



Heavenly Elements *Radiance*

"For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. " 2 Corinthians 4:6

*"There was the true light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man."
John 1:9-10*

When something is illuminated attention is brought to it, it is revealed or made clearer, or an object is enlightened. When something radiates it emits light or splendor. Radiance is an expression of the nature of the object or person; is a glow that comes from within. Reflection, however, depends on an outside light source in order to shine forth. Jesus Christ is a radiant light that illumines the Father, because He is the radiance of the Father's glory. When we allow ourselves to reflect the light of Christ we too illumine the Father. We reflect His glory. What an awesome privilege to multiply the glory of the Father.

At the creation God said let there be light and there was light. Light shone out of the darkness by a single word. Jesus, through whom the world was created, came as the true light to enlighten every man and to demonstrate the glory of God. The same God who spoke light out of darkness by a single word is also the one who shines in our hearts. We are his chosen, yet imperfect vessels, made to show forth the light of the knowledge of God through the gospel. We reflect our Master's radiance which illumines the heart of man.

Jesus is the light of the world and so are we.

In the history of Christian art there was first the freedom to depict Jesus Christ as a man. These unnamed artists shunned the criticism of the Jews who raised the Second Commandment against any graven image, embracing the truth that the Word had become flesh and dwelt among us. They decorated the walls of the catacombs beneath the streets of Rome with the image of Jesus Christ as the Good Shepherd. In following centuries, Christian artists attempted to show the divinity of Christ and the holiness of his followers, those whom had set themselves apart for His service. How did they attempt to show the divine? Borrowing from pagan art, they began to make use of the halo, or nimbus, above the heads of the figures they painted. A halo is a white or gold circular disc of light used to depict refracted or rayed light suggesting a heavenly being or the crowns of royalty. I believe these early artists chose to express divinity in this way because the word picture "light" is used so often in the scriptures to express the glory of God and the revelation of the gospel to a darkened world. The earliest appearance of the halo in Christian art was used only of Christ when seated on the Throne of God.

"And He (Jesus Christ) is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature." KJV

Hebrews 1:3

The Amplified Version puts it this way:

"He (Jesus Christ) is the sole expression of the glory of God, the Light being, out-ricing or radiance of the divine. He is the perfect imprint and very image of God's nature."

The KJV scripture states that Jesus Christ is the brightness of the glory of God. The Greek word used here, *apaugasma*, means reflected brightness. It is used of Christ in that He perfectly reflects the majesty of God. He is the absolute authentic representation of God. His brightness is a shining forth, a light coming from a luminous body. (Vines)

In the window we have chosen to celebrate the truth that Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man. In doing so we made use of three different forms of radiance. We borrowed from tradition and drew from the scriptures with the goal in mind of showing the glory of God in the person of Jesus Christ.



Around Christ's head is the traditional aureole-type halo. There is a cross within a circular halo that signifies the redemption or reconciliation of God and man through the cross. The halo with a cross is only used to depict the person of Jesus Christ. The archangels in our window wear the simple halo. The heavenly host and saints in Christ traditionally may have the simple halo or an orb of light to demonstrate that they reflect the light of God. This truth is beautifully expressed in Isaiah.

"Arise, shine ; for your light has come, And the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. "For behold, darkness will cover the earth, And deep darkness the peoples; But the Lord will rise upon you, And His glory will appear upon you. "And nations will come to your light, And kings to the brightness of your rising. " *Isaiah 60:1-3*



As far as we have the knowledge of God in us, and the favor of God towards us, our light has come. What is the duty which the rising of this light calls for... The children of light ought to shine as lights in the world. If God's glory be seen upon us to our honor, we ought not only with our lips, but in our lives, to return the praise of it to his honor.

Matthew Henry



Our window also portrays Jesus Christ with a luminous radiance that seems to come out from Him. This type of aureole traditionally has appeared as streams or bursts of light. The radiance is seen as circling the body and emerging from it. It can be the traditional white or gold, or colored like a rainbow. Reserved for divinity, symbolic of supreme power, this type of radiance has been used to represent the persons of the Trinity. The brightness of the clothing against the redness of Christ's robe was an attempt to make the figure of Christ in our window appear luminous and radiant. Instead of depicting streams of light, the sunlight that comes naturally through the window strengthens the appearance of the radiance that seems to originate from Jesus' very being. This type of radiance is described in Habakkuk and Ezekiel.

His splendor covers the heavens, And the earth is full of His praise. His radiance is like the sunlight *Habakkuk 3:3-4*

"And on that which resembled a throne, high up, was a figure with the appearance of a man. Then I noticed from the appearance of His loins and upward something like glowing metal that looked like fire all around within it, and from the appearance of His loins and downward I saw something like fire; and there was a radiance around Him.

Ezekiel 1:26



Further on in Ezekiel 1 we find the description of the third type of radiance that we have made use of in the window. It is that of the rainbow radiance. Its color fills the top half of the inner window proclaiming the glory of Jesus Christ and the faithfulness of God

As the appearance of the rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so was the appearance of the surrounding radiance. Such was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord. And when I saw it, I fell on my face and heard a voice speaking. *Ezekiel 1:26-28*

When the rainbow appears around the throne of God it communicates God's omnipresence and eternal peace. The rainbow that appears above the throne of God was the symbol God chose as the sign of the covenant with Noah. In Genesis 9 we see that the rainbow is a reflection of the heavenly rainbow. God said to Noah that He would set His bow in the clouds, to remind the world of His faithfulness. It is something given from the heart of God, a glimpse of His glory, a promise.

"And God said, "This is the sign of the covenant which I am making between Me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all successive generations; I set My bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a sign of a covenant between Me and the earth. And it shall come about, 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 never again shall the water become a flood to destroy all flesh. "
Genesis 9:12-15

Why did God give the rainbow as the sign of the covenant? After months adrift in the flood water, not knowing what the future would hold, Noah was finally able to leave the ark and once again stand on dry land. He built an altar to the Lord and offered a sacrifice of thanksgiving out of a true gratefulness to the Lord. It is the first mention of an altar being built in the scripture, (Kim Hall, In the Days of Noah be Noah)

" 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. And the Lord smelled the soothing aroma: and the Lord said to Himself, "I will never again curse the ground on account of man, for the intent of man's heart is evil from his youth; and I will never again destroy every living thing, as I have done. " Genesis 8:18-22

The Lord was pleased with Noah's sacrifice. He accepted it and established a covenant with Noah, all mankind, and every creature on the earth. The first altar was a foreshadowing of when Jesus Christ would make Himself the final sacrifice and present Himself before the throne of God. God accepted His sacrifice on our behalf; it was sufficient to atone for the sin of mankind. The Father was well pleased with the Son. Because Jesus Christ's sacrifice was accepted He is seated at the right hand of the Majesty on High. The rainbow above the throne of God is now an expression of God's pleasure in His Son and a sign of His faithfulness and compassion to mankind. In Christ, God chose to redeem a people for Himself. Jesus came to save the world, not to condemn it; a full and true expression of the heart of God towards man.

"And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. "
Hebrews 1:3



The Crown

The crown is an ancient and universal symbol of royalty and supreme position. With few true kingdoms in our modern world we fail to comprehend the implications of the role of a king in our lives. Royal heirs have for the most part been set aside as figureheads with little political power. This was not true in the ancient world. The king's authority was absolute, his words meant life or death. In the window above Christ's head is the crown, a declaration of His Kingship and supreme position. It is more than a decorative element.



We had Revelation 14:14 in mind when we decided to include the crown in the window's composition. The Greek word used in that verse for crown is *stephanos*. It is a crown that marks royalty or someone in an exalted rank. It is often pictured as a laurel wreath or garland which in ancient times was given as a prize to victors in public games. It symbolizes triumph, life and joy. In the window, Christ's crown is cast in gold and inlaid with precious jewels. At first glance, I thought the diadem or royal crown was a more appropriately word for His crown. I was curious when I discovered the word used here was the victor's crown. *Stephanos* seemed too common a crown. Then I read that the use of *stephanos* as Christ's royal crown implied that Christ wore a better crown. The diadem or royal crown never implies anything more than the authority of the ones who wears it. It is symbolic of an earthly king and worn by the dragon in the book of Revelation. *Stephanos*, a victor's crown, is the word used to describe the crown of thorns.

"And I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and sitting on the cloud was one like a son of man, having a golden crown on His head, and a sharp sickle in His hand." Rev 14:14

It was for the crime of claiming His kingship that our Lord's enemies were able to obtain the sentence of death. The crown of thorns was part of the public humiliation of Christ. It was meant to mock Him and inflict pain.

"And they began to accuse Him, saying, 'We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, and saying that He Himself is Christ, a King.' And Pilate asked Him, saying, 'Are You the King of the Jews?' And He answered him and said, 'It is as you say.'" Luke 23:2-3

"And the soldiers wove a crown of thorns and put it on His head, and arrayed Him in a purple robe; and they began to come up to Him, and say, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' and to give Him blows in the face." John 19:2-3

"In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes, were mocking Him among themselves and saying, 'He saved others; He cannot save Himself. 'Let this Christ, the King of Israel, now come down from the cross, so that we may see and believe!' And those who were crucified with Him were casting the same insult at Him." Mark 15: 31-32

Jesus Christ gladly wore the crown of thorns while He bled and died for us. In His triumph over death, when He was raised from the dead, the crown that was meant as scorn and shame was turned into the victor's crown. It a crown He shares with us, a crown He obtained for us. Throughout the scriptures the crown is used as a reward to the faithful. It is a blessing given to honor God's faithful servants, a reward of the righteous in Christ. Our crowns demonstrate the truth that God see us not only as His children, but as co-heirs with Christ (Romans 8: 16) Our crowns are received when we patiently endure and faithfully serve as Christ did. They show us that we will share in His glory.

Our crowns one day will be laid at Jesus' feet. Rev 4:4 describes the throne room of God with 24 elders seated about the throne, *"clothed in white garments, and golden crowns on their heads."* In verse 10, the 24 elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne. They worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, *"Worthy art Thou, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for Thou didst create all things, and because of Thy will they existed, and were created."*

The 24 elders represent the whole church of God. They sit before the throne, a place of honor, rest and satisfaction. They are near to God, able to enjoy His presence and gaze upon His majesty. They are clothed in white raiment because they share in Christ's righteousness and holiness. They have golden crowns on their heads, signifying the glory they have in their Lord. They cast their crowns before Him knowing it is better to own a part of Christ's glory than to have obtained their own.

Crowns in Scripture

Crown of Life

Given to those who are faithful until death. Rev 2:10
Given to those who persevere under trial. James 1:2

Crown of Glory

Given to those who are faithful shepherds over their flock. 1 Peter 5:4

Crowned with Glory and Majesty

Of man as created by God to rule over the earth
Psalm 8:4-6

Stones of a Crown

Of His people Zechariah 9: 16

Crown of Righteousness

To those who have fought the good fight, finished the course, kept the faith, and all who have loved His appearing. 2 Tim 4:7-8

Crown of Exaltation

The Church of Christ, you are our hope or joy or crown of exaltation 1 Thess 2:19

Crown of Beauty, Garland of Grace

Given by wisdom if you embrace her Proverbs 4:7
Spoken of God's redeemed Isaiah 62:3

The Throne of God



"Heaven is My throne, And earth is the footstool of My feet" Acts 7:49

In the fourth chapter of the book of Revelation, John wrote about a vision of the heavenlies. He had just received the letters to the seven churches. Then, he looked and before him was a door standing open in heaven. With an invitation "to come up here," John found himself in the Spirit and before him was a throne.

And He who was sitting was like a jasper stone and a sardius in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, like an emerald in appearance. Rev 4:3

Arrayed in wondrous light and beauty was the scene before John. The One who sat on the throne had the appearance of the brilliance of precious stones. Reflecting His glory was a rainbow that surrounded the throne. There were seven lamps and seven spirits and "a sea of glass clear as crystal." Lightening flashed above the throne. There were worshipers, both saints dressed in white with golden crowns upon their heads and beings described as the Four Living Creatures called cherubim. And at the center of it all was the Throne of God and its occupant.

We know from Hebrews that it is Christ who sits at the right hand of the Throne of God, indicating He is in the place of authority, rule, and power.

"Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." Hebrews 12:2

From ancient times a throne was a seat elevated on a platform. It was a royal chair and considered a seat of dignity, a place of power and authority. In Biblical times, a throne was occupied by royalty or the High Priest. A throne embodies dignity, majesty, authority, power, dominion, honor and glory.

The use of a chair in a country where the usual postures were squatting and reclining was at all times regarded as a symbol of dignity. Smith's Bible Dictionary

When the throne is spoken of as the Throne of God it is described as high and lifted up. Christ as its occupant is King of Kings, Lord of Lords, our great High Priest. He transforms the Throne of God into the heavenly temple with the true mercy seat.

"We have such a high priest, who has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a minister in the sanctuary, and in the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man." Hebrews 8:1

Our connection to the throne of God is Jesus Christ Himself. In Christ, the Throne of God becomes the Throne of Grace. When Jesus overcame death by offering Himself a sinless sacrifice, once and for all, and died and rose victorious over death, He made a way so we can come boldly to the Throne. He lives as mediator, redeemer and priest in continual and eternal intercession. Jesus is grace itself.

"Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Hebrews 4:14

"But He, on the other hand, because He abides forever, holds His priesthood permanently. Hence, also, He is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them." Hebrews 7:24

Contemplate Christ Jesus as intercessor and His efforts on our behalf and you will wonder how we could ever survive our time on earth, much less thrive and serve the Living God without Him. He did not save us and leave us here without access to Himself or the Father. Through prayer we have constant access. Although we can model Christ and the saints who came before us, we are inadequate to pray as we should. But looking to Him who is seated at the Throne of Grace, we shift our view of prayer. If I trust Christ as intercessor, I can be sure my requests will be heard. He will change them to reflect the will and heart of the Father. Our part in prayer is to change of the attitude of the heart. What is required is a willingness to change our view of life. It requires a deeper trust in God's sovereign will. If we allow the Father and Son to work on our behalf, for our best, and according to the purposes of God, we find ourselves in a place of great security. We shift our focus from earthly things to heavenly vistas. We let go of our wants and desires. We loosen our hold on our dreams and allow the Father to remake us and guide us into true fulfillment and abundant life.

Christ's as our intercessors one focus is to redeem the whole world. His ultimate desire is to place His church before the throne perfectly whole and restored. In John 17 we find Christ's Priestly Prayer. It is a window into the heart of our intercessor. His prayers before the Father are given on behalf, to those who have been given to Him, not for the world.

*"I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom Thou hast given Me; for they are Thine."
John 17 9*

I can't help but think the prayers Jesus Christ prayed for His disciples and for us on that night before he was betrayed are but a glimpse of His prayers for us in heaven to this very day. He prayed for His disciples' protection by the power of God's name, that they be kept from the evil one. He prayed they would receive the full measure of joy in understanding He was going to the Father. He prayed for their sanctification and that they might remain on earth to be sent into the world.

He prayed for us to be one so the world may believe that He was sent from God, demonstrating to the world that He loves us. Jesus expressed to the Father His great desire for us to be in His presence so we may see His glory. He prayed that the Father would continue to make Himself know to us so His love would be seen in us. I see in His prayer a struggle between His desire for us to be with Him and the privilege He gives us in sharing in His work. It helps me to understand it is only in His sovereignty that He either allows us to continue to labor or receives us into His glory. This has changed my view of death. From the vantage point of the Throne of Grace, Christ is our connection to our true purpose in life and His glory. It makes me agree with Paul in that,

"For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Phillipians 1: 21

The Crystal Sea

"Then God said, "Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." And God made the expanse, and separated the waters which were below the expanse from the waters which were above the expanse; and it was so. And God called the expanse heaven."
Genesis 1:6-8

"Spread out above the heads of the living creatures was what looked like an expanse, sparkling like ice, and awesome."
Ezekiel 1:22 NIV



"And before the throne there was, as it were, a sea of glass like crystal" Rev 4:6

The crystal sea whose vast expanse lies before the Throne of God gives us insight into how it is we can approach the holiness of God.

In Genesis 1:6-8 the word "expanse" was used to describe in creation the division between the upper and lower waters. The description of the throne of God in Ezekiel 1 shows the expanse separating the living creatures from the glory of the One who sits upon the throne. These verses give light to the idea of a dividing line or separation in heaven. Creation is separated from the holiness of God. This idea is further developed when you understand the crystal appearance of the expanse is symbolic for purity.

In the earthly temple, which is a picture or type of the Throne of God, there was a great brass laver. It was there that the priest washed themselves before they entered into service in the House of God. The vessel of water was called the "sea". This suggests the need for purification in order to serve before the throne. The ceremonial washing by the priests is an earthly picture of the crystal waters in heaven.

"Thou shalt also make a laver of brass, and his foot also of brass, to wash withal: and thou shalt put it between the tabernacle of the congregation and the altar, and thou shalt put water therein. For Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet there at: When they go into the tabernacle of the congregation, they shall wash with water, that they die not; or when they come near to the altar to minister, to burn offering made by fire unto the LORD:"
Exodus 30 18- 21

In the New Covenant the water that washes us clean is the blood of Jesus Christ. Those who wish to enter His Presence in heaven, must be washed in the blood of Jesus.

The Sea of Glass is the pure, deep and wide, the calm and clear majesty of the Lord's rule and authority. The depth and width of the expanse expresses the mysteries of the mercy and grace of God. It's transparency points us to the omniscient nature of the Father before whom all things are laid bare. The calmness of the surface described as "like glass" is the Gospel of Peace which brings the fruits of the spirit. It's solid nature is the firm foundation on which we are able to stand by faith before the throne.

In Rev 15:2 we see the sea mingles with fire. The presence of fire adds to the image of purification. Water is the element of baptism which symbolizes cleansing into newness of life. Fire is the element of the purifying and empowering nature of the Holy Spirit. Both water and fire are symbolic of the Holy Spirit.

"And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire" Rev 15:2

Within the image of the crystal sea we have the picture of the purity and holiness of God and the separation that results from it. We also see the means provided for by which a man may stand upon the water, like Christ walked upon the sea. Our foundation is the righteousness of Christ whose blood has cleansed us from sin. This sacrifice for us bridges the expanse of heaven and allows us into the presence of God.