

Sanctuary (Jeremiah 17:7–13)
By Pastor Jeff Alexander (4/26/2020)

Introduction

“A glorious throne set on high from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary” (17:12).

1. Here is an affirmation of faith and preview of the glory to be seen in the person of Christ.

The prophet spoke this word of consolation and hope amid the darkness of Judah’s sin and the gathering storms of impending judgment. He prays, “O Lord, the hope of Israel, all who forsake you shall be put to shame” (17:13).

His is the glorious throne set on high, and His throne *is*—not *will be* but already *is*—the place of our *sanctuary*. His throne is not the sanctuary because, due to the nature of man’s sinful rebellion, the throne portends judgment. Nevertheless, the glory of Christ makes it a *place* of sanctuary for all who would escape the ravage of sin and its consequences. The presence of Christ makes it a refuge of mercy.

2. Chapter 17:7–13 develops two kinds of *trust*, making the throne either hostile or friendly.

Do you put your trust in yourself? That kind of trust incurs the *curse* of the covenant (vv. 7, 8). Do you trust in the Lord, the kind of trust that has the *blessing* of the covenant on it (vv. 7, 8)?

The issue with the rebellious nation involves the self-deception causing one to trust in his own arm (strength). He is a fool who trusts in man, and such a one will be put to shame (v. 13). Only the Lord sees the true condition of the heart (v. 10), and He will reward each according to his deeds. On the other hand, the end of the one who trusts in the Lord will find sanctuary with the Lord (vv. 12, 13).

I. The Authority of the Throne

1. Background (16:21)

- a. Yahweh’s covenant termination (16:5b)

Yahweh cancelled His covenant with Judah. He called them “this people,” not “my people,” signifying that they would no longer be objects of His compassion (see Chapter 15).

With this cancelation, an expectation of terrible judgment, one that would consume them with deadly diseases, was all that remained. It would be so a plague so devastating that the dead could not be properly lamented or buried (16:4).

- b. Yahweh’s puzzling restoration revelation (16:14, 15)

The Lord’s new exodus would outshine the exodus from Egypt (16:14, 15). This deliverance first required punishing the people’s transgressions, which pointed to the work of Christ on the cross. All sin will be judged and punished, either in the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ or in suffering His eternal wrath in hell.

- c. Yahweh’s double punishment of “this people” (16:18)

They would receive *double* for their iniquity because they (1) polluted His land with “*the carcasses of their detestable idols*,” and (2) they filled His heritage with their abominations (16:18). This verse suggests that, in their return from Babylon, the influence of pagan idolatry continued although their idols were destroyed.

This led to empty-hearted worship, ritualistic and routine at best (Malachi 2:11). Jesus rebuked such people (Matthew 15:8, 9; Isaiah 29:13). They became their own idols, as many religious practitioners have become today.

2. Yahweh's greater purpose (16:19, 20)

a. Great plans and a glorious hope

Jeremiah responded with praise, faith, and understanding. He saw that the Lord planned for a future people from all the nations who would be greater than the old-covenant people.

b. The fathers' false heritage, a solemn warning

Israel foolishly threw away her great privileges in order to chase worthless and unprofitable idols of the nations. Beware lest we follow the madness of our own hearts and fail to honor Jesus Christ as supreme (1 John 5:21).

II. The Hope of Sanctuary

1. Judah's *heart* condition (17:1)

a. The seriousness of Judah's sin is described in stark terms—with diamond-pointed iron pen, Israel was indelibly engraving sin like graffiti on the Lord's sacred places. The two places of sanctuary of described: the heart and the horns of the altar.

1) The *heart*—God's tablet for truth and wisdom on which He could write His truth to be cherished and lived out in the fullness of joy and true satisfaction (Jeremiah 15:16; Proverbs 4:4, 5; Psalm 119:11, 12; Deuteronomy 11:18). However, the heart of the people of Judah was hardened and stubborn (Zechariah 7:12; Jeremiah 13:10).

2) The *horns of the altars*—to reflect spiritual life of the people (Leviticus 4:18; Psalm 118:27).

b. The greater implication here, however, is *sanctuary*. In ancient cultures holding on to the horns of the altar was a means of claiming sanctuary from a threat without (1 Kings 1:50). The plural of *altars* here also alerts the reader that these were altars of false gods, not the singular *altar* of Judah's true God (17:12).

2. Judah's (and our) only *hope* (17:10, 12, 13;)

a. Our only hope is a secure throne on high. The throne of the Lord is an eternal, enduring seat of supreme majesty, the seat of the Savior, Jesus Christ, King of kings and Lord of Lords. The throne of the Lord is the ultimate seat of all authority because King Jesus has been given all authority in heaven and earth to carry out His will and purpose.

b. The throne of the Lord is the place of *our* sanctuary, a place of safety, refuge, and security, but also a place of holiness, purity, peace, and rest.

c. Scripture gives us a glimpse into this sanctuary in Revelation 5:5, 6; 14:1–5.

What Can We Conclude?

1. It is Jesus Christ that makes the throne on high the place of His sanctuary—indeed, Jesus is our sanctuary. Do you see yourself in that sanctuary? If not, see Him and flee to Him.

2. Which of these two characterize your trust (confidence) in what you hope will bring you the fulfillment you crave? Are you one who trusts his own arm (17:5)? If so, then this is your reward (17:6). Or are you one who trusts in the Lord (17:7)? This is your reward (17:8)