

GAFCON- Jerusalem
Bible Study-Revelation 21 The throne of God
29th June, 2008

Opening Prayer:

O God our Father in Heaven, once again before we open your words, we humbly bow down before your throne of grace, we pray with joy and expectation for your Holy Spirit to open our hearts, minds and spirits to your living words. Help us to be totally teachable and receptive to the truth and blessing in your words. May your words bear fruit in our lives that we may glorify your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. In Jesus' name we pray.
Amen

1. Introduction

This is the last of the five Bible Studies designed for GAFCON Jerusalem 2008. It is a joy and privilege to share God's words with you on this final day of our Conference. May



Window Switcher.Ink I first greet you all by using the greetings John sent to the seven churches in Asia minor:

*Grace and peace to you from him who is and who was and who is to come,
And from the seven spirits before his throne,
And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness,
The firstborn from the dead,
And the ruler of the kings of the earth, (1:4-5)*

We have spent an amazing week together as brothers and sisters in Christ and as fellow pilgrims. We have experienced individually and together as a community of Faith the reality of God's love and purpose – stepping on and tracing the footsteps of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Our Bible expositors have ably led us into the core of our existence. God created us and gave us a perfect Eden where we could live in loving relationship with Him and all that He had created. But we turned away from that and chose our own way and allowed sin to enslave us. It has brought us nothing but fear, misery and eternal death. But our loving Father had a rescue plan for us even from the beginning by providing a way to restore our relationship with Him. He loves us so much that He was even willing to sacrifice His one and only Son to die for us so that we could live.

“For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

He is our Savior, our Lord and our King. He is our hope. He will led us into a new restored relationship with our God – to the new Jerusalem – the perfect kingdom where He sits enthroned as our King for all eternity. He will rule with perfect love and with absolute authority. Step by step our God brings us deeper and deeper into His Sanctuary

– a bit by bit He reveals the depth of His love and commitment to us. He invites us into His throne room to give us a glimpse of His glory and love.

Today I like to take us to the last book of the Bible and enter with John into the throne room of our God and Father. Let us see with John the glories of the heavenly court and hear what the Lord wants to say to us today. We will look at Revelation 21 and study this great chapter under 3 headings:

- A. The Context
- B. The Throne
- C. The Future

A. The Context

Then I Saw...(21:1)

Revelation 21 opens with these three words. Then I saw. Who is this I that saw? He is the Author of the book of Revelation. The author identified himself as “His servant John” or simply John (1:1). From historical and internal evidences, scholars have worked out that the Apostle John wrote Revelation near the end of the reign of the Roman Emperor Domitian (AD 81-96). Domitian was the Emperor who demanded all his subjects to worship him and address him as “Lord and God”. This decree immediately created a head on confrontation for the early Christians who confessed and worshiped only Jesus as “Lord and God” and refused to worship anyone else, the Emperor included. The book of Revelation contains many gruesome details of the killing and sufferings of the faithful believers who were unwilling to compromise. During this severe persecution ordered by Domitian, John, an elder of the early Christian community, was exiled in the island of Patmos about 50 miles South West of Ephesus because he faithfully proclaimed the Gospel of our Lord Jesus and remained loyal and committed to Christ and His Word (Revelation 1:8). Naturally John was discouraged and at time even despaired because of this isolation from the main body of Christ and the constant fear and worry of the enormous persecution and suffering put upon the tiny, fragile and powerless young church he loved so much. Yet, it was in such a critical, desperate and turbulent time of suffering and persecution, the Lord of the Church took initiative and issued John this invitation:

*Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches (1:11)
Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this (4:1)*

God knew what was going on. He was always in control. He took John up and gave him a series of visions. John was to take courage and stand firm. He also had to act and get on with the task of sharing the new vision from God to the people of God in persecution and suffering. He had been given a message to pass on to the churches. Such is the love of our God who bought His church with the blood of His only begotten Son. Again and again He raises up His servants to stand firm and to defend and rescue His church from the

onslaught of the enemy either in physical persecution or in erroneous , unfaithful and apostates teaching. You have heard our chairman out lined for us the crises of faith and leadership of our Communion in our own time on the opening night. The attacks on our Communion have been likened to spiritual genocide, spiritual tsunami or spiritual aids of our faith. At this very difficult time of our own, our living God has taken the same loving initiative and issue an extra ordinary invitation for us to be with Him here in Jerusalem. From the very time we accepted our invitation to come here we knew that we have responded to God’s timely, urgent and clear call. We have gathered humbly but boldly, cautiously but obediently in Jerusalem for CAFCON 2008. The last whole week has been time of celebration and spiritual feasting at the bosom of our Lord. Our inner spirits soared high and echoed the spirit of the Psalmists:

***I rejoiced with those who said to me; Let us go to the house of the Lord,
Our feet are standing in your gates, O Jerusalem (Psalm 122:1-2)***

***Shout for joy to the Lord all the earth,
Worship the Lord with gladness and come before
Him with joyful songs. (Psalm 100:1-2)
Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his court with praise;
Give thanks to him and praise his name.
For the Lord is good and his love endures forever,
His faithfulness continues through all generation. (Psalm 100:4-5)***

So, we are here. Representatives of the Anglican tribes totaling over 1200 precious souls from 25 nations of the world have come to Jerusalem for GAFCON. This is the last day of our extra ordinary, once in a life time gathering. In worship, prayers, Bible studies, fellowship, and pilgrimages we bowed down before the throne of our Lord and eagerly sought the face of the Lord. God has spoken to us. We have been blessed by our time together. Our hearts were touched and our spirits were stirred as individuals and as a conference. We experienced the unity in Spirit and in truth. We have special encounter with our living God deep in our souls. We share the experience of the two disciples when they met the Risen Christ on the road to Emmaus:

***“Were not our heart burning within us while He talked with us on the road
and opened the scriptures to us?”(Luke 24:32)***

We all know GAFCON JERUSALEM 2008 cannot and is not a dreamed up human strategy or a calculated response of the flesh to produce a competitive worldly solution and answer to the crises of faith and leadership in our time. God has brought us to the Holy Land, the land He chose to lay out His “story of salvation” from the Creation. Our Bible Studies have retraced that same eternal agenda dearest to His heart. He wants to imprint and knit our hearts together on the rock foundation of His Words so that we can be connected to His own heart’s desire to map out a rescue plan for the Anglican Communion we love. This is God’ doing. GAFCON is about God and not about us.

I am very sure that God does not want us to be here just to redraw the box that have failed miserably and have at best enslaved our Communion; corrupted some of our top leaders; blunted the cutting edge of the Gospel and side track our Communion from our Mission Agenda for such a long time. We would have missed the whole point and paid too much if we continue to fix our eyes on the human stage and play the human game with only the value of the human hearts. It is time for us to wake up and admit that our Communion is very sick. We need to critically realize that there is a high death trap designed and driven by some in our Communion with the clear intention to erode and change the fundamentals of the Gospel. This process, so invented and employed, will go on forever until it saps our energy and achieves the desired result of dulling the conscience of our whole Communion so that we will accommodate the biggest compromise of all time, i.e.

***To walk in the counsel of the wicked
To stand in the way of sinners
To sit in the seats of the mockers (Psalm 1:1-2)***

For many years now “a gallows seventy five feet high” ,if you permit me to borrow from the book of Ester, has been skillfully and determinedly constructed and put in place for the sole purpose of hanging the Biblical, Christ centered and spirit filled orthodox and evangelical witnesses in the Anglican Communion. GAFCON Jerusalem 2008 is the trumpet call for us to heed Mordecai’s warning.

Do not think that because you are in the king’s house you alone of all the Jews will escape. For If you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father’s family will perish. And who knows that you have come to royal position for such a time as this? Esther 4:12-14

God spoke in the day of Esther and in the day of John as the Bible recorded these events for us. God continue to speak to us in our day through His own Words. The experience of the last few days sharpens our focus and understanding of our context both in the temporal and the spiritual realms. We must learn our lesson and take the warning from the Bible seriously. God has invited us here to Jerusalem to give us His own vision and issue us anew His Challenges for us at a time like this.

Our people in different parts of the world have been deep in prayers. They are waiting for us to share with them the message of hope from God Himself. The world is watching and waiting too. But many may have already made up their mind about what they expect us to say. In our context today we must only say what the Lord has given us to say, no more and no less.

B. The Throne

Let us come to the second heading.

I heard a loud voice from the throne (21:3)

Like many of us, John needed a visual aid. God in His loving kindness and generous wisdom provided this for him. From the very beginning of the book of Revelation John was given clear and précised pictures.(1:12-20). In Chapter 4 God even provided John with an open door in heaven to walk in. Immediately after the invitation:

Come up and I will show you what must take place after this. (4:1b)

John recorded:

*At once I was in the Spirit,
And there before me was a throne in Heaven with someone sitting on it.(4:2)*

Then the whole of Revelation 4 goes on to give us in elaborate and glorious details of the throne room and the worship in the heavenly court. This throne in Revelation 21:3 is the same throne as in Revelation 4. This is the throne of God and God alone. This is the throne of the perfect king promised by God for His people. The fulfillment of that very special promise of God is this ultimate King who sits on the throne of dominion, power, authority and glory. This is that perfect king chosen and appointed by God from the line of David whose reign will have the favor and blessing of God forever and ever. Yet by God's own doing, this is also the throne of the lamb who was slain. For John this is the throne of the Ascended Christ, the King of Glory. He and He alone is worthy

*To receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength
And honor and glory and praise. (5:12)*

From this glorious and unique throne of grace comes the amazing words of authority and power. John needed to hear them all and praise God that he was there to receive them. We are deeply grateful that God has gathered us here in Jerusalem to hear and receive His special words for us in this critical moment of our Communion. Let us hear the three words coming from that eternal throne.

a. I am the Alpha and Omega ,the Beginning and the End (21:6)

These are words from "He who was seated on the throne". He is the absolute Alpha. He is the first-the beginning. Before Him there was nothing. There was no "before Him". He is the absolute Omega. He is the last-the end. Nothing comes after Him. He is eternal. There is no "after Him". All life flows from Him and all life flows back to Him. In Him we live and move and have our being (Acts 17:28) He is the ascended Christ and the King of Glory. This is our God who has invited us here to lay aside all our own desires, ambitions, like and dislike, and our agendas yes this means all our crowns must be laid before the throne in order to honor, glorify and magnify His name. CAFCON will have no future if we continue to long for what the

human king can give us and fashion our ministry and work for the earthly king. Brothers and sisters in Christ all of us are leaders in our church. God has called us to lay our crown before the throne today.

b. I am making everything new (21:5)

The Father's heart of God is to create us for His own glory. (Genesis 1:27, Ephesians 1:4-6) and to redeem us when we fall. (I Peter 1:18-20). He promises to give us a new heart. (Ezekiel 36:26). Jesus understood the heart of His Father and commanded that we must be born anew (John3:3, 5). Paul after his own born again experience was able to grasp the truth and the vital importance of the new life in Jesus, hence he declared uncompromisingly in 2 Corinthians 5:7):

*Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation;
The old has gone, the new has come.*

Jesus the King who sits on the throne longs for each one of us to have that born again experience in Him. He also long for His people catch the Pentecostal fire to go and win the lost souls for Him. He also desires His church to make disciples who in turn will go and make more disciples.

“I am making everything new” is in the heart of our Lord, Savior and King. He has invited us to come to this gathering to remind us that He requires us to be new being as individual leader, as a collection of provinces and as the bold witnesses of the Christ centered, Spirit filled, Biblical, orthodox and evangelical movement in our Communion and our world today. No human effort can make new our sick Communion. But the Holy Spirit can and will. But this renewing work of God must begin with us.

c. It is done (21:6)

This is the Testimony of the lamb who was slain on the Cross. This also echoes what Jesus our Lord and Savior declared on the Cross: “It is finished.” (John 19:30). Yes, Jesus has fulfilled the requirements of the Law and Prophets. He has fulfilled the Law of Sacrifice as the Lamb of God. His blood has shed for the forgiveness of Sin. The Mission He was sent to do is done. God has put the seal of His approval on this by rolling away the stone on the day of the Resurrection. The wages of Sin is death. But the Resurrection of Christ Jesus is the final blow of God that defeats Death. Henceforth, Death has no more power over the promised King who bore our Sin. Now the Word of the Cross is the Power of Salvation. Repentance, Forgiveness of Sin, New life in Christ by the Holy Spirit is now a real reality. I am sure that everyone in this conference will have our own personal story of this finished work of Christ on us to tell. Praise the Lord.

C. The Future

Now the third heading

Then I saw a new heaven and new earth (21:1)

I saw the Holy City, the New Jerusalem (21:2)

The visual aid provided by God for John includes both what he heard and also what he saw. What he heard are words of truth with power and authority. But what he saw are equally awesome and glorious.

He saw a new heaven and new earth. This new heaven and new earth was made clear by the New Jerusalem.

Being a Jew, John knew the deep significance of Jerusalem for the God's people in the Old Testament. He knew from the Old Testament that Jerusalem was the city God chose "to put his name" (Dt. 12:5, 11, 21). Jerusalem was the city where the temple of the living God was to be built. Hence this was the "Holy City" "the City of God" and "the City of the Lord". All the male Israelites were ordered to travel to Jerusalem 3 times a year.

In Jerusalem God revealed His word to His people (Isaiah 2:3) and ruled over them (Ps.99:1-2). When the Israelites prayed they were to face this Holy City. God also made a promise to them:

*As the mountain surround Jerusalem
So the Lord surrounds His people
Both now and forevermore. (Ps.125:2)*

Indeed, Jerusalem was a symbol of what God required of His people in the Old Testament. When God's people came to Jerusalem they were reminded of the God's ruling power, his holiness and his faithfulness. But most important of all they must remember His eternal commitment to be their God.

These are all good and wonderful but when God broke in and give John the vision of the Jerusalem. He let him see the New Jerusalem. The New Jerusalem is no more an earthly city. It is a heavenly city (Gal.4:26) where God dwells and Christ rules at His right hand. God has set this up for His own glory. When we come to Christ we "have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God." (Hebrews 12:22). John saw this New Jerusalem "coming down out of heaven, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband" (21:2). He heard a loud voice from the throne declared:

*Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them.
They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.*

*He will wipe away every tear from their eyes.
There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain,
For the old order of things has passed away. (21:3-4)*

He realized this was the day God had made. God's covenant promises had been fulfilled. Sin had been defeated. The effect of sin, such as sorrow, pain, unhappiness and death had been banished forever.

More extra ordinary than that, John testified:

*I did not see a temple in the city because
the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.
The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it
For the glory of God gives it light and the Lamb is its lamp. (21:22-23)*

God invited John to be with Him and gave him the visions in Revelation so that he could stand firm and got on with the mission God had given him. He was to challenge those early Christians to share the Gospel of the Lord Jesus to all nations, making disciples all over the world so that

*The nations will walk by its light, and
The kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it.(21:24)*

We have come to Jerusalem to seek God's face. Indeed, our life together and our visits to the various sites have helped us to link up with one another and with the history of our faith in Jesus Christ and given us inspiration and sustenance to do the work we were called to do. There were great rejoicing and thanksgiving when the draft of the **Statement on the Global Anglican Future** was presented to the assembly on Friday noon. Later this morning you will adopt the official statement. We rejoiced that a strong, clear, gracious, wise and bold Statement has been drafted. I believe God's vision for us at this time is very clear to all who attended this **Global Anglican Future Conference**. We will leave this earthly Jerusalem with the vision of God's New Jerusalem. In this **CAFCON 2008**, God has challenged and commissioned us to be **BRAVE** and **BOLD** leaders in our churches and in our Communion.

BRAVE stands for Biblical, Relevant, Action, Visionary and Evangelistic and **BOLD** stands for Biblical, Obedient, Loving and Dynamic.

2. Concluding Challenge

Brothers and sisters in Christ, after CAFCON 2008 our life and ministry will never be the same again. Let us go back to our churches and be God's servants who are Biblical, Relevant, Action minded, Visionary, Evangelistic, Obedient, Loving and Dynamic. Our churches need BOLD & BRAVE

leaders. Our Communion needs BOLD & BRAVE leaders. The Anglican Communion can only be saved by BOLD and BRAVE leaders. May God bless you all.

