

Session 8 Praying Before God’s Throne: The Perfection of Beauty

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. When we pray, we actually come before God’s throne—a real throne, with a real Person sitting on it. What an amazing privilege, that humans can approach the throne of the eternal One to ask for help!

¹⁶Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need (Heb. 4:16, NIV).

When we pray and when we worship, we actually come before God’s throne. Sometimes we lose sight of the fact that we are actually appearing before the majesty of God. It is a real throne, He is a real person, and the interaction is real. He feels it more than we do.

Revelation 4 is that amazing chapter in the Bible where the throne of God is described in the greatest detail of anywhere in the Bible. In Hebrews 4:16 it says, “Let us approach the”—Revelation 4—“throne of grace.” The Revelation 4 throne, the throne of majesty, is a throne of grace. This is remarkable what he is saying. We approach it with confidence that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Now the thing that is so remarkable is that the throne of grace is the place where infinite power and infinite purity have come together. The first thought that the world religions would have is that if you come before infinite power and infinite purity, you are going to get crushed. There is no way that it would be good for us to stand before One so pure and so powerful. But Hebrews 4:16 says to come in your weakness with confidence knowing you will receive mercy. You will not be crushed, but you will be helped. You will not find an adversary, but you will find a dear relationship, a Father.

- B. We are strengthened in our prayer lives by learning about the One to whom we pray. This includes *the place* where He dwells and *the majestic scene* that surrounds Him because it reveals His beauty in a unique way. When we understand the kind of God He is, our relationship with Him deepens and the way that we pray changes; prayer becomes more enjoyable, and thus is sustainable.

When we learn who is the One we are actually talking to, it strengthens our prayer life in a dynamic way. I do not know of many chapters in the Bible that have had more impact on my personal prayer life than Revelation 4. It is at the very top of the list. We learn about who we are talking to, because where He dwells is the ultimate place of beauty. I use an analogy; it is like He had a blank whiteboard and He could put anything around His throne He wanted. So whatever He established around His throne in eternity past is a reflection of who He is, He is like, and what kind of person He is.

As I gaze on the beauty of God, just ever so faintly, but in a real way, prayer becomes more enjoyable and prayer becomes more sustainable. You see, only enjoyable prayer is sustainable prayer. If prayer is only duty-bound or results-oriented just to see something happen, we will not sustain it. It is actually good to see something happen from our prayer, as we can believe that is the prayer of faith, but if our praying is only duty-bound or results-oriented, we will not sustain it.

- C. I sometimes refer to the scene around God’s throne as the “beauty realm of God” because it is the place where God’s beauty is most manifested. God chose to surround Himself with specific things to express His beauty. His royal court is the ultimate place of honor, majesty, strength, and beauty.

⁶Honor and majesty are before Him; strength and beauty are in His sanctuary. (Ps. 96:6)

I sometimes refer to the Revelation 4 scene around the throne as “the beauty realm of God.” It is a place where His beauty is most manifested in the whole created order, right there at His throne. Whatever God chose to put there deliberately is an expression of who He is and how He feels.

Look at Psalm 96:6. There are four things given. Honor and majesty are before God, before His throne. Power or strength and indescribable beauty are in His courtroom, His sanctuary. So not only does He have honor around the throne, that is also where He dispenses His honor to weak and broken people like us by the grace of God. It is the place where we connect, we receive, and we participate in the honor that God has and that God wants to give His own children.

It is the place of indescribable majesty, terrifying beauty. The angels cover their faces; the seraphim cover their faces, awestruck at what they see. They never, ever grow accustomed to that vibrant, dynamic Presence and reality of who God is. It is the place of strength, all power. Its source is that throne and the One who sits upon it, and it is the place of beauty.

- D. Rather than speaking into the air or praying in a mental vacuum, I focus my mind on the biblical description of God's throne as set forth in Revelation 4. The majestic beauty of the Father's throne as revealed to John is the clearest and most detailed depiction of God's throne in the Bible.

When you pray, instead of just speaking into air, what I have found is that Revelation 4 gives us the biblical description of where we can focus our mind when we pray. I like to speak and become more and more familiar with these facets that He revealed in His Word because He wants us to know them; that is why they are in the written Word. As I focus my attention on them, as I declare them to the Lord and thank Him for them and ask for understanding of them, I find my prayer life is greatly strengthened.

- E. I encourage you to give much time to the prayerful study of what the Word tells us about God's throne. My personal prayer life has been deeply impacted by these truths. Ask the Holy Spirit to escort you into a greater understanding of the truth about the Father. It is the Spirit's delight to escort us on a great and lifelong treasure hunt into the beauty of God.

I want to encourage you to spend much time meditating on Revelation 4. I did a twelve-part series a few years ago on the different facets of beauty implied in Revelation 4. What is implied in that short chapter is unlimited. I remember doing that twelve-part series and loving it. Every week I took one of the facets and developed it. It renewed and invigorated my own heart.

Ask the Holy Spirit to escort you. He is the divine Escort into the beauty of God. You cannot go there on your own without an Escort. The very being of God is the ultimate treasure hunt in the whole created order, though God is uncreated. The ultimate treasure hunt is the discovery of who God is. Beloved, a billion years from now we will still have fresh glimpses, fresh insights into His beauty and who He is.

F. In Revelation 4, I identify four categories, each with three themes—thus, a total of twelve themes.

²Behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne. ³He who sat there was like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, in appearance like an emerald. ⁴Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their head. ⁵From the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices. Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God. ⁶Before the throne there was a sea of glass, like crystal...around the throne, were four living creatures...⁸saying: “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God...” (Rev. 4:2-8)

Let’s look at the passage, Revelation 4:2. “Behold, a throne set in heaven and One who sat upon the throne,” of course that is the Father. Now notice verse 3, “He who sat there,” notice there are three colors, “was like a jasper.” That has a brilliant, diamond-like radiance. And, He was like “a sardius stone.” A sardius is a deep red gem like a ruby. So there is this brilliant, diamond-like radiance and this deep red glory emanating out of His being and out of His throne. There was a rainbow around the throne, and the dominant color of the rainbow was emerald green. I assume it had all the colors of the rainbow, but the dominant color was emerald. Now this description is given to us for our edification so that we actually engage with the Lord according to this description.

Verse 4 says that around the throne are twenty-four thrones. I do not know how it really is, but I picture those twenty-four thrones like a semicircle before the Father and His Son at His right hand. I do not know if it is that way, but we will find out in due time. On those twenty-four thrones—again I imagine this semicircle looking at the face of God—“I saw twenty-four elders.”

Now there is a debate among Bible commentators and scholars. Are these elders angels or are they humans? There is a good argument presented for both, but I am convinced they are humans. These are actually people who lived on the earth and were redeemed, and they are a representation of the kind of authority that God is willing to share with His people.

These twenty-four elders were sitting on thrones. They are enthroned, but not only enthroned; they are robed with white robes. They are crowned. They have golden crowns upon their head. So they are enthroned, robed, and crowned. I believe that is a picture of where the redeemed are going forever. This is what is on God’s heart. This is the partnership that He desires, that His people would be ultimately ruling with Him. It is where it is going: enthroned, robed, and crowned in His presence.

Verse 5, “Then from the throne proceeded, or emanated, out of the throne: lightening and thunder and voices.” In other places in the book of Revelation it says, sounds or noises, voices. I believe there is a whole array of sounds from beautiful voices to glorious and majestic sounds coming out of the throne, very musical and very powerful in terms of what is heard and what is seen. Lightening, thunder, and here it says voices, while in other places in Revelation 11 and other places, sounds and noises.

Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne. This gives us insight into the Holy Spirit’s personality and His activity. He manifests Himself like seven lamps of fire. Now do not picture some little five-foot lamp. You know I have seen pictures where artists depict the throne. They have like a little five-foot lamp, seven-foot lamp. I think, “I do not think so!”

The words some translations use here are seven “torches.” I picture these massive pillars of fire like with Moses in the wilderness in the Old Testament, a pillar of fire that reached from the sky down to the earth,

massive. I picture these seven massive torches, these lamps of fire that are releasing the glory of God, and they are before the throne.

Also before the throne, verse 6, there is this sea of glass. It is crystal. It is like a diamond in its radiance, this massive sea. Now notice it is not a lake and not a pond; it is a massive sea. This diamond-like crystal radiance, it reflects the whole glory of the throne. That is reflected on the sea. The rainbow, the jasper brilliance, the red sardius stone, the fire, all of this is reflected on the sea. We are going to find out in a few moments that the saints stand on the sea when they worship God. Again, get it out of your mind that it is a little lake or pond. This is massive. I think it is the convocation place or the gathering place of the redeemed. I mean there are probably going to be several billion saints in all of history, and the Great Harvest at the end, and also billions of angels. They all fit on the sea when they gather before the Father, massively amazing.

Then around the throne are the seraphim. Again I do not know exactly, but I have always imagined it as these four living creatures are flying because they have wings. They have three sets of wings it says in Isaiah 6. They cover their eyes because they are overwhelmed with the glory of God. I imagine that they are flying around the throne and the very face of God, flying around and being overwhelmed. They cover their eyes because they are overwhelmed by new experiences and insights into the transcendent majesty of God.

They are like a testimony all over the New Jerusalem that God's beauty continues to unfold forever. I mean you may be on that sea of glass, way out there on row three million. You may be in the New Jerusalem far away 1,500 miles over in some park somewhere. That is how it is, streets and gardens. You will be fellowshipping, and you will say, "I wonder where this is going?" You will look up and there again, for the billion times a billionth time, the seraphim are covering their eyes, overwhelmed again.

We will say, "Wow, it is not even close to exhausting the beauty of who God is." We will say, "It is still happening, it is still unfolding, my goodness." Well, I guess that would be the time you would say, "my God!"

I identify four categories of God's beauty in Revelation 4: God's person, His people, His power, and His presence. Each one of these four categories has three distinct elements in each one of them, so there are at least twelve facets of His beauty that are highlighted. You can identify them and organize them in other ways if you want. I look at these twelve, and I ask the Holy Spirit, use the Bible, and say, "Lord show me more about each one of these twelve facets of Your beauty." Let's look at each one of these four categories.

1. **The beauty of God's person:** how God looks, feels, and acts (v. 3)
2. **The beauty of God's people:** the church enthroned, robed, and crowned (v. 4)
3. **The beauty of God's power:** God's power manifested in lightning, thunder, and voices (v. 5)
4. **The beauty of God's presence:** His fire on the lamps, seraphim, and sea (vv. 5–7, 15:2)

Number one, the beauty of God's person, verse 3, how God looks and feels and acts.

Number, two, the beauty of God's people, verse 4, the redeemed, enthroned, robed, and crowned.

Number three, the beauty of God's power, His manifest power and glory in lightening, thunder, voices, sounds, music emanating out of His throne.

Number four, the beauty of His manifest presence. The fire is on the lamps, and the fire is on the living creatures, I believe. With a careful attention to detail when you compare scripture with scripture, these are not the cherubim like Ezekiel 1, but they are the seraphim like in Isaiah 6. The word "seraphim" means the burning

ones. They are a constant testimony of being bright and shining lamps overwhelmed by new discoveries of God. Then of course there is the sea. We will find out in a few moments in Revelation 15 that, though the saints are standing on it, the sea is filled with the fire of God. So we have the beauty of God’s presence, His fire.

You know that King David said, “This one thing I do: all the days of my life I gaze on Your beauty.” Well, Revelation 4 is a very significant passage of scripture for people who want to gaze on beauty all the days of their life. You know, the days of your life are not over when you get a resurrected body. All the days of your life means billions and billions and billions of years. You will never be bored, you will never come to the limit, and you will never exhaust the fascinating beauty of God, never ever.

II. THE BEAUTY OF GOD’S PERSON—HOW GOD LOOKS, FEELS, AND ACTS (REV. 4:3)

- A. The beauty of God’s person—how God looks, feels and acts. John saw the Father with a glorious jasper, sardius, and emerald light radiating from His throne. The jasper with diamond-like brilliance speaks of His splendor; the red sardius gem, His fiery desires; and the emerald rainbow, His mercy.

³And He who sat there was like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, in appearance like an emerald. (Rev. 4:3)

Let’s look at verse 3, at the first category, the beauty of God’s person. This is just a snapshot. For those who are really stirred up by this, on our website I have a twelve-part series with notes on each one of these facets, far more detail than the hints we will give tonight.

Verse 3, “He who sat there”—that is the Father—“was like a jasper and a sardius stone.” There was a rainbow around Him and the dominant color was emerald green. So John saw the Father with this glorious jasper-like, diamond-like radiance. This deep red sardius stone and emerald light are radiating out of the throne and the being of God. The jasper diamond-like brilliance speaks of His splendor, though I am sure it speaks much more than that. His red sardius glory speaks of His fiery desire, His perfect purity that is His perfect love. Purity, holiness, and love are synonymous in the being of God. The emerald rainbow speaks of His mercy.

- B. **Jasper stone:** how God looks—a “diamond-like” crystal brilliance radiates from God’s throne throughout the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:1). A jasper-like radiance emanating from God’s throne speaks of His beautiful, fascinating, and terrifying glory. The precise identification of jasper in the ancient world is uncertain; some equate the brilliance of jasper to the brightness of a diamond.

¹¹...her [New Jerusalem] light was...like a jasper stone, clear as crystal. (Rev. 21:11)

Revelation 21:11 gives us insight into what the ancient jasper stone was because the modern-day jasper stone is different than the ancient one. The jasper stone according to Revelation 21:11 was clear like crystal, a diamond-like radiance, and its shining light goes throughout the New Jerusalem.

1. Jesus’ face shines with brilliant radiance like the sun shining in its strength.

¹⁶His [Jesus’] face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance. (Rev. 1:16, NIV)

Jesus’ face shines like the sun in its brilliance. The brilliance of Jesus’ shining face like the sun is, I believe, an expression of this jasper-like glory.

2. God covers Himself with a multi-colored garment of light that shines forth with the colors of jasper (crystal), sardius (red), emerald (green) and the various colors in the rainbow.

²***You...cover Yourself with light as with a garment... (Ps. 104:2)***

Look at Psalm 104:2. God covers Himself with a garment of light. I do not exactly know what that means, but God covers His person—again this is beyond my understanding, it is out beyond the limits of what I grasp—He covers Himself with a garment of light. That garment has that jasper diamond-like radiance, that sardius, and the emerald, the colors of the rainbow. These are emanating out of Him, and they are part of the garment.

I think of the multi-colored garment that Joseph had. Joseph was a type of Christ—that is another subject for another day—and the multi-colored garment of light that God puts around Himself. Again this is far beyond what we understand in our limited human intellect, but it is exciting.

- C. ***Sardius stone***: how God feels—a sardius is a red gem depicting God's fiery desires for His people. John saw a ruby red brightness radiating from the throne. This speaks of God's fiery desire for His people that is like a fire. Moses may have seen this reality when he wrote of *God as a consuming fire* (Deut. 4:24). Jesus feels about His people in the way that His Father loves Him (Jn. 15:9).

⁹***As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you... (Jn. 15:9)***

I think of the sardius stone as depicting how God feels in His fiery desire. It is like a ruby red brightness. Moses might have seen this reality when He declared, "For our God is a consuming fire." He saw something in the burning bush and declared it. He saw something on the mountain when he met with God that revealed God as a consuming fire. My guess is he saw something of that sardius glory emanating out of God's being.

Now Jesus is the ultimate authority about God. He is God and He came to reveal the Father. He said that as the Father loves Me, that is the intensity of how I love you. Then He went on and said in John 17:23 that in the way the Father loves Me that is how the Father loves you. So Jesus loves us like the Father loves Jesus and the Father loves us like the Father loves Jesus. Beloved, He is a God of burning desire.

- D. ***An emerald rainbow***: how God acts—an emerald rainbow of mercy surrounds His throne. God set a rainbow in the clouds after Noah's flood as a promise of His mercy (Gen. 9:13). The dominant color of this rainbow is emerald. Emerald green speaks of life (vegetation). God's beautiful personality is seen in how He relates to His people with great kindness and tenderness.

¹³***I set My rainbow in the cloud, and it shall be for the sign of the covenant between Me and the earth...*** ¹⁶***I will look on it to remember the everlasting covenant... (Gen. 9:13-16)***

²⁸***Like the appearance of a rainbow...so was the appearance of the brightness all around it [the throne]. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. (Ezek. 1:26-28)***

The rainbow is introduced in Scripture for the first time in Genesis 9 from the lips of God as a sign of the covenant that God would show mercy. It was a token of the covenant, but the emphasis being mercy that His judgment would not come in that way again.

In Ezekiel 1, when Ezekiel had his encounter with the throne of God, he actually saw a Man on the throne; he saw the pre-incarnate Christ. He is looking at the throne of this Man, an appearance of Jesus in the Old Testament, and he said, "It was like the appearance of a rainbow, the brightness all around this Man's throne"

There was this bright, rainbow radiance emanating out of His throne. It was the likeness of the glory of God in a rainbow color.

*Beloved, there is that rainbow-like color, but it is the **meaning** of the rainbow, the mercy of God surrounds the throne. Again I do not know that I have it right, but I picture this rainbow arching over the throne of God. Now I have moved the furniture around a few times, but I have the rainbow arching over the throne of God. I have the twenty-four elders sitting in front, like this semicircle.*

Daniel 7—you cannot forget Daniel 7:10—out of the throne proceeds a river of fire. So I had to separate the elders, twelve on one side and twelve on the other side, to make room for the river. I remember when I found that river in Daniel 7 I thought, “Whoa!” I had to make room for it. Then that river undoubtedly spills on to the sea of crystal filled with flaming fire, I assume, coming from the river.

Now you got the four living creatures flying around the face of God declaring, “Holy, holy, holy,” which means transcendent beauty, transcendent beauty, transcendent beauty. All of their days they are crying, “God is holy.” God’s holiness is far more than His purity. The word “holy” means “other than.” God is not only other than sin, but He is also wholly other than everything created. He is transcendent. He is in another realm. He is other than everything created, even all the good. He is of another realm. So when the seraphim say, “Holy,” they are not saying “infinite purity.” They are saying, “transcendent beauty,” totally “other than” in Your love, Your wisdom, Your power, Your purity, in every attribute. You are “wholly other than” is what they are saying.

1. This emerald rainbow of mercy encompasses all the plans and actions that issue forth from God’s throne. His mercies cover all that He does, and it endures forever (Ps. 103:17; 145:9).

⁹The LORD is good to all, and His tender mercies are over all His works. (Ps. 145:9)

David said in Psalm 145:9 that His mercies are over everything. I think of that rainbow of mercy over His throne and therefore over all of God’s decrees, all of His plans, all of His judgments. They all flow out of His throne that is covered with mercy, the covenant rainbow. Even God’s judgment to remove everything that hinders love flows out of His mercy.

2. The song most repeated in Scripture is that “the Lord is good and His mercy endures forever” (1 Chr. 16:34, 41; 2 Chr. 5:13; 7:3, 6; 20:21; Ezra 3:11; Jer. 33:11; Ps. 52:1; 100:5; 106:1; 107:1; 117:2; 118:1-4, 29; 138:8; 136 [26x])

What do you think the song most repeated in all of the Bible? Well, you have it right here, “The Lord is good and His mercy endures forever.” I am assuming because it is the most repeated song by far in the Bible that becomes one of the premier songs. I do not think it is one song with one melody. I am guessing there are an infinite number of versions of that song sung forever. I think of it is more of a category of songs, not just one song forever.

Worthy is the Lamb! Your mercy endures! Your mercy endures my failure. Your mercy endures the generations. Billions of years from now, it never ever runs out and endures. God’s mercy outruns your sin, it outruns your failure, it outruns time itself, it endures. That is one of the premier themes of the songs around the throne.

Again I do not think it is one song with one melody, but multitudes of expressions of this song forever. The more that we write related to the “God is good” theme here in this age the better. The devil is a liar. God is good, His plans are good, His judgments are good, His decrees are good, and His commandments are good. He is good. The devil is liar and he wants to pervert all of this. God’s mercy outruns all of our failure and outruns all the generations of time.

III. THE BEAUTY OF GOD'S PEOPLE (REV. 4:4)

- A. God's beauty is seen in the exaltation of the saints as they are enthroned, robed, and crowned. The presence of the elders around His throne reveals His desire for partnership with His people. I imagine the twenty-four elders in front of the throne, sitting in a semicircle facing the Father.

⁴Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads. (Rev. 4:4)

We are going to the second category now in verse 4. We just looked at the beauty of God's person. Now we will see the beauty of God's people. Sitting around the throne are twenty-four thrones. Again I believe these are the redeemed. We see the exaltation of the saints. This reveals His desire for partnership with His people. He does not need partnership with us; He desires it. He is a Father. At the core of His being, He is a Father. At the core of who Jesus is, He is a Bridegroom King. God feels and thinks like a Father. Jesus feels and reasons like Bridegroom in partnership with His people. He is a Bridegroom King.

Well, around the throne are twenty-four elders. They are enthroned, seated on thrones. They are robed; they are clothed in white robes, totally pure priestly garments. They have golden crowns upon their heads.

- B. ***Enthroned:*** The elders are enthroned with God's authority, showing their value and dignity. This points to the exaltation of other believers. God's salvation so cleanses and exalts His former enemies that they can now reign with Him as His Bride (Rev. 2:28; 3:21; cf. Mt. 19:28; Lk. 22:30).

²¹To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne... (Rev. 3:21)

They are enthroned. Now I think these twenty-four are literal believers. It is my opinion. We will know for sure when we get there. They are showing God's desire for multitudes of believers to participate in His reign and His rule. Jesus said it in the verses right before Revelation 4. Jesus declared, "I will grant you to sit with Me on My throne." Then He opened up the realm of the throne of God. John saw the throne of which Jesus said, "I want you to sit with Me on My throne." Then the very next verse the Spirit opens up the realm of God's throne to John. I believe the context is that Jesus is saying, "This is how far redemption is going."

God's salvation so cleanses and exalts His former enemies that they reign with Him forever. Beloved, that is another order of love. He so cleanses and so exalts His former enemies, those who had no interest in Him at all. Even those who knew of Him and received Him, but then cast Him aside when they pleased. He said, "I am going to show you My cleansing and power. I am still going to break in and prepare you and raise you up, and you will participate with me forever." It is remarkable!

- C. ***Robed:*** The elders clothed in white robes speaks of their priestly ministry (Rev. 3:4-5, 18).
- D. ***Crowned:*** The elders wear golden crowns of victory because God remembers and rewards their works from this life (Rev. 2:10; 3:11). This dignifies our life of obedience in this age.
- E. There are two Greek words describing the crowns in the New Testament. One is the crown of a ruler (Gr. *diadem*); the other is the crown of a victor (Gr. *stephanos*), as in one who won a race in the Olympic Games. The Greek word *stephanos* for crowns is used in 1 Cor. 9:25; Phil. 4:1; 1 Thes. 2:19; 2 Tim. 2:5; 4:8; Heb. 2:7, 9; Jas. 1:12; 1 Pet. 5:4; Rev. 2:10; 3:11; 4:4, 10; 9:7; 12:1; 14:14.

Now there are two Greek words for "crown" in the New Testament. One speaks of the crown of a ruler and the other the crown of a victor like the Olympic games. Here he uses the word that is the crown of the victor. In

other words, they are wearing their love for the Lord in eternity on their heads. This is not just a crown of ruling. They are ruling, but the word that is used here is the crown of victory, like in the Olympics they give the gold medal now. This is not people competing with one another. This is about people running the race and just fulfilling the will of God in their life.

The Lord's rewards and crowns are not something we earn. There is not enough goodness we could do to earn a golden crown forever. I mean how many nice words can you say to somebody and humble yourself and serve some people in secret to get a golden crown forever? Some people say that you do earn your rewards. I say, "You could not! You cannot earn a golden crown by being nice to somebody in secret." But even the smallest thing He rewards because He wants us to know how He feels about the way we loved Him in this age.

Eternal rewards is Jesus' statement, His extravagance, about how He feels about the way you loved Him in this age. He is so wealthy. He is so kind. He is so extravagant that He rewards you, and you wear those expressions of your love and how He felt about the way you loved Him. Beloved, it is worth it. The devil comes and says, "Well, it is not worth it." I tell you it is worth it to press in, to resist, and to cast off sin.

- F. The beauty God possesses is the very beauty that He imparts to these people (Isa. 61:3).

³To give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning... (Isa. 61:3)

We see in this enthroned, robed, and crowned expression of the grace of God, the beauty of God, of Jesus. Isaiah 61:3 says of Him that He gives His people beauty for ashes. The very beauty He possesses is the beauty He imparts to His people. The crown, the robe, the throne and all that is involved. Your dwelling place, your resurrected body, your garments, so many things will express the beauty. The very beauty that Jesus possesses is the beauty that He imparts through redemption. It is a remarkable truth!

IV. THE BEAUTY OF GOD'S POWER (REV. 4:5)

- A. God's power is manifested in the lightning, thunder, and voices released in His royal court (v. 5). Out of God's throne comes beautiful, glorious, and even terrifying manifestations of His power. He makes known what He is thinking and feeling through these different manifestations.

⁵From the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices. (Rev. 4:5a)

¹⁹The temple of God was opened...there were lightnings, noises, thunderings... (Rev. 11:19)

The beauty of God's power is manifested in lightening, thunder, and voices. Again in Revelation 11 it says "noises." It is not noises versus voices. It is all a part of the beautiful sounds coming out of the throne of God and surrounding the throne of God. This power is glorious, I would say even terrifying, in its beauty. Again the seraphim are so overwhelmed with His beauty that they hide their eyes, not because they do not agree with it, but because it is overwhelming. When you plug in a 110 unit to a billion volts, something weird happens.

- B. **Lightning:** I think of the flashes of lightning continually going forth as releasing divine life, energy, light, and splendor to saints and the atmosphere of the eternal city (Rev. 4:5; 8:5; 11:19; 16:18).

I think of the lightning flashes that come out of the throne regularly, lightning. This is real. This is not symbolic or figurative. I certainly do not understand but a less than one percent of what these things mean, but I think of the lightening flashes that come out of His throne as speaking of that life and energy of the impartation of the Spirit constantly energizing the redeemed and the whole of created order. The lightning is coming out of His throne unendingly, continuously.

1. Flashes of lightning proceeding from God’s throne may also point to power encounters with the Spirit in our life.

In this age I think and I pray, “Lord, let the lightning of God touch me.” When I pray for people, I pray—and I whisper because I do not want to make them afraid—I pray, “Let the lightning of God touch them.”

*One guy says, “Glory!” Another guy completely misunderstands. I think of the lightning of God striking people **by** the Holy Spirit. It is coming out of His throne, and it is by the Spirit. I mean it is the demonstration of the Spirit’s power likened to lightning. I have no doubt that around the throne it looks like lightning, but it is still a ministry of the Holy Spirit.*

2. When the Spirit falls on people, I think of it as the “lightning of God” striking them in a glorious way, as when the Spirit fell on those who heard the word in Cornelius’s household (Acts 10:44). I pray, “Lord, let the ‘lightning of Your Spirit’ touch me.”

You know the example I have here in Acts 10 when Cornelius, an unbelieving Gentile, brings his whole family together and Peter comes. It says in Acts 10:44, while Peter is talking—here are these unbelieving Gentiles, the whole household of Cornelius—boom! the power of God hits them all. I say, “Lord, the lightning of God, let it strike.”

Remember when they were in the upper room in Acts 2? It says that fire rested on each one of the 120 people. I think of that as like the lightning of God touching that room. I pray, “Lord, let Your lightning touch my heart, to me and through me, etc.”

- C. **Thunderings:** Thunder from God is sometimes related to specific messages from His heart (Jn. 12:28-29; Rev. 10:4; 19:6 cf. Rev. 4:5; 8:5; 11:19; 16:18). When I worship, I ask for insight into messages from God’s Word praying, “Let Your word reverberate through my heart like thunder.”

*⁴When the seven **thunders** uttered their voices, I was about to write [the message]... (Rev. 10:4)*

¹One of the four living creatures saying with a voice like thunder, “Come and see.” (Rev. 6:1)

I think the thunder speaks of the message. I mean God has many messages. When you study thunder in the book of Revelation, and even through the Bible, related to the being of God, often it is related to God’s voice or it is related to a message. If you do a whole study on it, to me it is convincing. Revelation 10 said the seven thunders uttered their voices, and it was a message they gave.

So when I worship, I will be before the Lord and I will have this scene of the throne of God. I will say, “Lord, let the lightning of God touch my heart and thunder reverberate the Word of the Lord in my being.” I do not mean just some arbitrary, random word, but I mean something like the “Jesus, You love me like the Father loves You.” I mean a Bible verse you are familiar with or a truth. “Let it reverberate in me like thunder, God.”

- D. **Voices:** God’s royal court is filled with beautiful voices that surround His throne. This includes various noises, songs, sounds, and music led by harps and trumpets (Rev. 4:5; 8:5; 11:19; 16:18), as well as the voices of the Father, Son, Spirit, the saints, and angelic host. God’s voice is loud and majestic, or awesome with terrifying beauty (Ps. 29:4; Rev. 1:10, 15).

*⁴The voice of the LORD is **powerful...full of majesty**. (Ps. 29:4)*

God’s royal court is filled with beautiful voices. You know, Jesus is the ultimate songwriter. The Bible talks about David being the sweet psalmist of Israel. Well, the greater David is a lot better singer than natural David.

Jesus is an excellent singer, great musician. He can play every instrument and is a great songwriter, really amazing lyrics. Out of the being and the throne of God comes forth this musical dimension of the all-power, all-loving, all-wise, all-creative God.

When it says “voices,” there is so much related to this. It is like the Holy Spirit says, “I will give you one word, and, if you are interested, pursue Me and I will teach you all about it from Genesis to Revelation, each one of these words.”

It is like Revelation 4 is just a hint for the hungry. It is like a table of contents, whichever one you are interested in begin to pursue the Spirit and ask Him to show it to you. I do not mean once, just for a moment or two, but I mean over the years say, “Lord, I want everyone of these to be unpacked in my own heart and experience.”

V. THE BEAUTY OF GOD'S PRESENCE (REV. 4:5-7)

- A. The beauty of God's presence is seen in His fire on the lamps, seraphim, and sea (4:5b-7, 15:2). The Spirit imparts God's presence to His people to strengthen, renew, and beautify them.

⁵Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.

⁶Before the throne there was a sea of glass, like crystal...around the throne, were four living creatures...⁷The first living creature was like a lion, the second...like a calf [ox], the third...like a man...and fourth...a flying eagle...⁸they do not rest day or night, saying: “Holy, holy, holy...” (Rev. 4:5-8)

Now we see the beauty of God's manifest presence. Verse 5 speaks of seven lamps burning before the throne. This is the Holy Spirit or the seven expressions of the Holy Spirit. I do not know that there are only seven, but I think this depicts the full expression of the Spirit of God. It says “before the throne” there, so there are these lamps before the throne. Also before the throne there is a sea of glass. Again, this diamond-like radiance crystal is reflecting the whole glory of the throne.

Also around the throne are these four living creatures. In the Bible the four living creatures, some are called seraphim and some are called cherubim. There are distinctions, but that is not germane to what we are talking about right now, except that I believe that these are seraphim. The “seraphim” means the burning ones. I think these are about the fire of God. These creatures, the first was like a lion, the second like a calf or an ox, the third a man, and the fourth an eagle. Night and day they never stop crying out, “Holy! Transcendent beauty! Transcendent beauty!” Isaiah 6 says. They cover their eyes, overwhelmed with fresh discoveries of not just the infinite purity, but the transcendent beauty. His total other-than-ness is what holy means.

- B. ***Lamps of fire:*** The lamps speak of the Spirit's work and manifest presence (Rev. 1:4; 3:1; 5:6). I imagine vast torches of fire (like the pillar of fire in wilderness) comparable to the Spirit hovering over the earth (Gen. 1:2) so these torches may brood over the crystal sea touching all standing on it. Fire releases light and heat—it enlightens those in darkness, it melts or tenderizes cold hearts, and it ignites, cleanses, transforms (steel turns to liquid), warms, fascinates, and terrifies, and much more.

As I mentioned earlier, I do not see these as little five-foot lamps or something. I see them as being like the pillar of fire that led the three million people. It says there were 600,000 men of Israel that were over twenty. With all the women and children, that is where I get the number three million, just an estimated number. There was one pillar leading them.

So I think these torches, these lamps, are massive. I mean the sea is so big that billions of saints and angels can gather together. I imagining these lamps, these torches—I do not have a clue how big they are, but I do not think of them as ten feet high—I think of them like 100 miles high. I mean they are massive.

I think of Genesis 1 where it says that the Spirit hovered over the face of the whole earth. The Spirit was brooding, hovering. I am imagining these seven lamps, these torches, these vast columns—I mean I do not know how big they are—I see them hovering and brooding over the crystal sea like fire releasing the glory of God when the saints gather. Fire releases light and heat. It enlightens those in darkness. It tenderizes and ignites. I have a few things written there; this is just a little snapshot.

- C. **Sea of glass:** The saints will gather on the sea of glass, like crystal, standing in God's fire (Rev. 15:2). I see this fiery, glassy sea as the great heavenly "conference center" before God's glorious throne. Perhaps several billion believers will worship one day before the throne on this vast crystal sea. Imagine Acts 2:3 a "down payment" of what may occur in the fire on the sea of glass.

²I saw something like a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who have the victory over the beast [Antichrist]...standing on the sea of glass, having harps of God. (Rev. 15:2)

Look at Revelation 15. "I saw something like a sea of glass"—but it is—"mingled with fire." Again this is a vast sea; it is not little. In Revelation 7:10 there is a river of fire coming out of the throne. Again, right in front of the throne is the sea and those seven torches, and those massive lamps are—I am assuming, as this is my version of it—hovering, brooding because that is what the Holy Spirit does. He broods over the earth, moving, releasing power.

Look, there are people standing on that sea. I think of that sea as the grand conference center of the New Jerusalem, the convening place where we gather. As I mentioned already, in Acts 2:3, in the upper room the fire fell on the 120. It says the fire rested on each one of them. Like Peter looked at John and said, "John, look! The fire is on you."

He answers, "It is on you, too!" I think of that as a little down payment of when the whole Body is on the sea of glass and the fire is on them.

- D. **Living creatures:** The living creatures seem to be *seraphim*, which means burning ones (Isa. 6:2). They are attendants who are nearest to God's throne. They show forth four different faces of God in redemption: as a **lion** (warrior with courage), **calf** or ox (a servant persevering in the mundane), **man** (dignity of relating to and ruling with God), and the **eagle** (soaring in the Spirit). They are a picture of those fully alive in the Spirit as well as the different ways we relate to God and people.

- E. The seraphim may have the greatest spiritual capacity because they are in the closest proximity to God. When the seraphim look at God, they cover their eyes with one set of wings to keep from being overwhelmed by fresh insights into His transcendent glory (Isa. 6:2-3; Rev. 4:8).

The living creatures, again we went through all of this: their testimonies, their statements of the diversity of God. They show different faces of God in redemption. The lion speaks of the warrior with courage, the oxen the servant with perseverance, the man the dignity, the eagle of soaring in the spirit. These are pictures of someone fully alive in the spirit experiencing the fullness of God. They are depicting this image of God's diversity even in His relationship with His people and the fact that God is inexhaustible in His beauty. They are overwhelmed forever, and they never ever cease saying, "Holy, holy, transcendent beauty!"

So beloved, you come before the throne—infinite power, infinite purity—with confidence, even in your weakness. Get mercy! He is not to crush you. He is to beckon you, “Come closer and get help.” He calls, “I want to help you. I am not an adversary. I am Your Father. Come and get help!”

It is called prayer, and it is called worship. This is what we do. It is not the only thing we do, but it is core to what we do.

“Father, we just come before You now, and we just ask You to release the fire of the Holy Spirit even right now. Lord, I ask You for the fire of the Holy Spirit, as You gave a token in the upper room to the 120, as You will give the fullness on that sea one day. I ask that even now, Lord, as we gaze before You at that emerald rainbow around Your throne, the seraphim declaring Your beauty, the twenty-four elders around You, the river of fire flowing from You.”

The saints on the sea of glass—that is where we are right now! We are seated in heavenly places. When we are praying right now, we are on that sea, spiritually speaking, seated in heavenly places. That is where we are when we say, “Father, we love You.”

“Father, I ask for Your glory now. I ask You to break in, in Your power. Lord, we just wait upon You. Ignite our hearts. Tenderize and melt our cold hearts. Tenderize my heart, Lord. I need help. I need mercy. I need more help, Lord. Tenderize us. Tenderize me tonight. Fire, Lord. Release the anointing of the Holy Spirit on the heart.”

The Lord is giving some of you a hint right now. As you are thinking, an idea is coming into your head. To some of you He says, “I am inspiring you. I am giving you a hint. I am inspiring you. Yes, I will help you. Yes, I will give you a new beginning. Yes, this is for you. Yes, I will escort you. Yes, I know you are struggling, but I am here to help. I am here to fascinate you. I am here to invigorate.” For some of you just a phrase is coming here and there in your mind. The Holy Spirit says, “I am wooing you. I am whispering to you.”

Thank You, Lord! Well, amen and amen.