

**THE SERMONS, LECTURES, AND SONGS OF
SIDNEY EDWARD COX**

Revelation – Chapter 4
The Throne of God in Heaven

Editorial Note: This is a lecture by Sidney Cox that was part of a series of lectures on the Book of the Revelation that he taught while on the theological teaching faculty at the Toccoa Falls Bible Institute during the early part of 1962. He was 75 years of age at the time.

During the latter part of his life, Sidney Cox had developed a close relationship with the Christian and Missionary Alliance (“CMA”). CMA operates as a vast network of churches, similar to a “denomination.” Toccoa Falls Bible Institute was closely affiliated with the CMA, provided support to the Institute and the Institute sent many of its graduates into ministry within CMA churches. CMA and The Salvation Army, in which Sidney Cox served as an officer for 30 years previously in his life, share a similar theology and emphasis in Christian outreach.

From 1956 – 1960, Sidney and Violet Cox lived in Miami, Florida where Sidney was on the theological teaching faculty of the Miami Bible Institute, another CMA supported institution. They moved to Toccoa Falls, Georgia in 1960, where he served on the staff at the Toccoa Falls Bible Institute from 1960 – 1962.

As a lecture, he was obviously assuming that his students had prepared for class by reading and studying the pertinent scripture and other class material. Thus, his comments were not like a sermon, but lectures to enhance the students’ theological understanding. He emphasized a detailed study of the scripture and incorporated analysis that he gained from his study of Bible commentaries and books on the related subject matter. These lectures are remarkably free of any personal opinions, personal illustrations or “sermonizing” of any kind. While at other times in his career he was very much the preacher and evangelist, in these late-in-life roles of Bible Professor, he was very much the educator.

Lastly, it might be helpful to at least comment on the historical context in which these lectures were delivered. Many biblical scholars of that day associated some of what is found in the Book of Revelation with the Catholic Church – symbols of paganism, the movement of Satan/antichrist to establish one world church, etc. Many people viewed the Catholic Church with much skepticism and fear. Further, John F. Kennedy had just been elected the first Catholic president of the United States in 1960. His election was quite controversial and many non-Catholics were concerned about Kennedy’s catholic background. Elements of these concerns and mindset are found in these lectures. In 2008, many of these fears have been discredited and some would find them to be offensive and intolerant, but they were quite prevalent and not at all unusual in 1962.

John Douglas Cox, grandson of Sidney Cox. December 29, 2008.

We're now beginning the third period of this. Remember, if you please, that at the beginning of Chapter 4 we found these words ‘after this.’ And I think I gave you the references for the times, the seven times,

I believe it is, or the number of times in which you find this word 'after this,' 'after this,' 'after this.' Whenever you find it, whether it's 'after these things' or 'after this,' it's always a turning point, so that we know we are now turning a corner. And we stand seeing something that we have not seen before.

Now, you notice the mark of that which preceded it. John, the writer of this, is now caught up into the heavens and he is caught up by a word of command. Now, when you look at that throne, you do not need to wonder who makes the command. Who gives the command? The voice is exactly the same as the voice you heard in the first chapter. It is the first voice and this is the sound of it again. And you hear it. And that voice is saying to John, "Come up hither."¹

Well now listen my dear, that is exactly what you will hear one of these days. You will hear that voice saying exactly the same thing, "Come up hither." And it's the picture, not only of John being translated into the glory, but of all those who are like him, redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. And they are translated into the presence of the one who sits upon this throne.

Now, let's look at it again. Here's the sound of his voice. It's the same sound, the same speaker. The invitation is to come up hither and we see what is going to happen so that he can be shown things that are to be hereafter and he is 'in the spirit' while it happens.

Now, one of the reasons why I think we should think carefully about that phrase, "He was in the spirit on the Lord's day,"² and perhaps give careful thought to the idea that God lifted him and put him into a period years in advance so that he could see things there as if they were happening right before his eyes. As a matter of fact, some things that haven't happened yet, a good many things. You remember the two interpretations of that phrase. One, that John was writing this on the first day of the week, the Lord's day. The other is, that just as God took some of His servants and transferred them from one place to another, so in the case of John, he was transferred from one time to another. And actually saw things that are happening in the future and some of them that haven't happened yet. And God, the Eternal Now, took John and put him into the midst of it and said, "I want you to see these things that are going to take place. Here they are, so far as you're concerned, they are future. So far as I am concerned, they are now."

Now, take a look at that. And here he is. Now what does he see? He sees a throne. Here is a throne. First of all, he sees a door opened in heaven. I want you to notice something here. At the end of Chapter 3, a door was closed. At the beginning of Chapter 4, a door is opened. Did you notice it? Now, you watch that word 'open', because when you get to Chapter 19, you will meet the word again, only it won't be a door opened in heaven, it will be heaven itself that's opened. Here it's the door that's opened to receive those who belong to Christ. When you see it in Chapter 19, it's heaven itself opened, for He is coming with the heavenly hosts and with His saints to bring the climax of judgment upon a world that has rejected God and everything that God has done for its redemption.

Notice please, just these words, the opening there, "The one who sits upon it." (Inaudible) shall we? Supposing we just read it here so that we get it clearly before us there? "And immediately I was in the

1 Revelation 4:1
2 Revelation 1:10

spirit, and behold, a throne was set in heaven.”³ Now remember, if you please, that's a very interesting word. Thrones are not usually set anywhere.

I read a very interesting thing the other day that in the first fifty years of the century that we are living in, fifty thrones that looked as if they'd last forever just toppled down into the restless waves of the peoples of the earth. You look around at earthly thrones and they're not any too secure, are they? There's only one or two of them that looked as if they've got foundations and it wouldn't be surprising to those who do some thinking about this sort of thing to see even them topple before very long. I don't think there's any question about it.

A throne set – that's not an earthly scene, not at all. That's a heavenly scene. When God says, “The throne is set,” He means the throne is established, immovable. And here it is. This is God's throne. And He puts it there.

Now look at it. “A throne was set in heaven. One sat on the throne. And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone, and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.”⁴

Now, let's stop a minute, because you've got some very interesting things here.

Here is the description of the one who sits upon the throne. Could this be the same one that you find pictured before you in the first chapter? Now, let's look and see. What was he in the first chapter, among many other things? He was the first and the last, the Alpha and the Omega. And you ask, what has that got to do with two representations or two figures that we find, and the best that the writer could do to make them understandable to us, is to say that this one upon the throne looked like a jasper stone. There was a glory about him like a jasper stone. And yet through it all, you can see the crimson color of the sardine stone. Now, let's bring it down to our language.

The jasper stone, my dear, is the diamond. And the sardine stone is the ruby. Now, you don't need me to interpret that, do you? For the one upon the throne, brilliant in His glory, and yet all the way through you can see the color of His redemptive sacrifice. He's this strange blending of eternal light and the crimson of sacrifice. And you can see it all. Now, let's come back to the question I asked a moment ago.

What's that got to do with the first and the last? Well now remember if you please, that this one who now sits upon the throne, king, was before He went back there, and is now as far as His children are concerned, He is high priest as well as king. Now remember, that there was a priest, a high priest in Israel, and many of the things that you see about the high priest under the Aaronic system can be interpreted and has meaning for the one who sits there. Let me give you this one fact. In the breastplate of the high priest were twelve stones. The pearl was not there. The twelve stones were there. Now, watch it. The first of those stones was the jasper stone. And the last of them was the sardine stone. The first and the last. The glory and the sacrifice. And you find in the dress of the high priest this faint little inkling of something that says to you, “You are looking at somebody who is first

3 Revelation 4:2

4 Revelation 4:2,3

and last. He's the first and the last.”

Let's look at it again. “And round about the throne were four and twenty seats.”⁵ Now remember if you please, that this is a word that needs to be changed to get its proper meaning. These are not chairs at all. These are thrones, and the better word, you will find it in practically every translation: “There are four and twenty thrones, and upon the thrones I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiments and they had on their heads crowns of gold.”

Now, let's stop and see a moment or two. Here are those who obviously represent those who have been redeemed. They are sitting before a throne of judgment unafraid, covered by the sheltering blood. And there they are. They are sitting before the throne, twenty-four of them. Why twenty-four? Why? Why twenty-four? Well now let's remember, and let's go back there to some of the things that you can find and you can find them without any difficulty whatever. But let's go back, if you will, and you will find here, this particular thing that we have before us, this sight of the twenty-four elders. Now, if we go right back, we shall find this, that in the original set up of things there were in the priesthood around Solomon's temple, for example, twenty-four groups that were called ‘courses,’ a group of them.

In Solomon's day, a ‘course’ was one thousand priests, so that in the service of the temple in Solomon's day and glory, there were 24,000 priests. Each one of them in a group, called a ‘course,’ of 1000 each. They didn't all serve at once - one did this, and one did that, and one did it at this time, and one did it at the other, and one did it at something else. You will find that Zacharias, when this great word comes to himself and Elizabeth, that the children, that there is to be born a supernatural one in their home and in the home of someone else; that Zacharias was of the ‘course’ of so-and-so.⁶ And you can find him there, belonging in a certain group.

Now each one of these groups had a chief priest. Each course, a chief priest, so that there would be 24 chief priests. And then, there would be one high priest over them all. This then, was the set up- one high priest, 24 chief priests, and 24 courses of 1000 each. Now, that's the explanation of this rather strange figure of 24. Why 24? Because in each case, the representatives of those who have not only been redeemed, but don't forget that Chapter 1 tells us that in redemption, we were made kings and priests under God. We're not merely the redeemed ones. We are kings and priests under God. Now, watch this thing.

Each one of these representative elders had on a white garment, which was the garment the high priest wore when he stood in the presence of God. He didn't have any garments of glory and beauty when he went into the Holy of Holies, and there offered the sacrifice on the Day of Atonement. He had to put all these things on one side. The only thing he wore was the white or the blue garment. There is a difference of opinion about that, representing the righteousness that God bestows. And he stood there, not in garments of glory and beauty, but in garments of righteousness. Here they sit, dressed in garments representing a given righteousness - righteousness that has been bestowed upon them, just as a garment is put upon you. And righteousness.

And upon their heads, crowns. Now, that's not the particular crown that is given for a certain reason.

5 Revelation 4:4

6 Luke 1:5

For example, there's the martyr's crown, and there's this crown, and the other crown. This is the general crown that every redeemed one will wear. Every redeemed one is a king and priest under God. And upon the head, there is the crown. Now, they've got the 24 elders.

Let's have a look at them again, and we find: "Out of the throne proceeds thunders and lightnings."⁷ What did we say a few moments ago about this being a throne of judgment? This is the sign that judgment is about to be exercised from that throne, and it's going to be exercised upon a world that has rejected God and His Son and everything that God could do for them. Judgment is coming. And you hear the sound that indicates judgment and it's always there - thundering and lightning. Now, watch this, and I'll want you to notice this as you go along. You will find that throne appearing over and over again. And you will find this, that not only do you see the throne but you hear the sound of the thunder. And you can see the flash of the lightning.

But this, watch it, the next time you see that throne you will not only see thunder and lightning, but you will see some other evidence of judgment attached to it. And every time from now on that you find the words 'thunder and lightning,' you'll will find something else. The next time, it will be three things. The next time, it will be four things. The next time, it will be five things. Judgment increasing, all the way through. Judgment isn't going to slacken up toward the end of this judgment period. It's going to get worse and worse and heavier and heavier until finally the great act of judgment in which our Lord himself participates will take place at the end of it. But you watch it, as you go along, watch those words 'thundering and lightning' and you will find something attached to it, all the time, getting worse and worse as time goes by.

Now watch it if you please, and see who is there, for remember, that when the redeemed are called away from this old apostate world to stand in the presence of their Lord, somebody goes with them. The Holy Spirit who has been carrying out this work of gathering out a people for His name will accompany them. Now, I think I've said this before, it won't hurt to repeat it, that our Lord came to do a certain task down here on earth. And in His high priestly prayer at the close of his earthly ministry, He said this, "I have finished the work Thou gavest me to do."⁸ Now when He went, the Holy Spirit came to carry on a work of the Godhead down here for which He was to be particularly responsible - the gathering out of a people for His name.

Now, when that work is ended, and the body is complete, and the bride is ready for the bridegroom, and the bridegroom comes with rapture to meet his bride, then the Holy Spirit who has been gathering her out all these years will accompany her and will say to the Son exactly the same as the Son said to the Father, "I have finished the work Thou gavest me to do." You see.

Now you not only find the redeemed in heaven now, but you will find the Holy Spirit there as well. Now, you won't find the Holy Spirit down here on earth as He is during this day of grace. You find Him operating down here on earth just as He did before the Day of Grace, during the period of the law. The Holy Spirit was not indwelling anybody, but He was operating down here, of course He was. But when the Day of Grace dawned, there was a difference. From then on, "He shall be in you and abide with you

7 Revelation 4:5

8 John 17:4

forever.”⁹ That's the Day of Grace. Now when the Day of Grace is gone, the Holy Spirit is there with the redeemed. He took them out of this world and presents them as the bride to the bridegroom. And he says, “I have finished the work Thou gavest me to do.”

Now let's take a look at Him, because we've seen Him before in this respect. Notice it here, “And before the throne there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne.”¹⁰ Notice judgment again. Fire is always the symbol of judgment unless God uses it as the means of cleansing.

Now watch it - “Which are the seven spirits of God.”¹¹ Now, we have seen that before. We saw that in the first chapter, and we discovered that in the eleventh chapter of the prophecy of Isaiah, this seven fold manifestation of the Holy Spirit is there given. It doesn't mean seven spirits. It means the seven fold, the complete manifestation of the one Holy Spirit, just as the attributes of God do not represent different gods. God isn't justice and then another God, love and another God, something else. One God in different manifestations; one Holy Spirit in seven beautiful manifestations. And here we are again, “And before the throne there was a sea of glass.”¹²

And don't forget, before we get further than that, before we get too far down there, that around about the throne, an emerald rainbow. Let me give you a recommendation for a book. I mentioned one or two books that I think you would do well to be aware of at any rate. And this one's in our library. One of the best books that I know, and it's a book that is constantly referred to on the Book of Revelation, was written by a writer named Walter Scott, Walter Scott.¹³ Now, you'll find his book in the library. And I covet for you my dear, the sheer indescribable joy of reading it. Now, one of the reasons why I do not think I mentioned that when I was suggesting certain books at the beginning of our course together three weeks ago, I don't think I mentioned that one, and I believe the reason why I didn't mention it was that as you get in to the Book of Revelation, you will find your heart more and more attracted toward these men who make Revelation clear to us.

Now, you put the name of Walter Scott, and first time you get a chance in the library, even if you've only got five minutes, go to that section that we have on the Book of Revelation, and we've got a good one, and you go to that and take a look at this book by Walter Scott. And if you have ten minutes, read what he says about the beginning of the fourth chapter of Revelation. I read it the other night for the upteenth time, marked it all over again. My book is all marked up there. I went over it and marked it all over again, just as if I hadn't marked it at all. And I tell you, my eyes were just flashing and my heart was singing. It sure was.

As I took a look at that rainbow-encircled throne, and remember, there isn't any fear about it anymore. There was a time when I, like the children of Israel, stood afar off, like you did. And we dreaded the thought and the sight of God's throne and suddenly it all disappeared. We don't dread it anymore. We sit down right in front of it, right in its presence. What a glory. And we take a look at it in its magnificence and around about it an emerald rainbow encircling it.

9 Paraphrase of John 14:16

10 Revelation 4:5

11 Revelation 4:5

12 Revelation 4:6

13 He is referring to the book, *Exposition of the Revelation of Jesus Christ*, by Walter Scott.

Notice, two things about it, please. I think we've mentioned it before. You will want to mention it two or three times when you teach the book to your own people. First of all, we do not see a complete rainbow as a rule. I don't know whether we ever see it. I'm not too positive about that, but I am positive about the fact that we seldom see anything but a partial rainbow. But here's a complete rainbow. Now, remember if you please, what did a rainbow represent? What was it the promise of? What? It was the promise of God to fulfill His covenant. That was it. Now, it wasn't just a covenant there that was in part. His covenant to Israel is a partial rainbow.

But don't forget that now, God has made covenants with us as well. There is a New Covenant as well as the Old Covenant. And while the old partial rainbow had reference to the Old Covenant period, now there's a New Covenant and consequently, if you're going to have a rainbow that represents the covenant, it's got to be a complete one, because you've got Jew and Gentile all together in one unbroken circle, and it's around the throne of God. Now, watch it again.

Here is this color that we have mentioned before - the emerald rainbow. God in his kindness makes this rainbow that we shall be looking at for all eternity. He emphasizes it in a color that will make it possible and delightful to look at it forever. I think I made this suggestion, that if that rainbow was yellow or red or brown or even blue, we wouldn't want to look at it forever.

Did you ever try standing out under the blue of the sky and staring at it for a while? Just blue. Oh, it's lovely when it appears after a gray day. It's lovely. But did you ever stop and stare at it, look at it with both your eyes wide open. Blue - forever, forever, forever. Yellow, forever. Brown, forever. Red, forever. Lord deliver us! But green. How many times have you stood around here, for instance, and looked at the green. Never get tired of it, do you? You never get tired of it.

Supposing these hillsides were clothed with yellow or brown or blue. It's nice to see them like that for a little while, but we're always glad when the green comes. I want to tell you, there's going to be a song in your heart around here, my dear, in a very few weeks, there sure is. You can see the sign of it. It's coming, it's coming, it's coming. And we shall all rejoice. And God's lovely clothing of green will be all the way around it. And you will never tire of it, never. You'll never tire of it. It's always the same. And you can walk out under the loveliness of it, either alone or with somebody. And it won't make any difference. It will be just beautiful. And we'll see a rainbow all the way around the throne - the covenant of the past and the covenant of the present, and those who were God's people and those who are God's people. And there before the throne forever, we shall be looking at it.

Now, let's look again. Here, "Before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal".¹⁴ Now, let's stop a minute. What are we talking about there? Don't forget that every symbol that you find in the Book of Revelation is but a repetition of something that you find in some other part of the scripture. Now, what's he talking about there? What? The laver in the tabernacle, and when that became the enlarged thing in Solomon's temple, it is then spoken of as the brazen sea. A laver, a small vessel that has now become a great vessel - standing on the shoulders of brazen lions and animals of varied kinds; resting on the shoulders of them; filled with thousands of gallons of water, where the constant sacrifice could be cared for and where the constant flow of the priests with their bloodstained hands could wash

¹⁴ Revelation 4:6

and so on. And here it is, and it's called the 'brazen sea.'

Now we find this that is so intimately associated with priesthood is now before the throne, only instead of water it is crystal. That is the color of it. The content of it, the texture of it, is as glass. In other words, it's a solid thing now.

Now, let's stop a minute. (How much time have we got here? About gone.) Let's just stop a minute and ask this question. What does water represent in the new economy that actual water represents in the old? Now in the old economy, water was for cleansing. Now, what is it in the new economy that is for cleansing? What? "Now are ye clean," through the what? (Students answer: the Word) Now watch it. Keep that thought in mind. We're looking at something here that is connected with the Word of God.

And we'll see what it is when we meet again on Wednesday. You've been a nice class. Thank you very much.

(audio ends)