



Stuff They Didn't Teach Me In Sunday School



Episode 183 - A Spiral Staircase

(Revelation 4, 5, 7, 13)

While asking His followers to take up their crosses, lay down their lives, and follow Him, Jesus repeatedly gives them a glimpse of their future—living in His glorious presence throughout all eternity. First, He shows them His heavenly throne room.

The Heavenly Throne Room

Moses first glimpsed this glorious sight with his brother Aaron, Aaron's two sons and 70 elders of Israel, as recorded in Exodus 24:9-11. "Then Moses and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel went up, and they saw the God of Israel. There was under His feet as it were a pavement of sapphire stone, like the very heaven for clearness. And He did not lay His hand on the chief men of the people of Israel; they beheld God, and ate and drank." Later, Ezekiel was given a glimpse into this same throne room in Ezekiel 1:26-28. Now John sees it in Revelation 4-5.

- When John's original readers pictured God—the mighty King of kings—ruling over heaven and earth from His throne, what comfort and encouragement could they take, especially with Domitian threatening their lives from his throne in Rome?
- How does the heavenly throne room as depicted in these three Scriptures shed new light and meaning to the introduction to the Lord's Prayer: "Our Father, who art in heaven"?

The Saints in Heaven

In Revelation 7 John is reporting back to persecuted Christians the wonders he has witnessed in heaven. He speaks not only of the glorious vision of God on His throne surrounded by a countless multitude of angels, but also of the saints—his readers' loved ones who now stand in glory—as God Himself wipes the tears from their eyes.

- What comfort would this vision give Christians who grieved their loved ones martyred at the hands of the Romans?
- What encouragement would this give them to take up their crosses, resist emperor worship, and follow Christ—even to death, if necessary?
- Think of these saints and angels gathered around God's glorious throne. Now add to this the earthly experience of Moses, Aaron and his sons, and the 70 elders looking upon God's glory, as they ate in His presence on Mount Sinai. How does this transform our gathering together at the altar to eat our Lord's body and drink His blood in Holy Communion?

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The Beast and the Dragon

In chapter 13 we read about the beast and the dragon. The beast stands for any earthly ruler who tries to usurp God's place. For the first readers of Revelation it signified the Roman Emperor Domitian, who demanded that all subjects burn incense to him as god.

- Name some rulers from history who have tried to usurp God's gracious and righteous rule over their subjects.
- How did their actions reflect Satan's evil and hateful tyranny rather than God's gracious, righteous rule?
- Why is it important for us to keep praying for those who rule over us?