***A Rainbow of Gems

RV73-01***

We're looking again at the throne room of God. This is segment number four in Revelation 4:1-5.

**Arrogance**

It is probably self-evident to every believer who has thought about it that the key characteristic of the old sin nature may be summed up in the word "arrogant." Arrogance is the quality that is most characteristic of the human being without the controlling factor of God the Holy Spirit functioning in his life. The arrogance of a lost creature who is destined for the life of fire knows absolutely no restraints – arrogance without restraint of any kind. Fallen man's human viewpoint is arrogantly viewed as superior to God's divine viewpoint as it is revealed in Scripture. This arrogance of the sin nature leads mankind to subject the Bible to finite and fallen human reason in order to determine what is true in the Bible. It takes unmitigated arrogance to read the Bible, and to process it through human reason, in order to determine that which is true and that which is not – that which is acceptable to the arrogance of the sin nature, and that which is not. The arrogance of the sin nature does not hesitate to declare how God will accept the person into His heaven, even if that declaration is completely contradicted by the Bible. That is arrogance in its greatest form – how to go to heaven, no matter what the Bible says, determined by human reason.

The apostle John, in his new vision, beginning here in Revelation 4, sees a single door in the sky, symbolic of the one way of salvation which leads into heaven. This is the principle which is enunciated in Matthew 7:13-14, where the Lord Jesus says, "Enter in at the narrow gate, for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leads to destruction. And there are many who go in that way, because narrow is the gate, and hard is the way which leads unto life, and there are few that find it."

That's an amazing statement in the Bible. Do you agree with that? It says, "There are few that find it." Find what? Find that narrow gate. Find that distinctive door that John saw in the sky – that single entrance into heaven. There is no other way in, but by this single door. There is no other approach to God but by a specific way of salvation that Almighty God has designed and laid out for us. Narrow is the gate, and hard is the way which leads unto life (that is, life eternal), and there are few that find it." That's what it means. It means that, of all the masses of the millions of human beings on the face of the earth, only a few are ever going to go through that door. The reason most of them will not go through that door is because of the arrogance of their sin natures: the arrogance which insists that there is another way in, and a better way in – a way that is not so humiliating as the way that has to say, "I'm a helpless sinner. I have no good in me. I have nothing to offer to God, no matter how smart; how cultured; how refined; how educated; how rich; or, anything else I am. I'm a zero. God has to do it all for me. That is humiliating. I must accept from Him. I'm a complete case of welfare when it comes to eternal life. God has to provide me with it, and I cannot secure it on my own.

Unbelievers like to parade as those who want to honor God. They don't want to portray God as being so harsh that He would insist that only those people go to heaven who go through this door that He has established, and no other way. They want to claim their merit before God unto salvation: merit for their human good works; and, merit for the sincerity of their beliefs, even though they are wrong.

Some of you may have seen The Phil Donahue Show the other morning when he was interviewing Bob Jones III, president of Bob Jones University. I wish I had known it was going to be on. I just happened to stumble across it. I would have liked to have taped it and shown it to you. For one time, on national public television, the moral issue was being discussed with somebody who could answer in terms of the Bible. He was somebody who could answer in terms other than, "Well, I've just always believed this. This is the way I've always believed. This is the way I was brought up. This is just the way my grandmother always told me." He was an authority that could close the mouths of others. And it was really great to see Phil Donahue's mouth closed by the authority of the Word of God. It was just fantastic.

But it was also interesting to observe his slow burn. I was amazed at the antagonism in the audience – antagonism that bordered on rage over the concept that the only people who go to heaven are those who are born again. And Donahue argued when he said, "You know, who's to say how you go to heaven?" And he tried that line: "Just born-again people?" You know how he does. He comes at the person that he's interviewing so strongly: "Those are the only ones who are going to go to heaven? Is that what you're saying? Those who are born-again?" Dr. Bob Jones said, "I'm not saying anything, but the Bible is saying that only those who are born-again will go to heaven and have eternal life, and those who are not born again will not go to heaven. That's what the Bible says."

Well, that stunned him for a moment, but he shifted gears, and you can almost predict what he would say next, can't you? The next thing he did was to attack the gospels. The next thing he did was to attack the accuracy of Scripture. He came on with his smooth way, and his silver head, and said, "Well, you know, these gospel-writers were four men, just like the rest of us. And, you know, they weren't perfect. They wrote the best they could, and what they thought was the truth about how to go to heaven. But, you know, they could have been mistaken."

Here's the attack again on the inerrancy of the Bible. It is necessary to attack the accuracy of Scripture if you are going to try to establish any other door into heaven than that which the Bible presents, because the Bible says that it's a small door; it's a narrow door; and, few are going to make it. And those who make it are going to make it because they have gone through one person, Jesus Christ, and have received a new birth. Here is the way the Lord Jesus puts it in John 14:6: "Jesus said unto him, 'I am the way;" that is, unto eternal life into heaven: "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man comes to the Father but by Me." That is why so few people are going to make it into heaven: because they are trying to come unto God the Father by some means other than the Son: "He that has the Son has eternal life. He that does not have the Son does not have life." It is through Christ, and through Christ alone. That door that John saw up there in the sky, entering into heaven, symbolized Jesus Christ as the one entryway into eternal life.

The gospel writers are merely quoting Jesus Christ. And unfortunately, Phil Donahue, the good Catholic that he is, is not that well-acquainted with the Bible. Dr. Bob Jones had the poor taste to ask him, "Have you ever really read through the Bible?" And of course, that really punctured a hole in him really fast, because he had to say, "No, I really haven't read too much of it."

Here is somebody that's going to talk about God, and talk very confidently about how a person is going to get related to this God, assuming that this God has a heaven and a hell to send people to. And who's going to determine that? Well, he said that the human reason of Phil Donahue can determine how God is going to do this, even though he hasn't read the Bible. What does that tell you? Well, he is telling you that: "The Bible is not important. What the Bible says is kind of irrelevant to the issue. This wonderful mind that you have – that's what's going to tell me."

That is arrogance, people. That is the arrogance of the sin nature in its grossest form. Because Donahue does not read the Bible, he did not realize, when he was striking against the concept that only born-again people go to heaven, that he was striking against the Lord Jesus Himself, for it is the Lord that the gospel writers are quoting on that matter. John 3:3: "Jesus answered and said unto him (to Nicodemus), 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.'" You know that that term "born again" means "born from above." "Verily, verily" (truly, truly) is a technical expression, which is practically like saying, "I'm taking an oath before Almighty God that what I'm going to say now is absolutely true:" "I say unto you, except a person be born from above, he cannot see the Kingdom of God." Verse 7: "Do not marvel that I said unto you, 'You must be born again.'" Who said unto you? "I, The Lord Jesus Christ, said unto you."

The apostle Peter is referring to this same subject of the only basis of salvation in 1 Peter 1:23: "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God which lives and abides forever." It is the revelation of the written Scriptures which is the means to eternal life. Unless Phil Donahue knows what the Bible says about how to go to heaven, he is not qualified to speak on the subject. Neither is anyone else, because the Bible is very clear that that single door that John saw into heaven was symbolic of the fact that there is only one way into eternal life, and the Bible has the record about that way, and no place else will you find the explanation of how to secure new birth. Without personal regeneration (which is what the new birth means) through faith in Jesus Christ, a lost sinner lacks the absolute righteousness of God, which is necessary for a person to have if he is to enter heaven. I just wish that Dr. Jones had pressed that point. I just wish he had pressed upon them: "Look, the issue is that you must be as good as Jesus Christ to go to heaven." Boy, could you imagine the bombshell that would have been? Could you imagine the riot?

This was a group mostly of women. So, you already have a basic emotional tension built up here by that fact alone. They were just sitting there charging. Talk about charging! Man, this was quite a display. You'd think that you were back in medieval times as they are charging with their lances, trying to poke holes into Jones who was simply quoting the Bible. They were enraged over the idea that a person must have absolute righteousness. And I wish that it had been stressed to them that that is what they must have. Unless they have the absolute righteousness of Jesus Christ, they cannot go to heaven. That, I think, would have helped put in perspective for these people what the problem is, because anybody in his right mind says, "Well, how in the world can I do that? I can't be as good as Jesus Christ. I can't be as perfect as Christ. Therefore, something has to be done for me." I think that would have helped. I wish he had done that. In any case, he did a good job of pressing back again and again with Scripture.

The new birth is not merely the reformation of the old sin nature in restraining itself from evil, and in practicing good. It is a creative act of God the Holy Spirit who is producing a new creature in Christ to whom is imputed the absolute righteousness of Jesus Christ. That's what those people didn't understand. It is not just man reforming himself. It is God transforming him by a new creative act of regeneration.

The epitome of that program (the high point) was reached when Phil Donahue was going around getting the enraged comments of these people in the audience. He came to one lady who said she was a teacher, and Donahue picked up on the fact that she was concerned for the good of her children, and that that was her life that was being invested in teaching and caring for these children and seeking their good. Donahue turned to Dr. Bob Jones and said, "Now, look. Here's this woman. Suppose that the building she's teaching in catches on fire, and she rushes in there at the hazard of her life and saves her children in her classroom from death. But she's not born again. Are you telling me that God is going to sing send her from the flames of the classroom into the flames of hell?"

That was great. You know, man, what a picture! And I almost want to shout: "No, He won't." But, of course, I remembered a verse in the Bible, and I had to say, "Yes, He will. That's exactly what He is going to do." But you see the game that he was playing: good works; and, sincerity of effort. What kind of a God would be so harsh as to cast a person, who would hazard her life for her children, into hell just because she's not born again? It was interesting to see the hatred and the bitterness against the concept of being born again.

One lady on the telephone was so enraged that she could hardly speak. She happened to be in Chicago, putting on some kind of promotional show of one kind or another. She said, "I just happened to be listening, and I cannot believe what this man is saying. I'm so enraged at Dr. Jones – the audacity. Who does he think he is to declare that nobody but those who are born-again are going to go to heaven?"

Another lady stood up in the audience and she shook her finger. She was one of these wonderful, feisty women that you like to have in your church. She stood up there and said, "Who do you think you are? You better watch out and take care of yourself. I know where I'm not going, and I'm not going to hell. You better just worry about where you're going."

It was a wonderful program. But think of the pity when she discovers where she really is going when she wakes up. You can almost see the sadness on Dr. Jones' face. He knows enough about Scripture to know that, until God the Holy Spirit comes along and illumines the mind, you cannot even reach out for God. The arrogance of the sin nature will not even permit a person, who is lost and in the desperate straits of going to hell, to reach out for the salvation he needs. He can't even understand his need until God, in sovereign grace, pulls the blind back off his mind, and, suddenly, with horror, he sees what his condition is, and where he will be without absolute righteousness. Yet, these people were so blinded that they could not accept what the Bible said.

Of course, sooner or later, Donahue could not resist saying, "Are you saying, Dr. Jones, that all the Jews who believe in God; who pray to God; and, who worship God, but who do not accept Jesus Christ and are not born again, are going to hell?" So, what's he saying again? Sincere religion. "What kind of a God is going to throw you out?" And again, Jones came back with, "That's what the Bible says. Jesus is the only way. Without Him, you have no hope." It is arrogance of the sin nature that rejects that.

The program clearly showed me that no matter how intelligent, gifted, moral, or cultured the last person may be, his mind is abysmally blind to spiritual things. Therefore, he rebels against the concept of being saved on the basis of a gift from God. He rebels against the concept of being saved on simply accepting what God has offered by taking God at His word. The only means for securing the essential new birth is, of course, by believing the gospel.

And so I reiterate to you, John 3:14-18, where the Lord Jesus says, "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so much the Son of Man be lifted up." Please listen carefully. You need this, perhaps, not to be born again, but you need this to know how to be a genuine witness, and how to be able to properly direct people to eternal life, instead of getting them all fouled up with secondary things. Remember that we are told that the gospel of John was written uniquely to tell people how to go to heaven – to tell people how to get to that door and go through it. That's why this gospel was uniquely written. Here's the explanation:

Verse 15: "That whoever believes (the word means 'to trust') in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes (trusts) in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He that believes on Him is not condemned, but he that does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

The only door into heaven is believing the gospel: believing, plus nothing. The devil is always trying to add something else so as to confuse people that it's something other than taking God at His Word. As 1 John 5 tells us, if you don't take God at His Word concerning His Son, you have called God a liar. What God tells us is that His Son has paid for our sins. Believing that brings us into eternal life.

**Revelation 4:3**

John obeyed the heavenly voice which had commanded him to pass through the heavenly door into the throne room of God. From that vantage point in heaven, John is to be shown the history of mankind in the final years before the Second Coming of Christ to the earth. John sees One seated on a throne in heaven who is God the Father. The Father is seen in terms of His great glory, which John then proceeds to try to describe for us.

Revelation 4:3: "And He that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardius stone." "He that sat" is the word "kathemai." "Kathemai" describes the normal body position of one who is on the throne. We might translate this even better as "One sitting on the throne." This is in the present tense, which indicates continuity: One who is always going to be there. It's in the middle form, but it's active in meaning. It means that the Father himself does the sitting, not through a substitute. It is participle form in mood, which indicates a spiritual principle of God on His sovereign throne forever.

**Anthropomorphism**

John says what it was like "To look upon this One sitting on the throne." "To look upon" is the Greek word "horasis." "Horasis" is a noun, and it refers to the act of seeing. We would say "an appearance;" that is, "One sitting on the throne in appearance." Immediately, John is saying, "I'm not going to describe to you a human body. I'm not going to describe to you a figure who is in the form of a man. I'm going to describe to you a comparison." And what John is going to try to convey to us in human words is the glory of God: "One who was in appearance like." And he uses the word "homois." "Homois" means "resembling." God is not revealed in the form. That's anthropomorphism. But God does use anthropomorphic expressions in order to convey ideas to us. So, the Bible speaks about the about the eyes of God; the ears of God; and, the hand of God. But we must not think of God in terms of a human structure.

The Mormons do that, and the Bible condemns that. The reason for this, of course, is that the sin nature is prone to make images of God to be used in worship. This is why Israel was specifically forbidden to try to come up with any kind of physical representation of God at all. That's one of the things that is objectionable about these pictures that people hang around their homes of Jesus Christ. One of the worst things that is objectionable about it is that they always make Him look like a female with long hair, which is obviously, from Scripture, just the opposite of what He had. Furthermore, it has a way of becoming an object of worship – a focus of worship. I have seen good Christians on their knees in prayer in front of these pictures of Jesus Christ. It was obvious that the God they were praying to was hanging up there on the wall. It was not the God that you cannot see who is in heaven ‐ the real and the living God.

**Like a Jasper Stone**

So, John is very careful. He says, "I saw One sitting on a throne, and this One that I saw here was in appearance like." Then he uses the word "jasper." The Greek word is "hiaspis." "Hiaspis" is a precious gem which is described for us in Revelation 21:11: "Having the glory of God, and her light was like a stone most precious, even like a 'hiaspis' stone (a jasper stone), clear as crystal." So, the Bible tells us that the jasper stone was, perhaps, what we would refer to as a diamond today. In any case, it was like a diamond. A diamond, as you know, when properly cut, has enormous beauty in the refraction of light that it is capable of displaying. So, this stone, first of all, in appearance, was diamond-like crystal clear. When John looked upon the One sitting on the throne, this is the first thing that struck him – like he was looking at the brilliant reflection of the glorious light of a jasper stone.

**Like a Sardius Stone**

Then he says, and it was like another stone. It was like a sardius stone. The Greek word is "sardon." The sardius stone came from the city of Sardis, which was famed for this particular gem. The sardius was a red stone – ruby red in appearance. It was probably comparable to what we know as a ruby. But, again, it was a stone that was reflecting a brilliance of light color. Both of these are called stones ("lithos"). This is used here for the idea of a precious gem.

The jasper probably refers to the holiness of God, and the sardius (blood red), obviously, to the redemption of Jesus Christ. So John is saying, as he looks upon this luminous scene of light splendor, that two things strike him. One is the brilliant white, the glory reflected by the crystal clear jasper stone, speaking of the holiness of God. The other is the ruby red, the glowing, terrific color of the ruby, speaking of the blood of Jesus Christ. That's very significant. If there's anything that a person has to face when he walks into God's throne room, it is, first of all, that you are in the presence of a holy God. You had better have His absolute holiness imputed to you. You'll never even get in there without it. You will be stopped at the door. And the only basis for you to secure that kind of holiness is represented by the sardius stone – ruby red blood of Jesus Christ.

These gems were included in 12 gems that were on the garments of the high priest. The high priest had a breastplate attached to his shoulders, and was attached at the waist. There were four rows of three gems each in that breastplate. That breastplate represented the totality of the people of Israel, because each of these gems stood for one of the tribes specifically.

We have this described in Exodus 28:17-21: "And this breastplate symbolized Israel's presence before God as the high priest ministered before the altar in their behalf." With this breastplate, with one gem for each tribe, the whole tribe of Israel (the whole nation of Israel) was standing there symbolically before the altar when the priest was ministering. The jasper stone was the number one stone in the lineup. The jasper stone, of course, represented the tribe of Reuben, the oldest son of Jacob. The number 12 stone down was the sardius stone, and that represented the youngest son Benjamin. He was the last one on the breastplate. Reuben and Benjamin were the first and the last: that represented, in effect, all the tribes in between. That's one way of describing everything in between. You talk about the first and the last, and everything in between is automatically included. So, what you have here is two stones that are particularly pointed out that speak something very significant in the Old Testament, that are an outstanding demonstration, in John's eyes, when he sees God on His throne.

The word "Reuben" gives us a clue as to the significance of that stone, because Reuben means "behold, a son," symbolic of Jesus Christ as the first begotten Son of God. In Hebrews 1:6, we have that very concept spoken of: "And, again, when He brought in the first begotten into the world, He said, 'And let all the angels of God worship Him." So, the stone of Reuben ("behold, a son"), the jasper stone, was a significant stone (this diamond-like stone), to be reflecting the glory of Jesus Christ as the Son of God. Benjamin means "son of my right hand," which was symbolic of Jesus Christ as the Father's agent in salvation. This is pointed out in Hebrews 10:12: "But this man (that is, Jesus Christ), after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God." The Lord Jesus Christ, as the Son of God at the Father's right hand, executed the basis of salvation and of the eternal life that we needed. The first and the last stones of the breastplate, also, of course, you readily see, speak of Jesus Christ in His capacity as the Alpha and the Omega: that statement in Revelation 1:11, saying, "I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last." So, the implication there is that outside of Jesus Christ, there is nothing else.

So, we get back to the fact again that if you do not have the Son, you do not have anything in terms of eternal life. So, let your heart go out to all these people who are so confused, and who are so deluded by their human good, that they think that they can turn their nose up, and make a sneering, snotty remark about being born again, and that it is something that they will not need, and that they will escape the consequences of that viewpoint. Without Jesus Christ, there is no hope. He is the first and the last. It's all tied up in Him.

So, the One on the throne is, by the symbolism of these two gems, portrayed as the God of Israel; the One who is particularly tied to Israel; and, the One who reflects (who has, as God) the glories that were reflected by these gems on the breastplate of the high priest.

**A Rainbow**

Then John says that there's something else that he noticed as he's looking upon this scene of God upon His throne. He says, "He sees not only lights glowingly coming forward from this diamond-like jasper and the ruby red sardius, but there was also a rainbow. The Greek word is an "iris." This is a word for the visual arch of colors which is made by light refraction on droplets of rain following a rain storm. The classical Greeks used this word for any bright halo. Any bright halo was called an "iris," and that's, of course, in a round shape. And that's why this is also used in terms of the human eye, speaking of the "iris." The circle around the eyes of a peacock's tail is called an "iris" also, just as with the human eye.

John is telling us that he has seen a throne of some kind in heaven, and that on this throne, he sees One who is in the glory of the jasper and the sardius stone. Around this whole scene, he sees a circle – a rainbow. We are told that he sees a circle which is "roundabout." That's the Greek word "kuklothen." "Kuklothen" means "from all sides." It means halo-like. That's what it's referring to. John sees a complete ring (halo-like) around the whole throne upon which the Father is sitting.

You and I, when we see rainbows, we only see a half of them because the horizon cuts them off on us. But I have been flying in airplanes above the clouds, where I've looked down, and suddenly, I could see the shadow of my plane, and around it was a complete rainbow. It was a complete circle, with all of the colors, and the whole thing, moving along. If I would try to move this way and that way, and try to get out of it, and dive, and go around, the shadow and the rainbow would just move everywhere that I was moving. It is a fascinating sight – a complete rainbow around the shadow of the airplane on the clouds below. That's what John is talking about here.

Of course, I need not remind you that the rainbow goes back to Genesis 9:9-17. The significance of the rainbow is spelled out for us there. Until after the flood, there never was such a thing as a rainbow. That was because, until the flood took place, there was no such thing as rain from the sky. Genesis 9:9-17: "And, behold, I established My covenant with you and with your seed after you." This is now speaking to Noah, setting up a new dispensation – a dispensation of human authority where laws are to be made, and magistrates are to execute laws and punishment.

"And with every living creature that is with you: of the fowl; of the cattle; of every beast of the earth with you, from all that go out of the ark, to every beast of the earth. And I will establish my covenant with you. Neither shall all flesh be cut off anymore by the waters of a flood. Neither shall there anymore be a flood to destroy the earth." God promised here that there would never again be a worldwide flood.

"And God said this was the token of the covenant. Here is the sign of this promise I'm making that the world will never again be covered entirely by water." "Here is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you, and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations. I do set my bow (He is referring to the 'iris') in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between Me and the earth. And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud. And I will remember My covenant which is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh. And the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh. And the bow shall be in the cloud, and I will look upon it, and I will remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth. And God said unto Noah, 'This is the token of the covenant which I have established between Me and all flesh that is upon the earth."

So, between all human and animal life, God has made a promise that He would never again destroy the earth with a flood, and the rainbow is the token that God will be faithful to that promise. So, immediately, the word that comes through is the word "faithful" as we look at this rainbow. The significance of the bow around the throne that John sees is the faithfulness of God. Remember that the bow is always seen (the rainbow is always seen) by those who stand on a spot over which the storm has already passed. You don't see the rainbow during the storm. It is after the storm has passed you that you can see the rainbow, and not before. And those in heaven who see the rainbow around the throne of the Father are those who are already in the shelter of the cross of Jesus Christ. The storm of divine wrath against their evil has already passed over them. That, no doubt, is the significance of that rainbow that John sees around the throne. It is speaking of the faithfulness of God. The God who promised blessing will bless, and the God who promised judgment will judge. God is faithful in both ways. God is faithful to take people to heaven who are born again. God is faithful to send people to the lake of fire who are not born again. He is faithful in both directions, and the Scriptures can be fully counted upon. This is the essence of God to be faithful. That rainbow speaks of that.

**The Promises of God**

That is so important. That is why you can count upon what God tells you. There are probably something like 7,000 promises in the Bible that are applicable to you and me now – a good 7,000 of them. They are promises that God has made, and that you can call upon Him to execute because He has made them to you. They happen to be promises that are only good on earth. Once you go to heaven, the promises no longer apply. They're no longer necessary. But every promise that you find in the Word of God, you can count on God's faithfulness to execute.

As the children of the Father, we have no cause to doubt His total care of us, therefore, in every area of our life and in every circumstance. The storms of the tribulation that come into our lives are going to be followed by the rainbow of the millennial peace. Perhaps this halo appearance around the throne of God is one of the things that led Satan to take this, and make it a symbol of evil. For Satan, as you know, has had, and does have, access into the throne room of God. The Book of Job tells us about one instance when he had to go up and report. No doubt he, too, has seen this halo around the throne of God. As you know, the halo has been taken as a sign of holiness. You have this custom of artists who draw pictures with halos around saints and holy people. The circle of the halo, again, is symbolic of the sun up in the sky, because of the sun-god. The Halo is a representation in Nimrod's religion, and in all the pictures that we have inherited from the ancient world. The halos around certain priests and sacred people are their symbols that they are followers of Satan through the sun-god. So, don't be impressed with the halo as being indicative of something holy. I suspect that the devil saw this picture in heaven, and he came along to Nimrod, and said, "Nimrod, let's take that and let's pervert it too. We'll make it holiness representing our devotion to the sun-god."

Well, again, John says that he sees a rainbow, but the rainbow that he sees is rather unique. There's one other thing about it. He says, again, "In sight." That word is "horasis" – that same word we just had, meaning "in appearance." Then he says, "Like 'homois.'" We just had that same word also. Again, he is saying, "This is the way it appears." This time he says that it appears like another gem, and that is "an emerald." It appears like a "smaragdos." A "smaragdos" is a transparent stone, light-green in color. The rainbow that John sees around the throne of God is not all the multiple colors as we normally see a rainbow with all the spectrum of colors. Instead, it is a light green rainbow glowing. And of course, we're helplessly using words. It would take somebody who's got some laser-like techniques to try to, in any way, be able to demonstrate what we're talking about, of the breathtaking glories of light that John is seeing. But he's seeing this glowing, impressive light-green halo around the throne of God. It is a complete bow, but it is light-green in color.

In the Word of God, the color green, of course, symbolizes life. Here, perhaps, it is connoting to us eternal life through God's grace, which sent His Beloved Son through the storm of the cross for us all. The emerald occupied the first place in the second row on the high priest's breastplate, and it represented the tribe of Judah (Exodus 28:18). Judah means "praise." The color of an emerald, therefore, suggests to us an aura of praise surrounding our Magnificent Heavenly Father. Jesus Christ is the lion of the tribe of Judah who will rule the world as King of Kings and Lord of Lords, because he has made possible the eternal life signified by this bow – this complete halo around the throne of God, our Father, and praise that that brings to the Father. When John saw that, the very picture that he saw (the very halo around that throne) caused him to want to break out in praise.

"The One sitting looked like the glories of a diamond, crystal-clear jasper stone, and a ruby red sardius stone. And there was a halo surrounding the throne which looked like an emerald in its appearance." These are words to try to describe the glory of God. But while we can't do that, and we can't really convey to you what is really being said here, I'm happy to tell you that the time is coming when you too will walk through that door, and you will see this for yourself. Set this picture in your mind, and this is going to be someday for you as the experience that all of us had when we traveled.

A few summers ago, our kids went to Mount Rushmore. We've always heard, from our childhood about these stone faces carved up there in the mountains. Suddenly, we came around the bend in the trail, and there they were, and we saw them, and we said, "That's just the way they described them. That's just the way they look in the picture. I do recognize that. Look at those glasses on Theodore Roosevelt's nose. You can even see the lenses. Isn't that amazing?" And we were awed by what we were seeing. Can you imagine what it's going to be like when you walk into heaven someday? You will be able to say, "I remember that day at Berean church. ... We were looking at that picture and here it is." No, you won't be doing that. You'll be so awed that you'll be standing there with your mouth hanging open. You will be impressed. Aren't you glad you're going to be there?

Dr. John E. Danish, 1982

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