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In the Presence of God

Colby Junkin

There are found throughout Scripture occasions of men being found in the presence of God. While each story has its own unique context, the factors that unite them are amazing. It is when we search through these occasions and find the linking factors that we are better able to understand what it means to stand in the presence of God. Can one really imagine the majesty, glory and honor of God in heaven? While our human minds cannot comprehend the enormity of this glorious scene, may we take the time to understand the scenes when man is confronted with the glory of God.

Isaiah was being called into the role of prophet of the Lord for the southern kingdom, when he saw a great scene in heaven (Isaiah 6:1-7). Isaiah was given a glimpse into the beauty of heaven and saw the glory of God highly exalted and the train of His robe filling the temple. The Seraphim stood above the throne and praised God saying, "Holy, Holy. Holy, is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory" (Isaiah 6:3). Isaiah felt the foundations tremble at the sound of His voice and his immediate response was feelings of unworthiness and sin. Isaiah fell before the throne proclaiming his own sinfulness and his unclean lips, but the Lord sent forth an angel to cleanse Isaiah from all his sins.

Peter had been fishing all night and was tired and ready to go home when he was asked by Jesus to use his boat for teaching. After Jesus was finished teaching, He asked Peter to launch into the deep and to let down his nets for a catch (Luke 5:1-11). One can only imagine that a lifelong fisherman like Peter knew the obstacles of catching fish in the deep and especially during the day, but Peter obediently launched into the deep and let down his nets. When the nets were let down and Peter and the other fishermen began to pull, there was a great surprise to all of those in the boat. The nets began to break and Peter had to call for his partners to join in the wonderful catch. This catch of fish was more than one boat could even hold and Peter began to understand better the power of Jesus, Peter's guest fisherman. Peter responded to Jesus' request and the evidence of this great catch by falling down at Jesus' knees and proclaiming that he was a sinful man and did not deserve to be in the presence of God.

The apostle John had been exiled to the island of Patmos and here Jesus gave him His great revelation. In the first chapter, John heard a voice speaking to him and when he turned, he saw seven golden lampstands and Jesus standing in the middle of them (Revelation 1:10-16). John's reaction to this glorious sight was that he fell like a dead man at Jesus' feet (Revelation 1:17). John was given the great blessing of seeing his Lord in all His glory and his reaction was falling to His feet in fear.

In the fourth chapter of Revelation, John was given another opportunity to see the glories of heaven and he recorded the actions of those who were present in heaven before the great throne of God (Revelation 4:5-11). The twenty-four elders are recorded as falling down before "Him who sits on the throne," and saying, "Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created" (Revelation 4:11). We need to take note that even the elders in heaven were unwilling to stand in the presence of God, but fell down before Him casting their crowns before the throne.

One final depiction of man falling before the presence of the Lord is found on the morning of Jesus' resurrection (Matthew 28:1-8). While we are not told every detail as to the power and majesty of that very moment, we are told that at the resurrection of Jesus the earth quaked as an angel was sent to roll away the stone. The soldiers that were guarding the tomb are recorded as falling down, but why? When they encountered the majesty of that morning's

resurrection, the soldiers could not stand, but in fear fell like dead men to the ground. We find in this story another example of man's unworthiness to stand before the power and majesty of God. In either case, whether a person be in heaven or under judgement for his sins, his knees will bow before the great throne of God (Philippians 2:10).

These stories of man's encounter with the glory of God give us a clear understanding of how we should approach the presence of God. In worship, our aim through song should be to lift up a sacrifice of our lips in praise to His great name (Hebrews 13:15). We must understand that when we come together to worship God, we are coming before the throne of the Almighty Creator and Sustainer of the entire universe. Therefore, we should not come to worship with a lazy or proud attitude, but in total humility approach the throne of God with reverence and awe. We should be humbled by God's willingness to hear our prayers. When approaching the presence of God, what is your attitude today?

Better Late Than Never

Dan Lankford

You've heard that phrase, right? We frequently use it as an excuse for tardiness, but there's actually a true spiritual principle in it. Jesus even once told a parable which shows, as one of the many lessons that can be drawn from it, that it's better to commit yourself to live and serve your Master at a late point in life than to never come into his service at all (see Matt. 20:1-16). And we could think of many applications of the principle in the way that we live our lives:

- Better to be a good spouse now, even if you haven't been for a long time, than to continue to put it off.
- Better to be a great parent now, even if you haven't been for a long time, than to continue to put it off.
- Better to be evangelistic to a friend now, even if you haven't for a long time, than to continue to put it off.
- Etc.

In all those cases, it's tempting to think, "Well, I haven't for such a long time...it would be weird or awkward if I started now." And I completely understand that temptation. But on the other hand, if you choose to do the right thing, even late in the game, it would mean that you are doing the right thing. And it's better to be doing that late than never doing it.

Like the workers in the parable, it is better for us to commit late to the right thing and still have time to be rewarded for that choice than to put it off forever and lose all of its possible blessings.



"So the last will be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few chosen." Matthew 20:16