

# **OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN**

## **THE ETERNAL SOVEREIGN WITH TENDER AFFECTION – COREY STARK**

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### I. THE FATHER HEART OF GOD – DEVELOPING A BIBLICALLY HEALTHY VIEW

A. Today the Father heart of God is so misunderstood. Some having an *absent* father figure never received a positive view, while others having a *damaging* father figure received a negative view. In either case, whether a lack of positive input or an abundance of negative input, both obscure a healthy view of the Father's heart.

B. We're responsible to grow in the *self-revelation* of God in the Word of Truth so we're not vulnerable to our historical past, emotional fantasy or deception (Mt. 24:4). Deceivers aren't *only* unbelievers, but "Christians" using bible verses and operating in spiritual gifts with signs and wonders (Mt. 7:21-23; 2 Pet. 2:1-3)!

**Mt. 24:4 Take heed that no one deceives you. 5 For many will come in My name... and deceive many...**

C. Different streams in the Body of Christ emphasize different facets of the Father. Some emphasize His *eternal sovereignty* and power, while others His *tender affections* and love. However, we don't have to choose one above the other! A biblically healthy view must hold both aspects of His eternal nature in tension (Mt. 6:9; Lk. 11:2). He's not just tender, He's transcendent. He's not just powerful, He's personal. He uses His power as the eternal Sovereign *in heaven* to establish His plans for us as *our Father* with tender affection.

**Lk. 11:2 When you pray, say: Our Father [tender affection] in heaven [eternal sovereign]... (Mt. 6:9)**

### II. THE FATHER'S ETERNAL THRONE AND BEAUTY REALM OF GOD IN HEAVEN (REV. 4)

A. In Revelation 4 the Holy Spirit escorts John into the "*beauty realm*" surrounding the Father's throne, where he sees the eternal state of the sovereign Creator who is transcendent in beauty (Rev. 4:8). The Father is revealed as "*Him who sits on the throne*", highlighting His sovereignty (Rev. 4:9, 10; 5:13; 6:16; 7:10, 15) and "*Him who lives forever and ever*", highlighting His eternity (Rev. 4:9, 10; 5:14; 10:6; 15:7). Revelation 4 gives us the greatest revelation of the Father's person and surroundings found anywhere in Scripture.

**Rev. 4:8 Seraphim... do not rest... "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!"**

B. Revelation chapters 4-5 are one scene, which highlights the *Father's Throne* seventeen times. It gives us unprecedented insight into the throne room of God or "Holy of Holies", which is the central reality and interior view of God's heavenly temple (Heb. 8:2; 9:11; Rev. 3:12; 7:15; 11:19; 13:6; 14:15, 17; 15:5, 6, 8; 16:1, 17; 21:3) at the height of the eternal celestial city, called the New Jerusalem (Rev. 3:12; 21:2, 9, 22).

**Ps. 11:4 The Lord is in His holy temple, the Lord's throne is in heaven...**

C. The Father's royal court is the *fullness and perfection* of all beauty, glory and majesty (Ps. 50:2; 96:6, 9; 119:96), adorned with seraphim, cherubim, elders, saints and angels as His fire, light, wind, music and fragrance flow across the crystal sapphire sea. What the beautiful God set around Himself is strategically designed to reveal specific aspects of His beauty, glory and majesty to the rest of the created order.

**Ps. 50:2 Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God will shine forth. (Ps. 119:96)**

D. The Father's Throne is the *governmental epicenter* from which He rules the universe, changing the *times and seasons* (Eccl. 3:1-10; Dan. 2:21), and directing the course of *human history* (Job 34:21-30; Ps. 2:1-12; 94:10; 103:19; 119:89; Dan. 2:20-22; 4:17, 25, 34-37; 7:13-14, 18, 22, 27; Rom. 13:1-7; Rev. 6:1-8; 13:5-8), while effortlessly empowering and sustaining the *created order* (Isa. 40:12-17, 21-26; Mt. 5:45; Rev. 8:7-12).

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## III. FIVE CATEGORIES OF GOD’S BEAUTY EXPRESSED IN FIFTEEN THEMES (REV. 4:1-7)

A. Revelation 4:1-7 outline *five categories* of God’s beauty, each having *3 specific themes* that give insight into God’s beauty. Each of the fifteen themes are like “doorways” that the Holy Spirit will use to escort us into the deeper things of God as He did for John (Jn. 14:26; 15:26; 16:13-14; 1 Cor. 2:9-12; Eph. 1:17-19).

**Rev. 4:1 Behold, a door standing open in heaven... “Come up here, and I will show you things...”**

B. *The Beauty of the Godhead*: expressed in love, unity and order (Rev. 4:1-2). Together the *Father, Son* and *Holy Spirit* are the Godhead (Rom. 1:20; Acts 17:29; Col. 2:9). They are in perfect unity at all times (1 Jn. 5:17), being fully submitted to one another in eternal humility and love. To see them harmoniously operate together is inspiring, breathtaking and beautifully glorious. There is but *one God*, yet within this indivisible unity, there are *three distinct Persons*. The three are *never* separated or divided. They are *always* one.

**Rev. 4:1 And the first voice [Jesus] which I heard... saying, “Come up here, and I will show you things...”  
2 Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One [Father] sat on the throne.**

C. *The Beauty of God’s Person*: seen in *jasper, sardius* and *emerald rainbow* (Rev. 4:3). Glorious light filled with various colors radiate from God’s presence including the brightness of diamonds (*jasper*), fiery red glory (*sardius*), and the various colors of the emerald rainbow. *Jasper* describes His brilliant splendor emanating from uncreated light. *Sardius* describes His fiery desires, and the emerald rainbow reveals His mercy.

**Rev. 4:3 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.**

D. *The Beauty of God’s Partners*: seen in twenty-four elders *enthroned, robed* and *crowned* in the immediate presence of God surrounding His eternal Throne (Rev. 4:4). These are the highest governmental leaders of the redeemed in eternity. Causing once weak and broken saints like us to be enthroned in glory before Him, robed in light and crowned with gold gives us insight into the *transforming power* of God’s redemptive genius, as well as His desire for *intimate partnership* with His people forever. The Father, who possesses all things, desires to share His authority with human beings, as He imparts the very beauty He possesses (Isa. 61:3).

**Rev. 4:4 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. (Isa. 24:23)**

E. *The Beauty of God’s Power*: seen in glorious manifestations from His eternal Throne in *lightnings, thunderings* and *voices*, which include noises, sounds and music (Rev. 4:5a). These power manifestations reveal His thoughts and emotions to the saints, beautify His court and charge the atmosphere around Him. Beginning at God’s Throne, these manifestations of power, break out upon the earth at the close of each judgment series – *7 seals* (Rev. 8:5), *7 trumpets* (Rev. 11:19), *7 bowls* (Rev. 16:17-21).

**Rev. 4:5a And from the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices.**

F. *The Beauty of God’s Presence*: seen in the Spirit’s presence of “holy fire” on the *sapphire sea, saints* and *seraphim* (Rev. 4:5b-7; 15:2). The saints abide in resurrected glory forever (Dan. 12:3; Mt. 13:43; Acts 2:3).

**Rev. 4:5b Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God. 6 Before the throne there was a sea of glass, like crystal [mingled with flaming fire and saints Dan. 7:9; Rev. 15:2]. Around the throne, were four living creatures [seraphim “burning ones”] full of eyes in front and in back.**

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## IV. MAGNIFYING THE REVELATION OF GOD AS A TENDER FATHER

A. Jesus' *strong emphasis* on the Father heart of God to the Jewish people was startling and revolutionary. Although God was known in the O.T. as Father *doctrinally* (1 Chr. 29:10), it was not openly expressed *practically*. Israel sought to keep their distance from the God whom they knew as a *transcendent Creator* (Gen. 1-2) and *eternal Sovereign* (Isa. 6), who caused all to tremble before His majestic power (Ex. 19-20).

**1 Chr. 29:10 David said: "Blessed are You, Lord God of Israel, our Father, forever and ever.**

**Ex. 20:18 Now all the people witnessed the thunderings, the lightning flashes, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they trembled and stood afar off. 19 Then they said to Moses, "You speak with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die."**

B. Jesus taught that Israel's *Creator* was also their *Father* (Mt. 6:9). He desired to shift Israel's *fear-based* relationship with God to *faith-based*, giving them *confidence* to approach Him with boldness (Jn. 16:26; Heb. 4:16) and the *correct framework* to more clearly interpret the rest of His attributes, characteristics, qualities. God's nature as a consuming fire (Heb. 12:29) is interpreted much differently when you know Him as an approachable Father who delights in you, understanding that His powerful zeal is *for* you not *against* you!

**Jn. 16:26 In that day you will ask [the Father] in My name... 27 for the Father Himself loves you...**

**Heb. 4:16 Come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace... in time of need.**

C. Father is not just a *title* that God claims or *role* that He plays, but God *is* a Father at the very core of His being. He thinks, feels and relates to us *like* a Father who deeply enjoys us, because He *is* a Father (Rev. 4:11).

D. As the eternal Word of God (Jn. 1:1-3, 14; Rev. 19:13), Jesus came as the Father's divine communication of what He's thinking and feeling, as a living, breathing example of the Father's heart before all (Jn. 14:7-11). Jesus taught that the Father was intimately involved *not* distant, attentive to us *not* disconnected, engaged with us *not* apathetic, tender towards us *not* harsh, delighted in us *not* disappointed, joyful about us *not* angry, generous towards us *not* stingy and affectionate with us *not* cold.

**Jn. 14:7 "If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also... 8 Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father..." 9 Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"**

## V. THE ETERNAL SOVEREIGN IN HEAVEN IS OUR FATHER WITH TENDER AFFECTION

A. In Luke 15, we have the most dramatic and shocking view of the Father found anywhere in Scripture. Jesus portrays the eternal Sovereign who is *always seated* in heaven as *running* towards His returning children!

**Lk. 15:11 "A certain man had two sons. 12 And the younger said to his father, 'Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me.' 13 And the younger son... journeyed to a far country, and wasted his possessions with prodigal living... 17 But when he came to himself... 20 he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his FATHER saw him and had compassion and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. 21 And the son said, 'Father, I have sinned... and am no longer worthy to be called your son.' 22 But the father said, 'Bring out the best robe and put it on him, put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. 23 Let us eat and be merry; 24 for MY SON was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.'**

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B. Saw him a great way off: For the father to see his son a great way off, he had to be looking for him already! The father *really saw* his son, looking beyond the physical appearance into the very heart of the matter. Our Father created our very substance and truly knows who we are. We don't have to convince Him to like us!

***Jn. 21:17 He said to him the third time, "Simon... do you love Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" He said, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You."***

C. Had compassion: The father didn't stand afar off and condescendingly scold his son, but desired to relieve his suffering condition. It's one thing to desire to help others, but another to actually have the power to do it.

D. Ran: Jesus portrays the One *always seated* upon the throne as *running* (Rev. 4:9, 10; 5:13; 6:16; 7:10, 15)! The Father is gracious in nature, therefore He is always longing to extend grace and give mercy (Jas. 2:13).

***Joel 2:13 Return to the Lord... for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness...***

E. Fell on his neck: The father ran to cover his son from those ready to enforce justice. He was in essence saying, "If you want to harm him you must go through me first!" He also ran to cover his son in his weakness and restore him prior to others seeing his vulnerable, unkept and impoverished state (Gen. 9:20-23; Jn. 8:7).

F. Kissed him: The father wasn't embarrassed and withheld his affection. He openly gave it. Our Father in heaven wants the world to know that He loves us with the same quality and depth of love He has for Jesus!

***Jn. 17:23 That the world may know that... You [Father] have loved them as You have loved Me. (Jn. 15:9)***

G. No longer worthy: Due to the son's unwise decisions he hopes his father will receive him, even if reduced to only a servant. Sometimes we try to pay for our sin by renegotiating our relationship with God. However, once we repent, it would be absolute injustice for God to hold us accountable for sin Jesus already paid for.

***1 Jn. 1:9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us... and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.***

H. Best robe, ring and sandals: Notice the father doesn't even acknowledge the son's comment. The Father never relates to us according to our *performance*, which is weak at best, but according to our *identity*, which is perfect according to our original design! Our Father sees the finished product and takes pleasure in us now! The Father *instantly forgives* without probation and *fully restores* his son 100% not just "better than broken".

I. God uses His infinite power as the eternal Sovereign (Rev. 21:5) to establish the wisdom of His plans for us as a tender Father (Jer. 29:11; Rev. 21:7). Our Father is transcendent in power yet tender in affection!

***Rev. 21:3 "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people... 4 And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain..." 5 Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new... 7 He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son.***

J. Whether we lack a father, had an abusive father or have never connected with our heavenly Father, we have been given the Holy Spirit to escort us into the heart of our Abba Father, "daddy" (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6).

***Rom. 8:15 You received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." 16 The Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then... joint heirs with Christ...***

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