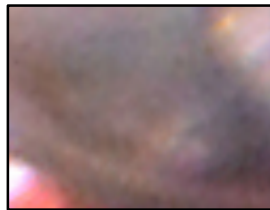


ONLY A REFLECTION

Like most girls, I enjoy a good fairy tale. There is nothing, absolutely nothing, however, like life in the Lord. A little over a year and a half ago, I went outside to photograph buttons. One would have thought that I had stepped into a magical garden where pumpkins turn into carriages, yet there was nothing magical that day. It was simply an ordinary girl taking a picture of an ordinary button on an ordinary branch, while her extraordinary God shined His glorious light into her life.

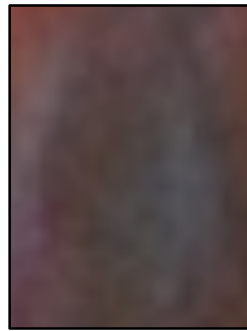
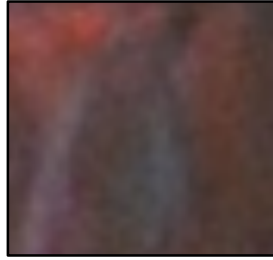
A year has passed since the discovery of the four living creatures. My mind went tilt when I first saw the lion looking at me. I wondered, “How could this be possible?”



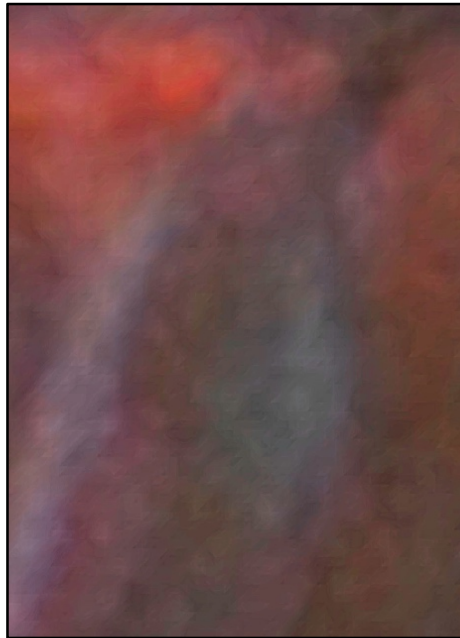
As my journey through God's photos has become somewhat normal in my life, there are times when I still stop and think, "What on earth am I doing?" People thought Noah was crazy for building an ark, so I suppose some may think I'm a little strange for examining the pictures. That's okay, though. I really don't mind. I am not embracing a fairy tale. Rather, my goal is to interpret each picture in light of God's Word. Perhaps you may see or know things I have yet to understand. I am grateful, however, for the opportunity to learn more about God's eternal plan.

The apostle Paul explains that "now we see only a reflection as in a mirror" (1 Corinthians 13:12). The King James Version calls it a "glass," also known as a "looking glass." Mirrors during Bible times were usually made from polished brass. When a woman looked at herself, the reflection was imperfect. It was blurry and incomplete. Our ideas about God and Heaven are like those old-fashioned mirrors. We do not see the Lord as fully or as clearly as we will in His eternal kingdom. When that time arrives, Paul tells us, we will see Him face to face.

When I first discovered the profile of the Lord Jesus, I was so excited. I walked around my house very quickly with a little skip to my step. In the photograph, the Lord is wearing a royal purple robe with a hint of red and blue. Then, within the blue, there is the image of the Ancient of Days, which many people believe is the Heavenly Father. In John 10:30, Jesus says, "I and the Father are one."



When Jesus spoke to His disciples, He talked about His Father's house and how it has many rooms (John 14:2). Thomas worried that the Lord was going there without them (vv. 3-5). How would they know the way?



Jesus' response helps us understand the photo. In verse 6, He tells them, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

Perhaps the most well-known verse in the Bible is John 3:16. It says, “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” Without Jesus, we are all separated from God because of our sin. However, through the death and resurrection of God’s dear Son, we can find forgiveness. It is a free gift that we must accept so we can go to Heaven when our time comes. We cannot earn forgiveness by doing good things (Ephesians 2:9). There isn’t enough good in and of ourselves to make up for any bad that we have done or have thought about doing. Life, eternal life, can only be found in Jesus Christ.

Verse 17 tells us that God did not send His Son into the world to condemn it, but to save the world through Him. It is through Jesus that we have so many things. “For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible...all things have been created through him and for him” (Colossians 1:16). Even the photographs have been given to us from the Lord and for the Lord, for His kingdom. May we understand His great love for us and all of creation as we look at each picture in light of His precious Word.

Jesus is the greatest gift because He gives us access to the Father in Heaven. Accepting Jesus as Savior and Lord is the first step. In Romans 10:9-10, it says, “If you declare with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” It is important, of course, to understand the message of

salvation before we continue with our study of God's kingdom. It is His hope that no one would perish, but that everyone would come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9). He wants us to turn from our evil ways and run to Jesus.



When my husband and I minister to new Christians, we emphasize accepting Jesus as Savior. We believe He died for our sins and arose from the dead so we can have eternal life. From that moment on, we live the life He has given us through His Lordship. When we say, "Jesus is Lord," we proclaim that He is the Lord of our life, our day, our hopes, our dreams, our failures, our successes, difficult situations, happy moments, everything! His name is greater than all of these things. He will be with us through it all.

You may think, "Well, I'm not so bad. I try to do what is right and good. I'm sure I'll make it to Heaven someday." I used to think this way as well. Proverbs 20:6 tells us that a man will proclaim his own goodness. However, we know from Scripture that no one is righteous (Romans 3:10).

If you have yet to receive Jesus as your Savior and Lord, and you would like to, this would be a good time. According to 2 Corinthians 6:2, today is the day of salvation. The best prayer to pray is one from your heart.

King David's Prayer (Psalm 51:1-12)

“Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your unfailing love;
according to your great compassion
blot out my transgressions.

Wash away all my iniquity
and cleanse me from my sin.

For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is always before me.
Against you, you only, have I sinned
and done what is evil in your sight;
so you are right in your verdict
and justified when you judge.

Surely I was sinful at birth,
sinful from the time my mother conceived me.
Yet you desired faithfulness even in the womb;
you taught me wisdom in that secret place.
Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean;
wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.

Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones you have crushed rejoice.

Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity.

Create in me a pure heart, O God,
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

Do not cast me from your presence
or take your Holy Spirit from me.

Restore to me the joy of your salvation
and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.”

Silver & Gold

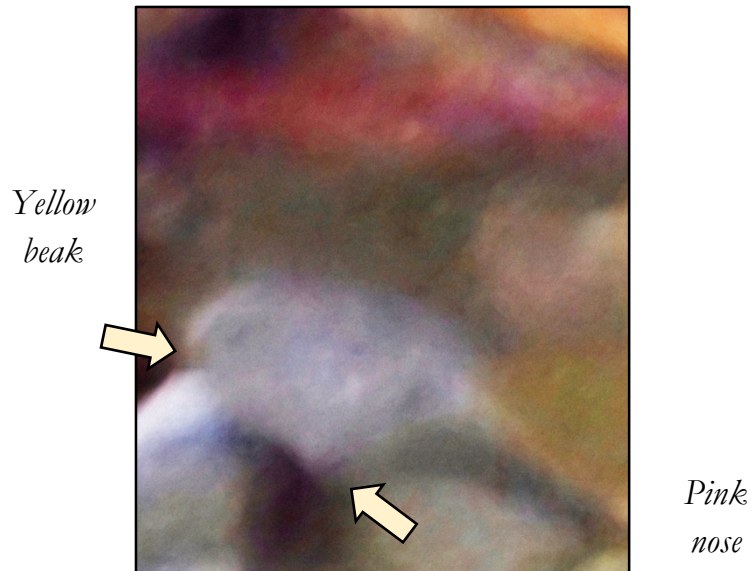
Like many Minnesotans, we have a cabin on one of the state's beautiful 10,000 lakes. When I was a little girl, I used to enjoy waking up to the gentle coo-oo of the mourning dove. It has been my favorite bird for as long as I can remember. Thankfully, our North Carolina backyard receives daily visits from the dove as well as many other kinds of birds. Each one is certainly special and dearly loved in its own way.

When I wrote *Stained Glass, The New Jerusalem*, I focused on seven of the twelve miracle pictures. Within the last month or so, I have begun to look at the remaining five. Each picture shows lovely illustrations of God's creation. For example, Ezekiel 47:9 describes the millennial kingdom. It tells us that "swarms of living creatures will live wherever the river flows."

When we look at the images within the pictures, please keep in mind that they are like impressionistic paintings. We do not get to see every detail, but the Lord has given us a glimpse into His kingdom to help us imagine its beauty. Whether it is His millennial reign or the eternal kingdom, I do not know. It could be both. I tend to think that it is the moment where the millennial kingdom transitions into eternity. So, with that being said, let's take a look and see what the Lord has to show us.

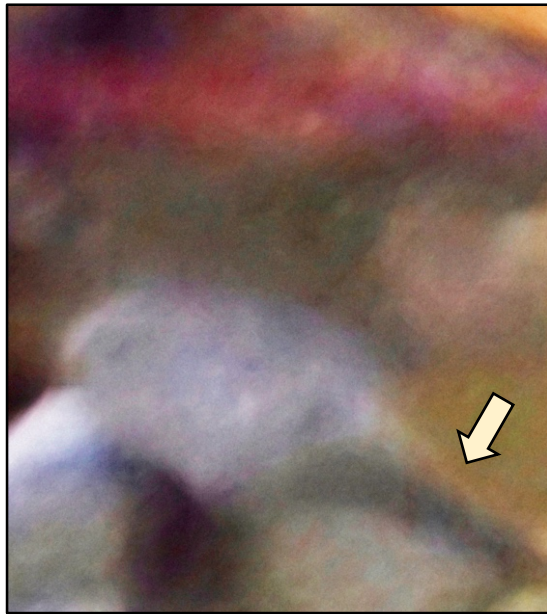
I have discovered several birds within the photos, one of which I found in the five remaining pictures. It will be our

focus for this chapter. First of all, the animals often look young in God's illustrations. This particular bird reminds me of a young dove. When a dove sleeps, her neck seems to disappear as she rests her head near her breast.



A few years ago, I had a dream about a bird that glistened with silver and gold. I rarely receive dreams from the Lord, but this one seemed special. At the time, I did a little research and came across Psalm 68:13. It says, "Even while you sleep among the sheep pens, the wings of my dove are sheathed with silver, its feathers with shining gold." Please note the face of a lamb right below the dove. They flow into one another. God's artwork is like that. Sometimes there will be layers of images, or embedded images, intricately woven together. That's not to say that one animal evolves or comes from another. Rather, it demonstrates how all life flows from God. Here we see creatures coming back to life in the river.

The dove's wings look like silver and its tail like gold. In the New Jerusalem, the Lord's glory will be extremely bright (Revelation 21:23). We will not need the sun or the moon since the light of the Lord will shine on the city and beyond. Verse 24 tells us that "the nations will walk by its light." The light from God, from within His city, will shine out to all the nations. When it shines on His creation, it will make everything even more beautiful. The colors on the dove will glisten in the glorious Son. Who knows, perhaps the dove will have real silver and gold on its feathers in the eternal kingdom. I wouldn't be surprised.



*Gold
tail*

The dove often represents the Holy Spirit in Scripture, while the lamb represents the Son. Both the dove and the lamb were a part of temple sacrifices. Thankfully, the animals can rest peacefully in the eternal kingdom since all sacrifices will be complete.

Faith, Hope & Love

In one of her poems, Emily Dickinson tells us that “hope is the thing with feathers.” If there is one thing we need to perch in the soul, it certainly is hope. When combined with faith and love, we find a much-needed trio for this present age.

Interestingly enough, as we continue to read through First Corinthians, we learn that “these three remain: faith, hope and love.” The apostle Paul explains that “the greatest of these is love” (1 Corinthians 13:13). So, why is love the greatest? Any number of reasons may come to mind or perch in the soul. When I looked up the word “greatest” in the Strong’s Concordance, I was pleasantly surprised to find the following definition: “larger (literally or figuratively, specifically in age):—elder, greater (-est), more.” Basically, in a nutshell, or in this case an eggshell, love has always existed and it always will. It is eternal because God is eternal. And God is love (1 John 4:8, 16). We need faith and hope in this life. When all things are complete, however, when we see Jesus face to face, our faith and hope will find fulfillment. When that day arrives, we will simply embrace His love in its fullness.



When Jesus who is Faithful and True returns, He will ride on a white horse (Revelation 19:11). If you look to the right of the lightened dove and lamb in the picture, you will see a white horse. It could be a part of the Lord's heavenly army, but if not, it is still one of His precious creatures.



A possible angel has his wings folded back at the bottom of the illustration. He is looking down.