of the character of that foundation. At the centre of all he saw an established throne. As I have indicated, he shared this conviction with all the great messengers of God, whose words have been recorded for us in the Scriptures of truth. There was a day when they said to David, "Flee as a bird to your mountain, for, lo, the wicked bend the bow, they make ready their arrow upon the string, that they may shoot in darkness at the upright in heart. If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" He replied, "How say ye to my soul, Flee as a bird to your mountain? ... The Lord is in His holy temple, the Lord, His throne is in heaven; his eyes behold, His eyelids try the children of men."

There was a day when Isaiah was passing from the first phase of his ministry into a larger and more trying one, a day when the throne of his people became vacant, and he said, "In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple." So here Jeremiah is facing a ministry full of difficulty; his heart is failing, his flesh is trembling, he is afraid; yet the word of God, as he says, burns within his bones and he is driven forth. He goes in spite of fear and trembling, with a courage and heroism that almost startle us as we read the story. Why was he courageous in spite of fear? The answer is to be found in his declaration, "A glorious throne, on high from the beginning, is the place of our sanctuary."

The conception of my text is that right relation to the throne of God is the place of sanctuary. Notice carefully that he does not say that the sanctuary is a throne, but that the throne is a sanctuary. If Jeremiah had declared the sanctuary to be a throne it would have been true; but it would have opened before our minds an entirely different aspect of truth. It then would have said to us that the sanctuary, using the word in the Hebrew sense, the place of worship and approach, was also the place of government. That is true, but that is not the message of the text. That is not the vision which made Jeremiah and all the messengers of God strong to face opposition and declare the truth. It was the conviction that the throne of God is a sanctuary, that if a man would find sanctuary he must find the throne; if a man would find the place of refuge, of quietness, of peace in the midst of trouble and turmoil and distress, he is not to seek it by the way of asking for a solution, but by putting his life into right relationship with the established throne of the abiding government of God.

Since the days of Jeremiah all the externals have changed. Human ideals, the habits and manners of men, and the customs of the age are all different; but the essential stream of human life flows on, and the laws of its progress are also unchanged.

We take this text out of the midst of the prophecies, turning from the man who uttered it, and all the strange and appalling circumstances in the midst of which he found himself, and we take the words and declare them to be a statement of truth for us. "A glorious throne, on high from the beginning, is the place of our sanctuary." I shall ask you to notice, first, the meaning of sanctuary, and second, to consider the final declaration of the text, that the place of our sanctuary is the throne.

The idea of sanctuary is a very old one. Indeed, it is as old as human history. Wherever you read human history you will find this idea obtaining. In the architecture of ancient Egypt there are found what are called sanctuary temples. They were temples which consisted of one simple chamber, so simple that a person finding his way into it was hidden, and yet no enemy could be hidden from him therein. They were the sanctuaries into which men in hours of great stress and danger came for safety. In the history of the ancient people of God you read of how men came and took hold upon the horns of the altar, which means they sought and claimed sanctuary. Not only in the ancient history and the history of the Bible, but in the history of our own country we find the same story. In olden times every church and churchyard offered what was called sanctuary. We are close to an illustrious instance of what I am now referring to. Dean Stanley says of Westminster Abbey, "The precincts of Westminster Abbey were a vast cave of Adullam for all the distressed and discontented in the metropolis who desired, in the phrase of the time, 'to take Westminster.'" That is to say, men in debt and danger, and discontented - I am quoting the words concerning Adullam - found their way in the olden days into the church or churchyard, and there were considered safe, and their confidence was respected.

What, then, does the idea suggest? There is a twofold note in this thought of sanctuary. Man's consciousness of his own danger and his desire for escape therefrom; his consciousness of unrest and his longing for a place of rest; his consciousness of peril and his desire after protection. The cry of man after sanctuary in all ages has been the cry of man in the midst of stress and strain and danger, of peril and conflict, and unrest; his cry for protection, for some place in which to hide himself, for some sphere in which the forces which have been buffeting, beating and bruising him will be unable to reach him. The idea of sanctuary is the idea of a place of quietness, of peace, of privacy, of protection. The deep meaning of the word is indicated in the fact that in all the instances I have quoted, and many others which I might have named, the thought of sanctuary is intimately related to religion - false or true matters nothing for the moment - whether the ancient religion of Egypt, or the revealed religion of Israel, or the religion of our own Christian times, the fact remains the same. When a man sought sanctuary he sought the things of religion. In that seeking is evidenced the fact that man associated with sanctuary the idea, first, of purity or holiness; second, of privacy, or perfect silence; and, finally, therefore, as a corollary to these two, the idea of protection, of being guarded from the things which were against him. The idea of purity, of separation by holiness, sanctuary, in all these illustrations, was in the thinking of the men who sought it, a place in which there was no lie, no deceit. The holy of holies in the sanctuary of the Hebrews was a perfect cube, suggestive of regularity, of exactness, of integrity. Sanctuary, therefore, was a place which had no complicity with the evil things which made sanctuary a necessity to man. Man, in the midst of evil - whether in the sense of wilful sin, or in the sense of the limitations and calamities which follow thereupon - evil, hampering, hindering, bruising, battering him, wants sanctuary, a place where evil is not. He is seeking some place of purity that he there may find refuge from the forces of impurity which have disturbed his life and harmed him.

Sanctuary suggests not only purity, and perhaps this is the sub-consciousness of desire - it suggests privacy, a place guarded by the forces of its own holiness from intrusion which is either inquisitive or revolutionary. It is a place of silence, a place of quiet - witness the great shrines of all religions, false and true. At the heart of every one is a place which few are permitted to enter, of which the chief characteristic is peace because there is privacy. In following me you will understand that I am not defending any form of religion. I am illustrating a truth. At the heart of many a religion in the place of silence, quietness, there is enthroned as deity that which is degrading. I simply ask you to notice the desire of the heart of man first of all for a religion untouched by evil, because evil has harmed him, and, second, for a place of quietness.

Men will take sanctuary in the most actual way even yet. You cannot walk through Westminster Abbey or St. Paul's Cathedral without seeing some poor, bruised, battered soul getting quiet. I never see such in the great cathedrals but I experience a twofold emotion - prayer for them, that they may find the secret place of hiding, and the desire that all our churches might always be open for such to pass inside, and sit and seek that quietness and find rest.

Then as a necessary corollary to this desire after purity and privacy, and now perhaps I have reached the first sentiment of the man who seeks it, seeking sanctuary is seeking protection, seeking to be guarded against the things which have troubled and harmed. Overcome in the conflict, bruised and broken in the battle, the spirit of man flings itself toward some religion of purity, privacy and protection, and in so doing at least indicates the fact that by submission to its law of holiness and peace he will be protected from the forces which have been against him.

Such are some of the suggestions of the great word sanctuary. Today the strenuousness of life is more terrible than it ever was. In the age in which we live perchance there are fewer cataclysms, catastrophes, than in olden days; but if the hours red and horrible with tragedy are fewer than they were, the sum total of unrest is greater than it ever was. The strain and stress of life have invaded places which were characterized by immunity therefrom. We still sing,

Thou hast Thy young men at the war,

Thy little ones at home,

but even our homes today are invaded, and the little ones are touched by the competitive fever of the age in which we live. Never perhaps have men more keenly felt the need of sanctuary.

Never has the sub-consciousness of common humanity more cried out after some place of rest, some relationship which will make the heart firm and steady, some attitude of life which will correct all the feverishness arising from the complexity and strain of life. Where shall we find our sanctuary? This is background that I may bring you to the text.

"A glorious throne, on high from the beginning, is the place of our sanctuary." A glorious throne. That is the sum total of the revelation of Scripture to men. There are many things included in that of which I am not going to speak. I am not going to attempt to dissect, or analyze, or find out all the component parts of the great truth. From Genesis to Revelation the one truth the Bible declares is that the throne of God is man's resting-place, the throne of God is the place where man will find the answer to his desire for quietness, to his passion for peace, to his search after sanctuary.

In a rapid survey go over the Bible with me. In the early Bible history the throne is unnamed, but it is always there. In the early movements chronicled for us I find men in relation to the throne, submissive, at peace; in rebellion against the throne, disturbed. The throne of God is everywhere. I come at last to the point where the chosen people make their great mistake, and I hear God's explanation of it, "They have rejected me, that I should not be King over them." I come further on until I find this selfsame chosen people in the midst of circumstances full of terror, Ahab and Jehoshaphat are the reigning kings. In the first book of Kings, for the first time in the Bible, the phrase, "the throne of God," appears. When the thrones of men which had been set up in folly were proven disloyal to the principles for which they stood, and suffering and darkness had settled over the people, the messenger of God reminded them of the one throne of God. The devotional and prophetic books are full of references to the throne of God. In the Gospel story Jesus speaks of the throne of God, and the burden of His message is always that of the Kingdom of God. In the Acts I see Him, the Son of man, having passed to the throne as the final place of His power. When I come to the Revelation, that last book of the canon, declaring the final movements that usher in the eternal state, the throne is mentioned more than in any other part of the Bible. It is the book of the throne of God and the government of God. It is the book of the Kingdom of God. Its one message to men is, if you would find sanctuary, find the throne; if you would find peace, kiss the sceptre; if you would be safe, get into right relationship with the one abiding and eternal throne. "A glorious throne ... is the place of our sanctuary."

Mark the suggestiveness of the idea. What is a throne? It is the symbol of authority. It is the basis of law. It is the place from which the laws which govern are uttered. It is more, it is the symbol of administration, and not merely the symbol of law. It speaks of rewards and punishments. It speaks of the fact that the laws which are for the governance of all submitted to it are enforced by its majesty. It is the throne of arbitration and the settlement of disputes. This is sanctuary. The Bible idea of sanctuary is not that men shall find peace by escape to the pity of God, but to the judgment of God. The Bible idea of sanctuary is not that man shall find peace because God as a Father takes him and lulls him to sleep while in his heart man is still in rebellion. The Bible idea of sanctuary is that man shall find peace when he returns to the will and government of God in submission. This is not to contradict the meaning and message of Jesus. Jesus came not to persuade God to have pity on men who to the end of their career would remain in rebellion; but to establish the law and make it honourable, to preach the Kingdom and, blessed be His name, to make it possible for any bruised and broken man, returning toward the throne, to be healed and made strong. The ultimate in the purpose of Jesus was to bring men to sanctuary by bringing them to the throne. "Seek ye first His Kingdom, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

Not only did Jeremiah speak of the throne, he used a phrase which runs all through Hebrew figurative speech. "A glorious throne, on high." Even in the Revised Version we have the rendering "set on high," the word "set" being introduced, as is shown by the italics, in order to indicate a thought. I venture to think that here, as so often, there is more grandeur, more rugged splendor if we translate literally, "A glorious throne, on high from the beginning, is the place of our sanctuary." Mark that Hebrew figure of height. It is but a figure, but it is a suggestive one. The figure of height runs through all Hebrew imagery, and is always indicative of safety. In Psalm 46, one of the great psalms which has become the common property of trusting souls, we read "The Lord of Hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge." You have noticed the marginal reading of the word "refuge," "high tower." Again in Proverbs it is written "The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it and is safe" - set on high. It is a peculiar Hebrew figure of safety. How is this safety produced? By setting man on high above the things which are against him.

Go back to the threefold fact of sanctuary. Man coming to the throne of God comes to a throne on high and is lifted above the evil, therefore, into a place of purity. He is lifted above disturbance, therefore, into a place of privacy. He is lifted above enmity, and therefore, into a place of protection. This is sanctuary. It is this thought of height symbolizing safety that emerges in the wonderful words of Jesus with which we are very familiar, "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Myself. But this He said, signifying by what manner of death He should die." He did not mean merely, "If I be lifted up a few yards from the ground on the rough Roman gibbet." He meant, "If by that pathway of suffering and sorrow, I am lifted high above evil, high above distraction and enmity, I will draw men to Myself." As He was lifted to the place of the throne by way of the cross He was lifted to a throne on high from the beginning, and as men find their way to Him on the throne through the mystery of His cross, they find their way to purity which is above evil, to privacy which is above disturbance, to protection which is above enmity.

Yet there is another phrase, for the prophet has not said the final thing. "A glorious throne, on high from the beginning, is the place of our sanctuary," "From the beginning." Again you are familiar with the phrase. It is one of those commonplaces of Scripture running from the first book to the last, from the first chapter to the final one, the simple phrase "the beginning." Take the highways of the phrase, "In the beginning God created." Come on into the sweet song of Solomon concerning wisdom, sung while the seeds of the decay of earthly kingship were already scattered, the song in which he sings, "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of His way, before His works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths, I was brought forth." In Isaiah's prophecy in the midst of the failure of earthly kingship, speaking of the one King, he declares that He sees "the end from the beginning." It is used by John in introducing the Gospel which reveals the inner life of Christ, "In the beginning was the Word." The Master Himself when correcting the casuistry of men who were asking Him questions about social order and quoting something Moses had said, swept behind Moses and said, "From the beginning," so indicating the permanence of the moral order. It is used by John again in the epistle, which has as its key words, life, light, love, showing from what source these things have sprung, "That which was from the beginning." Found again at the commencement and close of the Revelation of Jesus Christ which He sent and signified to His servant John, "The beginning." Some of you remember the words of Dr. Parker about that wonderful phrase. No words of mine can as beautifully and forcefully convey their profound significance. He said, "The beginning, the remotest date that has yet been suggested. Science has its slow rising and slow falling centuries. Yet 'the beginning' -the dateless date - includes them all, and drowns them in a deeper sea. On that ocean millenniums are but tufts of foam."

"A glorious throne, on high from the beginning, is the place of our sanctuary." That is to say, the government of God is based upon the reasons of things and finds its expression not in the rules of a passing hour, but in the principles of eternity. So that if God shall order my life for the next half-hour the reason of His ordering lies back in the ages that I cannot measure. That is Calvinism at its deepest and best and truest. That is the great fact which we still believe, that every flower that blooms on the sod under the Divine government has its roots of life and thought and suggestion far back in the ages we do not know.

Jeremiah had to preach to rebellious people, footmen to weary him, horsemen to tire him, in a land of peace, and amid the, swellings of Jordan. How can he do this work in the midst of the opposition? How can he continue? "A glorious throne, on high from the beginning, is the place of our sanctuary." If this tiny, short life of mine is conditioned by the law of the throne on high from eternity, there is no room for panic in my heart. There is no room for fear and trembling. Let me but learn that law, let me but find the place of true relationship to that fact, and I have found sanctuary.

The fixed point in the universe is the unchangeable throne of God. The laws which emanate from it, the supreme will that enforces those laws, the infinite and unchanging wisdom which arbitrates amid all the conflicts, the certain wisdom and eternal youth which preside over the strife and battle, these, when my life is in harmony, create the only perfect sanctuary for human life. Our loyalty to the throne is the law of our liberty.

In the present life on every hand are mysteries that baffle and perplex. Oh, the perplexities and the problems about us. Let me not speak in generalities. Let me speak to one man or woman here. Buffeted man, tempest-tossed soul, the circumstances of the hour are circumstances of chaos. You cannot see how there is to be deliverance. It may be in matters material, mental, or spiritual. Here you are, an atom of humanity, and the surging sea of the multitude does but add to your unrest. You are seeking sanctuary, a place of peace, of privacy, of purity. Oh, to be high lifted above the things which seem to break and scar. Listen, this is the Gospel of hope, "A glorious throne, on high from the beginning, is the place of our sanctuary." Oh, the inexpressible comfort of knowing that unseen by the vision that is physical, but surely apprehended by faith, "the throne of God is for ever and ever: the sceptre of His Kingdom is a right sceptre." And, oh, my soul, the deeper comfort when individual life is immediately related to that throne by submission to its authority. Then indeed is man able to sing:

Father, I know that all my life

Is portioned out for me,

The changes that are sure to come

I do not fear to see;

I ask Thee for a present mind

Intent on pleasing Thee.

How may I find that throne? It is not far to seek, for the King Himself, in grace and tenderness and compassion, is at hand, and without material sign you may find the King, and finding Him thou shalt find the abiding throne, the glorious throne lifted high from the beginning. If thy life and mine may be surrendered to Him, we shall have found sanctuary.