The Voice of Heaven

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[0:00] I'd like us to turn now to the chapter of God's Word that we read together in the book of Revelation. Revelation chapter 12.

And I'd like us to consider particularly verse 10. And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation and strength and the kingdom of our God and the power of his Christ.
For the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. I think whenever we turn to the book of Revelation, which of course we all find a difficult book and in many ways a strange book.
Whenever we turn to it, I think it's good for us to root it in the historical narrative that we can gain from the beginning of the book.
We are bound to be helped in interpreting what the book is saying to us if we gain some understanding of what was the situation in the church when God first had this book written down for his people.
[1:20] And I think there are two things that we learn from the beginning of the book of Revelation that are important in this connection. The first thing is, of course, that the revelation was given to John, the apostle, one of the twelve disciples, perhaps the last of the apostles to die.

And it was given to him in the island of Patmos because he was there in isolation and in abandonment. He was under persecution. And he was given this revelation undoubtedly to encourage a sincere Christian believer who was encountering the great difficulties of being a Christian in this wicked world.
And the revelation was given to him to encourage him and comfort him and strengthen him. But then also we learn that the very first part of the revelation that John was to write down concerned seven churches, seven congregations in the church of Christ at that time.
Churches that were to be found in that part of the world which today is the land of Turkey. Churches that were to be found in the church of Christ at that time.
Seven congregations. Seven congregations. It's perfectly clear that some of them were doing well and some of them were not doing well. They were a mixed bag of congregations.
[3:27] There were those who were living faithfully for Christ. And there were those who were showing more and more unfaithfulness. So that God has to warn them that their witness will not last much longer.

And into that sort of situation, the revelation of God's purposes was given. Purposes of what God was about.
And what God was doing. It might seem behind the scenes that it was impinging at all points on the real world that we all know.
And I've chosen this verse that's in front of us this evening, Revelations 12 and 10, because it seems to me that it's a typical verse that typifies really the whole book of Revelation.
Revelation 12 and 11. Revelation 12. You may remember that there's a refrain that comes again and again in the passages to the seven churches. The refrain that says, He who hath an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.
[4:45] And this is a refrain that we could apply to this verse here. A verse that almost sums up what God is saying throughout the whole book of Revelation.

And I think as God presents this verse before us this evening, whether it is that we're an individual Christian, going through some very difficult situation, feeling oppressed, feeling the way difficult as John the Divine was, or whether we're just part of the Christian church in these days.
We may feel a vital part of it, or we may feel this evening that all we want to do is to be a little bit on the outside and look in on the church.

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But we're aware of the mixed bag that the church is, and it's a trouble to us, and it's affecting our lives, and it may be doing harm to our lives in these days.
And we need this word from God, as he says through this verse, He who hath an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.
[6:06] I would hope that we would have time to look at three things from this verse this evening. I want us to learn about the voice in heaven.

And I would like us to learn about the victory from heaven. And I would like us to learn about the vision for heaven. It seems to me that these are the things from this verse that the Spirit is saying to the churches.
First of all, the voice in heaven. Look at our verse again. And I heard a loud voice saying, In heaven.
Now I think you'll agree with me, even although your knowledge of the book of Revelation may be very scanty, I think this will have stuck in your memory. That the book of Revelation is full of visions of heaven.
Sometimes very strange things that we find difficult to understand. But even the most unenlightened of us, I think when we read through the book of Revelation, we're aware that it's bringing us to see things that are going on in heaven.
[7:24] Things that are going on in the place of authority. In the spiritual realm of which we are part. And this verse is saying, as most of the book of Revelation is saying, there is a voice in heaven that is in control of it all.

John in Patmos, in the midst of your difficulties and your troubles, hold on to this truth. That no matter the difficulties that you are in, no matter how you may feel from time to time to be in the darkness, because you feel so weak against the oppression of the evil one, there is a voice in heaven, and it is a loud voice.
It's a voice that's in authority. It's a voice that's in control. And whatever your circumstances may be saying to you, God is saying to you, the Holy Spirit is speaking to you, and he is saying, remember the voice in heaven.
Remember that it's there, where all authority is, and that authority is in control of this world. Or perhaps you're caught up in the difficulties of the church situation, as many were in John's day, because the churches were a mixed bag, and all seemed to be confusion, and it seemed so difficult to make out what was really happening.
And again, God would call us to the loud voice in heaven that speaks, that controls, and that makes clear that whatever confusion from our viewpoint, there is no confusion in heaven.
[9:26] God knows it and understands it all, and will work it out to fulfill his perfect purposes. That's surely the reason that the book of Revelation begins in the way that it does.

What's the first vision that John is given when he is told to write down all the visions that are going to come that are now part of the book of Revelation?
What's the first vision that sets the scene for all the other visions? It's the vision of Christ in his exalted glory. Or read Revelation chapter 1 when you go home if you have time.
And if you're a Christian this evening, surely you cannot fail to gain encouragement and confidence from that glorious vision of Christ in all his exalted glory in the beauty of every part of his body that speaks of the fact that he's in control and the good work that he made clear when he was here on earth.
It's continuing according to the eternal purposes of God. I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, that's the first thing that we have to take on board this evening.
[10:57] Whatever our thoughts of the present spiritual condition of our church, our churches and our world.

And then I think as a sort of counterbalance to that, when we consider the voice in heaven, we must surely be warned of the curse of worldliness which makes us concentrate on the scene.
You see, the book of Revelation and this verse that's before us this evening is God drawing back the curtain and enabling the people of faith to see the unseen by faith.
And so often the difficulties of our church and the difficulties of our own lives is that we become encumbered with the scene.
And if you like spiritually, we can't see beyond the end of our gnosis because we're so taken up with the scene and the felt around us and it takes up all our concentration and all our time and all our

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energies.
[12:23] And we fail in what's the most important thing in the life of faith to lay hold on the unseen God. The unseen truths about our God and the unseen purposes of our God that he reveals in his word.

That's what worldliness is. And of course the Bible tells us that the devil whom we meet throughout this chapter and whom we meet in the verse of our text as the accuser of the brethren, he's also described in the Bible as the prince of this world.
This is one of his great intentions to keep people engrossed in the immediate, in the things of this world so that they forget that there is a next world, that there is an unseen spiritual world that is around us and within us.
And that we are moving on from this present physical world to the new world, be it the world of heaven or the world of hell.
And the devil's great work is to prevent us from thinking about that and that's worldliness. In our tradition we have thought that worldliness is to do with going to concerts and going to dances and going to all sorts of entertainment.
[13:58] And as long as you don't do these things, you're not worldly. Now of course it may be that it is a sign of worldliness when people become so infatuated with the entertainments of this world.

But let us be in no misunderstanding about this truth. You may have never been on a dance floor. You may have never been in a picture house. And be the most worldly person in this world. Because worldliness is to do with putting first the things of this world and forgetting about the unseen world of God and his love and his commands and his purposes for eternity.
worldliness or lack of worldliness is to do with our relationship to the unseen or our lack of relationship.
And that's what the book of Revelation is about and that's what this verse is about. I heard a loud voice saying in heaven does that interest you? Is that what you find vital in these days?
[15:36] Is this what you want to hear about? Is this what you want to know about? Is this what you and I, is this what we long for every day when we awake? That we may know more of the voice from heaven.

That we may understand more of what it's saying. That we may be guided by the voice and the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ into all obedience into all righteousness into the ways of love for our God.
Is that what matters to us more than anything else in the whole world? If it is not we are of this world and we may find that when the great day comes we are found wanting and will be cast out from God's presence forever.
the voice in heaven. But then we need to prove further and we need to see the victory from heaven. The fact of the voice is not sufficient comfort for us. The fact of the voice is not sufficient to help us in the midst of our confused state when we see the state of the churches in our day.
[17:03] we need to know something of the content of the voice. What is the voice saying? And the verse leaves us in no doubt about what the voice is saying. And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven now is come salvation and strength and the kingdom of our God and the power of his Christ for the accuser of our brethren is cast down which accused them before our God day and night.

The voice speaks and the voice speaks a word of victory from heaven. That's what this verse is about. It's just one of many verses in the book of Revelation that describe that Jesus Christ is victorious.
And when we share in Jesus' victory then it doesn't matter what's happening in the world we can find a way through that confusion that is a right way and a good way.
We need to pick out one or two things under this heading the victory from heaven. What is the verse saying? Well the verse is saying that there has been conflict.
That goes without saying doesn't it? If there's victory there has been a conflict there has been some difficulty there has been some danger there has been some need of salvation and deliverance but the victory has come.
[18:32] Now has come salvation and strength. Now it's come. It may have seemed for a while that it wasn't there and that seems to be what John is told to write down and describe and what may seem to us strange this picture of the woman who is with child and who is in conflict with the dragon who is clearly seen to be the evil one the devil and the conflict goes on with this woman because

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she's with child but immediately she bears her child.

that child is brought up to heaven to a place of authority and the chapter is so clear about it that we know that the child of the woman is none other than Christ.
And the woman therefore must be the church of Christ through all Old Testament times. The line of the seed if you like that we've been dealing with when we've been looking at Abram in the morning.
And sure enough the Old Testament scriptures are full of narratives where we see that right from the beginning the devil was in conflict with the purposes of God that the victory of Christ that God had planned might be thwarted.
Didn't God make this clear when he spoke in the garden immediately after Adam and Eve had fallen into sin about the conflict that there would be between the serpent and the seed of the woman.
[20:15] And there will be that constant battle and conflict with the seed. And we've got some picture of it here. And we can go to our Old Testament scriptures.

We can go to the life of Abram again and see all the difficulties that he went through before the child Isaac was born. The tricky situations aren't these evidences of the conflict between the purposes of our God and the wiles and the powers of the evil one as he seeks to thwart the purposes of God.
We see God's people in Egypt or we see them in the wilderness and we see them going through all sorts of difficulties as the evil one seeks to draw them away from the ongoing purposes of God to bring to this world at last from his people Israel a saviour Christ the Lord.
You can see it in the conflict with David who was in the direct line that God had planned for the man Christ Jesus. And you can see his conflict with Saul.
And that's part of what's written for us here in Revelation chapter 12. The devil fighting against the woman to thwart God's purposes.
[21:44] And then when Christ comes remember how the evil one worked through Herod when the Christ child was hardly born. to kill all the babies under two years that he might get at the Christ.

The Christ has hardly began his public ministry before he is down in the wilderness under the fierce and violent temptations of the evil one.
And when he comes to towards the end of that great conflict and when he's about to approach the cross itself what does Christ himself say about that conflict as it approaches?
He says in John chapter 14 and at verse 30 for the prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me.
That's what I'm going to. I'm going to the last battle if we use the title of one of C.S. Lewis's Narnia books. I'm going to the last battle.
[22:56] The prince of this world has not given up yet but he has nothing in me. There has been a conflict but victory has been won by the power of Christ.

Now has come salvation and strength and the kingdom of our God and the power of his Christ. Paul sums this up for us quite briefly in Colossians chapter 2 verses 14 and 15 when he describes what happened at the cross of Calvary.
He says it was a blotting out of the handwriting of ordinance that was against us which was contrary to us. He took it out of the way nailing it to his cross and having spoiled principalities and powers he made a show of them openly triumphing over them in it.
That's what the cross and the resurrection that follows after it declares to us. That the conflict has been won by the Lord Jesus Christ and it has been won for all his people.
the law that was against them and all the mad fever of attempts to keep the law and to do it in our own efforts and to fail again and again.
[24:29] Christ has taken all that and has nailed it to the cross and the principalities and powers who were against us and who were weighing us down and who were working in our sinful hearts so that we could not please God.

He has made us show of them openly and he has risen with power for his people to the place of authority and dominion at the right hand of God the Father.
And that's really what the text concentrates on as it goes on. Because of this victory our text tells us the accuser is cast down. This is the way that the text finally describes this great victory of Christ for his people.
For the accuser of our brethren is cast down which accused them before our God day and night.
What's the revelation saying there to us?

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What is the voice from heaven saying to the people of God there? It's saying to us that if we're safe in Christ if we receive that victory that Christ has for his people that he gives to his people when he comes to live in their lives then we have a security that nothing can take away.
[26:01] The devil may accuse the devil may point to the remaining sin that is with us. The devil may point to the confusion that is still abroad in the world and say to us surely you can never be saved when you look to that difficulty and that problem and that problem.

But the Christian believer now has a knowledge of what Christ has done that enables them to beat the accuser so that he is cast down and his words are now empty and hollow.
That's what Paul is talking about in Romans chapter 8 verse 33 when he says who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect. It is God that justifies.
We could translate that who shall bring any accusation against God's elect. And of course earlier in that chapter Paul has written down there is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit.
The victory that Christ has for his people is a victory that secures us and gives us assurance that enables us to deal with all the devil's accusations and to tell him that Christ can meet our every need.
[27:45] And the question of course is do you have this Christ? Have you come to an end?

of your own efforts to please God? Have you come to an end of your own puny efforts to beat off the accuser of the brethren the evil one with all his wiles and powers?
Have you an advocate with the father? One whom you know can speak for you who is at work within you and can present you faultless at that great throne of judgment?
have you trusted in Christ? Have you turned from your sin and your hopeless efforts at pleasing God in your own strength?
Have you turned to Christ alone? Is that where your confidence lies tonight? victory that comes from heaven?
[28:56] Can we see just in a word or two the vision for heaven? Because that also is what the text is about. You see the text causes us to hear the voice from heaven.

the text causes us to understand the victory that comes for sinners who trust in Christ from heaven for this purpose that we might have a vision for heaven.
That's what the book of Revelation was saying to the apostle John. Whatever difficulties you're in, whatever trials you are to endure, you can stay the course when you have a vision for heaven, when you can see that this way, difficult though it may be, can lead you on to heaven.
This is what the book of Revelation was saying to a confused church and to mixed bag congregations. It was saying understand what the voice from heaven is saying and follow that voice and you will find a way out of the confusion and you will find a way that will give you a sure vision for heaven and you can carry on until you reach it.
What is the application of what we've learnt from this text? The first application is this. We must sing the song of triumph.
[30:32] If we are going to know the strength of this victory, victory, we must sing that song of victory. We must sing it with our minds, we must believe it and we must live by it.

It's difficult. We're tested in many ways in this world. We're tested when we see the confusion that's abroad, even within the church of Christ.
Christ. And we would wonder, has Christ really got the victory? And the test comes. And God is challenging and easy, saying, who are you going to listen to?
Are you going to listen to the voice of this world? Or are you going to listen to the voice of heaven? Are you going to believe what he says and stake your life in it?
Are you going to sing the song of Zion? Are you going to sing the song of Zion? It's difficult. It's the same sort of difficulty as the exiles in Psalm 137 had.
[31:42] How can we sing this song? How can we lift up our voices and stay faithful to our God? But oh skill part from my right hand if I forget not Jerusalem?

If I forget not the place where God lives, if I forget not heaven where God is on the throne, if I forget not heaven where Christ is, the one who is able to save, and I will sing that song with my mind, I will accept it and I will hold on to it, come what may.
With my heart, I will believe it and I will love it and I will rejoice in it. And with my will, I will follow that voice, I will obey it and I will do all that it asks, because there alone is their victory and a way out of

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this confusion.
salvation. And I will understand the devil's work. I will understand that there is great conflict.
I will, for instance, go on and read the following verses of Revelation chapter 12. And I will see that the devil, although he has been cast down as the accuser of souls, although he knows that his time is short, he is still with great rage and anger working against the woman and the seed of the woman.
[33:24] And he is still determined to create whatever havoc he can in the church. and I will face up to the terrible power that the evil one has, that he can work within the church as well as outside of the church.

And I will be aware of that and I will not take it lightly. But despite that, I will apply all the truth of the gospel that God has given to me.
and I will live in the way of triumph. That's what verse 11 says. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony and they lived not their lives and today.
I will apply the salvation of Christ, the blood of the Lamb, to every situation where the devil assaults. I will flee to Christ and to his power and to his forgiveness and to his reconciliation at every point where I find myself getting into difficulty with the evil one.
[34:44] I will flee to him. I will seek him. I will not stop trusting in him and in the power that has come through his blood. and I will give myself to the word of the testimony that I must bear.

I will remember that if I am his then I have to show it in a changed life. My testimony is not just something that happened to me years ago but I will cling on to that testimony and I will seek more and more power from my Saviour to live a Christian testimony.
To show that I can live a changed life a Christ like life by the power of Christ no matter what the devil throws at me.
And I will live not my life even to the death. I will give myself to the way of Christ no matter how difficult it is and no matter although it would cost me my health and my life because there is nothing more precious than having Christ and his glory.
Amen. now let us turn to Psalm 84 and sing the verses 4 to 7 to the Tune University.
[36:24] Psalm 84 at verse 4 page 3 going.

from strength and weary go still forward unto strength until in Zion they appear before the Lord at length.
Psalm 84 and the verses 4 to 7 and we stand to sing. Blessed are they in our house but well the ever-givenly praise.
Blessed is the one who sang the war in whose path hath thy ways.
For passing some of the cross-gale therein to dig the wells.
[37:52] A storm of rain that fall and die the cold with water fills.

So they cross dry and weary go still forward unto strength until in Zion they appear before the Lord at length.
Now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit remain with us now and always.
Amen. Amen.

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