



## FACE-TO-FACE

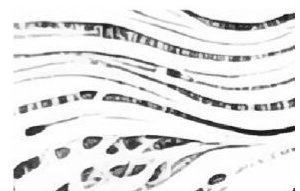
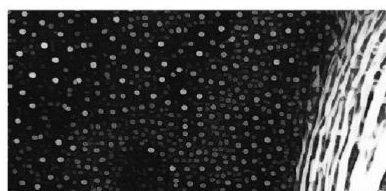
We continue our conversation, exploring what worship looks like in heaven and how we can authentically apply those principles in our lives here on earth. Revelation 4 gives us a glimpse of worship in the throne room, with four living creatures worshipping around the throne, each revealing something of the nature of the One they are worshipping. Each one represents something of the heart of a worshipper, and in this session, our attention will be on the worshipper who has the Face of a Man.

Jesus was both fully God and fully Man. He experienced the same challenges we do. Luke's Gospel tells us time and again how Jesus was 'moved with compassion' when He met someone who had been hurt or disadvantaged. He knows what it feels like to be despised and rejected. He is still moved with compassion by our lostness, pain and brokenness. But He knows that unless we choose to look away from our pain and sorrow, we will probably never lock eyes with Him, the 'Man of sorrows' who was battered and bruised so that we could find healing (Isaiah 53).

The worshipper in the throne room with the face of a man is inviting us to turn our eyes upon Jesus, to look full in His wonderful face. There's no condemnation in His gaze, only GRACE and TRUTH (John 1:14). Jesus came to close the distance between us, making us 'one'; He has made it possible for me to enjoy a lifetime of intimacy with Him.

The concept of 'intimacy with God' can be uncomfortable for some of us. But here's the thing: God desires intimacy with you. Nothing about you can surprise Him; nothing you do can get Him to love you more – or less – than He already does. As **Father**, He sees you as His very own child. You belong in His strong, protective arms, safe in His embrace. That's where He wants you to live. The **Holy Spirit** wants you to thrive in the atmosphere of His wrap-around presence. He wants to fill you to the brim with His love and joy. **Jesus**, your Heavenly Bridegroom, sees you as **His equal**, mature enough to engage with Him at the deepest level of His desire. His invitation to intimacy with Him will never leave you feeling worthless, violated, or worse about yourself. Intimacy with Him will always reinforce His view of your value, confirming your true identity.

As long as guilt and shame are the loudest voices in shaping our understanding of 'self', our relationship with God will never really flourish. An identity that's rooted in guilt/shame causes us to look down at Jesus' feet – like someone with an 'orphan' mentality – feeling 'I don't belong here; I don't deserve to be loved'. But Jesus wants us to 'lock eyes' with Him, to gaze upon Him, looking into His face, giving Him our full attention. He wants us to 'behold Him with an unveiled face' so that His love can awaken us to the truth of who we are (Isaiah 1:18; Ephesians 5:25-27; Esther 2:12). The Psalmist knew this – in YOUR light WE see light (Psalm 36:9b); I will behold Your face in righteousness; I will be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness (Psalm 17:15). When we see HIM for who HE is, we begin to grasp who WE are – because we behold IN HIM our 'original face' (James 1:23-25).





Authentic worship flows from the discovery of our new self – our true self – in Him. In worship, we are being more ‘authentic’, more ‘true-to-self’ than any other human experience we could have.

All four Gospels include an account of a woman pouring out expensive anointing oil on Jesus (Matthew 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9; Luke 7:37-50; John 12:1-8). Those who had a sense of financial value couldn’t believe the way such precious ointment was being ‘wasted’. But this act of worship was her way of valuing the One who had radically restored her sense of value. The opinions of the important people in that room were irrelevant to her. She was responding to the opinion of the One who had restored her value with His love. By pouring out the most valuable item she possessed on Jesus, she was declaring her absolute trust in Him for her future. How does one not give in worship (worth-ship) once you have discovered His worth?

Ephesians 2:10 reminds us that we have become His workmanship, a re-created people (created in Christ), destined to fulfil the destiny He has given each of us; we are joined (linked or connected) to Jesus, the Anointed One. Even before we were born, His plan for humanity was and is connection – intimacy – face-to-face with Him!

Every believer is a New Creation in Christ, a different version of the same kind of being. We may each have a different physical form, but we all have His spiritual DNA because we have become partakers of His divine nature (2 Peter 1:4). We are the righteousness of God in Christ (2 Cor 5:21); we are sons and daughters of a Heavenly Father; we belong to Him (Rom 8:17). We are the Bride of Christ, our Heavenly Bridegroom (John 3:29; Ephesians 5:22-33); we stand unashamed with ‘unveiled faces’ in His presence (Gen 2:25; 2 Cor 3:18). He is not ashamed to be associated with us (Heb 2:11); in fact, He delights in us (Zeph 3:17). He sees us as one of His own kind (Eph 5:30).

In Christ, we have been redeemed and restored, washed in the blood, repositioned as ‘new creatures’ to engage with Him from a whole new place of favour (Ephesians 2:4-10) – beholding Him with ‘unveiled faces’ (2 Corinthians 3:18 / Matthew 27:51 / Hebrews 10:20).

He desires an intimate relationship with you. He desires to be face-to-face with you, locking eyes with you, revealing His heart for you, to you. He adores you and loves you unconditionally. Drop the mask; let go of the veil ...

