

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).

- 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.

- 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)

- 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.

- 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.

- 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)

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)

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.

³*And 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)*

- 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)*

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

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

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)*

- 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)*

- 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...¹⁶I 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)*

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).

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

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])

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)
- 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)
- 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.
- 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)

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

- 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."
⁴*When the seven thunders uttered their voices, I was about to write [the message]... (Rev. 10:4)*
¹*One of the four living creatures saying with a voice like thunder, "Come and see." (Rev. 6:1)*
- 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).
⁴*The voice of the LORD is powerful...full of majesty. (Ps. 29:4)*

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.
⁵*Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.*
⁶*Before the throne there was a sea of glass, like crystal...around the throne, were four living creatures...⁷*The first living creature was like a lion, the second...like a calf [ox], the third...like a man...and fourth...a flying eagle*...⁸*they do not rest day or night, saying: "Holy, holy, holy..." (Rev. 4:5-8)**
- 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.
- 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.
²*I 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)*
- 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).