



THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

"Heaven Goes Green"

4:2-3

Revelation 4:2 Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and *One* sat on the throne.

Revelation 4:3 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.

A door was opened in Heaven. A trumpet sounded. A voice said, **Come up here...** It was a type of the catching away of the church that we call the rapture. It followed the church age represented by chapters two and three and it precedes the Great Tribulation of chapters six through nineteen. The church is in Heaven during the Tribulation and returns in chapter nineteen from Heaven with Jesus in His Second Coming.

Verse one was a type of what will happen to the church. Beginning in verses two and three you're told what occurred with John. He was **in the Spirit**. John was touched by the Holy Spirit in such a way that he was in a kind of trance-like state and carried beyond his normal senses to be able to experience the series of visions revealed to him. John was actually on Patmos but spiritually in the very presence of God.

Before anything else is told him John sees that the throne was set in Heaven. Set gives you the idea of being solidly established.

One sat on the throne. High above the affairs of men and nations a throne exists. It is a reminder of what we summarize as the sovereignty of God. In popular language we say God is in control. He is overseeing and overruling. As the drama of the redemption of creation unfolds God sees to it that all things work together for the good.

A great personal Bible study would be glimpses of God on His throne throughout the Bible.

1. Isaiah saw God on His throne (Isaiah 6). He saw the Lord high and lifted up and the train of His robe filled the heavenly temple. It was before the throne that Isaiah volunteered to be sent out to God's people.
2. Job didn't see the throne but we see it in the book bearing his name. The sons of God appear there in the opening verses and Satan among them. The devil desires to destroy Job but God puts boundaries around him. Many chapters later we see that our trials are to purify us and bring us forth as gold.
3. Micaiah saw God on His throne. In First Kings twenty-two he was brought from prison to stand before the king of Israel and the king of Judah. Four hundred false prophets were there but it didn't stop Micaiah from telling the truth. From him we see that we receive boldness at the throne of God.
4. Ezekiel saw God on His throne. His vision was somewhat unusual in that he saw a sort of throne-chariot moving through the heavens. God was on the move accomplishing His eternal purposes.
5. Daniel saw God on His throne. It was when he received the dream describing the succession of world empires – Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. He saw Jesus returning to earth in His Second Coming to establish a kingdom on the earth.

From God's throne we are sent out. We're to speak as His ambassadors with boldness. Our trials and afflictions are overruled by Him for our good and His glory. He's on the move accomplishing

His eternal purposes on earth. One day He will return, and we with Him, to rule and reign.

Revelation 4:3 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.

Remember that the Revelation relies heavily on imagery from the Old Testament. There are something like eight hundred references to the Old Testament.

These particular stones had a relationship to the tribes of Israel. Each tribe had a representative precious stone. The high priest had stones representing each of the twelve tribes on his breast when he functioned in his duties before the altar. It signified that he was representing all the tribes and all the people in each tribe.

The **jasper** is described in chapter twenty-one as clear and might be what we would call a diamond. The **sardius** is in color like a ruby.

The **jasper** and the **sardius** are the first and the last of those twelve stones (Exodus 28:17-21). The **jasper** represented Reuben the first of the tribes since Reuben was the firstborn of Jacob. The **sardius** was Benjamin's stone – the youngest son born to Jacob. The two stones can be seen as including all the other stones and tribes in-between.

The names Reuben and Benjamin are significant in their meaning. Reuben means *behold a son*. Benjamin means *son of my right hand*.

Concerning Jesus you read at the announcement of His birth,

Matthew 1:23 "BEHOLD, THE VIRGIN SHALL BE WITH CHILD, AND BEAR A SON, AND THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL," which is translated, "God with us."

After Jesus' earthly ministry concluded you read of Him,

Acts 5:31 Him God has exalted to His right hand *to be* Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.

The breastplate of the high priest thus anticipated the greatest son of Israel, the Son of God, Who was born to rule from Heaven. The **jasper** and the **sardius** in John's vision represents the glory of God in sending Jesus through His people to save all mankind.

Revelation 4:3 ...and *there was* a rainbow around the throne, in appearance like an emerald.

The **rainbow** encircled the throne. It was not an arc but a complete circle. The rainbow first and most prominently appears in the Bible after the global flood wipes out all but Noah and his family. It is the sign of God's promise to never again destroy the earth by flood.

The **rainbow** might perpetually surround the throne. More likely it appears when times of judgment are decreed. Looking ahead in verse five you read,

Revelation 4:5 And from the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices...

As we mentioned last time, a storm was about to break forth upon the earth. It's the Great Tribulation. But whereas on earth we see a rainbow after the storm, this heavenly rainbow precedes. Why?

I suggest two reasons:

1. First, it suggests that though the storm of wrath is coming, in wrath God will remember mercy.
2. Second, remember that the church is raptured and in Heaven surrounding the throne. **For us the storm will be over because we are kept from it!**

I want to talk about gemstones for a moment. We utilize precious gemstones for many reasons. We give them as gifts to those we love the most. We give them when pledging our love or as a reminder of it. Usually they are set in some manner – in a ring of gold or platinum. Most notably we wear them as wedding rings and continue to wear them as tokens we are married – to show others our heart belongs to another, to our beloved.

God is represented to us as a **jasper** and a **sardius** that was 'set' in a ring of **emerald**. God is wearing, as it were, this ring. As the storm of incredible, terrible judgment is about to explode upon the earth He has not forgotten His people Israel nor has His love for them faded in any way.

God's description is a romantic depiction of His intentions. While we study the various seal, trumpet, and bowl judgments; while we see the awful devastation meted out upon a Christ-rejecting earth; God is deeply and wonderfully in love with His people and is working to draw them back to Himself as their Husband.

In a similar manner we, the church, are beloved by Jesus. His Holy Spirit is described in Ephesians as our engagement ring! The heavenly city, New Jerusalem, when it comes down out of Heaven is described in terms of the precious gemstones that are its building materials. It is like one humongous wedding ring for us to enjoy with our Beloved for all eternity. It reveals the love of your Savior for you as extravagant and over-the-top.

May we ever be enamored of His love!

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