

Session 9 The Emerald Rainbow: The God of Tender Mercy (Rev. 4:3)

I. REVELATION 4 IS THE HIGHEST REVELATION OF GOD’S BEAUTY IN SCRIPTURE

² I was in the Spirit and...Throne set in heaven, and One sat on the Throne. ³ He who sat there was like a jasper (diamond like) and a sardius stone (deep red) in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the Throne, in appearance like an emerald (green). ⁴ Around the Throne were 24 Thrones...I saw 24 elders...they had crowns...⁵ From the Throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices. Seven lamps of fire were burning... ⁶ Before the Throne there was a sea of glass...around the Throne, were four living creatures... (Rev. 4:2-6)

A. God gave us Rev. 4, to help us meditate on His majesty. Each detail is significant. We fill our mind with truth about God by long and loving mediation on what God’s Word says about God.

⁵ I will meditate on the glorious splendor of Your majesty... (Ps. 145:5)

B. It is not enough to study about God, we must talk to God about God. Bible study must create an active dialogue in our heart with God. The power of God’s Word touches us as we declare it back to God. First, **we thank God** for His Throne. Second, **we ask God to reveal** (release) a spirit of revelation about the Throne (Eph. 1:17).

C. God revealed His appearance in three significant colors (jasper, sardius and emerald). How God looks and what He feels are deeply connected. He radiates with what He feels. He radiates with jasper or diamond like glory which speaks of His beauty and truth, as well as with sardius like fiery desires, and His emerald tender mercy. The sardius stone is a fiery red or ruby like gem.

D. The first thing God’s reveals about His appearance is that it is a jasper-like light (supernatural diamond-like radiance). The Shekinah glory of God’s jasper light fills the Eternal City.

¹⁰ The holy Jerusalem...¹¹ having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal... (Rev. 21:10-11)

E. The sardius stone points to God’s passion as manifest in redemption or judgment. The fire of God’s desire is the same as His zeal to judge or remove all that hinders love. God’s desire is shown forth both in redeeming or punishing sinners, depending on their response to Him through Jesus. God is a consuming fire which He defines as a jealous or zealous desire (burning passion).

²⁴ For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous (passionate) God. (Deut. 4:24)

F. These colors are seen in the stones in the New Jerusalem and on the high priest’s breastplate.

¹⁷ The first row shall be a sardius, a topaz, and an emerald; this shall be the first row; ¹⁸ the second row shall be a turquoise, a sapphire, and a diamond...²⁰ and the fourth row, a beryl, an onyx, and a jasper. They shall be set in gold settings. (Ex. 28:17-20)

¹⁹ The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all kinds of precious stones: the first foundation was jasper ...the fourth emerald...²⁰ the sixth sardius... (Rev. 21:19-20)

II. THE RAINBOW IS A SIGN OF GOD'S COVENANT

⁸ God spoke to Noah...saying: ⁹ "As for Me, behold, I establish My covenant with you and with your descendants after you, ¹⁰ and with every living creature that is with you: the birds, the cattle, and every beast of the earth with you...¹¹ Thus I establish My covenant with you: never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood; never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth." ¹² God said: "This is the sign of the covenant which I make...for perpetual generations: ¹³ I set My rainbow in the cloud, and it shall be for the sign of the covenant between Me and the earth...¹⁵ I will remember My covenant...the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. ¹⁶ The rainbow shall be in the cloud, and I will look on it to remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth." (Gen 9:8-16)

- A. In the days of Noah, God sent a flood which killed everyone except the eight people in Noah's family. God set a rainbow in the sky as a sign of His promise to never again destroy the earth with a flood. God referred to the rainbow as "My rainbow" and "My covenant" (Gen. 9:13, 15).
- B. Before the flood, the earth was watered by a mist that came up from the ground. The people had never seen rain. Water had never come down from the sky, thus, there had never been a rainbow.

⁶ A mist went up from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground. (Gen. 2:6)

- C. After Noah left the Ark, he offered a sacrifice to God, which was a prophetic picture of Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross. When the Lord saw the sacrifice and smelled the sweet savor of the sacrifice, then He bound Himself with a covenant to never totally destroy the earth with water. The blood of Jesus secured God's rainbow in the storm of our sin, Satan's rage, and God's judgment. This is our hope and confidence.

²⁰ Then Noah built an altar to the LORD, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. ²¹ And the LORD smelled a soothing aroma. Then the LORD said in His heart, "I will never again curse the ground for man's sake, although the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; nor will I again destroy every living thing as I have done. ²² While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, winter and summer, and day and night shall not cease." (Gen. 8:20-22)

- D. God had it in His heart to never curse the ground so as to destroy all the people. He promised that in every generation there would be a seedtime and a harvest along with changing seasons and daylight to provide food, warmth, and light for man's sake. He did not promise to remove all famine, but to keep the regular routines functioning on earth to sustain life.

III. ALL OF GOD'S WORKS ARE SURROUNDED WITH MERCY

- A. In Rev. 4, we see God's heavenly Temple and courtroom. The Judge hands down the sentence upon the guilty. He is the Creator of life, thus, He is the Ruler and Judge of all history. The majesty and passion of God's jasper and sardius like glory is tempered by His rainbow of mercy. God's holiness cannot tolerate sin with His intense passion (sardius), thus great mercy is needed.

¹³ You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on wickedness. (Hab. 1:13)

- B. God's mercy is as dynamic and vast as His majesty. God is awesome and merciful in the way He manifests His power. To His enemies He is only terrifying, yet, to those who love Him, He is also a refuge of tender mercy.
- C. Majesty without mercy crushes the very people that He invites to partner with Him. The innocent One became guilty so that the guilty become innocent. It is the combination of His majesty and mercy that transforms the people to rule with Him in the age to come as seen in Rev. 4:4. The "exchange rate" to receive mercy in this age is great. Those who fully take it will rule in eternity.
⁴ Around the Throne were 24 thrones, and on the thrones I saw 24 elders sitting, clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads. (Rev. 4:4)
- D. The rainbow is around God's Throne. In other words, it completely encircles it. The glory of God's mercy surrounds God's Throne of majesty. Mercy completely encircles His Throne and all the works of His government. Man only sees the earthly side of the "arc of the rainbow."
³ ...There was a rainbow around the Throne, in appearance like an emerald. (Rev. 4:3)
- E. This speaks of all that God does as being tempered with mercy.
¹⁰ All the paths of the LORD are mercy and truth, to such as keep His covenant... (Ps. 25:10)
¹⁴ Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your Throne; mercy and truth go before Your face. (Ps. 89:14)
¹⁰ But he who trusts in the LORD, mercy shall surround him. (Ps. 32:10)
- F. John used the more rare word for rainbow (*iris*) instead of the common one (*toxon*) to point out the full circle instead of a semicircle around the Throne. Most agree that the shape of the "rainbow" (Gk. word "*iris*") is circular and not semicircular. The prepositions *hyperano* (above) or *epi* (over") would have been used if a half-arc was to be understood.
- G. Ezekiel testified that the rainbow was "around" God's Throne. Ezekiel saw a the radiance of a glorious rainbow around the Throne that looked like the glory of God. Ezekiel understands that God would show mercy in the coming Babylonian judgment.
²⁸ The appearance of a rainbow...was the appearance of the brightness all around it (God's Throne). This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. (Ezek. 1:28)
- H. The rainbow around God's Throne speaks of His desire to show His tender mercy in judgment. The storms of man's sin, Satan's rage, and God's judgment that have broken into world history would have destroyed the earth without God's great mercy.
¹⁸ Who is a God like You, pardoning iniquity and passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in mercy.
¹⁹ He will again have compassion on us, and will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea. (Mic. 7:18-19)

IV. GOD'S MERCY IN THE END-TIME JUDGMENTS IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION

- A. In Rev. 4, we see the Judge of history who is filled with glory and mercy. The judgments of the Book of Revelation do not compromise mercy as mercy does not compromise God's holiness.
²⁶ ***As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man... (Lk. 17:26)***
- B. The coming judgment is tempered by God's mercy as seen in the rainbow around His Throne. In the End-Time judgments, as seen in the Book of Revelation, we can be assured that God will show forth great mercy that will lead to the establishing of a "new heaven and earth" (Rev. 21:1).
- C. The rainbow around God's Throne is a prophetic sign that He will show His tender mercy in the time of sin and judgment. It is the hope of protection and deliverance in judgment. With God in the time of judgment, there is always mercy and more so to those who put their faith in Jesus.
- D. After the dark night of the Antichrist's reign of terror and God's terrifying judgments a new day will dawn upon the earth. Even in the midst of the dark night God will show forth His mercy
² ***O LORD, revive Your work in the midst of the years...in wrath remember mercy. (Hab. 3:2)***
- E. The rainbow is a sign of peace that appears on the cloud as the storm passes away. It is seen as the rays of the sun as it appears filling the sky with beauty. The rainbow promises that when the conflict is over that God will smile again on the earth as He beautifies it.
⁹ ***"For this is like the waters of Noah to Me; for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah would no longer cover the earth, so have I sworn That I would not be angry with you, nor rebuke you. 10 For the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but My kindness shall not depart from you, nor shall My covenant of peace be removed," Says the LORD, who has mercy on you. (Isa. 54:9-10)***
- F. The rainbow above the Throne promises that in the midst of the most severe judgments in history, God will offer mercy each step of the way to all who sincerely desire it.
- G. John saw an angel who was clothed with a rainbow on his head. God made known to John that He will show great mercy in the End-Times. He will show mercy as He raises up His forerunner messengers of judgment and mercy. First, the messengers will receive deeply from God's mercy in a personal way, then will make known to others what they have experienced.
¹ ***I saw another mighty angel...clothed with a cloud. And a rainbow was on his head, his face was like the sun...8 Then the voice...spoke to me and said, "Go, take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel who stands on the sea and on the earth." 9 I went to the angel and said, "Give me the little book." And he said to me, "Take and eat it; and it will make your stomach bitter (message of judgment), but it will be as sweet (message of grace) as honey in your mouth." 10 Then I took the little book out of the angel's hand and ate it, and it was as sweet as honey in my mouth. But when I had eaten it, my stomach became bitter. 11 And he said to me, "You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings." (Rev. 10:1, 8-11)***

V. EMERALD RAINBOW

- A. Naturally speaking, a rainbow occurs because of the refraction (reflection or bending) of sunlight as it passes through raindrops which form a prism. An arc of 7 colors appears in the clouds as a result of the refractive dispersion of sunlight in raindrops, causing the 7 colors to be seen.
- B. The rainbow is light which is broken or diversified as it passes through a prism. A rainbow comes after the storm is over. The cross is the prism through which God's light or truth passes. Sir Isaac Newton defined the seven colors of the rainbow as red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo (*blue-violet*) and violet. The color order of the rainbow starts with red (at the outer edge) and ends with violet. The brightness and width of the bands of color vary greatly in rainbows.
- C. This rainbow is different from other rainbows in that it has a dominant emerald hue seen along with the other seven colors of the rainbow. The various colors of the rainbow symbolize the varied aspects of God's providential dealings with His people.
- D. The emerald was the most prevailing color to show the reviving and refreshing nature of the new covenant. Green is the color of life and vegetation (grass and trees). Emerald green represents life and refreshing. An emerald is a bright green transparent rock crystal. John saw that it functioned as a prism reflecting the seven colors of the rainbow.
- E. The emerald stone was Judah's stone. Judah was the royal tribe in which the Messianic King would come to sit on the throne of David. Jesus is the king who holds the scepter (Heb.7:14; Rom.1:1-3; Rev. 5:5).

VI. THE GLORY OF GOD'S MERCY

- A. We receive mercy based on what Jesus did on the cross for us.
17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.... 21 For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (2 Cor. 5:17-21)
- B. God desires to show abundant measures of mercy to those who cry out to Him.
5 You are...ready to forgive, and abundant in mercy to all those who call upon You. (Ps. 86:5)
1 Have mercy upon me...according to the multitude of Your tender mercies... (Ps. 51:1)
- C. David trusted in God's mercy in the times of his failure.
5 I have trusted in Your mercy... (Ps. 13:5)
6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life... (Ps. 23:6)
18 If I say, "My foot slips," Your mercy, O LORD, will hold me up. (Ps. 94:18)

⁸ I am like a green olive tree in the house of God; I trust in the mercy of God... (Ps. 52:8)

- D. What we do with God's mercy determines our life in God. We must not refuse nor take it in vain.
¹⁶ Let us therefore come boldly to the Throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. (Heb. 4:16)
- E. We must not refuse to trust God's mercy in our failure by trying to earn or deserve it.
² For if Abraham was justified (forgiven) by works, he has something to boast about...³ For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." ⁴ Now to him who works (earns forgiveness), the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. ⁵ But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies (forgives) the ungodly, his faith is accounted for (results in) righteousness, ⁶ just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works: ⁷ "Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; ⁸ blessed is the man to whom the LORD shall not impute sin." (Rom. 4:2-8)
- F. We must not be casual about God's mercy and thus receive it in vain so that it does not produce gratitude, obedience, and the fear of God in our hearts.
¹ We...plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain. ² For He says: "In an acceptable time I have heard you, and in the day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation. (2 Cor. 6:1-2)
¹ Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it. ² For indeed the gospel was preached to...them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it. (Heb. 4:1-2)
- G. God shows great mercy to those who have set their heart to fear Him. We cry out, "God give me mercy and I will seek You with all my heart." God answers, "I will give you mercy, but I require that You set your heart to fear Me."
³ If You, LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? ⁴ But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared. (Ps. 130:3-4)
¹¹ As the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him... (Ps. 103:11)
¹⁸ The eye of the LORD is on those who fear Him...who hope in His mercy... (Ps. 33:18)
¹¹ The LORD takes pleasure in those who fear Him...who hope in His mercy. (Ps. 147:11)
- H. The way to receive the full benefits of God's delight in showing us mercy is by declaring war on all the areas of compromise in our life and to refuse to condemnation after we repent of our sin.
¹ There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. (Rom. 8:1)