

### 3,24.22 Rev. 4 The Throne of God

A few years ago, we thought being able to see through the Calvinist and Charismatic movements meant we had *great discernment* and could withstand any deception Jesus said could potentially deceive 'even the elect' at the end.

Then when we started seeing through the vaccine and the patriotic, freedom-fighter movement where pastors were using their churches as vaccine centers and using the Bible to convince us that fighting tyranny was obedience to God, we convinced ourselves that we had finally arrived at seeing through the 'great deceptions' sweeping the world.

But now, we can see that nothing we've seen so far even comes close to reaching the power and appeal what the Lord meant by 'the deception of the elect'. Whatever's coming, it will so attractive, and so far beyond our imagination in spiritual and practical appeal, that I can only hope we will continue to grow immensely in our discernment, or we will be pulled into it.

I only mention this in beginning our study because this really does need to become a consistent part of our prayer life, as this world rushes toward both the final deception of the church and the birth of the Antichrist kingdom.

We all know Satan is extremely busy deceiving the world, and we see the results everywhere. But since that has become a primary focus of most of the podcasters and news outlets we listen to, we sometimes forget the fact that Satan's *primary* concern, the target of his *most intense* deception, is you and me – it's the church.

In that context we need to make sure we don't underestimate the intelligence and power of this fallen angel.

Now, before we dive into the details of the tribulation period, I want to start with a brief review of the final criteria of judgment for the seven churches in Rev. 2 & 3, as well as in our *own* appearance and evaluation before God at the Bema Seat of Christ; this author sums it up well:

“When this world has run its course, this inhabited earth will be judged in Christ. Men will be judged by what their inward relationship is to that Man. The question at the judgment will never be of how much good or bad, right or wrong, more or less, is in a man; it will turn upon our relationship with

Christ. . . The gold, silver and precious stones represent the measure of Christ formed in us; the wood hay and stubble represent *our* Christianity; our works, agenda and plans in service to the Lord which have their source *in us*. God's intention, God's proclamation is that all things of value are only in His Son. That is the basis of judgment. It all comes back to the very simple, and yet comprehensive and blessed truth, that it is what Christ is that satisfies God - that reaches God's end."

Also, Watchman Nee's comments on Eph. 1:7 remind us of what's most important in *any* part of the Book of Revelation we study:

*"That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him."*

"If we truly know God, we will not be disturbed even though we may have many questions. People may attempt to prove this or that thing, but we Christians can prove one very important thing— that God is indeed God and that we know Him. And by knowing Him, all problems are solved. Such knowledge does not rely on how logical are the reasons or how clear the doctrines; it relies only on revelation. Spiritual revelation is absolutely necessary. We must ask God to give us the spirit of revelation so that we may really know Him. And knowledge such as this is the foundation of a believer and is of utmost importance."

We saw in the first chapter of Revelation that this entire unveiling of time and eternity centers in Christ. It might be good to see what went on behind the scenes in developing and executing all that we now understand to be God's eternal plan. This is an author's insight into John 3:35 which says, *"The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into his hand."*

"In eternity past God has predetermined to establish a creation over which the second person in the Godhead, the Son, shall rule. He has given all things to the Son as His inheritance. All things are of the Son, through the Son, and to the Son. The Father plans, the Son inherits whatever the Father has planned, and the Holy Spirit accomplishes all that the Father has planned. The Father is the Planner, the Son is the Heir, and the Holy Spirit is the Executor. The love of the Father towards the Son commences in eternity past. He is the Beloved of the Father. Even in eternity the Father has loved

the Son. When the Son came to the world the Father still declares, 'This is my beloved Son' (Matt. 3.17), and 'The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hands.'"

As we'll see in vs. 4, we are also included in this plan; not as it's "center", but still given an incredible position in His kingdom.

Let's start with the first verse of ch. 4;

"After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, 'Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this.'"

"After this" – after the seven historical segments of the Church Age, a door is opened in heaven, and John is told to "come up here" to see what happens next. It doesn't take a hermeneutical genius to realize that John is representative of Church Age believers and the command, "come up here" identifies the pre-tribulation rapture of the church which is "caught up" to meet the Lord. This is the same trumpet Paul refers to in 1 Thess. 4:16-18;

"For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus, we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words."

What we will see from chapters 4 through 19, is heaven's perspective on the events of the Tribulation. Since the church will have been raptured and is involved in the judgments on earth, we will be able to see what all heaven sees of what's happening to this world during that final seven years of history before the return of Christ.

(1 Cor. 6:2) "Do you not know that the saints will judge the world?"

And chs. 4 and 5 reveal the specifics that will be taking place in heaven *in preparation* for the judgements that will happen on earth.

Just as John's vision of the Church Age revealed the entire history of the church from Pentecost to the rapture, chs. 4 & 5 show the events between the rapture and judgment of the nations.

Joseph Seiss shows us that there is an important aspect that shouldn't be overlooked concerning the way history has led to this point in time. Here's what he wrote;

“So far as regards the history of the Church, it is a simple matter of fact that its course has always been along the lines of deterioration. In a recent course of lectures on the Ages of Christendom, I find it announced that ‘Ecclesiastical history is, to a large extent, a history of corruptions.’ That such is the truth, every one may easily ascertain for himself. The very creeds of the Church are just so many protestations against the consuming errors which have invaded and preyed upon it, and which, once introduced, never entirely disappeared. Apart, then, from all prophetic interpretation, it is a stubborn fact that the power of deterioration has held vast sway in the Church. And if we shut our eyes and ears to what the prophets have said, because the picture is unwelcome and embarrassing, what is written stands, and we must face it.”

What he's saying is true, as we saw in the letters in chs. 2 & 3, but I would also want us to remember that in most of those letters there was a remnant of believers who held firmly to God's original vision and purpose of the church.

If you ever want to read what I feel is the best historical book ever written that traces the line of this remnant from the first to the twentieth century, it's called “The Torch of the Testimony” by John Kennedy; not the president; *this* John Kennedy was a missionary in India (I'll put at link to the book in the notes);

[https://www.amazon.com/Torch-Testimony-John-W-Kennedy/dp/094023212X/ref=asc\\_df\\_094023212X/?tag=hyprod-20&linkCode=df0&hvadid=312154648235&hvpos=&hvnetw=g&hvrnd=10777486225475955768&hvpone=&hvptwo=&hvqmt=&hvdev=c&hvdvcmdl=&hvlocint=&hilocphy=9029600&hvtargid=pla-568159812704&psc=1](https://www.amazon.com/Torch-Testimony-John-W-Kennedy/dp/094023212X/ref=asc_df_094023212X/?tag=hyprod-20&linkCode=df0&hvadid=312154648235&hvpos=&hvnetw=g&hvrnd=10777486225475955768&hvpone=&hvptwo=&hvqmt=&hvdev=c&hvdvcmdl=&hvlocint=&hilocphy=9029600&hvtargid=pla-568159812704&psc=1)

Now, vs. 2;

“Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne.”

Before we look at the throne and its inhabitants, I want to double-down on the importance of studying what we are studying. This author does a great job of driving this home;

“The question of the second coming of Christ is not one of mere curiosity, still less an intrusion into regions we are forbidden to tread. The distinction which our Lord draws between the servant and the friend is that ‘the servant knows not what his Lord does,’ while He told His disciples, as friends, all that He had heard from His Father (John 15: 15). In the same discourse He promises to send ‘the Spirit of truth,’ the Comforter; to show them ‘things to come’ (John 16: 13). Indeed, the very thought that the constant references to the future scattered through the sacred writings are not meant to be understood, carries its own refutation.

“And, as if foreseeing the spirit of unbelief and indifference which characterizes the present time, the Holy Spirit has, in the introduction to the Revelation, the most distinctively prophetic portion of the New Testament, pronounced a special blessing on those ‘that hear the words of this prophecy and keep those things which are written therein’ (Revelation 1: 3).

“While, moreover, it is admitted that the interpretation of prophecy may be attempted in a frivolously inquisitive spirit, are not those who turn a deaf ear to its promises and warnings themselves guilty of the same irreverence which they censure in others? For the object of prophecy is to unfold God's purposes with respect to the glory of His Son, whom man has refused, but whom God has exalted, and to whom every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess.

“God invites us to look at the inheritance He has Himself prepared for us in joint possession with the Son of His love. And surely, as in the enjoyment of that inheritance, the ‘first-born,’ in whom we have our acceptance, will be the one object of our worship and delight, so in its contemplation now, our brightest thought should be that we are gazing on the portion prepared for Him who alone is worthy ‘to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and

strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing.’ To study prophecy with any more trivial object is to lose sight of this glorious end.”

To neglect the study of the prophetic scriptures as unprofitable because it does not contribute to our personal salvation, is a piece of selfishness derogatory to the claims of Christ, and unworthy of the condescending goodness of God in thus taking us into His own secret counsels.”

I wouldn’t have to read exhortations like this if we weren’t living in a generation of believers who, for the most part, are totally ambivalent about eschatology.

I have received numerous emails and phone calls asking how we can know if a specific church is spiritually dead. Based on what we just heard, here’s one criterion you can use. Are they teaching the whole Bible or are they removing the parts they don’t want to teach – like the prophetic writings which make up over 1/3 of the Bible?

To ignore or even censure huge portions of God’s own words is a betrayal of the Spirit’s desire to “show us things to come”. As the author I just read said,

“To neglect the study of the prophetic scriptures is a piece of selfishness derogatory to the claims of Christ, and unworthy of the condescending goodness of God in taking us into His own secret counsels.”

These churches aren’t just ignoring parts of God’s Word, that would be bad enough; they are literally turning their back on the parts of the Bible that the Lord, in His desire and love for us, wants to use to “take us into His own counsels” regarding the glory and destiny of His Son.

Now, (Rev. 4:3-5)

“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. Around 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. And from the throne proceeded lightning, thundering, and voices. Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.”

Whether creation wants to acknowledge it or not, whether we understand the full implications or not - a Throne is the central fact of this universe; it is the symbol of God's sovereign government.

For us it means security and strength. The Throne, and our association with it (which we'll see in vs. 4), means we share its immovable stability.

But, for those opposed to God, the Throne is a terrifying prospect. For Christ, as King of Kings, will compel surrender from every created being whether through fire or through grace.

The description of the One on the Throne begins with two precious stones; Jasper and Sardius (vs. 3).

The Jasper is described in Rev. 21:11 as clear - like crystal. The form of Jasper we're most familiar with is opaque. John seems to be describing a diamond more than a Jasper; regardless, what John saw represented clarity and purity, which would represent the absolute unstained holiness of God.

I think the thing that most amazed me about the character of the Lord on His throne is His complete and total "innocence" – pure holiness is innocence from all sin.

When we look at a small child or a kitten or puppy, we are in awe of the purity and simplicity of life seen through unstained eyes.

Life is filled with wonder and fantasy and imagination – and none of those incredible qualities are defiled by suspicion, or doubt, or hatred or sin.

Pure, simple innocence.

God is more innocent than the purest creature, whether animal or human. And we are going to be conformed to *His* image.

And as we saw in the life of Jesus, the greater the innocence, the greater the world's antagonism against it.

The second stone, Sardius, is deep red which, throughout Scripture, speaks of "sacrifice". This would also be the significance of John's vision in 5:6 where he sees a sacrificial Lamb on the Throne.

The last element in vs. 3 is a Rainbow in a circle, which as you remember with Noah (Gen. 9:9-17), represents God's faithfulness.

So, now think through what the Throne of heaven is characterized by. Because what John has given us, shows the exact elements of God's nature that are *directly* involved in ruling His creation.

And those elements are - Holiness, Sacrifice, Innocence and Faithfulness.

Listen to Walter Scott's description of the faithfulness of God represented in the Rainbow:

"The rainbow set in the cloud with its prismatic colors and varied beauties, is the token of God's covenant with the earth. It is rarely seen as a complete circle, but generally as an arch, or half-circle, and is God's object lesson for the race, a public sign hung out in the heavens that all may see and learn that God is good, a lesson from God, and of God, to men. In the last notice of the rainbow, it is seen over the head of the Lord when in power He asserts His claim to the earth.

"He will sweep the defiled scene with destruction, but even then, the old appointed token of divine goodness reappears (Rev. 10:1). Instead of the combination of colors to which we are accustomed in the rainbow the heavenly one over the throne is 'like in appearance to an emerald.' The beautiful green, the characteristic color of the plant world, and the only one that never tires the eye, is the chosen color of the rainbow beheld by John. The glorified saints will have constantly before their never-tiring gaze the rainbow in its entirety; the remembrance of God's grace to the earth even when He is about to deal with the race in judgment."

In Rev. 4:4 we see the overcomers of the Church Age sharing the throne of Christ.

"Around 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."

Let's start by identifying the twenty-four elders.

David divided the priesthood into 24 orders. There were hundreds of priests, and obviously all could not serve at once, so each order was represented by one.

Josephus, the Jewish historian, tells us his family was “of the first course of the four and twenty.” So, there was one high priest, 24 orders of priests with 24 who served as representatives of the whole.

In the New Testament believers are a spiritual house, a royal priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5, 9).

They are called “elders” which is the Greek word presbuteros, which is a technical term for officers and mature leaders in the church.

They have golden crowns. We’ll look at this more in a minute, but the victor’s crown is used throughout the New Testament for the rewards given to New Testament believers (1 Cor 9:25; 1 Thess. 2:19; 2 Tim. 4:8; James 1:12; 1 Pet. 5:4).

So, the elders would be functioning as representatives of the church; they are the spiritually mature believers in the church who committed to, and entered into, God’s full thought for us.

We can see an historical example of this in Ex. 32:25-28;

“Now when Moses saw that the people were unrestrained (for Aaron had not restrained them, to their shame among their enemies), then Moses stood in the entrance of the camp, and said, ‘Whoever is on the Lord’s side—come to me!’ And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together to him. And he said to them, Thus says the Lord God of Israel: ‘Let every man put his sword on his side, and go in and out from entrance to entrance throughout the camp, and let every man kill his brother, every man his companion, and every man his neighbor.’ So, the sons of Levi did according to the word of Moses. And about three thousand men of the people fell that day.”

The Levites of the dispensation of Israel were the overcomers of the Exodus generation, just as the 24 elders on the throne of heaven are the overcomers of the Church Age.

And in Rev. 5:8-9 we read this;

“Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they

sang a new song, saying, 'Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.'"

The millions of believers brought into the Church during this age who fought the good fight and finished their course, will sit with Christ and take their position with Him.

And, of course, as we've seen numerous of times in the past, "crowns" are tied exclusively to overcomers throughout the New Testament.

"Crowns" is stefanos and refers to the victor's crown and is the same term used throughout the New Testament for the rewards given to New Testament believers;

(1 Cor 9:25) "Everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown."

(2 Tim. 4:8) "There is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing."

(James 1:12) "Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life . . ."

(1 Pet. 5:4) ". . . when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away."

Eternal life is a gift of grace that all believers possess at the moment of salvation; crowns are attained through endurance, which only those who remain faithful to the end receive.

These elders are sitting, as one author puts it, "in repose".

So, we see a throne preparing for unprecedented wrath to be poured out on this rebellious earth, and the overcomers, in heaven, are fully at rest - totally trusting the wisdom and purpose of the King.

If you ever wonder why they are "resting" inwardly, now you know. We don't trust Him. Even though He's totally trustworthy, we don't believe Him so, as Heb. 3 & 4 puts it, we don't "enter the rest *by faith*".

We'll never rest based on our performance, but we can relax any time we want if we decide to trust our Lord.

Our place then, *and now*, is to rest in Him and trust Him as He often moves mysteriously in our lives.

He does things we don't understand, or things we don't like and we blame Him for our lack of inner rest.

The elders are not resting in the throne because God's program for earth is finished, but because they now *know God as He is*.

When we really understand Who God is and what He's doing in us, we can rest.

So, on earth is bitterness, chaos and rebellion; in heaven is celebration.

God's desire for us is that the world we live in would see in us the reality of heavenly citizenship. Regardless of the pressure that surrounded the life of Jesus, He delighted and rejoiced in His Father's will. How?

- Absolute inner assurance of His Father's faithfulness to Him, coupled with
- Unwavering personal dedication to, and trust in, His Father's interests

The challenge to us is to be at rest now in the midst of what we're going through, just as we will be in eternity - convinced that God is for us and that our happiness lies in trusting Him, not in our circumstances.

Those around the Throne finally and fully realize these truths, and we can share their rest - if we share their faith.

The white robes are explained in Rev. 19:7-8;

“Let us rejoice and be glad and give Him the glory. For the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His bride has made herself ready. She was given clothing of fine linen, bright and pure. For the fine linen she wears is the righteous acts of the saints.”

We'll look more at the marriage of the Lamb when we get to ch. 19.

Vs. 5 brings in something that is intended to prepare the 'atmosphere' of the remainder of Rev. through ch. 19.

“And from the throne proceeded lightning, thunder, and voices. Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.”

We saw in Rev. 1:4 that the seven Spirits of God is a symbol of the sevenfold ministry of the Holy Spirit.

But to understand the lightening, thunder and voices, we need to consider what this author wrote;

“These demonstrate that the throne is one of judgment, and that wrath is about to proceed from it. When God was about to visit Egypt's sins upon her, He sent thunder, and hail, and fire ran along upon the ground. And Pharaoh sent and said, ‘Intreat the Lord that there be no more voices of God.’ (Exodus 9:23; Exodus 9:28.) When God wished to show Israel the terribleness of His anger with sin, there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud. (Exodus 19:16.) When He sent forth His wrath upon the Philistines, the Lord thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines, and they were smitten before Israel.” (1 Samuel 7:10.) These instances show us, that this is not a throne of grace, but a throne of judgment. These lightnings, thunders, and voices, proceeding from it, tell of justice and wrath to be visited upon transgressors.”

This is extremely important to understand when we try to make sense of the judgments of Revelation chs. 6-19. We will see that in the midst of this, God’s grace is still reaching the lost, but this time is *not* primarily characterized by mercy, but by judgment.

The justice of God, which has been patient for 6000 years, is now to be unleashed on this planet to bring justice to those this world’s citizens have persecuted and killed.

Another reason this verse is a key interpretative verse is that it supplies the lens we have to see through to understand the symbols that will be used to describe this time on earth.

When we get to vs's 6-8 (which I'll read in a minute), this is neither the first nor last time in the Book of Revelation that there is a wide divergence of interpretations by various authors.

I'll do the same thing with this next part of Revelation that I'll be doing at other times before we're done – I'll give you what I believe are the best interpretations of this, but I'll also encourage you to go "Berean" on any passage you are unsure of and see where *you* land.

Here's the passage;

"Before the throne there was a sea of glass, like crystal (*we'll look more at this sea when we get to ch. 15*) And in the midst of the throne, and around the throne, were four living creatures full of eyes in front and in back. The first living creature was like a lion, the second living creature like a calf, the third living creature had a face like a man, and the fourth living creature was like a flying eagle. The four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying: 'Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come.'"

So, even though I found several interpretations, there were only two that seemed plausible to me.

Here's the first; it's from Walter Scott;

"In the four living creatures grouped together we have a complete and perfect view of God's judicial government. The symbols are taken from the most prominent animals. The first attribute of God's throne symbolized by a lion is majesty, strength, & omnipotence (Gen. 49:9; Dan. 7:4; Amos 3:8). The second symbol is an ox or calf in patient labor, working for the good of others (1 Cor. 9:9,10; Prov. 14:4). The third creature has the face of a man, denoting intelligence or reason (Job 9:24; Ezra 9:6). And the fourth symbol of a flying eagle presents keen sight and rapid action (Deut. 28:49; Job 9:26; Hab. 1:8; Job 39:27-30). These characteristics combined express the character of God's throne in relation to the earth. They are attributes of a judicial nature exercised through human or angelic instruments according to the sovereign plan of God. The living creatures represent the judicial authority of the throne. From the first mention of the cherubim in Gen. 3:24

till the last in Heb. 9:5, the same leading thought characterizes all the passages, namely, the wondrous attributes of God's government"

H.A. Ironside add this to Scott's explanation;

"It is well known that instead of four 'creatures' surrounding the throne, a better translation would be 'four living ones'. They are not created beings, for they are in the midst of the throne, where only Deity can dwell. They are linked with it round about. They represent the attributes of the living God. The lion is the well-known symbol of divine majesty. The young ox symbolizes the divine strength graciously serving man. The face of a man indicates intelligence and purpose; it tells us that Deity is no mere blind force, nor is He simply the 'great first cause' or impersonal law. The eagle suggests swiftness in detecting evil and executing judgment. The living ones are six-winged and full of eyes suggesting incessant activity and omniscience. 'The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good' (Proverbs 15:3). The creatures cry, 'Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come', (Revelation 4:8) for all God's attributes glorify the eternal Son."

Again, look at "when" and "where" these symbols surface. The time of Earth's greatest judgment and, vs. 6, ". . . in the midst (or center) of the throne." And the "multitude of eyes" represents omniscience; only One Who sees all, is qualified to judge.

The second possibility is by author Joseph Seiss. He has a segment in another article of his that draws heavily from Ezekiel's vision in Ezek. 1 & 10 which describes these creatures in a way that's nearly identical to John's description in Rev. 4:6-8. But since we are in a new dispensation, Seiss doesn't see the reference to the Old Testament creatures in Ezek. as binding on the book of Revelation.

Here's what he wrote;

"Some have taken them to be the same as the Elders. I cannot so understand it. They have, it is true, the same priestly censers as the Elders, and they sing the same song of a common redemption, kingdom, priesthood, and dominion over the earth. But they have, as a class, an individual distinctness, which is never confounded with the eldership. The

Elders have crowns and thrones distinct from the central throne; but these living ones have for their crown the very throne itself. They are joined to the throne; they are in the midst of it, and directly express it. They also lead the Elders in their adorations; for ‘whosoever they give glory and honor, and thanks to Him that sits on the throne,’ then it is that ‘the twenty-four Elders fall down before Him that sits on the throne, and cast their crowns before the throne’, giving glory, honor, and power to the Almighty Maker of heaven and earth. The ‘living ones’ have more the semblance of counsellors, the elders, that of executors, and the two together are the closest to God of all the redeemed. And these, my friends, are the dignities and glories to which you, and I, and all who hear the Gospel of Christ, are called and invited. There is not a prerogative of that celestial eldership—not an office or possession of these living ones—not a song they sing—not an attribute they wear—not a place they fill—which is not held out and offered to every one of us. Oh, the grandeur, the blessedness, the sublimity of the overtures of the Gospel of Christ! May the Lord fasten it on your soul, and give each of us grace to let go of friends, pleasures, comforts, home, country, freedom, life, everything, rather than let slip so blessed an opportunity for so great a prize!”

I personally lean toward the first interpretation, but the second one definitely wins the inspiration contest:)

Finally, here are the last two verses in this chapter – 10 & 11;

“The twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying: ‘You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created.’”

Humility mingled with praise.

If you think about it, both of these are extremely easy when you know the truth – that all we have is because of His love and grace.

Before we close, Ironside also helps us tie these two verses into the ‘divine attribute’ interpretation we looked at a minute ago;

“In chapter 4 we see the living ones linked especially with the throne. In chapter 5 they are most particularly linked with the 24 elders. We have suggested that they represent the divine attributes. During the present age and before the Lamb takes the book of judgment these are largely seen in angelic ministry. But ‘unto the angels He has not put in subjection the [age] to come’ (Hebrews 2:5). In that day God will work through His redeemed ones (His overcomers), hence the living ones join in the new song, voicing the joy of the saints in whom the divine glory will be displayed. The living creatures of Ezekiel’s vision and the cherubim on the mercy seat tell the same story.”

We saw earlier that the elders were sitting – now they fall down prostrate. What happened? An overwhelming seeing and realization of God’s character and being.

They cast their crowns before the throne for the same reason.

Because even though the crowns had been given to them by God for faithfulness as overcomers, when they see the worship of the living ones, they recognize it was all by God’s grace and that any crowns we have, we all owe to God alone.

He is the only One actually worthy, for all *we* are flows from what *He* is - as we, by faith, allow Him to reproduce His life in us through the Spirit.

I’m going to close with some comment by Sparks on Eph. 3:18-19 which reads;

“That you... may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height – to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.”

“Comprehending” without limitation is exactly what the elders are experiencing in ways we can’t even imagine now. Falling down to worship is not mandated, it’s spontaneous when we really see the wonder of Who God is.

Here’s what Sparks wrote;

“The mark of a life governed by the Holy Spirit is that such a life is continually and ever more and more occupied with Christ, that Christ is becoming greater and greater as time goes on. The effect of the Holy Spirit's work in us is to bring us to the shore of a mighty ocean which reaches far, far beyond our range, and concerning which we feel the depths, the fullness,

of Christ. If we live as long as ever man lived, we shall still be only on the fringe of this vast fullness that Christ is.

“Now, that at once becomes a challenge to us before we go any further. These are not just words. This is not just rhetoric; this is truth. Is this the kind of life that we know? That is to say, that we are drawn on and ever on. That is the mark of a life governed by the Holy Spirit. Christ becomes greater and greater as we go on. If that is true, well, that is the way of Life. If ever you and I should come to a place where we think we know all, we have attained, and from that point things become static, we may take it that that life has become suppressed.”