

KINGDOM BIBLE STUDIES

"Teaching the things concerning the Kingdom of God..."

FROM THE CANDLESTICK

TO THE THRONE

Book Two

The Seven Churches

By J. Preston Eby

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Chapter 28

The Seven Churches Of Asia

"What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia...the mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches" (Rev. 1:11,20).

The church means the "called-out." Church is ekklesia in the Greek which is a compound noun made up of ek, meaning "out," and klesia, meaning "called." When joined together we have the literal meaning in English of "out-called." The word occurs 115 times in the Greek text. In the King James Bible it has been rendered 112 times by the word "church" and three times by the word "assembly." The English word "church" came from the Greek expression kuriakon doma meaning "house of the Lord." By a long trail over Teutonic Europe came the word kirk and finally church. Because of this many people think of the church as a building, but the true building or house of the Lord is the living organism of the body of people in whom Christ dwells! And while the word church does indicate this body or house of the Lord, it is still not quite true to the original which means simply and only "out-called." Any other idea or significance than this has been added by man.

We go back to the New Testament for the beginnings of the church; and when once we are there it is wonderful how simple it all is! Jesus Christ comes and preaches the gospel of the kingdom, and manifests the life of God. He stands with His shining nature upon the hill of the truth He has to preach. He is lifted up, by and by, in the fullness of His sacrificial death upon the cross. Then He rises from the dead, ascends into the heavens of God's Spirit, and pours out this Holy Spirit upon His disciples. Toward His light, soul after soul is drawn out of the darkness of ignorance, sin, and death. Into the power of His resurrection one life after another is summoned out of the death of trespasses and sins. It is all personal and individual at first. "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God." It is this man and that man that is summoned. "Follow me," "Follow me," says the Master, and Matthew leaves his tax-table standing in the street; and the sons of Zebedee pull hastily in from the blue waters of Galilee to give themselves to the Lord, who has called them from the shore. To His most intimate disciples He gives the command, "Go and tarry in Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high." It is all personal and individual.

And what came next? Why, the most natural thing in all the world — that which must always come when individual men and women believe the same truth, receive the same experience, or share the same vision and purpose. When did a group of scholars ever sit at the same teacher's feet and not become a school? When did a host of separate men go and volunteer to fight the same enemy and not be drawn into an army? When were a multitude of atoms ever filled with one magnetism and not brought into magnetic communion with one another? All the individual believers in, and followers of, Christ become one in their common life, love, and hope. And so out of the crowd of disciples comes the corporate expression of the church!

What Jews call a synagogue and what we call a congregation means simply a gathering of people together. That is the idea behind a club, a conference, a meeting. But the church means something different from this! Its members are people who have been called away — who have left something behind — who have come out of some place, condition, or state — who are separate and even peculiar. That is the significance of the Greek term ekklesia. It is not an "assembly" as some say, although all the individual members are indeed a group. But it is not the "meeting" that makes them the church — it is the fact that they have heard the Master's call and have been drawn out of their former understanding, walk, condition, and purpose. They are the "out-called"! They are individuals who are being instructed, prepared, and trained to receive their orders to march forth as the army of the Lord! Yet it is not the army that makes them the ekklesia, rather, it is the fact of their out-calling that makes them the ekklesia!

Ray Prinzing has shared an instructive word: "We speak of this as being 'the church age,' and so it is, for this has been a time of CALLING OUT — out from the world, out from the flesh, out from the religious, etc. that we might be gathered unto Him. The church is not a building anymore than the inner sanctuary of our lives is a building. For of a truth the called out are a people! Furthermore, it is a very progressive calling out — out — and out some more! Out of darkness into light; out of error into truth; out of the earthly into the heavenly; out of the bondage of the systems of man, into the freedom of the walk of the Spirit; out of religion and into a blessed relationship with Christ. And do take note, it is not just an OUT, it is also an INTO — INTO CHRIST. It does not necessarily imply a coming out from the fellowship with others, unless one has substituted meetings instead of communion with Christ, and rely only upon 'group therapy' for solving their problems, rather than turning first and foremost to God Himself. If peoples, groups, fellowships usurp HIS place in your life, then He will say again, 'Come out of her, my people' (Rev. 18:4), for He is a jealous God, and desires that we be only His" — end quote.

The truth is that the church in any age consists of a people that is CALLED OUT. They are called out by God, called out of the world, called out of their human, earthly identity and consciousness, called out unto God in the Spirit. Furthermore they are called out of every religious system on earth including those systems that have the audacity to call themselves "the church," but who in reality are the inventions and programs of man. The church is the called out ones, and they are called out by God and they are called out unto God. Their ears know His voice and not the clamoring voices of strangers. Well they know by the Spirit that the Babel of voices which clamor to be heard from the pulpit, from the radio, and from the VOB television network (Voice of Babylon) are too often the voices of strangers who seek to draw away disciples after themselves and their grandiose programs and promotions, and not to bring men into living relationship with Christ in the Spirit.

So churches today appear to be quite different from what Jesus had in mind when He said, "I will build my church." He wasn't talking about building a structure, organization, or meeting — He was speaking of building men, building lives, of building up a people into Christ to be the habitation of God by the Spirit! "I will build my church" speaks of bringing forth spiritual maturity in the sons of God! The body of Christ is "built up" by spiritual growth, not by adding more and more babes to the family, wonderful as that is. And Christ said, "I will do it!" "I will build my church!" Again He said, "You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you" (Jn. 15:16). Today people choose a church of "their choice." When a large evangelistic campaign comes to their city, the evangelist may be cooperating with any number of other churches in an interdenominational sense, and members of many denominations may be urged to attend with their congregations. At the conclusion of an impassioned appeal, the evangelist may invite

hungry hearts to come forward and "accept Christ." Thus people are led to believe it is up to them to "choose Christ," and not up to Him to "choose them"! And finally they are instructed to go out and attend the church of their choice!

The following words by Ricky Evans are so true and vital for God's elect today. "We are called out, separated. The calling out, the separation, is from the ways of the world. These separations are of an inner nature as God separates the soul from the spirit in us (Heb. 4:12). We may cease to go to certain places we were accustomed to going in the past and doing certain things that we used to do, but the true separation, calling out, is an inner change which brings forth His life in us. We may have come out of Babylon, but God is working to get Babylon out of us!

"Church is not something you do. Church is not something you initiate. It is something which happens to you independently from you. You are called out. You can't call yourself out! You must be called out by God. Abraham didn't just decide one day to call himself out of Ur of the Chaldees. God, the God of glory, appeared to him and called him out. God initiated the action! God made the first step toward Abraham. God exposed Himself to Abraham and the appearing of God is what called Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees. The appearance of the God of glory was what called Abraham out of his family, out of his own land.

"We must free ourselves from a 'meeting mentality.' We have boxed God in to 'the meeting.' Whether it be in a building, a home, or somewhere else we must rid ourselves of this 'meeting mentality.' One only needs to watch as individuals gather and the appointed time arrives, the change which comes over people, to realize the 'meeting mentality' has set in. Suddenly people assume an air of what they deem to be 'spiritual.' The preacher's voice changes to his 'official voice.' People try to 'get in the Spirit' so there will be a good 'meeting.' This will continue for an hour or two, depending on the group, and then the 'meeting' is over and people can relax and be themselves again until the next appointed time. The meeting becomes all-important. The meeting becomes the hub around which we build our lives.

"We have been separated from the world and separated unto HIM. Anything and everything which keeps us from the Father will find itself coming under the pruning knife of our great vinedresser. Sad to say, much that has been called church has been responsible for keeping people from an intimate relationship with the Father. The upheaval within what is called church is nothing more than the pruning knife of the Father as He cuts away that which does not bring us to Himself. As men build their kingdoms to revolve around themselves, God is drawing all men unto Himself. As men try to fill our lives with their programs and activities, our Father longs to fill us with Himself. Is it not the very desire of our Father that we all know Him? (Heb. 8:11). Are not our gatherings meant to bring forth a greater reality of our Father's presence with us? (Mat. 18:20). Yet we find pastors preparing all week for one or two 'meetings.' They prepare their 'message.' They plan how they can orchestrate that time called 'church' so as to create a utopia which will attract more people to their building. When meetings don't seem to do the job, they create programs and activities, something that will draw the people and keep them active. Fill their lives with busyness so they won't realize or feel the void within!

"Preachers prepare 'messages,' traveling from meeting to meeting trying to excite the crowds, getting the people emotionally stirred so they will come back to the next meeting with their friends. People live from meeting to meeting. They run to get their fix! Another shot in the arm of Jesus, hoping that will keep them till the next meeting, hoping it will ease the pain of life until the next fix. When Sunday and Wednesday are not enough, they look for another meeting. Perhaps Tuesday or Friday, or both. All the above is simply 'meeting mentality.'

"We would not negate the fact that there are those pastors and traveling ministries who spend time before the Lord and have a word for the body of Christ! These do not spend their time trying to create 'messages,' these are those who have been with the Father and the Father has spoken a word into their lives. The word has become a part of their lives and not just a 'message.' They have a responsibility to feed the sheep and may spend hours studying and praying, but they are not looking for a message. They are hearing from the Father and their time is spent searching and seeking a better understanding of that which the Father is saying. Their time is spent allowing the Father to work the truth He is speaking into their heart, into the very fibers of their lives.

"By no means would we demean our gatherings or their importance. But friend, there has to be a change from the present system of things! We find ourselves standing in the midst of an over-lapping period as we change from Shiloh (form) to Zion (life). Those who want life will come out from the lifeless forms of Shiloh and climb the heights of Zion! The life of the Father is pulsating in our lives! The Christ is manifesting Himself in our midst! It's not the meeting we long for, it is the Father who is now manifesting Himself in our midst. Oh, we must see the voice in the midst! We must see the Christ declaring the Father in our midst! It is not 'meetings' that change lives, it is the 'one in the midst' who changes lives! When we read in the book of Acts how the early believers gathered daily from house to house or in the temple, it was not because they were preached at to 'be faithful to come to the meeting and God will bless you. If you're not faithful God will get you.' They had come into contact with the Christ! They weren't told they had to gather together — they wanted to! Christ was becoming more and more real in their midst. The life within was growing. The kingdom of God was flooding and overflowing their very being. There was no need for threats to persuade them to gather together. Christ was their reason! Are you not beginning to hear a song echoing from deep within your being? Does it sound like an old familiar song that you can't seem to remember? Is this not the song which the morning stars sang together and caused the sons of God to shout for joy? (Job 38:7). Friend, this is none other than the Son declaring the name of the Father in the midst of His brethren! The Son is singing praises to the Father in the midst of your being! The Son is walking through our midst singing praise to the Father!" — end quote.

When God speaks of the church, He means the called-out ones wherever they may be found or for whatever reason they may have been called out. Oh, how we pervert this word in our everyday conversation! We talk to people about "going to church." What "church" do you belong to? Why don't you come to our "church"? Or, if the meeting is going exceptionally well, with blessings all around, we say, "Now we're really having church!" We use phrases like, "That is a Baptist church, that is a Pentecostal church." We have changed the true meaning of the word church from a calling out to mean a building, an organization, or a meeting. Thus in our minds the meaning is lost, the reality covered up.

An article which came across my desk, and bears the name of no author, has beautifully articulated this great truth in these words: "There are groups of God's people everywhere, each in different stages of growth and experience. Some people are called out of the world but do not believe in any further experience or revelation. Others are called out from those who have embraced salvation to a further experience of sanctification. From the sanctified people are called out a Spirit-baptized people. From the baptized people are called out a gifted people. From the gifted people are called out a fruitful people. And finally there is a calling out of those who have reached the maturity of sonship. The particular body of people with whom you identify undoubtedly was called forth at one time from some other group of God's people! Around your present revelation of truth, therefore, you are the called-out assembly. There is therefore a church within a church; a wheel within a wheel.

"In Gideon's army there was a special chosen company of three hundred; an army within an army. In David and his four hundred men there was an Israel within Israel who finally took the kingdom. Israel was called 'the church in the wilderness' (Acts 7:38). They were God's called-out ones. They were called out of the bondage of Egypt. Many stages of consecration may be witnessed even amongst natural Israel. There was a company called 'the mixed multitude' that went up out of Egypt with Israel and then there was Israel in general who were called to a greater measure of consecration as the people of the Lord. Then from amongst them there was a tribe of the priesthood called to a still closer walk with the Lord in a still greater measure of consecration. Of all that came out of Egypt by Moses, Joshua and Caleb alone, with the younger generation, were called to a still newer experience of entering the promised land. All these companies were called-out ones, but some were called to go where others refused to go. The New Testament church called forth by the apostles was called forth from what remained of the church in the wilderness (Israel) with the addition of the Gentiles who were called out through the ministry of the apostle Paul. This proves that one church or called-out people can come forth from another church or called-out people.

"From the formal and sectarian ranks and the confusion of Babylon a church is now coming forth: a church of spiritually endued saints, called out to attain the maturity of sonship. God is now raising up the builders to build this new body who will be a habitation of God through the Spirit, and they in turn will perfect all the others who are called out, and raise their experience from the glory where they now reside unto the glories that are above them. This will continue until all believers have been raised to perfection, until the entire church will be a glorious church without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. God recognizes all believers as being His children, but He does not recognize them all as being of one stature. He sees some as babes, some children, some young men, and some fathers" — end quote. Let us always remember that regardless of which company of called out ones we pertain to, ALL of the Lord's people, on whatever level of growth and experience they have attained to, are on some plane God's called-out or His church!

THE SEVEN CHURCHES

The seven churches in the book of Revelation are seven realms to overcome, seven opportunities to be victorious. What is the church? You are the church. I am the church. We are all the church. So we are the seven churches! You are the seven churches! I am the seven churches! We are all the seven churches! Just as the seven spirits are but one spirit in fullness, so the seven churches are but one church in its completeness. All the characteristics of the seven churches may be found in each of us individually as well as in every local body and also in the whole universal church collectively. In each of our experience there is the capacity to partake of everything that the seven churches represent. I, you, all of us may be tested in each area of its negatives or excel in each aspect of its positives. The seven churches are seven realities and seven potentialities within ourselves. The seven churches are within you, my beloved, or else we are of all men most miserable, for none of us is the whole church nor are all of us those seven churches that existed in Asia in that long ago. If the whole reality is not within each one of us, then the promises to the overcomers are not fully available to us. We would each be able to attain to only one — the one pertaining to the church we identify with!

If the seven churches represent seven church ages, as many teach, then we have a problem! You would be able to appropriate only the promises to the overcomer that belong to the church age you live in. Furthermore, if we are now in the Laodicean church age, as many assert, the only promise we can claim is that of throneship. To the church of Laodicea the Lord says, "To

him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne" (Rev. 3:21). That is a beautiful promise and a wonderful calling! But if this is the Laodicean church age, we would be denied the promise of eating of the tree of life, given to the church in Ephesus; we would be refused the promise of not being hurt of the second death, given to the church in Smyrna; we would be prevented from eating of the hidden manna, and receiving a white stone and a new name, as promised the overcomers in the church at Pergamos; we could by no means be given power over the nations to rule them with a rod of iron, for that promise was made only to the overcomers in the church in Thyratira; we would be prohibited from partaking of the promises to the overcomers in Sardis of being clothed in white raiment, and that our name will not be blotted out of the book of life; nor could we in any way become a pillar in the temple of God, or have written upon us the name (nature) of our God, or the name of the city of our God, or the new name of God's Christ — for those promises could only be experienced by those overcomers out of the Philadelphia church age!

So, when we see by the spirit of wisdom and revelation that all the saints of the entire church age are the seven churches, that you and I today are the seven churches, that the seven churches are within each of us, and that God has given this revelation in a mystery that the carnal mind cannot comprehend, then we are filled with the secret wisdom that comes only to the mature in Christ. My hope in Christ is that I may lay hold upon all the overcoming promises of my Lord and find that abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of Jesus Christ the Son of God! I open wide my heart to receive of all the rebukes, admonitions, chastenings, encouragements, commendations, and promises to all the seven churches! They are one and all mine, and they are yours! I am, as you are, and as we all are, the seven golden candlesticks. As soon as I turn and behold that great truth, as soon as I know who I am, know my identity, know my birth, know who my Father is, know the kingdom to which I pertain, and know my calling; as soon as I turn and behold the seven golden candlesticks and see them lighted within my own soul and in my spirit; then do I begin to understand in the mind of Christ what is the height and the depth and the length and the breadth of the reality of Christ in me the hope of glory!

The word church, as I have pointed out, is from the Greek ekklesia, meaning the "called-out." There is a meaning connected with that word which denotes that these called out ones are in progress, from one position to another. They are involved in movement. Ekklesia is not a static position! The called out are called out from something and unto something. Many people believe they have been called out from the world, from the values of the world, from the ways of the world, from the spirit of the world, from its philosophies and concepts, and from the flesh, from sin, from death; but they have no concept at all of what they are called unto. They have the idea that the church itself is what they are called unto! But the church is merely the vehicle of the calling — not the calling itself. The church, the calling out, denotes movement. What you were called out from is not the church, nor is that which you are called unto the church. The church occupies the territory between these two things!

It is like a man who boards a train in New York City going to Los Angeles. The train is the vehicle of his movement and travel, to carry him from his point of origin to his destination. The train is a wonderful experience, but it is not his destination. He has no plan to live permanently on the train. By the train he is able to move from New York City to Los Angeles. In like manner the church is the instrument of God by which He carries the called out from the Babylon of this world unto the fullness of the kingdom of God! It denotes movement. We are called out to move from one point to another, ever ascending from glory to glory and from realm to realm in our experience of Christ. Sonship and the kingdom are via the church. But the church is

neither sonship nor the kingdom! Those who overcome within the church realm will inherit the kingdom, and those who overcome within the church realm will attain to sonship. Hear it! "He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son" (Rev. 21:7). The church is not our destination!

All over the world today there is a curious people being called and drawn to a union in the high places of the Spirit where their very nature and existence are being changed. What is emerging in this hour is the birth of a manchild, a life out of a life, a people out of a people, a company out of a company, a son out of the bride, to produce the full image of Christ Jesus in the earth again. The fully manifest presence of His glory and power, of His life and light and love, will mark the beginning of a transfer of the powers of this dying age into the hands of a people that has apprehended the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. The whole purpose of redemption is to save, deliver, quicken, restore, and transform mankind according to the life and truth that are in Christ Jesus. This involves the calling out and raising up of a body of sons in His image, filled with His wisdom, knowledge, love, grace, and power to be the instrument through which Christ will appear on the earth again in the fullness of Himself to liberate all men and all nations from the tyranny of sin, ignorance, poverty, limitation, sickness, pain, sorrow, and death. On the immediate horizon is this very emerging presence of Christ manifest through a many-membered body called out from every form of background of religion, nationality, and ethnicity!

"I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Mat. 16:18). I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH. What wonderful words are those of Jesus the Christ! And He is still building that church. There is no man or group of men who may of themselves build this church. It is not their church, it is His church, the body of Christ, and He will build it! It is a church which is dependent upon no ministers upon earth, however much it values those who proclaim the word of God to its members. The life of its members does not hang upon man-made church membership, nor upon Old Testament style outward forms of rituals, ceremonies, types, and shadows such as water baptism and communion, nor any other natural, outward, external observance. Truly it was the Old Covenant which "stood in meats and drinks, and divers washings (baptisms), and carnal (outward, fleshly, natural) ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation (change)" (Heb. 9:10).

This church has only one Head, one great Shepherd, one chief Apostle and Bishop — and that is Jesus Christ. He alone, by His Spirit, admits the members of this church. Till He opens the door no man on earth can open it — neither bishops, nor presbyters, nor evangelists, nor pastors, nor boards, nor convocations, nor synods. Let a man be called, touched, awakened, and quickened by the Spirit of the Lord, and in that heaven-blessed moment he becomes a member of this church. There is no church membership in heaven or in earth apart from this. God Himself must call you out and God Himself must set you in. Only God can do this! "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:47). Any other form of church membership is a bare-faced sham, an invention of man, a carnal-minded mockery of that which is true. The moment you are born of God's Spirit you are a member of the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven (Heb. 12:23).

Every effort on the part of man to have you join yourself with one of the man-made organizations falsely called "the church" is an effort to lead you astray from your union with Christ the Head and that divine work which the Holy Spirit accomplished when He placed you by His power into His body, which is the true church. The misguided and false shepherds would seduce you to commit fornication with that bawdy mother of harlots and her prostitute daughters of many denominational names. How cunningly and seductively do these preachers

perform the work of Satan by telling their converts to "join the church of your choice!" God's thought is not the church systems of man; it is not churches as organized denominational systems; it is not propagation of denominational teaching and enterprise. God's thought is to have a people in the earth in whom, and in the midst of whom, Christ is all, and in all. That is the church! In the thought of God the church begins and ends with this — the life of Christ formed and reproduced in a people! He passes by the great institutions, the so-called "church" and He is with those who in themselves are of an humble and contrite spirit and who tremble at His word. God's thought for us is that One, even Jesus Christ, who is the fullness of God in bodily form, should be our fullness!

The church that mankind is building is visible. The church that the Christ is building is invisible, but it is the powerful and all-inclusive one! The church that men build is earthly and seeks physical, material blessings; but the church that the Christ births out of His life dwells in heavenly places and is blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus! Lively stones, living stones, stones of another world, are being daily added to this church and it is growing and becoming more powerful in the Spirit with each passing day. The church is the miracle of Christ's resurrection life appearing again in a people upon the earth! At just the right time, at God's appointed time, this living church will be made known to all men everywhere, and begin to openly work to bring the whole of creation into the fullness of God. Hallelujah!

RACHEL AND LEAH

There is a wonderful story in the Old Testament which illustrates a beautiful spiritual truth concerning the church. It is the story of Jacob and Rachel and Leah found in chapter twenty-nine of the book of Genesis.

The story relates how Laban had two daughters; the name of the elder was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. Leah's eyes were weak and dull looking, but Rachel was beautiful and attractive. Jacob fell in love with Rachel, so he said to Laban, "I will work for you for seven years if you will give me Rachel your youngest daughter for my wife." Laban responded, "It is better for me to give her to you than to another man. Stay and live with me." So Jacob served seven years for Rachel; and they seemed to him but a few days, because of the love he had for her. Finally, Jacob said to Laban, "Give me my wife, for my time is completed, so that I may take her to me."

Laban gathered together all the men of the place, and made a feast with much to eat and drink. But when night came he took Leah his daughter and brought her in the darkness to Jacob. Jacob took her into his place and had intercourse with her. When the morning sun arose Jacob saw his wife, and alas, it was Leah! Jacob promptly found Laban and confronted him, "What is this you have done to me? Did I not work for you all those seven years for Rachel? Why then have you deceived and cheated and thrown me down like this?" And Laban said, "It is not permitted in our country to give the younger daughter in marriage before the eldest. Finish the wedding feast week with Leah, then we will give you Rachel also, and you shall work for me yet seven years more in return." So Jacob complied and spent the wedding feast week with Leah; then Laban gave him Rachel his daughter as his wife.

Jacob had been promised Rachel, but after the wedding, when he woke up in the morning, he discovered he was with the wrong woman! How could a man marry a woman, take her into his tent, spend the night with her in his bed, make love to her, and not know he had the wrong woman? I never knew the deep significance of that event in the life of Jacob until God shined the blazing, penetrating light of His revelation upon my life. I woke up one day in my spiritual

experience and realized that I was not joined to Rachel. Don't you know that that is what has happened to us all? Did not most of you who read these lines wake up one morning in your walk with God and realize you didn't have the woman you thought you married when you received Christ? You joined yourself to the church, thinking you were coming into union with the beautiful, desirable, pure bride of Christ, but the woman you entered into intimacy with was not the woman you thought you had! I admire Jacob for the courage he had to accept what had befallen him and because of his great love for the woman he desired he first confronted the issue, and then he abode with Laban for another seven years. He would not be denied!

Leah represents the church systems of man. It is easy to settle for tradition, but you need courage to hold out for what you want in God. I wonder how many of us would have worked another seven years for Rachel! It would be very easy to settle for less than God has called us to. How very easy it would be to settle for the feast of Pentecost rather than paying the price required to press on into the feast of Tabernacles. It requires no effort at all to settle for the immaturity of the church realm instead of laying hold upon sonship to God. It takes courage, patience, and faith to go beyond the weak-eyed (lack of spiritual vision) Leah, to leave the in-part realm of the church world behind and blaze the trail into God's highest and best — the beautiful hope of fullness and maturity in God!

So much depends upon our vantage point. Let all men know that though we desire Rachel and are willing to work another seven years for her, the fact remains that Leah is of God. Leah is the mother of Israel. The church realm, the church system as we know it, is of God, regardless of how weak-eyed it is, how grotesque it is, how organized it is, how apostate it is, how dead it is, how fleshly and carnal it is, or how alive it is — the measure of life that is in it is of God! Most of us have had some degree of contentment with the church system at some time in our life. There was a night when we received Leah to ourselves, not knowing any better because of the great spiritual darkness that enveloped us. There was a night when we slept with Leah in our tent and enjoyed her pleasures, we delighted in her programs, her rituals, her ceremonies, her methods, her promotions, her doctrines, her ways, for we wist not who she was!

I remember well my early days in the church system, I thought I had found the highest purpose of God in the universe. I presumed that I had found the ultimate reality of God attainable in this life. Now I have woke up under the dawning rays of the new day of the glory of Christ and realize that what I was first joined to was not what I hungered and thirsted after! It was not what I wanted. From the very beginning there was a sense in my deepest heart that somehow there had to be more, there must be something greater, fuller in God. I discovered that I was attached to the wrong principles, the wrong expression, the wrong spirit, the wrong doctrine, the wrong objectives, the wrong name, the wrong hope, the wrong activities and program. Oh, yes! In the shimmering light of day I was able to clearly see that what I had did not measure up nor did it satisfy. It left a great and profound void in my life. It was the weak-eyed Leah, but by the spirit and revelation of God we have caught a glimpse of Rachel and been ravished in our hearts!

We have no desire to harm Leah, no desire at all to hurt her, denounce her, ridicule her, destroy her, or even to put her away — we just cannot settle for her! We are willing to work another seven years, we are willing to pay the required price to gain Rachel! We have set our faces to go after what we want! And Leah probably has a problem with it, but we want Rachel. We don't want Leah. We are sick of Leah. We are tired of Leah's weak-eyed religion with no vision of God's great plan and purpose. We are weary of Leah churches. We are burned out with Leah people. We are worn out from Leah's carnal programs and dead works. Leah in

Hebrew means dull. Oh yes, she's dull! That's what the old order (elder daughter) church systems are — they're dull, slow-witted, dense, undiscerning, humdrum, lifeless, spiritless, tasteless, monotonous. They hold nothing for us anymore!

Rachel was initially barren, but Leah was fruitful. You will find that carnal, traditional religion multiplies disciples rapidly. People flock to these carnal, man-centered appeals that promise naught but blessings upon the flesh. People love to be entertained, and the popular churches are expert entertainers! Therefore Leah bears many children, while the beloved Rachel appears barren.

Do you know what Rachel did? She kept her father's flock (Gen. 29:9). She did a man's job. Rachel was a shepherdess. Rachel kept her father's flock, she brought them out for watering, and Jacob couldn't believe she was doing a man's job. His response was, "This is my woman!" Rachel typifies the realm of the overcomer, the realm that, though it appears as a woman, the church, is in reality fulfilling the role of a man, the sons of God. I want Rachel! I'm willing to wait for Rachel. I'm willing to work, to expend all my time, all my energies, all my hopes and dreams, to get Rachel. She will be mine. I will be joined to that beautiful realm of God's glory and beauty and power. And though she bore far less sons than Leah, she became the mother of Joseph, the bearer of the birthright, who more than any son of Jacob serves as the type of Christ and His body, the sons of God. As Joseph ascended the throne of Egypt, and fed the nations in the years of drought, so shall the sons of God be given power over the nations and shall shepherd and feed them under the rule of the kingdom of God. Sonship is the hope of all creation. It is the hope dearest to the heart of God. Therefore I admonish you this day — HOLD OUT FOR RACHEL, HOLD OUT FOR THE PROMISE, HOLD OUT FOR THE BIRTHRIGHT!

Hold out, my brother, my sister, for the truth and reality and not just a blessing. Hold out for life and immortality, not just a healing or a miracle. Hold out for the fullness of God, not just a touch of God. You don't need the traditions and programs of religion, you need Christ manifested in your body, soul, and spirit. I'd rather be dead than reproduce the nonsense of religion. I'd rather be buried than dwell in Babylon again. It's easy to marry tradition and reproduce! People love to say they are disciples. People love to say that they follow Jesus. And they do follow Him — just as the Galilean multitudes followed Him in that long ago for the loaves and the fishes. Men still flock to the loaves and the fishes. And men still walk away, flee, and forsake the Lord when He teaches the deep things of God, when He points out the narrow road that leads to the life of the kingdom, and when it leads to the cross.

It is easy to marry tradition and be joined to the blessings. I traveled and ministered for years among people who wanted me to be joined to them in that religious state where I just tickled them, entertained them, baptized them, prayed for them, blessed them, healed them, and taught them a whole lot about the devil, the antichrist, the tribulation, the end of the world. Today I have left all of that behind. The one consuming passion of my life is to grow up in Christ as a son of God. My desire today is to overcome all things, to be filled with the mind of God, to lay hold upon the glory of God, to be perfected in the nature of God, to be swallowed up by the life of God, and to apprehend the power of God. I want to see all creation delivered from the bondage of corruption — I'm not the least bit interested in the limited, tired, time-worn, dead-end methods of the past. I want Rachel! I must have Rachel! I will pay any price for Rachel! I will get Rachel!

I write these things to those who are the called out for this great day of the Lord. Truly we have been called out by God to be about our Father's business, to fulfill His redemptive, restorative,

and governmental purposes in the earth. We are a people with a purpose! As we walk in the Spirit we are receiving power and authority in the earth to accomplish the will of God among men! This is the work of the Holy Spirit! Just because we assemble together at a place called "church" on Sunday does not mean we are the Lord's ekklesia or that we do what God calls us to do at such a gathering. There is nothing sacred about "going to church" if the Spirit of God has not called us together! When a believer hears the true "calling out" it is the Holy Spirit calling him out to Himself, revealing His will, and empowering him to accomplish His plan. It has nothing whatever to do with going to a "church" building where we do all sorts of things which may or may not have anything to do with the work of God! Oh, how we have been cheated by Leah! Let us press on, dear ones, until we get Rachel!

Chapter 29

The Seven Churches Of Asia

continued

“What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the *seven churches* which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyratira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea...the *seven candlesticks* which thou sawest are the *seven churches*” (Rev. 1:11,20).

The book of Revelation is clearly addressed to “the seven churches which are in Asia.” Considering the *purpose* of the book of Revelation, why is the book addressed and delivered to *seven specific churches only*? Only by the revelation of the mind of the Lord can we understand this! An important key is found in the repeated use of the number seven. Numerology has always been a subject of special interest to students of the scriptures. There are two major errors people fall into when considering the mystical significance of numbers in the Bible. On the one hand numbers are looked upon as a sort of “*talisman*.” That is to say, numbers are viewed as having power to influence events. This concept underlies the idea of so-called “*lucky numbers*.” The theory is that certain numbers are likely to favor you more than other people or more than other numbers. Implicit in this is the notion that the numbers have some kind of *magical power* — thus they are a *talisman*, *charm*, or *fetish*.

The other error is in the use of numbers for *validation*. By this we mean the concept that the occurrence of certain numbers may show divine approval of some action you are undertaking or about to undertake. The fact that your new address, for example, is 777, 888, or some multiple of seven or twelve may be taken as an indication that God has led you to this place. But in the scriptures there is *no use* of numbers as talismans or for validation of human actions. Numbers are used two ways in the Bible. They may refer to a literal number or they may be used as symbols or codes to convey a *spiritual*, *metaphorical*, or *allegorical* meaning. While several numbers have some sort of mystical significance in the Bible, the ones of primary importance are three, four, seven, and twelve. Interestingly enough, *all* of the numbers convey some aspect of completion, wholeness, totality, perfection, or power.

In the book of Revelation numbers do not actually define amounts at all, but they represent *concepts*. The number twenty-four, for example, is meaningless as an amount — there are not exactly twenty-four elders sitting on twenty-four thrones up in some far-off heaven somewhere; but what the number signifies, the *priesthood of God*, is vital. The number 144,000 mentioned in the Revelation is relatively unimportant as a number; but when we understand that it is a multiple of twelve, and that twelve is the number of *divine government*, then twelve squared by itself times a thousand (the number representing the *day of the Lord*) represents the absolute fullness and perfection of *divine government* within a people in the *day of the Lord*!

Seven is very significant in the economy of God. It is the most frequently used number in the Bible! The Hebrew word for seven is *sheba*. From it is *shaba*, meaning “to be complete...to

seven oneself, i.e. swear by repeating a declaration seven times.” That is how the ancients swore, by repeating the oath seven times instead of placing their hand upon a Bible or merely invoking the name of God. Seven speaks of completion, fullness, perfection. Nothing can be added to or taken from it without it becoming marred. Being a prime number makes it divisible only by itself. The week is complete, full, and perfect in seven days. Seven completes the colors of the spectrum. There are seven notes in the musical scale. The cells of the human body completely replace themselves every seven years. Jesus said that when the unclean spirit is cast out of a man, but the man’s house (body) is not filled with God, the spirit returns with seven others more vile than itself and the end of that man is worse than before. Mary Magdalene had seven devils cast out of her. Armed with the knowledge of the significance of the number seven in scripture it becomes clear that in both of these cases the Lord was speaking *metaphorically*. Rather than seven devils, there was *total* or *complete* possession by sin and demonic power! Thank God, in the midst of that unfathomable depth into which Mary Magdalene had fallen, she was forgiven, delivered, and lifted into life by Jesus!

This magnificent number seven is used for the grouping of many things which John saw in his visions on the isle of Patmos. In chapter one we find seven golden candlesticks which are the seven churches, seven stars and seven angels which are the messengers of the seven churches. In chapter four there are seven lamps of fire burning before the throne which are the seven spirits of God. In chapter five we see a scroll sealed with seven seals, and a Lamb with seven horns and seven eyes which again are the seven spirits of God. Also there are listed seven things that the Lamb receives — power, riches, wisdom, strength, honor, glory, and blessing. In chapter six the Lamb opens the seven seals, one at a time. In chapter eight John saw seven angels with seven trumpets. In chapter ten we find the mysterious seven thunders, which John was not allowed to describe. In chapter twelve there is seen in heaven a great red dragon having seven heads and seven crowns on his heads. In chapter thirteen a beast rises up out of the sea having seven heads. In chapter fifteen we see seven angels carrying seven vials (bowls) which contain seven plagues, which are the “wrath of God.” In chapter seventeen we find a woman riding a beast which has seven heads. These seven heads are described as seven mountains (kingdoms) which have seven kings. In chapter twenty-one we again see one of the same seven angels who had the bowls which had contained the seven plagues and thereafter in the book of Revelation there are no more sevens. Everything from that point onward is counted in groups of twelve!

SEVEN CHURCHES — THE WHOLE CHURCH

The seven churches are in Asia, which is actually Asia Minor, and were located on the western end of Asia bordering on the Aegean and Mediterranean seas. It is a small area now in Turkey, about the size of Oregon. The seven cities mentioned in our text form an irregular loop or circle. The order in which the cities are named is that in which a messenger naturally might be sent, as he followed the great circular road that bound together the most populous and influential part of the province. Ephesus, the chief city and capital, naturally is mentioned first; then Smyrna, located about forty miles to the north; then Pergamos, some fifty miles further northeast. From there, continuing clockwise around the loop, your next city will be Thyatira, some forty miles southeast; then Sardis, thirty miles farther south; and Philadelphia and Laodicea, about thirty and seventy miles to the southeast of Sardis.

It is also interesting to note that this circle of churches lay in the very territory where the apostle Paul had labored as an apostle, founding many of the churches. Without doubt the epistle of Paul to the Ephesians was circulated around this same circle of churches, for it was the custom in those days for letters to one church to be shared with all the others. As we read the

messages of the Lord Jesus to the seven churches we are made painfully aware of the fact that the anointing, glory, holiness, and power of the early days had already lost much of their freshness and potency, as the second generation of believers came along. We shall find that the same conditions which prevail in the church systems today were already manifest in the primitive church of John's day!

The churches are seven in number because seven in the Bible is always the number of *completeness*. Remember! There were *many other* local congregations existing contemporaneously with the seven mentioned in Revelation. The seven churches to whom John wrote were not even the most important! The churches in Corinth, in Rome, in Iconium, in Lystra, in Derbe, in Miletus, in Antioch, in Heliopolis, in Colossae, in Thessalonica, in Babylon, or even Jerusalem itself, *are not mentioned*. Instead these seven are singled out! Their selection, however, is deeply significant. These cities where the churches existed lay along the Imperial Post Road. This Roman highway was built about 133 B.C. It is because God knew *these seven* were facing patterns of trials, tribulations, errors, dealings, faith, steadfastness, victories, and triumphs that would be common to all the Lord's people down through the entire church age. The spiritual instructions are, "He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churchES" — PLURAL! Thus the Spirit tells us that every believer should *hear* what the Spirit says to ALL the churches! That is another positive evidence that the seven churches *do not* represent *seven church ages*. If we are currently living in the Laodicean church age, as many assert, then we would need to hear *only* the word sent to the church at Laodicea! But every overcomer is admonished to hear **ALL THAT THE LORD SPEAKS TO ALL THE CHURCHES!**

Therefore, however much there may be in the seven messages to the seven churches having applicability to the seven churches existing in John's day, or the church in previous times and generations, the messages must be considered in relation to the **complete church** throughout the age. The messages are **prophetic!** They are to the whole church realm of yesterday, today, and tomorrow! The seven churches represent not only the conditions existing at the time John wrote, but conditions which may be expected to reveal themselves in the midst of the Lord's people throughout the entire age. That is precisely why that, out of all the churches existing in John's day, exactly *seven* were chosen for this Revelation — the number of *totality* and *completeness!*

The key to all the mysteries of the book of Revelation is found in the very first chapter, where the occasion of the writing of the book, by whom it was dictated, and for whom it is intended, is made crystal clear. It was given to John by the angel of Jesus Christ — by the Holy Spirit — to be sent to the *seven churches*. The seven churches represent the *complete church*. The key to all the mysteries of the book of Revelation is — THE CHURCH! The church is — THE CALLED-OUT! The book of Revelation is therefore the unveiling of Christ's wonderful, marvelous, awesome dealings with every saint of God whom He is *calling out!* If God is calling you out of any realm of the world, or the religious, my brother, my sister, you may expect to experience within yourself all the things written in this book!

"He that hath an ear, let him *hear* what the Spirit saith unto the *churches*" (Rev. 2:7). "Blessed are your eyes for they *see*, and your ears, for they *hear*" (Mat. 13:16). "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that *hear* the words of this prophecy" (Rev. 1:3). When the Lord Jesus wanted His disciples to realize they could understand His words only because God had *opened their ears*, He used this expression. Our Lord uses this phrase *seven times* in the book of Revelation! The seven churches with all their virtues and problems represent different *spiritual states* or *conditions* in the whole church realm. What these churches did right before the Lord

we are called to do, and what they did wrong we must abandon, asking God to purge and purify us from it. These churches represent for us the progressive way to the throne of God; for the final promise to the overcomer in these churches is that to him it will be given to reign with Christ upon HIS THRONE. As each of us overcomes spiritually within ourselves all that these churches faced, we receive the greatest reward of all — His mind, likeness, nature, glory, and power!

The meaning of the names of the cities in which the seven churches were located have a special and prophetic significance. Asia itself, for instance, means *slime* or *mire*, an apt type of the world, of sin and death, of the carnal mind and Adamic nature, and the false religious realms out of which we have been called! Ephesus means *desired* or *desirable*, a term applied by a lover to the woman of his choice. Smyrna means *myrrh*, a symbol of sorrow, suffering, and death, an apt picture of the trials, troubles, and tribulations through which we are passing on our journey into perfection. Pergamos means *marriage*, *elevation*, or *firm union*, and truly each of us is married to, and in firm union with, either the flesh or the spirit! The meaning of Thyatira is *incense*, bespeaking of the outflow of grace, praise, and worship through our lives. Sardis means *remnant* or *escaping ones*, signifying that God is always bringing out a remnant unto His purposes. Philadelphia means *brotherly love*. Laodicea conveys the idea of the *people's right*, the *people's judgment*, or the *people's choice*, expressing the negative aspect of the *rule of the flesh and the carnal mind* of which the Lord says, "I am about to *spew you out of my mouth*." Those who overcome in *this realm* are qualified to REIGN WITH CHRIST ON HIS THRONE! None of these names are irrelevant, for they were chosen by divine wisdom to speak to us of the great works of God in the lives of His elect! The church **at** this city or that indicates the Lord's people who are **at** that particular stage in their growth, development, and overcoming in Christ! One may be **at** the stage of suffering, another **at** the stage of the offering up of spiritual *incense*, while others are **at** the stage of *brotherly love*, and many are **at** the place of choosing between *their rights, their ways, their will* — and HIS!

The spiritual condition in these churches and their standing with God varied greatly. We may be sure that the messages sent by Jesus to these churches applied to each of them personally, yet we may be equally certain that the messages were prophetic and were intended to portray the spiritual condition of the church throughout the age, and indeed *our very own* circumstances and experiences! If the things written therein were simply literal and intended to address actual events and conditions in the churches of that day, then it would be difficult to see how they could serve as "signs" and "symbols" (Rev. 1:1). Ingenuously seven actual Asiatic churches were selected by the Holy Spirit in which were found the traits which have been used by the Lord to prophetically set forth His dealings with the church as a whole and within each of the Lord's called out elect individually. Oh, the wonder of it! Oh, the mystery of it!

Thus we see Christ, the very spirit of Christ within each of us, walking in the midst of the churches as *Judge*, with eyes as a flame of fire, searching the thoughts and intents of the hearts of all the called out ones, inquiring how far each of us has answered to, or departed from, our heavenly privileges and potentialities. The Lord passes sentence on what He finds, approving what is right and condemning all that is contrary to His nature; warning as regards the evil, and giving encouragement and strength to the overcomer! It is *within* that the Christ is walking, and it is *within* that the judgment is taking place!

Let me illustrate. God dwells in our spirit. Our spirit is the Most Holy Place typified by the Most Holy Place in the tabernacle of Moses. God in His glory dwelt in the Most Holy Place of old, over the mercy seat, between the Cherubim. Now, "He that is joined to the Lord **is one spirit**." There is the fullness of God in the Most Holy Place of our spirit! In the words of the Lord to the

Laodicean church, we see a remarkable picture of God coming out of the Most Holy Place to fill all realms. “Behold, I stand at the door and knock,” says the Lord. “If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me” (Rev. 3:20). This has traditionally been understood in the light of the pictures men have painted of Jesus standing at the outside of a door, knocking, to gain admittance. The preachers have preached that Jesus is on the outside of the Laodicean church, standing at the door, knocking, *trying to get inside the church!*

Christ, however, is **not** outside the church, not even the lukewarm Laodicean church! If He were on the outside, it would not *be* His church! The church is the very house of God and the temple of the Holy Ghost! (II Cor. 6:16). The body of Christ is the *residence* of the spirit of Christ, else it ceases to *be* His body! Nothing can be simpler than that. Matters not how weak, how sick, how carnal, Christ is *never* on the outside of any child of God! I do not doubt that many who read these lines are convinced that He is outside some of the churches you know — and He indeed IS outside the **systems** of man. But the church is composed of **people**, not the systems of Babylon they are held captive in. Ah, Christ is **in your spirit**, in the deepest and innermost part of your being, knocking to gain admittance into the outer departments of your life, into your **soul** and into your **body**. He longs to enter into your soul and into your body in the fullness of Himself that He may fill and transform your whole being with the glory of His presence and the power of His life!

John was one of the “three mighties” who walked with the Lord in the days of His flesh; he was with Him in the Mount, he lay in His bosom and, above all others, has received the distinctive title as “that disciple whom the Lord loved.” It was fitting that the man who had leaned upon the breast of God’s Son and heard the inmost beating of His heart, should become the depository of His most intimate thought in respect to the course of the church in this age. And such is the case! This is the picture we see in the book of Revelation. The seven churches of Asia are saluted by John. He was shown the seven candlesticks “which ARE the seven churches.” God raised up a prophet that could see and foretell in detail the entire church age before it could transpire. This is what the messages to the seven churches are all about! John beheld the good and the evil of the church age. He declared the blessings and the curses of this age. He saw the strength and the weakness of the church, and indeed of each one of us. He saw the church in its beginnings and in its consummation. He beheld the true church of the Lord Jesus Christ and he exposed the false church systems, the swaggering harlot of this age with her unholy spirit, her false doctrines, her man-made organizations, and her carnal methods and programs. John shows forth the full revelation of all the fullness of Christ and His church during the age and the glory that should follow!

A tremendous revelation was given to the beloved John on Patmos! The seven churches that he saw in the Spirit represent THE WHOLE CHURCH REALM THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE CHURCH AGE. If you want to know what the church is like, look at the seven churches! There you have the divinely inspired portrait of the church realm painted by the brush strokes of the Holy Spirit. Were they not imperfect, carnal, childish, idolatrous, heretical, rebuked — a realm of mixture and duality? The Lord commends and praises them on one hand, while warning and rebuking them on the other hand! Some of the saints are praised for their works, labor, faith and love, while others are warned of impending judgment if they fail to repent. These seven churches reveal the true state and condition of the whole church throughout the age, and both history and personal experience testify conclusively that John was shown aright! Who can dispute it? The early church was a church of mixture and duality — flesh and spirit, truth and error, law and grace, spirituality and carnality. Even a casual perusal of the

New Testament reveals this! And from that day to this, make no mistake about it — ALL CHURCHES HAVE BEEN THE SAME! They are today!

There is a church in El Paso, Texas. There is only *one* church in El Paso. I belong to that church. I have not joined any of the denominations or movements of men, but I belong to the church in El Paso because I live in El Paso and Christ *has a church* in this city. I cannot escape it! I could deny that I belong to it, but that would not change anything. People tell me they have come out of the church. It is *impossible* to come out of the church unless you are severed from Christ, for the church *is His body!* And if you have come out of the systems of men *you are still the church because that is what the church is* — THE CALLED OUT! Now let me tell you something about the church in El Paso. *It is a carnal church!* Oh, it has some *spiritual people* in it, alright, but the church in El Paso is a carnal church. How do I know? Whereas one says, “We are of Luther,” and another says, “We are Baptist,” and another says, “We are Pentecostal,” and yet another says, “We are of Christ,” are they not carnal and walk as men? (I Cor. 3:1-4). And should the church age continue for another thousand years the church would not have changed — the revelation of the seven candlesticks immutably declares it! The seven candlesticks **are** the seven churches! The seven churches **are** the whole, complete church! And the condition of the seven churches **is** the condition of the church throughout the age! Only the *overcomer* changes. And only the *overcomer* receives the promises! Very little is promised to the churches. The great, heavenly, and eternal promises are made to the overcomer *alone!*

GOLDEN CANDLESTICKS

It was once a mystery to me why the Lord would symbolize the church in its condition of weakness, immaturity, and carnality by seven “golden” candlesticks. Gold is the symbol of *deity* or the *divine nature*. How could gold serve as the figure for a realm of mixture, for the gold of the candlestick was *pure* gold — unmixed! This was a deep mystery in my mind. Then one day the Spirit of the Lord spoke within me and it came with such clarity and with great power! The church is not composed of so many bodies sitting on pews. We do not have a church simply because a number of saved people have gathered together. Oh, no! The church is a thing of the *spirit*. It is the “city of the living God, the *heavenly* Jerusalem” and the “general assembly and church of the firstborn which are written in *heaven*” and the “*spirits* of just men made perfect” (Heb. 12:22-23). It is God *in my spirit* that makes me the body of Christ! I may have mixture in my life, but my *regenerated spirit* is pure! My spirit is the very offspring of God! (Heb. 12:9). He that is joined to the Lord *is one spirit!* (I Cor. 6:17). Christ dwells in my spirit, and my spirit is the seed of God within me! (I Jn. 3:9). I need no processing in my spirit, although I do need processing in my soul and body realms.

Let me give you an illustration. In the world there is a lot of wealth, an incomprehensible amount of wealth. The natural resources of this earth are mind-boggling. And yet, is it not a fact that in the midst of all the riches of this marvelous planet we’re living on there are literally billions of people living in poverty! In most of the countries of the world millions of people live in squalor, ignorance, disease, limitation, and servitude — yet the earth is abundant in wealth. There’s gold in the vast oceans of the earth, but it’s so diluted that it’s unusable to the normal person. There are treasures that are buried in the sea, but there have been only a few of earth’s inhabitants that have been able to bring up those stout Spanish galleons with their marvelous treasures, and recover them. There is gold on strange planets in distant galaxies, but nature is too intractable, the distances are too vast, and the human lifespan so short that men are unable to go and secure it.

How different things would be if only we had gold mines that were very close to us, that were near at hand, that were accessible to us, and convenient! How different things would be for some of us if we knew we had a gold mine in our backyard, perhaps concealed behind the rose bushes, unknown to our neighbors, and unknown to the government. How secure we would feel if on a summer evening we could chat with our neighbors over the fence, water our lawn, and play ball with our children knowing that when the sun sank below the horizon we could sneak out under the cover of night and mine a little bit of the gold out of our private gold mine at the edge of our house, behind the rose bushes. Wouldn't it be wonderful when income tax time came, if we didn't have to worry about anything? Just slip out in our mine and get a few nuggets the size of walnuts! Or when there was a tragedy, a hospital bill, an unexpected expense, or whatever might come we could just get a few bags of gold dust out of our gold mine and pay those bills. Or perhaps we want to travel to far away places with strange-sounding names, but we don't have a rich uncle and we haven't won the lottery, so we sneak out again and get some gold out of our gold mine, and we're able to fly away and go wherever we want to go — travel the earth, see the sights, live like a king, with no lack or limitations whatsoever. Oh, how delightful that would be!

I'm here to tell you that you *have* a gold mine! It's not beside your house. It's not concealed behind the rose bushes. **IT'S IN YOUR SPIRIT!** Yes, my friend, *you* have a gold mine. Each person who now reads these lines has a gold mine and it's closer to you than the air that you breathe, closer even than the blood that courses through your veins. The gold mine that you possess is GOD in your spirit! The infinite resources of divinity dwell within your spirit! All the power of the omnipotent Creator is in your spirit! The omniscient mind that framed the galaxies abides in your spirit! All the riches of the glory, wisdom, knowledge, righteousness, joy, and peace of the almighty Father are rooted in your spirit! God is incorruptible, immortal life; indestructible light, and infinite love — and God is **in your spirit!**

You are the sons and daughters of the Most High God. The very life of God is within you today as your very own life. In that life which *you are* there is no limitation whatever. Now I am aware that even in "kingdom" circles we often find very little difference in where people are living experientially than we find anywhere else in the world. Many of us have been struggling in our spiritual life, and we have been struggling because we have not understood the work and reality of God, the way of God in our lives. Our struggle has been with the earth realm, with the carnal mind, the flesh nature. We have contended with our apparent weakness and limitation. We have wrestled with pressures from the world around us. We have felt condemned by our mistakes, failures, and errors, and have tried to climb up out of the pit that we perceive ourselves in, endeavoring to extricate ourselves by self-effort, to somehow overcome and evolve out of that world we have been held captive in, to ascend into the realm God has apprehended us for.

All the time of our spiritual poverty *we have had a gold mine hidden within us!* We have the full power of overcoming life right within our spirit! Paul put it this way: "And if Christ be *in you*, the body is dead because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell *in you*, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies *by His Spirit that dwelleth in you*" (Rom. 8:10-11). Your spirit is much deeper than your mind, your emotion, or your will. Deep down on the inside of you, where your true life dwells, you are a spiritual being, a divine being, a truly God-being. That is where you are alive! "The *spirit is life.*" That is where you are pure and righteous! That is where you *do not* sin, neither *can* you sin! (I Jn. 3:9). That is where Christ in you is your hope of glory! Your body (outer man) is dead because of sin, but your spirit is alive because of Christ's righteousness within it. Once you know where life really is, you have discovered the gold mine within! LIFE IS IN YOUR SPIRIT! What is true in your spirit is who and what "you" truly are!

When you get beyond the flesh, to the gold mine deep behind the rose bushes, you begin to draw your resources out of the vast, limitless gold mine of the life, power, and victory within your spirit. You begin to function out of your spirit instead of out of your mind, emotions, and passions. Soul and body can then be brought to line up with the life that is deep on the inside of you; you will find that your body which has been dead in trespasses and sins of the flesh *will begin to change*. “He shall also *quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you.*” How true that is! That is the *way* of life! Where your soul once demanded its own way and its own rights of selfhood and self-expression, it now cries out for righteousness and reality. Your body and soul will control you unless your spirit quickens them. You can be a Christian for a hundred years, but if you have not learned to live out of the gold mine of your spirit, soul and body will still manifest themselves through you, setting themselves up as lord. Do we really know what is on the inside of us? We have within us, within our spirit, the uncreated, indestructible, immortal, omnipotent life of God! Soul and body will con you, they will delude, deceive, mislead, bamboozle, hoodwink, cheat, and swindle you! They will trick you into living a natural, carnal, deficient or ungodly life, until you have a revelation and realization of the riches of the heavenly life down on the inside of you. Once you get down beneath the surface, under the house, behind the rose bushes, to live out of the secret springs of life in the spirit — you will discover life, and that more abundantly!

Most believers live this dual life, this split personality existence. Sometimes they think and act out of the spirit, while at other times they function out of their outward natural life. Does that mean they are not the Lord’s people or the body of Christ? Not at all! Christ lives in every regenerated spirit! We are His by redemption and Christ dwells in our hearts by faith. This explains why the “golden” candlesticks had so many problems and were chastened by the Lord! Because He has bought us by His blood and quickened us by His life in our spirit, we are His people, His body, His church, His out-called ones. Therefore we are called “golden” candlesticks although we are not yet righteous or perfect in all of our thoughts, attitudes, or actions in our outer man.

Truly we are the Lord’s “holy” people even though we may not yet be perfectly conformed to the image of the Son. Let me explain! To be holy means to be sanctified. To sanctify means TO SET APART or TO SEPARATE. The word is applied to people, places, and things — as Sinai among the mountains; the Sabbath among the days of the week; the Temple among all buildings; the city of Jerusalem among the cities of Israel; the Priesthood of Levi among all the tribes of Israel; and Israel among all the nations of the earth. For example, the Lord Jesus shows us that gold, if used for the Temple, as a gift, when placed on the altar, becomes sanctified or holy (Mat. 23:17-19). All the gold in this world is for human use and is therefore common; however, if a portion is separated and placed in the Temple for God’s use, it becomes classified as holy, set apart. Again, if an ox or a sheep is among the herd, they are for human use and are common. When chosen and placed upon the altar, however, they become an offering unto God, being separated unto holiness. It is altogether a matter of whether they are for ordinary use or whether they are separated and belong to God. Before they are separated, they are common; after they are separated, they become holy. Therefore holiness means all that pertains to God, and all that is of God, unto God, and for God!

But beyond this there is a deeper thought. Why were people, places, and things set apart? Was it not because GOD WAS THERE? He came down in might and glory on mount Sinai; *therefore* they needed to set the bounds around its base, and it is known as “the holy mount of God.” It was His presence that made it holy! He selected Israel to be His peculiar people, and the house of Aaron to be His priests, and the royal line of Judah to be His kings; *therefore* they were isolated from all others. He appeared to Moses in the bush, glowing with the light of the

Shekinah; *therefore* the spot was holy ground, and the shepherd needed to bare his feet. In other words, it is the presence of God that makes holy! There is only one Being in all the universe who is intrinsically holy. Holiness is the attribute of His nature, and of His nature only. He is by nature, wisdom, power and being set apart from all beside. So we can never be holy apart from God; but when God enters the spirit of man, He brings the quality of holiness with Him. Thus the presence of God in man IS HOLINESS. HE is our only hope of righteousness!

We cannot reform our carnal mind or Adamic nature. It doesn't work! Only by the overwhelming presence of God in our lives can body and soul be brought into union with the nature of God in our spirit. Laws, rules, regulations, condemnation don't change anything. That is why we say to every man, to every person who has a *sin consciousness* or a *sin problem* — EXPOSE YOURSELF TO THE PRESENCE OF GOD! We could try to get them to do better, we could lay laws upon them and tell them they can't be a follower of Jesus and do the things they do, we could cast them out of our fellowship until they straighten up and do right, but that would not help them at all. We must help them find their gold mine! The gold mine is *the presence of God in their spirit*. That is where *life* is! People don't need condemnation — they need *help*! "GOD is our help." The help of God is within the gold mine of God's presence and life within the spirit of every man! Only the presence of God can make us holy! Salvation is wholly of God. The High Calling is wholly of God. Sonship is wholly of God. Priesthood is wholly of God. Immortality and eternal life are wholly of God. Perfection is wholly of God. "Ye shall therefore be holy for I AM HOLY" (Lev. 11:45) is a statement of fact, rather than a call to become a "good" person in word and deed. We are separated unto God by His life in our spirit, and only by yielding to His life within does holiness become revealed through the totality of our being!

This brings us to a truth that is at the same time both wonderful and dreadful. The seven churches in the book of Revelation had all kinds of problems, yet they were "golden" candlesticks and Christ walked "in the midst" of them in terrible glory! You see, we are prone to look back on the *early church* through "rose-colored glasses," seeing only the ideal, the positive, and the good. Many preachers are trying to build up a "New Testament Church," to reproduce the exact order they see in the churches in the days of the first apostles. Some even tell us that we can't make it into sonship unless we are *submitted* under the ministry of a "New Testament Church." They haven't thought this through! Do they *really* want to reproduce the New Testament Church? When you do that, here is what you get! By the mid-50's AD, the Galatian churches were steeped in doctrinal error. The Ephesians struggled with the bondage of the law. Even the Philippians, the fruit of Paul's most successful labors, were marred by selfish ambition and disunity. The Colossian church was overrun with heresies and legalism. The Thessalonians, as stunning as their conversions were, yet were beset by outbreaks of immorality and apocalyptic fanaticism. The Corinthians had experienced the most dramatic manifestation of the power and gifts of the Spirit, yet notwithstanding this, they had profound problems with sexual perversion and moral misconduct, false doctrines, drunkenness from an excess of wine right in the meetings at communion, and total confusion and chaos in the manifestations of the gifts! Wouldn't that be a wonderful "New Testament Church" to reproduce! The fact is, ALL churches ARE already New Testament Churches **without trying to reproduce anything!** The portrait of *all churches* is graphically drawn by the pencil strokes of the Holy Spirit in *the seven churches of Asia!*

Can we not see by this that the work of the Holy Spirit is always *perfect* in its origins, however the vessels through whom and upon whom the Spirit moves are often *flawed* and *broken*, and capable of the most grievous of sins and errors and extremes. THIS IS THE PICTURE OF THE SEVEN CHURCHES! Let us **UNDERSTAND!** The church has not been a perfect realm, just as none of us have been perfect. The *candlestick realm* is the *vehicle* of our *overcoming!* The

seven churches represent for us the progressive way to the throne of God! God has deliberately put us in an imperfect church as a training ground for overcomers! This is God's school! As each member of God's called and chosen elect overcomes spiritually within himself all that these churches represent, we truly become qualified to receive the promises and finally REIGN WITH CHRIST UPON HIS THRONE! Sonship is *via* the church! I'm not talking about the organized systems of men *called* churches, I'm talking about our living relationship with Christ in an imperfect state! Actually we travel through the churches, overcoming first in one area, then in another, until we have overcome within ourselves all that the churches represent. When we have overcome in one God "calls us out" unto the next. The seven churches are *seven stages* of our *out-calling* from realm to realm until we are perfected in the image of Jesus Christ to stand in the fullness of the mind, nature, will, glory, and power of God!

Have the flaws in your own character, my beloved, been magnified in your eyes until you despair of ever attaining to the High Calling of God in Christ Jesus? Today I point you to CHRIST THE HEALER. Think not for one moment that Jesus Christ is the healer only of diseases of the body! He has come to cleanse His church, to sanctify and purify His elect, to purge and refine and make every whit whole His children called to be sons. I declare to you today that HE IS THE HEALER AND PERFECTER OF HIS FAMILY. He purges out of His kingdom all things that defile and offend. Listen! The great and wonderful mercy of the Christ receives all who have blemishes, and His power heals all who walk with Him in the light of His presence. Have you received the call to sonship? Then be of good cheer! "And the very God of peace *sanctify you wholly*; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved *without blemish* unto the unveiling of our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Thes. 5:23). If we are to be cleansed, healed, made whole and preserved without blemish there is only one way, and that is shown in the verse that immediately follows the one quoted above: "Faithful is HE that calleth you, WHO ALSO WILL DO IT." What a word!

We have now come to the close of the church age and God is ready to *change the order*. The hour has arrived for the *manifestation of the sons of God* gathered out of the church age, and the rule of the kingdom of God over the nations. That which God is bringing forth for the next age will be perfect, it will be sinless, deathless, and gloriously victorious! There will be no weakness or failure in all of God's holy mountain! The sons of God shall not go out with power to heal the sick, cast out devils, and do signs and wonders, but with no power to be honest, pure, and holy. You won't have to worry about them swindling you out of your money, seducing your wife, being caught in some homosexual act, lying, cheating, deceiving, swelling up with pride and pompousness like a frog, manipulating the Lord's sheep for their own profit, or building another tower of Mystery Babylon around their ministry. **God won't do it that way this time!**

You can have imperfect apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, and imperfect Christians, but you can't have IMPERFECT MANIFESTED SONS OF GOD! Sons of God won't carry on their cars the bumper sticker that proclaims, "I'm not perfect — *just forgiven!*" If God were to give unlimited power into the hands of men with character flaws, imperfect lives, and corrupt hearts, they would become the most despicable race of devils, monsters, and tyrants the world has ever known. They would wreck the kingdom of God in short order and creation would never be set free. But God is preparing a people in this hour to receive *kingdom power and authority*. He is preparing our hearts, purifying our souls, cleansing our motives, changing our desires, raising up grace and truth and righteousness in our inward parts. Fear not, little flock, for it is the Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom! He will finish His work and cut it short in righteousness!

Chapter 30

The Seven Churches Of Asia

continued

"What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the *seven churches* which are in Asia" (Rev. 1:11).

According to our Lord's parable of the wheat and the tares, the kingdom of heaven during this past age was to be an age of mingled blessing when the seed of the kingdom of God would be planted and begin to grow and develop in the hearts of a chosen company who would believe on Christ. It was to be an age when *true and false* would be *side by side* in the same pew, when *wheat and tares* would grow in the same field, when *sheep and goats* would roam the same pastures, when *good and bad* fish would be caught in the same gospel net. So alike were the tares and the wheat that the Lord Himself declared that men should not try to separate them, but that both should be permitted to *grow together until the time of the end* when God would send forth His angel-messengers to divide the wicked from the righteous, the spiritual from the carnal, the sheep from the goats, and the wheat from the tares (Mat. 13:36-43).

This mixture in the church — the wheat and the tares — becomes, later on in the Revelation, the gaudy harlot riding astride the beast of the carnal nature and worldly government. This great whore is described as "arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication" (Rev. 17:4). Ray Prinzing draws our attention to the fact that even as the seven infant churches were "golden" candlesticks, though beset by flesh, error, carnality, and abominations of various kinds, so this wanton harlot carries in her hand a "golden" cup. Ray wrote, "*Golden* bespeaks of things of intrinsic value, or, spiritual things. There is no doubt that religious Babylon has held in her hand a golden cup — treasures of truth, spiritual enrichments, revivals, times of divine visitation, but she has also mixed in of her own abominations, gross manifestations of the flesh, idolatry, carnality, spiritual adultery, whatever filthiness can be mentioned, it is all found in that cup, and then it was given to men to drink, until all the earth has become drunken with this awful mixture of flesh and spirit.

"Again this is noted in Daniel 5:2-3, as Belshazzar 'commanded to bring the silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple, and they drank wine in them.' They would take hold of the cup and place in it their own wine, and dishonor the true by mixing it with the false. As the spirit of man is joined to the spirit of the world, the spirit of self-aggrandizement, stroking their own ego, yet all the time claim to be doing it for the Lord. It's Babylon — CONFUSION — taking the things of intrinsic value, the songs of Zion, the quickened Word, the precious blood of Christ, the anointing of the Spirit, and mixing it all up with the frivolity of the flesh, equating loudness as the anointing, emotional outbursts are thought to be spirit-movings, and it is amazing how many are ready to drink from this cup — to become drunken with spiritual fornication, party-time mixing of the holy with the profane. Yet

the Word speaks loud and clear, 'Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot partake of the Lord's table, and the table of devils' (I Cor. 10:21). Participation in Babylon's cup must end!" — end quote.

Again, consider the parable of the wheat and the tares. The master told his servants to ignore the tares and let them grow together in the wheat field until the harvest. Although the tares were the predominant plants in the field, it was **not** a tare field — it was a **wheat field**, and the crop which the Great Sower is interested in, is the wheat! The Lord had planted the wheat, and *an adversary* had crept in during the night and sown tares. And thus it has been during the length of the church age, nearly two thousand years, there have been the true children of God, of God's planting, and false believers, false doctrines, false ways and works, of Satan's planting! For these two millennia, the professed church of God has been endeavoring to convert the world to "Christianity." But this effort has been unsuccessful, since it is out of harmony with God's plan for this age. The plan for this work to be *successfully* completed, as we know, is the *new age* of the manifestation of the sons of God. Considering the spirit which controls the pseudo-church, it is not surprising to discover in the warnings to the churches in the Revelation, that, instead of effectively converting the world, it finds itself in danger of *being converted* to the world!

I spent a number of years in my early ministry seeking out a "perfect church." On a few occasions it appeared that I had actually found one! The people were so loving and consecrated, the worship was so glorious and heavenly, and there was such a purity of the revelation of the Lord! But when I stuck around for just a little while, the undercurrents of strife, jealousy, division, flesh, sin, and corruption began to surface. All was not as it seemed! Suppose you had been searching for the perfect church back in the days of the early church. Suppose you had been traveling around in search of the one true church armed with the following list of criteria: (1) perfect doctrines and revelation (2) total dedication and zeal (3) perfect harmony and respect among members (4) no sinners, hypocrites, or non-believers in the church (5) perfect love and consecration (6) perfect worship and order in the Spirit. You could travel from Jerusalem to Galatia to Rome — probably to every congregation mentioned in the New Testament — and you would not be able to find the perfect church based on your criteria!

Many people have searched for the perfect church today and have given up in frustration; some conclude that the Bible must be all mixed up, and maybe God doesn't really exist. Others reason that, since the perfect church doesn't exist, they'll have to start it! Or they fall prey to the cults or cult-like churches who claim that they, and they alone, are the one true church. Millions have cast aside family, friends, jobs, even the Word of God for the false sense of warmth and security offered by organizations claiming to have the only truth or to be the one true church. Well, thank God, the complete membership roll of the church is found only in *heaven*, in the realm of the Spirit, not in the computer of any organization on earth! Only *by the Spirit* can we know those who are truly His!

Through many years of experience I have learned the valuable lesson that as long as there is even *one imperfect* person in a church you do not have, nor *can* you have, a perfect church. By God's design the churches are full of imperfect, immature, needy, and broken people, whom God is in the process of restoring and making whole! If you are looking for the perfect church *in the candlestick realm* of the Holy Place, you are truly making an effort in futility! There is no such thing! The seven golden candlesticks are prefigured by the candlestick in the Holy Place of the Tabernacle of Moses. In the Holy Place the oil of the candlestick burns out, the wick from day to day needs trimming, the bread on the table of showbread contains leaven,

a type of evil, and will grow stale, needing to be replenished. Everything in that realm is corruptible, imperfect, and temporal! We are forced to accept every group of people on the basis of their *degree of maturity and perfection*, for when they are compared to the stature and perfection of Christ, they fall short. Thus, we can proclaim with those who sang the song of Moses unto the Lord, "FOR THOU ONLY ART HOLY!"

What another word of wisdom Ray Prinzing shared when he wrote: "We recognize that we are neither fully out of the old, nor totally into the new, and therefore we offer no condemnation for anything or anyone in this time of transition. 'Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God' (I Cor. 4:5). Our heart desires to truly WORSHIP HIM, IN SPIRIT AND IN TRUTH, yet as we come together betimes, and have our services, we readily admit that we carry over the forms of the past, to sing, pray, preach — it is all we know. And some mix in more of the old traditions with the new moves of the Spirit, while others try to remain as free and flexible to His leadings as possible. But I dare say, we are not yet true thoroughbreds in our worship! But we also have confidence that HE will complete His work in us, and ultimately we shall freely and joyfully render unto Him the worship which He desires. While we wait for the establishment of HIS KINGDOM, however, we have no desire to build any more with the 'old stones of Babylon.' This leaves us without any current identification, no institution, no label, no brand, and we confess that we are but 'pilgrims and strangers' passing through this present age, for we have here no continuing city, but we SEEK ONE TO COME. Praise God!" — end quote.

The seven churches of Asia with their mixture of truth and error, flesh and spirit, are a picture of the church, the one church, the New Testament Church, the true church, throughout the church age! God's people, for the most part, are IN BABYLON. How could the Lord say, "Come out of her MY PEOPLE," unless the church is dwelling in spiritual Babylon, just as Israel of old was in captivity in the literal Babylon. My point is this: We cannot draw *clear lines* between the church and Babylon! Babylon is a **system**. The church is a **people**. Multitudes of the people who make up the church are IN BABYLON! They are controlled by Babylon, they have absorbed the ways and culture of Babylon, they think like Babylon, they talk like Babylon, they act like Babylon, they enjoy life in Babylon! And yet the people themselves are NOT BABYLON! Coming out of Babylon does not then *make you the church*. All of God's people are the church, including those in Babylon! When God calls you out of Babylon you are His "called out" on a different or higher level than those in Babylon who have been called out of sin and the world. But both are "called out" and all are "the church"!

This is a great mystery, and my prayer to God is that He may give all who read these lines the spirit of wisdom and revelation to perceive and see the true nature of all things. The Babylon system *calls* itself the church. It is *not* the church! Someone says, "That is a Baptist church," or, "that is a Methodist church," or, "that is a Pentecostal church." There is no such thing as either a Baptist church or a Methodist church or a Pentecostal church! They don't exist! There is a Baptist *religious organization and system* which *calls itself the church* but it is not the church. The **living redeemed people** are the church! And the **Baptist religious system** is Babylon! So here we have a seeming contradiction! On the one hand we do not call Babylon the church, while on the other hand we refer to the people in the religious systems as the church. *It is because much of the church is in captivity in Babylon!* Now, there are those who "come out of Babylon" and they appear to be "another church." Some even deny that those in Babylon *are* the church! But the truth becomes very clear as we consider the seven churches of Asia! Most of them were already living in some form of religious Babylon, yet they were the Lord's church whom He both praised and rebuked!

In chapter one of the Revelation we see the Lord Jesus walking in the midst of the churches with eyes as a flame of fire and feet like unto brass, as if they burned in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters. This is the **prophetic spirit** of Christ in the midst of the churches! The Son of God walks in the midst of the churches in **judgment**. His eyes pierce through the façade the church has built up around itself, and His feet bring the refining fire of God every where He steps. The message is clear: The Lord Jesus is the authority over the church! Some ministers, whether apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, or teachers, try to be little dictators over the Lord's people. Many churches have been spiritually devastated by leaders who take advantage of the Lord's flock. But the pastor is not the authority over the church — the One we have to deal with is the One who walks in the midst of the churches!

"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also *loved the church*, and gave Himself for it; that HE might *sanctify* and *cleanse it* with the washing of water by the word, that HE might present it to Himself a *glorious church*, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be *holy* and *without blemish*" (Eph. 5:25-27).

Make no mistake about it, HE WILL HAVE A GLORIOUS CHURCH, and it is the result of building — He is both the Author and the Finisher. There is a tremendous purging process on the horizon among the many groups and institutions of man, for although the systems themselves are Babylon, yet those within the systems are HIS PEOPLE. They may be but abused and brainwashed babes in Christ — but He will finish in them what He has begun! Oh, yes, there is a work begun, and salvation is a process, and those touched with His salvation are HIS, but in need of much purging and processing. The responsibility is HIS, for it is He who has redeemed them unto Himself, and line upon line Christ will work in each heart, every man in his own order, from glory to glory, until every man is made *complete in Him*. God is performing this great work in His **firstfruit company** now, and we are experiencing what it means to be refined by fire, purged, purified, changed, transformed and conformed to the image of the Son of God! For the called-out firstfruits the *place* is HERE, and the *time* is NOW! The work taking place in the lives of God's sons in this hour is but the *first step* in God's great redemptive, reconstructive, and restorational purpose. When God has finished His purifying, all who name the name of Christ will advance into heights and depths in Him! Mystery of mysteries, Christ *loved the church* and gave Himself for it that He might *sanctify* and *cleanse* and present it to Himself a GLORIOUS CHURCH without spot, wrinkle, or blemish. The final vision of this glorious church is the NEW JERUSALEM COMING DOWN FROM GOD OUT OF HEAVEN PREPARED AS A BRIDE ADORNED FOR HER HUSBAND. This is not Israel, the wife of Yahweh — this is the church, the *bride of Christ*! The New Jerusalem is *the ultimate reality of the church*!

THE LIGHT OF THE CANDLESTICKS

"The seven *candlesticks* which thou sawest are the seven churches" (Rev. 1:20).

Candlesticks are for light! In the opening verses of the Bible we read, "And God said, Let there be *light*: and there was *light*" (Gen. 1:3). "And God said, Let there be *lights* in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and God made two great *lights*; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: He made the stars also" (Gen. 1:14,16).

I would draw your reverent attention to the words used here for light. The Hebrew text of Genesis 1:3 says, "Ye hi or: wa ye hi or." The nearest to a literal translation our language will permit is to say, "Light be, and light was;" or even better, "Exist light, then exists light." Our English word, light, appears again in the English translation of the Bible in the plural form in the

fourteenth verse, "God said, Let there be *lights* in the firmament of the heavens." There is, however, a vast difference between the word for *light*, the substance, in verse three, and the one translated *lights* in verse fourteen. In verse three the Hebrew word is *or*, while in verse fourteen the word is *ma-or*. This latter word is best translated as "luminary, light container, or light holder," and these light holders are placed about throughout His universe like street lights in a big city. We have the same distinction in the Greek where *phos* appears as light, the essence, and *phoster* as the word for a light container. The *ma-or*, then, are the great luminaries such as the flaming suns, and even their reflecting satellites called moons, the meteors, and the nebulae; but *or* is the very substance and essence of light.

In the Old Testament symbology the Hebrew word used for light, when speaking of God as light, is *or*, that is, light substance; and in the New Testament the Greek word for light, when speaking of Christ as light, is *phos*, that is, light substance. The significance of this is noted when we see that the characteristic word for the body of Christ as light in the New Testament is *phoster*, or light holder. Jesus Christ then is The Light and we, as His body, are the luminaries which contain or shine forth the light. **THUS WE ARE THE CANDLESTICK!** The most significant appearance of this word in connection with the body of Christ is in Philippians 2:15, "That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, *among whom ye shine as lights* (*phoster* – light holders, luminaries) in the world." This word is comparable to the luminaries of the Old Testament. The *ma-or*, or light containers. In Revelation 21:10-11 we find, "And He showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, having the glory of God: and her light (*phoster*) was...clear as crystal." The candlestick realm, when purged, cleansed, purified and matured *becomes* the holy city, the New Jerusalem shining with the plenitude of the glory of God!

So beautifully is the truth unveiled, in the New Testament writings, that Jesus Christ is the Head of His body, and that His body is the church! (Eph. 5:22-33; II Cor. 11:2). It is a beautiful thing to contemplate, a precious thing, a wonderful thing. Jesus is the Head, and the body, though being many, is one body. Everything of its life and interests and doings originates from the Head. The Christ within is the life of each member. In the book of Revelation the churches are the lamps in which HE burns and shines by His Spirit, and the light which shines is His own life. As lamps, or candlesticks, the churches are the forms into which His Spirit flows as oil. In them His word burns as light. The members of the body of Christ are the *forms* by which the Christ of God appears as light in the world! It is not the forms themselves which are to appear, but the light that burns and shines in them. In Him, then, the forms become lights or luminaries. "YE are the light of the world."

God's first concern has always been for His people. You ask, Is He not equally concerned about the world? Of course He is — and that is why He has placed the candlesticks in the world, *to be the Light of the world!* Some say to me, "Don't bother me with those deep revelations — my burden is to reach the world for Christ." Those who speak thus have missed the whole point! The candlesticks are just dim lights in a world of darkness, and when the candlestick flickers and goes out, as it has in so many churches, then darkness covers the earth and gross darkness the people. God is after something greater than the candlesticks! The light of the candlesticks is seen in the opening chapters of the Revelation, but when you come to the closing chapters there are no more candlesticks, just the holy Jerusalem coming down from God out heaven, having the glory of God! Then it is that the *nations* walk in the light of that city, and the *kings of the earth* bring their glory into it.

The "deep revelation" found in the visions of John between the candlestick and the New Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven, is the revelation of God *by which* we are

changed and transformed and brought from the candlestick to the throne! The Lord wants to walk in our midst with *ever-increasing Light*. If you want to forget the "deep revelation" and just remain a flickering candlestick in the world, then go ahead! You can do some good, you can affect some souls and bring blessing to some people. We can all be a blessing! But if you really, truly desire to reach the *world* for Christ, you must give yourself to *becoming* the *overcomer* who shall be a son of God, who shall inherit all things, and in whose light the nations and kings of the earth shall walk! The path of the just is just that way — it *shineth more and more unto the perfect Day!*

The Lord has promised *greater works* than those He did, *greater works* than any of us have seen in our lifetime, because He has *all power in heaven and in earth* to invest in His people as they are prepared for it. You want to reach the world for Christ? The greatest thing you can do for humanity in this hour is to pay the price to become a *manifest son of God!* The whole creation is groaning, travailing for the unveiling of God's sons! We ourselves are groaning within ourselves in mighty, heart-wrenching travail, seeking God for the adoption, the placement as sons, to wit, the redemption of our body! This is the word the Lord is speaking by the mouths of His prophets in this day, and we are compelled to give ourselves to it, to yield ourselves under the mighty hand of God, to wait upon the Lord, until we receive the *greater glory* from on High! There is little hope for this sin-cursed world until the next great move of God, the greatest *ever seen*, breaks in power and great glory upon the horizon! Let us not settle for less, let us not sell creation short!

God's work in us begins by making us a new creation with a new nature, a new spirit, and a new mind. The light of the candlestick is at the top of the candlestick. It is my earnest prayer that the Spirit of God will give each one who reads these pages the spirit of thoughtfulness and revelation. If your spirit is able to grasp the truth of this you will see that "the light of the body is the eye" or the understanding, and it is the *mind* that must be renewed and enlightened by the spirit of Truth, giving light to the whole temple of God. Just as the light is at the top of the lamp stand, so is the mind at the top of man's body. "Be renewed in the spirit of your mind" (Eph. 4:23). "That...the Father...may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him: the *eyes of your understanding being enlightened*; that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints" (Eph. 1:18)

Christ is seen standing in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, representing something. Since Christ is pictured as standing right in the midst of the candlesticks, He is the One who is actually *fueling*, or supplying the needs of, the candlesticks, as His Spirit is represented by the oil. Christ is thus *embodied* within these seven churches. Even the positioning of the candlestick in the typical Tabernacle in the wilderness speaks powerfully to us. You will remember that the candlestick was not in the Holiest of all, but was located in what was known as the Holy Place, which is the area of the Tabernacle just before the Holiest of all or the Most Holy Place.

This positioning of the seven-branched candlestick gives us some special truth about the church age. The church does not dwell in the Holiest of all — the place of *fullness!* It does not walk in the realities of the *third compartment* of the Tabernacle, the Most Holy Place, nor yet in the glory of the *third day*, the fullness of the Day of the Lord. The church of this age has remained in the second compartment of the Holy Place, in the second feast, the Feast of Pentecost, and in the life of the second day, which falls short of full resurrection and perfection. "Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for He hath torn, and He will heal us; He hath smitten, and He will bind us up. *After two days* He will revive us: in *the third day* He will raise us up, and

we shall live in His sight. *Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord:* His going forth is prepared as the morning; and He shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth" (Hos. 6:1-3). "Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures today and tomorrow, and the *third day* I shall be perfected" (Lk. 13:32).

Believers of this age have with one accord sold themselves woefully short of all the great promises of God! Christ has entered in to that which lies within the veil, the absolute fullness of God! He has opened up the way for men to enter into a full and complete salvation, into the *realm of sonship*. Jesus is the *apostle* of our faith. He is the *sign Son*, the *first-begotten*, the *pattern Son*. All who are to come to sonship to God shall follow Him through the veil and come into that wonderful fullness of the resurrected, ascended, glorified, and enthroned Lord. It is now time, above all times, for us to mightily stress these truths! I see no possibility of any long delay until the *manifestation of the sons of God* becomes a reality. I know not the day or the hour, but it is my deep conviction in the spirit that we are now in *the generation* that shall witness this marvelous unveiling. I live daily in the expectation of the glory of God! Should my eyes grow dim and my gait unsteady with the passing of the years, I shall still rest in hope of the glory that *shall be revealed!*

Thus it is written, "Then the Lord will create over all of mount Zion and OVER ALL WHO ASSEMBLE THERE a cloud of smoke by day and a glow of flaming fire by night; over all the glory will be a canopy. It will be a shelter and shade from the heat of the day, and a refuge and hiding place from the storm and rain" (Isa. 4:5-6, NIV). Mount Zion represents the spiritual place of reigning with Christ! If we are ascending mount Zion in the Spirit, and beginning to reign with Christ in the Spirit, the glorious light of Christ must be always shining from within us. David, who reigned gloriously from the mount Zion of old, spoke from experience when he said, "He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. And HE SHALL BE AS THE LIGHT OF THE MORNING, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain" (II Sam. 23:3-4).

The sons of God are those elect and chosen ones who shall eventually *rule over men*. And we are to do so with the light of Christ shining out from within us to dispel all the darkness in people and in all the kingdoms of men. We are to be filled with so much of the light of Christ that we will shine forth as the sun in its brilliance, when it rises over the horizon to shed its rays over all the earth. All the inhabitants of the world, being ruled by the power of the Spirit within the sons, will then grow in the Spirit "as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain." All men will be set free from their bondages of sin, sickness, ignorance, selfishness, limitation, human government and religious domination, and will then worship the Lord in spirit and in truth, and walk in the word of God within them. They will grow to the full stature of Christ, in the light of the glory that is seen in us, in the power and glory of the kingdom of God! They shall grow up into righteousness, understanding, love, faith, and power with God until eventually even the shackles of corruption and death shall fall from off their lives. Creation shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption. And our growth to the full maturity of sonship manifest will make all this possible!

It will be spiritually instructive for us to understand how that in the Tabernacle of Moses there were three different kinds of light. And by this light there were three different kinds of order. In the Outer Court the sun was the light, but there was night in that realm for when the sun went down in the western sky the Outer Court was veiled in darkness. Then in the Holy Place there was the candlestick, and there was a glimmering light in that compartment, not a very bright light, but a light sufficient to illuminate that realm by day and by night. That light was produced out of an indwelling, out of oil that was *in the candlestick* producing light. It was not a perfect

light because the wick had to be trimmed daily, and the oil must continually be replenished. There was a necessary service rendered to that candlestick by the priests to maintain the light, just as we have needed the ministry of the word, the dealings of the Spirit, and seasons of refreshing and times of revival in order to rid our lives of recurring carnality, keep a supply of oil, and maintain the light of God burning in our lives. That is the Holy Place! But you know, when you enter into the Most Holy Place, the Holiest of all, the light of that realm is the Shekinah, the blazing, penetrating fullness of the glory of God, and there are no shadows and there is no night there! It is eternal light! The Shekinah is not dependent upon anything. It is not drawn or derived from any earthly substance. It doesn't have to be serviced. There is no wick to trim, no oil to pour, no priestly ministrations of any kind to maintain it. It simply **is**, because God **is**!

Yet, the candlestick is a wonderful encouragement and edification to all who are pressing forward into God. The candlestick was kept burning in that Holy Place "from evening to morning before the Lord." This statute was given to show us that the light of the Spirit is always available to us, even during these dark, spiritual hours of our walk in the flesh. We will never be left alone in this world with its troubles, testings, and trials, for we are assured that His light is always shining in our hearts to guide and direct us on the pathway we should take, by the Spirit. Therefore we should be filled with the oil (anointing) of Christ at all times, whether it is a time of more light as He sends seasons of refreshing to cause us to blossom and grow up in Him, or the time of the darkness of a spiritual night, for His light is always shining in His heavenly, spiritual Tabernacle within us. By His glorious light within, we are able to make it through this dark night with faith, understanding, illumination, confidence, and trust in Him. Not only will we make it through this dark night of trial and testing, but we will do so triumphantly and victoriously, overcoming every obstacle, hindrance, and limitation of the flesh realm. We will turn our darkness into glorious Day as we walk in the light of the indwelling Spirit, ascending at the golden altar of incense to worship our Father in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, where we are enabled by His life to pass beyond the veil into the eternal and immortal glory of the Holiest of all! In order to enter in beyond the veil the glorious light of Christ must always be shining from within us so that we do not stumble as we make our way from realm to realm.

While the church is a light to the world, the light of the candlestick in the Holy Place of the Tabernacle reveals clearly that the light is, first and foremost, the revelation of Christ within ourselves to guide us on our journey into God. The Holy Place typifies the church realm, for it was the realm of the candlestick. When we step through the door, which separates the Outer Court from the Holy Place, immediately we come under the influence of the light of this candlestick. Everything in the Holy Place is seen in the light of the candlestick which is the light of Christ in our spirit. Your light is a flaming expression and manifestation of the glory of God and is fed by the oil that is put in your vessel. That's what the candlestick is all about; it is the life of Christ living in you!

It is the illumination of Christ, the anointing within, which draws us northward to the table of showbread where we begin to fellowship with Christ in His word. We begin to sup with Him and He with us. We hear His voice and take into us His word which is made strength and sustenance to our new creation life. We then move on to the golden altar of incense to proclaim the praises of Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light. This is not the soulful, toe-tapping, hand-clapping, dancing music we hear in many places. This realm of praise and worship is the declaration of His virtues out of a heart of brokenness, love, consecration, and adoration. This is the realm of praise *in the spirit and by the spirit* which God begins to inhabit. This is the place where our transformation begins! The golden altar is the

final piece of furniture in the Holy Place — located just before the veil into the Holiest of all. The incense is a cold, hard substance which, when placed upon the fire on the golden altar, is *transformed into a spiritual fragrance* which wafts its way through the veil into the Holiest of all! This is the place where we are changed and begin to pass from the Holy Place into the Most Holy Place. When we have passed through the veil there is *no candlestick*; rather, the glory of God in the full power of Christ's resurrection is the light of that realm!

The candlestick was to burn continually, which speaks to us of living in a continual awareness of the presence and revelation of the Lord. When we stepped into this Holy Place of the indwelling Spirit the light of His glory released in our lives permeated the whole room. How we thank God for the light produced by the candlestick in the Holy Place, though it is limited in its power and range of illumination. We're grateful for the "in-part" realm, for only by passing through the dim light of the Holy Place can we enter on in to the blazing Shekinah of the Holiest of all! The revelation of the Lord in this Holy Place (church realm) is always calling us onward. The revelation of the Lord within ourselves will never leave us in the same position where we receive it. This should let us know, that as wonderful and glorious as this Holy Place is, it is not the ultimate in God! He is ever calling us toward the Most Holy Place, into Himself, in that dimension of fullness where it is His glory alone that fills the room. In the Most Holy Place there are no distractions of wick-trimming and making sure there is adequate oil in the lamps. There is only the constant, unchanging, undiminished, brilliantly shining glory of His all-consuming presence! In the Most Holy Place there is no more labor of baking and replenishing the bread on the table. There is now the eternal, incorruptible manna within the ark of the covenant! In the Most Holy Place there are no more distractions of periods of burning incense — times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord — seasons of God's movings through our prayers, praise, and worship. There is only the abiding *law of the spirit of life* in Christ Jesus, the state of *being His nature* by which we are *all that He is!*

There has been a light coming from the candlestick, the church, which allowed us to see all that is in this realm and to find our way into all the purposes of God that pertain to this realm. The light of the candlestick is the illumination of the Holy Spirit through all of the anointings, revelations, gifts, ministries, and graces which quicken our lives. The light of the candlestick enables us to find our way to the table of showbread where we feed on Christ as the word of God in one another, for "the bread which we break, is it not the *communion (fellowship) of the body of Christ?* For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread" (I Cor. 10:16-17). The light of Christ in the candlestick also makes it possible for us to arrive at the golden altar of incense before the veil where we offer the incense of our prayers, praise, and worship, and very *being*, unto the Father. It is this place, when truly in the Spirit and by the Spirit, which opens the way for us to enter in *beyond the veil* into the Holiest of all. Now we can understand this realm of the candlestick — *the church!*

THE SEED-PLOT OF REVELATION

Some of us have surely noticed how all truth in the book of Revelation is germinative in the seven churches. We find the *seed-plot* for all that happens throughout the whole book in the experience of the seven churches! Thus it will be seen that the germs of all those evils which in the days of their fruition bring God's judgment into men's lives, and upon the Lord's people collectively, are already at work in the midst of those who have been called out of the world unto salvation. The Lord's word to the churches, "Repent, or I will come unto thee and do thus and so..." cannot be separated from the judgments we see later throughout the book of Revelation. His warning to the churches is not one thing and the judgments that follow another thing. They are the *same thing!* The very judgments that fall upon men throughout the book are

in very fact the *fulfillment* of Christ's warning to the churches! They are not judgments upon Israel, Russia, China, the Arabs, Europe, or America — they are the corrective, remedial, redemptive judgments upon those apprehended of God by which we are purged, purified, and transformed into the image of God's Son! The judgments recorded in the book of Revelation tell the story of how the evil began as tares sown in the field of God's kingdom, the means used by the adversary to sow and develop them, and the wonderful process by which the Lord sends His messengers and gathers the tares into bundles and burns them. When this great work is fulfilled **in us**, then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father!

When our lovely Lord Jesus came into this sin-cursed world bringing the word and power of the kingdom, He ushered in a new and glorious age. It is very doubtful that any in those days had the remotest idea that it was the Father's intention to take the next two thousand years to complete the great work of preparing the *kings of the kingdom*! Jesus came to bring in the new age of *the church*, the *seed-bed* in which the kingdom could grow and develop to its **next stage**. When the conditions are fully ripe for this **next stage** of the kingdom, *this age will completely pass away*. How our glad hearts rejoice in the sacred knowledge that we are standing even now at the dawning of the **next new age** and the **greater glory** of the kingdom that it brings!

The Word of God contains mysteries which little by little are opened to us like the opening of a rose. In His wonderful kingdom parables Jesus revealed the great mystery of the *progression of the kingdom* from stage to stage and from realm to realm. He said, "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof" (Mat. 13:31-32). Again, "Behold, a sower went forth to sow; and when he sowed, some seeds (the word of the kingdom) fell by the wayside, and fowls came and devoured them. Some fell upon stony places...some fell among thorns...but other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundred fold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold. Who has ears to hear, let him hear" (Mat. 13:3-9). And yet again, "The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way..."

As Jesus taught, it is like a farmer planting his seed in the soil. He makes the field ready and plants the seed in the ground. The seed lies buried under the earth, lost from sight, of course. If I had my way, I would expect a field full of corn tomorrow morning! After all, I put a lot of time and energy and money to prepare this soil and plant this seed. I did the right thing. I sowed the seed. An experienced farmer understands, however, that it is going to take *time* for the seed to sprout, to grow, to develop through all its stages, and ultimately bear fruit at harvest. The consummation doesn't come immediately nor instantly, but in season. Seedtime and harvest! That is God's method of operation in everything He does. It's been this way since the beginning, when God took six "days" to fashion the heavens and the earth, and it will continue to be His way throughout all the limitless ages. The Lord is ambitious, but also very deliberate and methodical. He enjoys growth and expansion! That is the way of His plan and purpose, always. Do not despair, precious one, if the work of God in you seems very slow. As long as there is some progress, however infinitesimal it may appear to the eye, GOD IS AT WORK! He will never leave you nor forsake you, even through the long, cold months of winter when *nothing is happening*, He will not abandon the work of His hands, nor will He turn from His purpose in you. God will complete that good work He has begun in you! Oh yes, He will! You see, this is the deep mystery of the kingdom of God. Jesus has taught us that it comes like

silent leaven, grows like a grain of mustard seed, develops like corn, which is "first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear."

The good seed, this extraordinary seed, is our blessed Lord Jesus Christ, who is the *Word of God*. It is a very good seed, for it is the germ of spiritual, divine life! It is the *incorruptible seed*! When this seed was planted in the earth it began to grow vigorously and brought forth first the glory of the early church. Then, from move to move, from visitation to visitation, from revival to revival, from dealing to dealing, this seed has grown and multiplied and reproduced in the earth and now it is time for the *cash crop* that will bring blessing to all the families of the earth — the *manifest sons of God*! The sons are the *final product* of the planting of the Lord, the precious *fruit*, the seed *exactly like the first seed that was planted* — Jesus Christ! The sons are the increase of the kingdom of God within the Lord's elect. Within that first, extraordinary seed was a preview of the kingdom when Christ in His entire body of sons will appear in the glory of sonship. And that, precious friend of mine, is how the kingdom of God will also increase and expand from age to age throughout the ages of the ages with the unending increase of God! Think about it! Just as Jesus was the first seed for this age, bringing forth a harvest of many sons, so the sons are the first seed for the next age. What an increase of the kingdom they will bring! And the harvest out of the age now dawning will be the seed-bed for the age that follows after that. And of the *increase* of His kingdom there shall be NO END!

The kingdom is like seed that is planted, sprouts, grows, passing through various stages over time, until at last it produces the fruit within which is the seed just like the original seed planted — only multiplied *many, many* times! In the time of harvest, we shall bring forth seed identical with the seed of Christ that was planted in the fertile soil of our hearts. We shall then become more seed exactly like that original Seed that was planted in our hearts! When Jesus was asked by His disciples to explain the parable of the wheat and tares, He said, "The field is the world; **the good seed ARE the children of the kingdom**; but the tares are the children of the wicked one" (Mat. 13:38). Let us pay attention to the words of Jesus. "The good seed are the children of the kingdom." In this parable He is not viewing us as having the seed within us, or as having the kingdom planted within us, as He does in other parables. Rather, He presents us as being "the good seed." In other words, Jesus saw us as being equal with Him, as a good seed just like the original Seed of Christ. We are becoming like the original seed of Christ through the planting of the incorruptible seed within us, but Jesus saw us as being already complete. Jesus saw us as, not the "blade," or the "ear," but He saw us as the "full corn in the ear." He saw us as seed to be harvested! The seed that we are becoming is identical to the original Seed of Christ that was planted within us. And this seed shall be sown again to reproduce many times over according to the power of the original Christ-seed.

The kingdom of God operates by God's law of reproduction and increase. Just as all vegetation and animals and humans in the world are brought forth by the law of germination, growth, and increase, so is the law of the kingdom of God! Nature is but the outward, visible revelation of God's spiritual principles. Just as it is impossible for a wheat seed to produce apples, so it is impossible for the Christ seed within us to bring forth anything but Christ. As the Christ was planted within us, so that original seed must bring forth not only the spirit of Christ, but also *a body just like His glorious body*! God will give us a body like that of Christ, either by transformation while we live and stand upon our two feet, or by resurrection from the dead. The body that we receive must be *exactly like* the seed of the *resurrected Christ* who has been planted within our hearts (I Cor. 15:38). The Christ seed that we are becoming will have the same *life* that is in Christ. The seed will come forth with the *likeness* of Christ, the *mind* of Christ, the *nature* of Christ, the *righteousness* of Christ, the *compassion* of Christ, the *mercy* of Christ, the *love* of Christ, the *miracle-working, creative power* of Christ, the *fullness* of Christ! It

must be this way, for the law of God reveals that everything must "bring forth after its kind." The seed to be harvested is identical to the Seed that was planted! The seed that we are becoming shall be scattered abroad to reproduce after His kind, filling the earth with kingdom sons just like us and, more importantly, just like Jesus Christ!

Armed with the understanding of this blessed truth, can we not see the importance of our wise Husbandman putting His chosen ones to the test, that He might prove us, purge us, and purify us from all that is not the perfection of Christ? It must be so, for if the tares of the carnal mind and fleshly nature were left to be harvested with the Christ life the kingdom of God would be a horrible *mixture* of flesh and spirit, truth and error, righteousness and corruption! Thank God that *at the time of harvest*, when the sons come to spiritual maturity, THE TARES ARE SEPARATED FROM THE WHEAT! The tares are gathered and *burned* in the refining, purging, purifying fire of God! Truly this gives us understanding of our present life and its difficulties! His truth is setting us free within ourselves from the fears, weaknesses, errors, limitations, and bondages of the flesh, of sin, and of religion. And how blessed and privileged we are to see the truth as it is in Christ!

There should be no need to remind any who read these pages that there is a negative side of this principle of sowing and reaping. In the parable of the wheat and tares a remarkable fact is revealed, the fact of continued mixture; up to the end of the harvest the field is a *mixed field*; it is a field divided between wheat and tares. And both the wheat and the tares are in the *Lord's field* — in His church! An enemy sows tares in the midst of God's wheat. Now notice — the tares are sown *after* the wheat is sown! So this is something that happens to the spiritual life of the children of God *after* they have been quickened by Christ! I do not doubt that this enemy is the devil of the *carnal mind*.

The kingdom is birthed into us in an infinitesimally small beginning. But it comes with sufficient power to begin to change our lives! The government of God begins in that undistinguished place where the spirit of Christ takes root in the inner life. Little by little we begin to become aware of what God wants in our life, and the paths of obedience begin to be learned. The desire is created within us, by the new genetic makeup of our mind, to want to do His will. We want to do what He wants us to do and to be what He wants us to be. It is right there that an enemy comes into the Lord's field, and begins to *sow tares*! The tares look just like wheat, but they are *not* wheat, and they are not the Lord's planting! It is right there that the church systems *begin to lay upon the Lord's people* their own man-made laws, requirements, rules, regulations, commandments, creeds, traditions, rituals, ceremonies, programs, works, and a whole world of religious tomfoolery, and leads the child of God down the dead-end street of man-made religion! Oh, yes, an *enemy* hath done this!

It may be quite a revelation to some to realize that tares look and act exactly like wheat, but a tare is a weed. It grows like a stalk of wheat and is identical to a wheat plant *except at the time of harvest*. The wheat at harvest time has a full head of grain and is bending over with the weight of the grain. A tare is not bent over with the weight of grain for there is nothing but an empty head of chaff. Only at harvest time is the distinction between wheat and tares clearly visible. No doubt all of us have come into contact with tares! We have worshipped with them in services. They went through the same religious motions. They knew how to praise the Lord at the appropriate time, or when the worship leader instructed them to. They even prayed with apparent devotion, but all of their prayers were self-centered. They diligently studied the scriptures, but all of their interpretations were literalistic and carnal. They spoke the name of Christ, and did all kinds of *religious things*, especially at Christmas, Easter, and in all kinds of programs, concerts, drives, and works. Indeed, the tares have been with us all through our

spiritual pilgrimage! And they really do look like wheat! It is only when you come to the harvest, when the Husbandman looks for the *MATURED CHRIST-LIFE IN THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT* that it becomes evident that this is not the Seed!

"Let both grow together until the harvest" (Mat. 13:30). Jesus was clearly stating that both realms would grow side by side, in the same seed-plot, until the time of harvest. Harvest bespeaks of **full maturity**, when each seed has reached its ultimate potential, size, capacity, and brings forth the fruit of what it is in the fullness of itself. And indeed both realms of the spirit and the flesh have been growing together in the church, in the candlestick realm, just as Jesus said they would! The wheat represents the kingdom saints, the sons of God in the fullness of Christ's life, nature, and power. The tares represent the carnal minded Christians of man's false religious systems. It could be no other way!

Multitudes who read the book of Revelation do not grasp the deep truth of why the Spirit began the book with the messages to the seven churches and then goes on to all the horrendous scenes that follow. The natural mind fails to get the connection! But this miscalculation arises from the failure to discern the difference between a *seed-plot*, where the seeds are planted, cultivated, and grown, and the immeasurable harvest that is to follow! The truth is, the messages to the seven churches are not something separate from, or different than, the events in the rest of the book! They are intricately related, the one grows out of the other; they are the very same images, pictures, events, and realities presented at different stages of development!

Let us now notice that the first three chapters of Revelation are introductory. Introductions can be of two types. Those which are casual, serving merely as the opening of the door, bearing no vital relationship to the real heart of the matter to come later in the main body of the work. And those which are absolutely essential, laying out in embryonic fashion the very essence of all that is to follow. Revelation's three chapters of introduction are of the latter type! Every great theme of the book is already found in compact and concise form, in these opening letters to the seven churches. **IF ONE UNDERSTANDS THE INTRODUCTION, ONE HAS GREATLY GRASPED THE ESSENTIAL IDEAS OF THE ENTIRE BOOK!**

As I stated earlier, all truth in the book of Revelation is germinative in the seven churches. A great mistake that many have in their minds is the notion that the seven churches are one thing and the events described through the seals, trumpets, and vials are something else. Such is not the case! The messages to the seven churches are given first because **the church is the seed-plot for the development of the seed — both the wheat and the tares!** Oh, yes! The church is the seed-bed of everything that happens in the whole book of Revelation! It all begins there! The beasts, the women, the cities, the shakings, the judgments, the glory — all these things and many more are found in seed form in the seven churches. All the mighty things that manifest out of the sea, the earth, and the heavens are there in the seven churches in embryonic form. As a plant grows and develops, and the blossoms and fruit come, so does every seed of good and evil in the seven churches become full grown and full blown in the chapters that follow!

Notice how it is that the little seed of Jezebel, the fornicating false prophetess in the church at Thyatira, grows and increases in numbers, organization, and stature until *she becomes* "the great whore that sitteth upon many waters: with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication" (Rev. 17:1-2). Consider how the little seed of the doctrine of Balaam in the church

at Pergamos, increases and intensifies until it brings forth in the earth the corporate beast of the false prophet who has "two horns like a lamb, and speaks as a dragon" (Rev. 13:11).

Then there is the little seed of the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes by which the Lord's people are brought under the fleshly dominion of men who set themselves up as lords over God's flock; and this group of pastors, bishops, overseers, superintendents, etc., these usurpers of Christ's Headship over His body grows and aggrandizes until it *becomes* "that great city Babylon, that mighty city" which "is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. For all nations have drunk the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies" (Rev. 18:2-3). Then the seed of the struggling little "overcomer" in each of the seven churches, to whom such glorious promises are given, increases in wisdom, stature, and authority in the Spirit until *he becomes* 144,000 sons of God standing upon the heavenly mount Zion, the very pinnacle of power and dominion in the kingdom of God!

John sees the seven golden candlesticks — the church — later on in the Revelation, this time no longer a flickering light in the secluded darkness of the Holy Place of the Tabernacle (the church age), but now become a glorious wonder in the heavens of God's Spirit, clothed with the dazzling glory of Christ as the light of the noonday sun, a glittering crown of twelve stars of divine government upon her head, and the moon of the cold, reflective light of ritual, law, ceremony, and all outward religious ordinances and forms put *under* her beautiful feet. She is about to give birth to a manchild, a mature son, the manifest sons of God, who shall rule all nations from the throne of God in the Spirit. The little seed of the candlestick has now *become* the glorious sun-clad woman in the heavenlies! And the little seed of the overcomer has *become* the manchild upon the throne of the universe!

We could go on and on, but for the present these few examples suffice to show clearly how the seven churches are the seed-bed of *all* the great events pictured in the Revelation. Every seed in the early church, good and evil, has now grown up in the earth as a mighty power to be reckoned with in this day of the harvest when the tares shall be separated from the wheat!

Chapter 31

The Church In Ephesus

"Unto the *angel* of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith He that holdeth the *seven stars* in His right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks" (Rev. 2:1). "The mystery of the *seven stars* which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The *seven stars* are the *angels* of the seven churches; and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches" (Rev. 1:20).

John calls the seven stars and the seven candlesticks a *mystery*. A scriptural mystery, however, is not something which cannot be understood, but rather something which can be understood when it has been revealed. It is a hidden truth, veiled, concealed in some sign or symbol, until it is opened to the understanding by the quickening of the Holy Spirit and then understood by those to whom it is revealed. So then, it is a *revelation*! The seven stars and the seven candlesticks are no longer a mystery when the explanation is given that "the *seven stars* are the *angels* of the seven churches; and the *seven candlesticks* are the *seven churches*." He holds the angels or messengers of the churches in His right hand while His position among the churches is *in the midst*.

Now I would draw your reverent attention to a most significant point. The King James Version of the Bible prefaces each message to the churches with these words: "*Unto the angel* of the church at Ephesus...or Smyrna...or Pergamos...or...write." It sounds as though John is writing TO the messengers of the churches. But such is not the case! John is by no means communicating the message TO the messengers, rather BY or THROUGH the messengers. In an even deeper sense John is receiving the message FROM the messengers. The messengers are not the recipients of the message *from* John, but *in* and *with* John they are the active force by which the messages are received and delivered to the churches.

Let us UNDERSTAND! Charles Williams in *The Place of the Lion* made the following astute comment about *prepositions*. "It was good *of* you to look for Quentin...or good *in* you. How accurate one has to be with one's prepositions! Perhaps it was a wrong preposition that set the whole world awry..." The preposition "unto" in the command of the Spirit to John is, in the Greek, in the *dative case*. Greek is different than English, and in the Greek language of the New Testament the dative case is used to signify not only "to" and "for," but also "in," "with," and "by." Let me give you a few examples of such usage where the very same preposition is used that is translated "**Unto** the angel of the church...write."

"For if **through** the offense of one many be dead..." (Rom. 5:15). "For if **by** one man's offense death reigned **by** one, much more they which receive abundance of grace...shall reign in life **by** one, Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:17). "Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia and was unknown **by** face unto the churches of Judea which were in Christ" (Gal. 1:22). "That He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water **by** the word" (Eph. 5:26). "Who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things **by** the word of His power..." (Heb. 1:3). "Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the

tree...**by** whose stripes ye were healed" (I Pet. 2:24). "For this they willingly are ignorant of, that **by** the word of God the heavens were of old..." (II Pet. 3:5).

The word "by" in each of the preceding passages of scripture is the identical form of the preposition used in chapters two and three of Revelation where it is translated "**Unto** the angel of the church...write." But the meaning is that it is "in" or "by" or "through" the angel of the church that John should write, not "unto" the angel or messenger! The Emphatic Diaglott correctly renders this phrase: "**BY** the messenger of the congregation in Ephesus, write..." There is a world of difference between writing TO a messenger and writing BY or THROUGH a messenger! The true sense of the action is reflected in the following passage where the same preposition is used again, "Until the day in which He (Jesus) was taken up, after that He **THROUGH** THE HOLY GHOST had given commandment unto the apostles whom He had chosen" (Acts 1:2). What is really being said is just this: "BY the anointing, BY the spirit of revelation, BY the spirit of prophecy, BY the word of the Lord, BY the dispensation of God unto the church at Ephesus...write!"

There are seven star-angels and there are seven churches. Each message concludes with the thrilling and commanding call, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what **the Spirit** saith unto the churches!" And that is what is meant! John is not writing **to** a messenger, rather, it is **by** the messenger that he writes, and the messenger IS THE HOLY SPIRIT, for the churches that receive the message are admonished to *hear* what "the Spirit" is saying! Each message is given **from** Jesus, it is **through** or **by** the Spirit, and there is a dispensation of the Spirit designated for each church. The dispensation of the Spirit for each church is typified by a *star* or *messenger*, which is the symbol for the ANOINTED WORD OF THE LORD to that church! Thus it was **by** the seven angels, which are *the seven spirits of God*, that John wrote to the churches! Only when we understand that the *seven stars*, the *seven angels*, and the *seven spirits* are the very same thing does the *mystery* become REVEALED! These are deep and very sacred principles of God. And today, my beloved, unless *we, too*, are quickened by these same seven spirits or seven angels, or seven stars, which are the seven-fold word of God by the seven-fold spirit of God, we will understand absolutely nothing of what we read in the book of Revelation! Only as we become personally identified with the seven stars, the seven angels, and the seven spirits are mind and heart quickened to the truth as it is in Jesus.

You will notice that in the book of Revelation from chapter one all the way through chapter twenty-two there is angel after angel involved in the unfolding revelation of Jesus Christ. Do you know who these angels are? They are ministries, agents, messengers, spirits, anointings, voices, revelations, words, spiritual powers and manifestations of God by which He accomplishes His mighty works in His elect and in the whole earth! These are His spiritual ministers! "He maketh His angels *spirits*, and His ministers a *flame of fire*" (Heb. 1:7). The symbolic term "angel" is used in the Revelation to show that the ministry and action comes from heaven, it comes in the Spirit and by the Spirit, it comes by the word, authority, and power of God. That is the kind of ministry that at pivotal times in earth's history has been loosed in the earth, and in this new day of the manifestation of the sons of God is loosed in the earth, and shall be over and over again until the kingdom of God triumphs over all. There are no literal angels with wings flying around over the earth doing these things, for it is all **by the Spirit!**

The first error many make is believing that the "angels" of the churches are the *pastors*! It will come as a shock to some to learn that there was no such position of "the pastor" in the churches in the days of the first apostles! Even the apostles Paul and Peter never once wrote to any church addressing, or even referring to, "the pastor." The term is completely foreign to the word of God and entered in later years as an invention of the man-made religious systems

of Babylon. Though God truly speaks to His people through ministries — through apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers, and others — He speaks to His elect BY HIS SPIRIT. If it is not by the Spirit, then God has not spoken! The "angel" or "messenger" of Jesus Christ *is the Holy Spirit!* How plain this is made by the apostle John in his Gospel, the very same John who wrote the book of Revelation! "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, *whom the Father will send in my name*, He shall teach you all things" (Jn. 14:26). "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the *Spirit of truth*...He shall *testify of me*" (Jn. 15:26). "When He, the *Spirit of truth*, is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and *He will show you things to come*. He shall *glorify me*: for He shall *receive of mine*, and shall *show it unto you*" (Jn. 16:13-14). Now notice the correspondence between these scriptures and the following: "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him, to *show unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass*; and He sent and signified it *by His angel* (messenger) unto His servant John" (Rev. 1:1). "I Jesus have sent *mine angel* to *testify unto you* these things in the churches...and *the Spirit says*..." (Rev. 22:16-17). Oh, yes! The "angel" of Jesus Christ who is *sent* from Him, who *testifies* of Him, who *reveals* Him, who *shows His chosen ones things to come* is none other than THE HOLY SPIRIT OF TRUTH!

The angel of Jesus is the Spirit of truth! Angels throughout the Bible were sent to men to impart revelation, to deliver a message, to speak a word from God. In the Old Testament Daniel had an instructing angel. Zachariah had an instructing angel. Ezekiel had an instructing angel which told him about the events that were to come. It was an angel that notified the virgin Mary of the Son she was to bear, and angels announced His birth to the shepherds attending their flocks by night. But that old order has now passed away, for God has sent the Holy Spirit Himself to guide the elect into all truth! The only angel we need in this new day of the kingdom of God is the Spirit of truth, the very Spirit of Christ!

The ministry of the seven churches is the ministry of the Son of God who has the seven spirits of God. In the symbology of the book of Revelation one of the seven spirits is the messenger or revealer of each church. The seven spirits are identified by the prophet Isaiah. "And the Spirit of the *Lord* shall rest upon Him, the spirit of *wisdom* and *understanding*, the spirit of *counsel* and *might*, the spirit of *knowledge* and of the *fear of the Lord*" (Isa. 11:2). In the symbolism of the Revelation there is a spirit that goes with each church. The spirit, when "dispatched" to the church, is called an "angel," the angel or messenger or revelation of the word of the Lord to that church. When you know which of the seven-spirit-star-angels is speaking in the exhortation to each church, the understanding is vastly enhanced. Each of the seven spirits, and thus each of the messages to the churches, represents a stage or aspect of our growth and development into the fullness of Christ.

Can we not see by this that even the angels in the book of Revelation are wonderful *symbols*, representing the living word of God communicated by the spirit of revelation! An angel came and showed these things unto John — that is, a powerful word of the Lord came to John out of the heavenly realm of the Spirit, speaking mysteries to his heart and passing before his spiritual eyes visions of wonders to come. The proof of this is found in John's own statement as to how the revelation was received. "He sent and signified it unto His servant John: who bare record of the **word of God**, and of the **testimony of Jesus Christ**, and of all that he saw" (Rev. 1:1-2). The voice of the angel was merely a figure for THE LIVING WORD OF GOD BY THE SPIRIT!

The seven angels of the seven churches are the seven-fold spirit of God. So the angel was not saying to John, "Write to the pastor, and tell the pastor to tell the church that I have this *for*

them, and that *against* them." That wasn't the message at all! Rather, it is "**By** the angel of the church...write!" That is, by the dispensation of the Spirit, by the anointing, by the word of the Lord to the church...write!" An angel is a *messenger*. Therefore, what we are talking about is a **word!** God says, "I am sending a word. It's a word of my Spirit. It's out of the seven-fold spirit of my own nature, mind, power, and glory. John — by the angel, by the Spirit, by the operation of God in you write this word and send it to the churches. Don't write something to the pastor, but in the Spirit and by the Spirit send forth the word!" The entire book was written *in the Spirit*. John was *in* the Spirit when he received it, and he wrote it *by* the Spirit. That is the word that is alive today! It's not the word that you hear from my lips, or read from my pen; it's not the word that falls upon your natural ear or your physical eye. It's the word that comes by the anointing, by the spirit of revelation, by the illumination of the mighty God — that is the word that enlightens your mind, penetrates your heart, transforms your life, and brings forth within you **the revelation of Jesus Christ!** The seven angels are the seven spirits, which are the seven lamps of fire burning before the throne (Rev. 4:5). The seven angels are the seven stars in Christ's right hand. The seven lamps are also the seven angels with the seven trumpets standing before God (Rev. 8:2) sounding forth the word of the Lord! Therefore He says, "**By** the angel...write!"

We meet these seven angels, and other mighty angels besides, throughout the book of Revelation. When God desires to reveal something, or to accomplish a work within His elect, or in the earth, He sends forth a symbolic angel — a word, a move of His Spirit, a manifestation of His power — out of the heavens of His Spirit. Oh, yes! The new word of the kingdom, the word of God's new order of kings and priests for the new age, must come "down" from God out of heaven into our earth. It is the message of an angel, or a heavenly messenger, even a spiritual anointing and a divine, creative word from the Lord that will transform us into the glorious image and likeness of Christ (Rev. 10:1-7). It is also by a message or the word of an angel or a spiritual anointing and a divine, authoritative word from the Lord that great Babylon, the three-fold systems of man's creation, shall *fall* to rise no more (Rev. 14:8). The anointed word of our Father, sent from the heavens of His Spirit to the earth, declares it to be so and also begins the process that makes it so!

THE CHURCH IN EPHEBUS

"By the angel of the church in *Ephesus* write..." (Rev. 2:1).

Ephesus is the first mentioned church of the seven. Ephesus was a city of about two hundred thousand people. It was a great city and had a huge outdoor theater which could seat about twenty thousand people. It was a place of resorts, and the Roman emperors came there. It was a city constructed of white marble, a beautiful place, and Paul commented on that. The city was considered as the greatest city of Roman Asia. It was also a seaport with a very good harbor. A Roman writer called it "Lumen Asiae" or "The Light of Asia." What was the source of its greatness? It was the Gateway of Asia. Ships plying the waters of the Mediterranean sea could enter this fine harbor. Ephesus was the end of the road from far off exotic places of the east. Travelers and goods bound for Rome passed through this city. When Christians were shipped to Rome to be flung to the lions, Ephesus was the port of embarkation. Ignatius called it the Highway of the Martyrs. Its position made Ephesus the wealthiest and the greatest city in all Asia.

The city of Ephesus was a beautiful city but was probably best known in the ancient world for its sexual perversion. This is what many thousands of people came to the city for! The world-famous temple of the goddess Diana was located in the city and every form of immorality was

centered in the temple worship, for "sacred sex" was one of the prominent features of the cult of Diana. It was one of those cities where, like Las Vegas today, if you wanted a "good time" and you were unconverted and didn't care what kind of good time you had, that was the place to go. Ephesus was a city one went to to sin — everything was legal. The temple of Diana was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Inside the temple was an altar built to Diana in front of three velvet curtains. Behind the curtains was the image of Diana. The image was so ancient that no one could remember where it originated, which fostered the belief that it literally fell from heaven. If you see a picture of the image of Diana you would wonder why they worshipped such a hideous likeness! Diana was not a beautiful woman, she was a repulsive, dark, squatty figure, covered with dozens of breasts on the front, each representing a different aspect of her character. Among other things she was the goddess of fertility and sex. Around her worship were some of the most bawdy and vulgar orgies of the ancient world. About her, day and night, unceasing music was played and everything that appealed to the senses. Her temple worship made use of some ten thousand girls and women who were called "holy women" because, as history shows, they "united" male worshippers with their goddess. In some instances there were male prostitutes and sodomites for the women and effeminate. It was an ugly affair all the way round, and the worship of Diana literally smelled of hell. **In the midst of such a city we find one of the assemblies of Christ set as a light in a dark place!**

The first church to whom Christ spoke was Ephesus and the reason the order begins there is because Ephesus is the "mother church" for all the other churches in that part of Asia. The seven churches literally began out of the church at Ephesus. The letters that were sent to these churches probably started at Ephesus, as was the custom in those days, they circulated letters from church to church. The first letter was addressed to Ephesus and the remainder were undoubtedly directed to the churches in the order that the letters would be circulated, for they were seven letters within one letter — the whole of the Revelation being but one book.

The following remarkable words reveal how Ephesus became the beginning point of all the seven churches. Paul had come to Ephesus "and he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God. But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus. And this continued for the space of two years; *so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks*" (Acts 19:8-10). The seven churches were all in the area around Ephesus, but they formed a circle. They were not a great distance from each other, some were only ten miles from one another, others were thirty or forty-five miles from another. By the time the book of Revelation was written Paul was dead, and John had become sort of a spiritual overseer to the seven churches before he was banished to the isle of Patmos. Amidst the afflictions of Patmos his heart was still in those churches.

In the letters to the seven churches the Holy Spirit deals first of all with THE EPHESIAN CONDITION. "By the angel of the church in Ephesus write: These things saith He that holdeth the seven stars in His right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks; I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars...nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love...but this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate" (Rev. 2:1-6). The EPHESIAN CONDITION is one that the Lord partially compliments. Here is a body of believers who toil and persevere for the sake of Christ; they can't endure wickedness; they

have discernment and are not carried away by false ministries; they endure many things for the gospel's sake; and most of all the Lord could say of them, "You hate the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate."

Ephesus was the church closest to Patmos. The city was located in a very desirable location, and the name means "desired" or "desirable." This has a spiritual meaning to the Lord's elect. We must learn that in the Lord's eyes *we are desirable!* Those called to sonship are losing their former religious sense of unworthiness, their sin-consciousness, spirit of condemnation, inferiority complexes, and are being delivered from all depressions, for we are truly a *new creation* in Christ! Ah, yes, my brother, my sister, the Father of glory chose *you* — picked *you* out for Himself as His special own, predestined for a purpose — before the foundation of the world, and before the times of the ages. "According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love: having predestinated us unto placement as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will" (Eph. 1:3-5). And of His Zion company, those who ascend into the heavenly heights of authority and dominion with Christ upon His throne, the Lord says, "For the Lord hath *chosen Zion*; He hath *desired it* for His habitation. This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have *desired it*" (Ps. 132:13-14).

It is a beautiful truth that the Lord thinks of each one of His elect as *desirable*. He desires us! To understand this you must read the Song of Solomon and wait before the Lord until He reveals the deep spiritual meaning of that book in your heart. As a bridegroom desires his bride, so the Lord desires us! He does not look upon our outer man of flesh with its imperfections and corruptions, but upon the inner new creation man of the spirit. In our spirit we are truly holy and without blame! On the personal and individual level, when we come to the place in our experience of becoming a bridegroom, possessing within ourselves the spiritually masculine characteristics of the *sons of God*, then we desire *our bride*. Our bride is within ourselves — our soul. That is how the soul is saved! Within me my spirit desires my soul as its bride and woos her to become one life in the union of love. When spirit and soul are united in marriage within ourselves, they then clean up their house (the body) so that sin is forever put away and the house can be glorified with incorruption and immortality. All this the Lord *desires* for His elect and is fulfilling it within us by His Spirit!

To each of the churches, before ever He praises or corrects them, before ever He requires anything of them, He gives a revelation of Himself. Notice the revelation of Himself He gives to the church at Ephesus. "These things saith He that holdeth the seven stars in His right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks" (Rev. 2:1). In the book of Revelation everything is presented as a "message" sent in writing to the churches, but that is only the symbol. The reality is that CHRIST REVEALS HIMSELF in that capacity to that people, whoever, whenever, or wherever they are in the history of the church. The revelation He gives to each OF HIMSELF is what it is going to take for that church, or the people in that state or condition of their spiritual lives, to overcome. Each church represents people in a particular *spiritual dimension* of their growth and development in Christ, and it takes that unique aspect of the revelation of Jesus Christ unto them and within them for that people in their particular condition, state, and circumstance to come to the fullness of Himself. The people in THE EPHESIAN CONDITION need to know by the Spirit that Christ holds the administration of their lives in His all-powerful hand, and that the Lord of glory truly walks in the midst of them!

I KNOW...YOUR WORKS!

"I know thy *works*, and thy *labour*..." (Rev. 2:2).

It was mid-March when the young man gave his mother a little package. He told her that inside were seeds for an unusual flower that would spring up and blossom within two weeks. So she put the seeds into a pot of moist soil, placed the pot in a sunny window, and waited for the miracle. But the pot of dirt just sat there. When April 1 rolled around, the son stopped in to ask how the flowers were doing. His mom got a pained look on her face and said there was still nothing but dirt. Her son started laughing and said, "April Fools!" The "seeds" he had given her were actually the hard little tips of turkey beaks he had picked up at a local farm. When you plant something, great things won't happen unless there's **life** inside the thing you plant! The Lord says, "I know your works." He neither condemns nor praises the works, He says simply, "I know." Oh, yes, He knows! There are works of life and there are works of death. The Lord is actively purging each member of His elect in this hour from all the *dead works* of man's carnal religious efforts. He is bringing forth life in the inward parts that we may bring forth the fruits of righteousness in the earth!

The burden of the Spirit is to conform the Lord's people into the image and likeness of Christ. Oftentimes He will lead us in wilderness ways of isolation, testing, and proving, for His ultimate desire is to lead us close to the heart of God, and therefore His dealings are designed to bring us to an humble and contrite heart. Some have the notion that because we are at the "end-time" we've got to come up with ingenious plans to *get the job* done. Many today are promoting their own grandiose schemes to convert the world to Christ! And He who is Lord of the church is crowded out of His temple, and replaced with the zeal and wisdom of the flesh! Many seek to use the Holy Spirit to do *their bidding* and bless *their efforts*, rather than waiting upon the Lord to manifest His life in them. It is the mighty working of the Spirit of Life within God's sons that shall bring forth the revelation of Jesus Christ in this Day! The firstborn Son did only those things He saw the Father doing. For thirty years He saw *nothing* as He stayed in Nazareth growing in the knowledge of the Father and learning His ways. Then one day, when He was ready for it, the Father showed Him a work and He stepped forth to Cana of Galilee and turned water into wine. From that day forward the mighty works of God were wrought through His Son! They were *God's works*, for He had waited upon the Father to manifest His life from within. So shall it be in this Day! To those who go about doing their own works, and to those who wait upon the Father to do *His works*, the Lord says, "*I know thy works!*" We may fool men, but the Lord *knows!*

I KNOW...YOUR PATIENCE!

"I know...thy *patience*" (Rev. 2:2).

Patience is mentioned twice in verse two and verse three. In a church of that stature, as the mother church of all the churches in Asia, with all the false teachers coming through, all the weirdoes, nuts, and flakes coming from all the other places around, false teachers of the Judaizers and Knostics and myriad others, they *needed patience* to try each one of these by the discernment of the Spirit and see what these doctrines were, and what the hearts of these individuals were.

The Lord's called and chosen elect also need patience concerning the work of God in us! If you've taken a trip with young children, you'll recognize the question, "Are we almost there yet?" It's an annoying question for parents, especially when it comes about twenty minutes into a day-long drive. But the Lord's children are not innocent of such questioning either! "O God, aren't we there yet? Haven't we been through enough? Are the sons about to be manifested?"

Do we have to endure this night much longer? Isn't it time for our change? Is the work about finished? Will I make it in to the high calling before I go by way of the grave? Are we almost there?"

The three most common words heard among believers in time of crisis are: "Lord, *do something!*" It is completely contrary to our nature as human beings to stand still and do nothing when we face perplexing trials. In fact, waiting patiently for God to act is probably the most difficult thing about the walk of sonship! Even those with deep dealings of the Lord in their lives sometimes panic when the Lord doesn't move according to their timetable. We often give God deadlines and time limits. We cry, "Lord, when are you going to do something about this? If you don't act now, it will be too late!" But I do not hesitate to tell you, my beloved, God is *never* too late! Mary and Martha found that out when their brother, Lazarus, died and was buried! He always acts — and not according to our schedule, but His.

The Lord is calling a people unto Himself in this new day of the kingdom who will trust Him in every crisis. Indeed, He often leads us into situations that are frightening, critical, difficult, in order to teach us His ways. He tests us to reveal in our hearts whether we are able to stand still and see the salvation of God! Every called out one should pray that the Lord will open his eyes and show him the eternal truth of these words of scripture: "The steps of a good man are *ordered by the Lord*: and He delighteth in his way" (Ps. 37:23). The Hebrew word for "ordered" here means "prearranged, step by step, fixed, ordained by God." This means it is God, not the devil, not some freak accident, but the Lord Himself who leads us into difficult places. We may cry out, "Lord, why are you allowing my crisis to continue?" But the truth is, not only does He allow our trial, He *arranges* it! And that is hard on the carnal mind!

I firmly believe every step I take is ordained by our heavenly Father. And if that is indeed true, then I know that God will never lead me to the brink of a difficult situation only to abandon me. He wouldn't say, "Okay, Preston, I've directed you up to this point. Now you're on your own!" No! Our wonderful Father is absolutely faithful to every one of His sons, in every situation and circumstance. Whenever God requires anything of man, there is always a reason for it. The reason so many people fail to attain to great heights in the Spirit is because they are unable to see God's *purpose*, and therefore they fail in the faith that lays hold upon the great heights that are in Him. His word to you today, precious one, is just this: "Will you be the one who won't panic — who won't charge God with forsaking, abandoning, and failing you? Will you stand still in your crisis and testing, leaning upon the faithfulness of your Father, trusting Him to reveal His power in you?" That is the stuff sons of God are made of!

A dear brother shared the following. "In this fast-paced age, to tell someone to wait brings some difficult problems. A child sees all his presents for his birthday and yet must wait until the date arrives. Oh, the excitement that he feels, for he contemplates the pleasures hidden just under those pretty wrappings for him. In like manner, we know some joys of the kingdom. They are like the outer wrappings of the child's gifts. We anticipate the full glory of the kingdom of God, but also know that *we must wait*. The first picture the word 'wait' sets before our eyes is as the child and his presents. Time holds him back from receiving what is his. He sits and with anxiety waits for the hour when he will be free to possess them. His waiting is an exercise in *patience*. Our waiting upon the Lord has this element, yet is much greater! When we wait upon the Lord, we twist together with the One for whom we wait. The boy aims his sight on receiving what is his by the promise of a birthday. Time passes, and with each moment of thought upon his gifts, he is uniting to his ownership of them. He sees the big wrapped box in the corner and thinks, 'This is *mine*. I wonder what it is?' Whatever it is, he unites to his possession of it. So also do we wait upon God!

"In the spring of 1979 I attended the graduating ceremony of the Bible school I attended before God sent me back to Missouri. Now, they had a guest speaker at their meeting. He was recognized as one who hears from God and shares what's on God's mind for the moment. As he came to the podium, before him sat the young graduates. Without an introduction or even an hello, he began to speak in a mild voice the word God wanted these to hear. His voice became louder and more intense with each sentence. Finally, his concluding statements were at the top of his vocal range, yet without breaking the richness of his voice. He went through several Old Testament characters attaching the word *wait* to each one. He said, 'Abraham, God has called you to birth the son of promise, but you must *wait*. *Wait* you must! Isaac, you must *wait* for the time for Rebecca to come. You must *wait*! Jacob, *wait* and *wait* and *wait* you will for Rachel your love. And *wait* you will to have your name changed to Israel. You will *wait*! Joseph, you must *wait* for the day of deliverance. Yes, Joseph, you must *wait*! *Wait*, yes *wait* David you shall to be king. David, you will *wait*. *Wait*! *Wait*! You must *wait*!'" — end quote.

To all who treasure the beautiful hope of sonship to God, who yearn to see the fullness of God revealed in His elect; to all who long to see creation set free from the bondage of corruption; to all who hope in Christ for the perfection, completion, and fulfillment of **all** He has promised those who follow on to know Him in this Day; to one and all I say, "*wait*!" "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him" (Ps. 37:7). "But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it" (Rom. 8:25). "Be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises" (Heb. 6:12). "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise" (Heb. 10:35-36). Patience is often lacking when God does not seem to accomplish His work in our lives, or in others, or in the earth as quickly as we think He should. But every son must understand this great truth — God seems to use *delay* as a choice process in the development of character and faith! *Wait*! Be *patient*, saith the Lord! Every promise of God *will be fulfilled* in His appointed time, when every necessary preparation has been completed in each son. God will finish His work and show forth His glory in us. He *will* do it! He *is doing* it! The work of God in us today is setting the stage for God's great tomorrow. Not one thing shall fail of **all** that He hath spoken!

THOSE WHO SAY THEY ARE APOSTLES

"Thou hast tried them which *say they are apostles, and are not*, and has found them liars" (Rev. 2:2).

The setting for the passage above is a time when Paul is now dead, Peter is gone, and John has only a few more years to live — he is the last of the twelve apostles — and already false apostles are rising up in the midst of the Lord's people. It seems that false apostles always *tell you* they are apostles. In fact, we usually have only *their word* for it that they are apostles! I've noticed through many years that true apostles rarely open their mouths to tell it. Notice the wording — "those who **say** they are apostles." We find something happening in their day that is characteristic of the church in every generation and age, especially in this climatic hour of the transition of the ages. In John's day there was a massive rising up of people who declared themselves to be apostles, and were not. Does that not sound a little familiar today?

There has never been an hour when so many self-appointed apostles were coming out of the woodwork as this hour in which we stand. I have no hesitation in telling you that the vast majority of them **are not apostles** at all, for they do not the works of an apostle. This is the day of false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ; and no marvel, for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light; therefore it is no great wonder if

his ministers also be transformed as ministers of righteousness, whose end shall be according to their works (II Cor. 11:13-15). Any preacher who can come up with a unique twist of doctrine, an apparent gift of some kind, and a liberal dose of charisma can gain a following and start a little movement around himself, imagining that he is an apostle.

As the elect of God you have a divine obligation to investigate, scrutinize, and seek the Lord about everything that I teach or that anyone else teaches! You have an obligation in the Spirit and by the Spirit to observe my life and the life of every minister of God. I have no right to expect you to blindly follow my words or ministry in any fashion or form. But I do earnestly pray that you will make sure of all things, search the scriptures, and be led by the Spirit of truth within you! The word of the Lord is sure to all who humbly and sincerely follow on to know the Lord, for He says, "If any man will do His will, *he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself*" (Jn. 7:7). You will know *within yourself*, by the anointing abiding in you. If you do not know the truth within yourself, then you do not yet know the truth! If you know the truth you can share it with me and I will say, "Amen!" When I share what the Father is saying with you there is a witness in your Spirit even if your conscious mind was not aware of the truth, you know that in the depths of your spirit you already knew that! "But the anointing which you have received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that *any man teach you*: but as the same anointing *teacheth you all things*, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it *hath taught you*, ye shall abide in Him" (I Jn. 2:27). You can *trust* the anointing within you, my friend! It is the oracle of God within the spirit of every anointed son! Never, *never*, violate the voice of God in your own spirit. God's true sons are not ruled over by men claiming position and power over other men's lives. The Father Himself loveth us and showeth Himself unto us! How precious that we can encourage and confirm one another in the glorious word of God for this new Day! But there are no "sonship popes" in this kingdom realm!

Paul spoke of a higher realm than the religious works and orders we have known in the church realm of our day when he said, "Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the *savour of His knowledge* by us in every place. For we are unto God a *sweet savour of Christ*, in them that are saved, and in them that perish. To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life" (II Cor. 2:14-16). Paul said that it is our purpose to "make manifest the SAVOUR (fragrance) of the knowledge of Christ in every place." Only a person who is completely possessed by Christ and walking in the Spirit of God can even know how to do that, for all of us have in the past been so dependent upon our doctrines, our forms, our ways and methods, so that we have made manifest the KNOWLEDGE, rather than the FRAGRANCE of the knowledge! What a difference there is, and what an impossibility to walk in it apart from the complete destruction of the soulful man! That is what the elect are called to in this new kingdom day, to be the *fragrance* of the knowledge of Christ. Truly we are being so changed, so transformed into the spirit of the Son, so exuding His love, goodness, mercy, grace, wisdom, glory, and power until the *scent* of His sweet and beautiful nature emanates and flows forth out of our lives. The very fragrance of Christ thus *becomes a teaching* — men learn of Christ by seeing Him as He really is in those who are truly His body; at last they come to understand His heart, behold His beauty, appreciate His ways, and are completely captivated by His spirit through the *fragrance of the knowledge of Christ* emitted from our lives.

This is ministry on a higher level than it has been known in the old-order church realms. The thing God is after in this hour is an ESSENCE-MINISTRY, the outflow of Christ from a people that has broken through **all** form into the very **spirit** of the word and are, therefore, equipped to *breathe the breath of life* into the souls of men. The ministry of the manifest sons of God will not be like any of the church order ministries we have known! This ministry will have nothing to

do with organized meetings, buildings, pulpits, sermons, choirs, programs, baptisms, communions, worship services, pastors, apostles, organizations, promotions, or any thing we have known in the past. Jesus had *none* of those things, and He was a manifest son of God! Jesus simply *was the essence of the Father* in the earth — at all times, in all places, and in all power! He was the *fragrance of the knowledge of God!*

Men weren't saved, healed, delivered, quickened, and transformed because of the eloquence of His sermons, the anointing of the choir, or the beauty of the worship. It was the very love, compassion, and goodness of God that exuded out through the pores of His life, permeated the atmosphere, and touched and transformed all that came under its power. And it worked everywhere all the time — not in a "meeting" organized in a "building." The fragrance flowed out of His life in the streets, in the homes, in the business establishments, in the fields, on the mountains, by the seashore, in the synagogues and the temple, even at feasts, weddings, funerals, and in the cemetery!

Those who move by the essence-life of the Father have no set form in which they move. No one can point to their work and say, "Lo, here is Christ, or there is Christ." The meeting doesn't begin at seven and end at ten. You cannot set your watch by what is going on, as is the case in most church services! They have no need to sing for an hour and preach for two hours in order to bring men to the point of faith, or for their gift to work. There is no such order or program! All those methods belong to the old and passing religious order of the church age. Those who shall move in the higher order of manifest sonship and the kingdom will be like Jesus; today they may use the method of anointing eyes with clay, tomorrow they may spit on them to perform the same miracle of opening the blinded eyes, and the next day they may do nothing more than send a word. A *fragrance* — nothing anyone can get his hand on and say, "I know how you operate in this realm, I know how it is done," or, "I know what you believe!" Just an essence...just a savour...nothing concrete...like the wind!

This is that which Jesus was talking about when He said, "As the wind blows and you don't know where it came from or where it goes, so is everyone that is **born of the SPIRIT!**" No one can categorize those who are *born of the Spirit*, for they believe all things spoken by the anointing and believe nothing spoken apart from it. They do only what they see their Father do, and speak only what they hear the Father speak. That's why there are no regular meetings in the kingdom realm, no rented halls, no advertising, no organized crusades, no worship leaders, no special songs, no program, no sermonizing, no staged altar calls at the end of the sermon, or any other religious form.

The Jews had their prescribed forms of religion, their laws, synagogues, temple, sacrifices, priesthood, and all the rest. But Jesus came and demonstrated the kingdom of God, what it is, and how it works. And what He demonstrated has little to do with anything we see done in churches today! He **CRACKED THE FORM OF THE FORMER AGE** and brought forth the essence of it, and established the essence. Jesus cracked the form of the sacrificial lamb and brought forth the essence of it within Himself! He became the lamb, not the lamb from which flowed the animal life of the brazen altar, but the Lamb of God from whose hands, feet, and side flowed the incorruptible life of God in the Spirit! It flowed down Calvary's hill, it flowed through Jerusalem, it flowed through the land of Israel, it flowed to Antioch, to Ephesus, to Corinth, to Rome, to all the ends of the earth.

When the essence was brought forth, the form fell. God saw to that! He sent Titus in to take care of that with his armies in A.D. 70, and they not only felled the form of the law and the old covenant, but the whole city of Jerusalem, the temple, the priesthood, the rituals and

ceremonies, and the whole nation of Israel! Lambs are no longer sacrificed! But the quickening Spirit of Christ has been sent into our hearts as we eat His flesh and drink His blood in the Spirit! Christ cracked the form of the law and brought forth the essence of it within Himself, by fulfilling all righteousness in His sinless life. Christ cracked the form of the temple by bringing forth the essence of it within Himself, His own body becoming the habitation of His Father by the Spirit. Oh, yes! Jesus cracked *every form* of the former age and brought forth the essence of it within Himself! It is that essence...that fragrance of the Father's life that changed everything wherever He went!

Those pressing on into the purposes of God for this day are not concerned about the titles men take to themselves, all of which pertain to a passing order, those who say they are apostles, or something else. Our deepest prayer to God is that we may just become the *fragrance of the knowledge of Christ IN EVERY PLACE!* That, my beloved, is the higher order of the kingdom of God on the earth!

Chapter 32

The Church In Ephesus

continued

“Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast *left thy first love*” (Rev. 2:4).

Some believe that the messages to the seven churches have no relevance to the sons of God because they describe the conditions in the old-order church realm, not the state of the overcoming elect. These believe that only the promises to the overcomers relate to those called to sonship who have already come out of the church age. But I would be remiss if I did not remind you, my beloved, that each promise to the overcomer begins with the phrase, “To *him that overcometh* will I give...” The question follows: To him that overcometh *what*? And while it is true that we are called to overcome *everything* that would dominate our lives to the detriment of our spiritual walk, yet the thrust of these messages to the churches is not about overcoming cussing, smoking, and drinking, but overcoming the very *spiritual conditions* that are revealed in the seven churches, that is, among the Lord’s people!

While we might like to pride ourselves that we have *already* fully and forever overcome all these things, and no longer pertain in any sense to the old-order church realm, I do not hesitate to tell you that I know many who treasure the beautiful hope of sonship and are following on to know the Lord who are *still in the process of overcoming* in many of these areas. If the work of overcoming would now be complete in each of us, would we not already have *received all the promises*? Therefore, until we have *all* attained the absolute fullness of *everything* the Father has apprehended us to, the messages to the churches are still relevant to our present walk. Nothing can be clearer than this! Otherwise, how could we know and understand where and what it is that we still must overcome?

The saints in Ephesus had left their first love, and the One who walked in the midst was unrecognized and only dimly known. What is that *first love* which is here described as outweighing all their wonderful works? Think of it! Labor — steadfastness of toiling on and on for His name’s sake; patience — the endurance to bear up under testing; uncompromising — the refusal to fellowship evil; discernment — they had tried the false apostles and found them liars — not a bad record at all! “Nevertheless...”

This is one of the most mis-understood passages of scripture in all the Bible. Most teachers have looked at this departure from the first love in the sense of having left something we once had. The idea usually expounded is that there was a quality of love that we possessed in the beginning of our walk with the Lord which we have departed from. That is certainly true in a great many cases! But the understanding I have received from the Spirit is that there has at times been an experience in our walk wherein we have left or departed from that which should have *first place* in our lives, we have neglected that which we should love and esteem *preeminently*. What do we love the most? What are our priorities? What is it that grabs our attention and gains our affection most readily? What is it that consumes most of our thoughts,

time, and emotion? That is indeed our *first love*, although not the first love the Spirit has in mind! If steadfastly trusting and praising God in all things, walking out the nature of God, and doing all the Father's will in every situation is down the line in priority in our lives, then we have fallen short of that which must have *first place* in the life of every son of God.

It is interesting to note the precise meaning of the word "first" in the original as used in the phrase "your first love." "First" is from the Greek *protos* meaning "foremost, best, chief, principle, prime, paramount, cardinal, main, supreme, crowning, supreme, number one." Your *first* love is therefore your *paramount* love! Your *supreme* love! Your *crowning* love! Your *most important* and *most imperative* love! What a message that is!

Christians spend a lifetime trying to recapture early experiences with the Lord. They mistakenly believe that the immature, romantic love they first experienced when they came to Christ is the greatest quality of love — the *first love*. But think about it, my friend, does not true love grow, develop, increase, intensify and deepen through the years? I know I loved my wife when we got married — Lorain was eighteen years old and I was nineteen. She was so sweet, so innocent, so pure, so pretty, so very desirable! Oh, how "in love" we were! That was *young love*. But is young love the *best* love? In those early days, should Lorain have left me or been killed in some horrible accident, almost certainly I would have gotten over it in a few months or in a few years, married again, and gotten on with my life. But after 48 years together, raising three children together, passing through the hard times and the good times together, standing by each other, truly getting to know each other, trust each other, and depend upon one another, there is now a bonding, a depth, intensity, quality, and power of love that our "young love" knew absolutely nothing about!

Today, I would gladly do anything, pay any price, spend my last dime and suffer the loss of all my world's goods to save her life or care for her — so deep does our love go. Young love, childish love, untried love, immature love, romantic love is *not the greatest love* and that is not the love the Lord rebuked the Ephesian church for having left! Christians mistakenly assume that going back to the first love is returning to the zeal, fervor, and excitement of their early relationship with Christ. They grieve over having lost some kind of youthful enthusiasm for the Lord. It's true, many believers have grown cold and dry — but going back to a more innocent time is not enough and does not express the deeper truth of this text.

WE SHOULD NEVER GO BACK TO WHAT WE WERE AT FIRST! Who wants to return to the cradle, the bottle, the nursery, kindergarten, or to the distresses of adolescence? Some get saved out of selfish interests — to escape hell, to get blessed or healed, or simply because they want peace of mind. None of us really *knew* the Lord, nor did we understand who He truly is, His ways, His truth, or His great plan and purpose in our lives and in creation. We knew so little! I have no desire to go back to my early days either naturally or spiritually! Our understanding was deficient, our experience limited, our wisdom incomplete, our zeal without knowledge, our works were, for the most part, the dead works of religion, and our love for Christ was more emotion than devotion! I would not want to return to anything **LESS THAN I NOW HAVE ATTAINED!**

When Jesus uses the words "first love" He speaks not of the childish and immature love we experienced when first we met the Lord. He's referring to *exclusive* love — *first place* in our hearts above *all* other things! The Christians in the religious systems today are satisfied with merely an *entrance* into the family of God where as children they can enjoy the many blessings and wonderful benefits of God's mercy, kindness, and goodness. Their eyes are blind to the higher purposes of God, and any efforts to lead them on to higher ground are rebuffed and

resisted by a human reasoning that asks why one should waste time on “deep things” when they are already saved and “on their way to heaven.” But the new birth, while it is the most astounding miracle of the ages, is, nevertheless, but the birth of a mere spiritual infant. There are many further steps that must follow this birth if one is to come into all the glories and the full heritage which is prepared for those who follow on to know the Lord.

The life of God is a free gift of unmerited mercy and favor. But there is a vast kingdom of spiritual heavenly wealth and power and glory and usefulness that is given to those who grow up into the fullness of Christ! In the wonderful family of God we can give ourselves to become either spiritual paupers or heavenly billionaires! We can remain thumb-sucking children or mature in wisdom and stature to become kings and priests upon the throne of the universe! Once we see by the Spirit the high purposes of our heavenly Father in calling us to sonship, there is no more desire to return to any stage of spiritual development or any hope that we ever had before! THE WILL OF THE FATHER IS OUR FIRST LOVE! THE HIGH CALLING OF GOD IN CHRIST JESUS IS OUR FIRST LOVE! THE FULLNESS OF GOD HIMSELF IS OUR FIRST LOVE! Here is the test, my beloved, here is where those in THE EPHESIAN CONDITION must overcome — we cling to the Lord of our *first* love, our *chief* love, our *best* love, our *paramount* love! The overcoming ones do not neglect to yield themselves to the purpose and calling of sonship to God! Their priority is not in doing all kinds of religious works, getting all kinds of worldly blessings, or in trying to convert the world by the antiquated methods of the old church order. The fullness of the righteousness and power and glory of God’s heavenly kingdom on earth, the image and likeness of Christ within, and our full stature and inheritance in Christ Jesus, is the *supreme* quest, the *first* and *highest* love of our life! We cannot, dare not, leave our first love! We cannot, dare not, *will not* settle for less!

The elect of God are *true worshippers*, for by supreme love they worship the Father in spirit and in truth. One can only fully and maturely love God when he loves also His ways, His will, His word, and His purposes. There is a second word that goes with worship. It is the word *adoration*. It is a term of endearment. There is passion in that word! “O, worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness” (Ps. 96:9). Worship is a love affair; it is making love to God. You know, according to the Jewish sages, it was David who wrote this Psalm on the day he brought the ark into Jerusalem. His first wife, Michal, the daughter of Saul, who represents the rule of the flesh, witnessed David bringing the ark into the city as he danced in the Spirit and sang before the Lord, and the scripture says that as she watched from her balcony she despised him in her heart. Sure she did! She discovered that David loved God more than he loved her, more than he loved the fleshly ways of the soul and the carnal mind, and that he was making love to God *in the spirit*. Is that not the same reason why the fleshly religious folks in the church systems of man often despise the called-out elect of God? Worship without love is like a flame without heat; it is like a rainbow without color; it is like a flower without perfume. There is spontaneity and intensity in love. It has a tenderness, an eagerness, and an expectancy in it. God is bringing His elect into that place of the intensity and expectation of love by which we anticipate the full fruit and inheritance of our union with Him! In the union of love we are being made one with His mind, His will, His nature, His glory and His purpose. The overcomer will *never* leave this *first* and *highest* love!

In union with God there is rest that’s complete,
There is joy, and there’s peace without measure.
In union with God we can sit at His feet,
And enjoy this wonderful treasure.
He’s coming to us as our hearts yearn for Him
And we’re changed in the light of His glory;

The Father is pleased as with gladness He sees
His likeness brought forth in this union of love!

Come near to the holy men and women of the past and you will soon feel the heat of their desire after God. They mourned for Him, they prayed and wrestled and sought for Him day and night, in season and out, and when they had found Him the finding was all the sweeter for the long seeking. Moses used the fact that He knew God as an argument for knowing Him better. "Now, therefore, I pray Thee, if I have found grace in Thy sight, show me now Thy way, that I may *know Thee*." From there he rose to make the daring request, "I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory!"

God was pleased with this intensity of desire, and the next day called Moses into the mount, and there in solemn procession made all His glory pass before him. In meekness Moses sought nothing for himself, but all for the glory of God. Through faithful communion with God Moses became acquainted with God's intentions. He was able to see far into the future and understand what the Lord purposed to do in distant ages. His wise heart knew what would evolve from the confusion and disorder of the day. He knew that from among the stiff-necked people he led the Lord would raise up a prophet like himself, and that prophet would be God's Christ who would, as a Son, do all the will of the Father and only those things that pleased the Father. He saw, furthermore, that by the transforming power of the Holy Spirit the Lord would raise up other sons of God who would be manifest out of the church age in the fullness of HIS LIFE. Out of his love relationship with God he received the revelation of the Father's purpose; out of *our* love relationship with the Father we are blessed to be made glad partakers of the *reality* of what Moses saw!

David's life was a torrent of spiritual desire, and his psalms ring with the cry of the seeker and the glad shout of the finder. Paul confessed the mainspring of his life to be his burning desire after Christ. "That I may *know Him!*" was the goal of his heart, and to this he sacrificed everything, if by any means he might apprehend that for which he was apprehended by Christ Jesus, for Christ in all His glory, wisdom, righteousness, and power was Paul's *first love*. He never left his *first*, his *supreme* love! The church world for the most part is content to know *about* Christ, but the heart of every apprehended member of God's called and chosen elect will never be satisfied until we fully and completely KNOW HIM!

Any man can come to know something of the *acts* and the *ways* of God, but only those who walk with Christ in the heavenly places of the Spirit can ever come to *know Him* in the most wonderfully personal and intimate manner. This depth of "knowing" Him is like the intimate relationship of a man with his beloved wife, in which love he seeks to reproduce after his kind. In fact this is precisely the way in which the scriptures in a number of cases make use of the word "know" — to declare the giving and receiving of human seed in the act of love. We read that "Adam *knew* Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain" (Gen. 4:1). This statement does not mean that Adam was able to *recognize* his wife as she walked about the house! "Knowing," in the sense of recognition, does not beget children! When Adam "knew" his wife he intimately and fully explored her physical and emotional being, and she "knew" him in return in a personal, familiar, and private way that words could never communicate. Only by the experience of the sexual relationship does man know woman in this sense, and she him.

In like manner, it is only in that exquisite relationship where the believer completely yields himself to the spirit, presence, mind, will and desires of the Lord, and proves by his wholehearted response that he totally and truly loves the Lord, that he *knows* and is *known* of God. A husband and wife, by means of the act of "knowing," become ONE FLESH; so Christ

and the believer, by the spiritual act of “knowing,” become ONE SPIRIT. “Know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is *one body*? But he that is joined to the Lord is *one spirit*” (I Cor. 6:16-17). As we truly come to *know* the Lord in the ecstasy of spiritual union, His seed is raised up in us and His image and likeness is reproduced within us as the *son of God*. This truly is the first love — the foremost, the crowning, the chiefest of all!

From the earliest years of my memory there stirred deep within my bosom an insatiable longing after reality. Though only a child, I wanted to *know* Him who redeemed me, who made me His own, who came as the pattern and forerunner of all that we are called to in God. I wanted to intimately know the Christ; oh, how I wanted to KNOW HIM! At the tender age of twelve the Lord revealed Himself to me in a remarkable manner, flooding my life with billows of His presence, power, and glory. I had found the Christ and my heart was filled with joy because of the love I had for Him. I wanted to be near Him, and become *like Him*. I wanted to be conformed to His image and be the expression of Himself in the earth to humanity. He was to me the Center of all things and the most important Reality in the universe! From that moment Christ was the ONLY REALITY. He filled the skies. He filled the earth. He filled heaven and hell and all realms above and beneath. He filled my life and flooded my heart with love, hope, and expectation of the glory of God. He spoke mysteries into my spirit. He enlightened my understanding concerning His great plan and purpose to restore all things and all men unto Himself. He raised up in my heart the hope of His kingdom coming in earth as it is in heaven. He showed me the throne of His dominion and our call to sit with Christ upon the throne of His power over all things. He unfolded within the depths of my being the wonders of His awesome holiness, His ineffable glory, His fearful majesty, His inscrutable wisdom, His unsearchable ways, and His merciful, wise, glorious, and all-encompassing plan for creation. Christ in me in all His glory is truly my FIRST LOVE! Can we not now understand what a sin, what a tragedy, what a failure, what a *loss* it would be to *leave our first, supreme, transcendent love*! Not the immature love of our beginning in Christ, but that love above all loves, the greatest, highest love, the *love of loves* — Christ Himself!

The most important thing for any person who has received the call to sonship is to have a *relationship* with the Father — not merely an experience, not a creed or doctrine or religious program and activity — but relationship, a real presence in your life that you know and that is made unto you strength, wisdom, understanding, faith, life, love, and power. By way of illustration, the earth has a relationship to the sun, all things in our solar system and on earth have a relationship to one another, and only this *perfect relationship* makes life possible on earth!

An example of this is to be found in the unique position and size of the earth in relation to the sun and the other planets of the solar system. Were the earth only a few miles closer to the sun, we would all be burned to a crisp and our tombstone could read, “*Well done*, thou good and faithful servant!” On the other hand, were the earth only a little farther from the sun we would all be blocks of ice. Were the earth smaller than it is — as the moon, for instance — the power of gravitation would be too weak to retain sufficient atmosphere for the needs of life forms. Were the earth as large as Jupiter, or even Saturn or Uranus, the power of gravity would be so strong as to render man’s movements difficult. Were the earth as near the sun as Venus its burning heat would be unbearable; were it as remote as Mars there would be scarcely a night, even in its warmest zones, that would be free from snow and ice. Then look, too, at the perfect proportion of the earth’s land and water. If the ocean had only one half of its present area the earth would receive only one-fourth its present rainfall. But, on the other hand, if the area of the ocean should be increased one-eighth the rainfall would be increased four times, and the earth would

become a vast swamp. Truly these wonderful *relationships* display the marvelous intelligence of the Creator!

In the spiritual world our relationship to Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, is altogether as vital as the earth's relationship to the sun! It is by relationship that we learn to respect Him, draw from Him, depend upon Him, love Him, and live by Him. Spiritual relationship is not cosmic law. Many people have the idea that they can learn certain *facts* about God and then walk with Him. That's not *relationship*! That's not how you have a relationship with your husband, your wife, your children, or your best friend. You don't search out a certain law that they live by and then relate to them on the basis of that law. That's not relationship! Yet that's how vast multitudes of Christians think about the Lord today! They think they have His doctrines in their head, and His rituals, ceremonies, and ordinances in the church, and by believing the doctrines, attending meetings, singing songs, saying prayers, going through the motions of worship, doing religious works, and observing the ordinances they suppose that they have a relationship with God. But that's not relationship!

You say, "Then, what is?" INTIMACY OF FELLOWSHIP AND VITAL UNION! First of all, you have to communicate to relate. That's where prayer, praise, and worship come in. Prayer is not designed primarily for asking or petitioning God for *things* — prayer is *communication* and *communion* with God! Prayer is seeking after the presence of God, the voice of God, the knowledge of God. This brings us near enough to *experience* God in the spirit, and by the spirit exploring intimately the very personality, mind, heart, and being of God. Relationship is the key! We are being saved, changed, matured, and transformed by relationship, not by knowledge or laws or observances. I have seen hundreds and thousands of people who sat in pews listening to doctrines of salvation, doctrines of sanctification, doctrines of the Holy Spirit, doctrines of the kingdom, doctrines of perfection, doctrines of sonship, doctrines of the feast of tabernacles, doctrines of the most holy place, doctrines of the third day, doctrines of life and immortality, and they are no closer to the reality of any of those things today than they were when they first heard them. Doctrine, teaching, and understanding don't make anything happen! You've got to have a *relationship*.

God is causing His true elect to seek this, pursue this, extend themselves to this, and make it personal in their lives at all times and in all circumstances. Intimacy of fellowship and vital union — that's where it is! That is how truth becomes experiential, that is how sonship becomes life, that is how the purposes of God become power and reality within our lives. God is raising up and maturing a seed in the earth. Those who walk with Him and live with Him in this significant hour are becoming that seed and are being made a harvest of salvation and righteousness unto all the ends of the earth. God gave His firstborn Son thirty years to mature in the life of the Father within Him. And now many sons are growing up into the fullness of Christ!

Relationship with God is a Song. It's a song in your heart, it's a melody in your spirit — joy unspeakable and full of glory! It's like when two people fall in love — they are like two songbirds. As soon as the arrow of love pierces the heart all things are transformed; in that exhilarating moment nothing else matters anymore. All that matters is that loving song that has occurred between two individuals who are now lost in one another. And that is what relationship with God is like! It's a love song. The message of the inner chamber, the Holy of holies within our spirit, is the message of those who have been brought into union with Christ. The Holiest of all is the conception chamber, the place of union. It is not a place outside of us, it is not an experience, it is not found in some church or group or meeting, or in heaven someday. It is that place in the deepest part of our being, right within our spirit, where the life of God ravishes our heart, and we are made one in love.

The Song of Solomon is the reflections of king Solomon and is a revelation of love and union. In the Song of Solomon the king purposed to bring the Shulamite maiden into his conception chamber, into the most intimate part of his life. The Shulamite is not just any woman, she is not merely a little illiterate, unkempt, desert girl with dirt underneath her fingernails and needing a bath. Oh, no! She is undoubtedly from the tent of the leader of the tribe, the wealthiest family among the Bedouin. She is a princess — a royal natured person of exquisite beauty and enchanting personality. She is unusual, unique, special and unsurpassed in poise, grace, mental adeptness, ability, and loveliness.

The significance of the Song of Solomon is found in the distinctions that come forth between the various characters. There are four main characters, two male and two female, although one female is a group — the daughters of Jerusalem. The interplay between these four characters is the *key* to the book and the secret lies in identifying the *voice* — the one speaking. The importance of this drama is rooted in the fact that in the beginning God created man, male and female. And within each of us are the characteristics of both male and female — *spirit* and *soul*. Anyone who has read the Song of Solomon knows that it is very sexual in content, it's about the intimacy of love, about coming together, about the union of two people, male and female. It is not about something you do out in the world, in public, but it's private and personal. And that's how our relationship with Christ is — it's not something we do in church — it's a secret love *within ourselves*.

Christ is in your spirit, dear one, and He seeks to come into your soul fully. He wants to affect the way you feel, the way you think about things, the way you act and react, your deepest desires and all of your will. That's how it is in *relationship!* Over time a couple start to think like each other, act alike, and even *look* like each other because they are knowing each other through each other. And that's how it is between the spirit and the soul, between us and the Lord! In relationship we no longer keep rules, believe doctrines, observe ordinances, or do works to please God. We simply begin to *think* like the Lord, *desire* like the Lord, *act* like the Lord, *talk* like the Lord, *walk* like the Lord, and *look* like the Lord! We are not conformed to a law, but now share His life at the most intimate, deepest, and powerful level of our being!

Every one of God's called and chosen elect is brought to the place of accepting the Lord into our *soul*. I'm not talking about raising your hand or going forward in a revival meeting, I am speaking of entering into a relationship with the *Lover of your soul*. It is not a matter of receiving a *gift* from the Lord — union is far *beyond gifts!* The Lord invites us to the deepest and most intimate and exhilarating relationship that can exist between two people — the relationship of love! Love is a power greater than anything we can imagine, for *God is love*. As infinite as God, so is the depth and height of all that the Lord expresses in love. This is the *first* and *foremost* love we must realize as we enter into relationship with God. This is the *supreme, first love!*

The meaning of the message of the Song of Solomon is just this — a song. Singing is one of the major themes of scripture. In the book of Revelation, when the elect of the Lord move into a higher place in the Spirit, they sing a *new song*. The songs of the Bible came by revelation of the Holy Spirit, indeed, they *were* revelations of the Holy Spirit. Moses revealed by song. David revealed by song. The Psalms are songs. They are music. They are singing. They are a symphony. David ordained a whole realm of ministry just for songs. Paul spoke of "singing and making melody in your heart unto the Lord." The Bible is full of songs! But of all the songs that have ever been sung, Solomon's is the song of all songs. It is called "The *song of songs*, which is Solomon's" (S. of S. 1:1). "Song of songs" is a term like "King of kings" or the "Day of days." It denotes that which is higher, finer, supreme, superlative, unexcelled! A song in scripture means

a *message*. Thus, the “song of songs” is truly the MESSAGE OF MESSAGES — the greatest and highest message of all!

It is the message of love. It is a song of love-making. It is a song of intimacy. It is a song of union. You know what happens when you fall in love, everything else sinks into the shadows, and you are consumed by this one fixation of your life. The grass appears greener, the sun shines brighter, the air smells fresher, the birds sing sweeter, your step is quicker, and all creation is alive, vibrating harmoniously to the melody of your awakened soul. This is the song of creation — the eternal song of love! That is why the Song of Solomon is in the Bible. It is a book of love — in the very Book of God! It’s not a poem. It’s not a theatrical drama. It’s not a novel. It’s not a sex-education manual. It’s a REVELATION! It’s about who we are, why we are who we are, and how the relationship between Christ and the church, the relationship between our spirit and our soul, *works*.

I view the story of the Song of Solomon differently than I did in the past. I once saw the male character in Solomon’s Song as king Solomon himself, and the female character was a little desert girl whose beauty Solomon had discovered in the wilderness and brought her into his harem. The king fell in love with the Bedouin maiden, and in return she fell in love with the king. That is how the story is usually taught. As you carefully read this story, however, you find something else altogether. It seems that this exquisite Shulamite girl was sent out to work in the vineyards in the hill country north of Jerusalem where the blazing sun had turned her olive complexion black. How beautiful she must have been when one day king Solomon, traveling through his kingdom, upon passing the vineyard, found her so comely that his heart melted within him. Exercising his right of authority he ordered that she be escorted to his court and made ready for his pleasure.

Once there, Solomon sought, by every means in his power, to woo and win the lovely Shulamite girl. At the palace she was surrounded by the many careful attentions of the attending ladies, king Solomon’s servants, the “daughters of Jerusalem.” Her sun-burnt skin was carefully rubbed with precious aromatic oils and spices. She was also bedecked with ornaments and chains of gold to please the king. Solomon wooed her as he praised her beauty and lavished affection upon her. He told her of his desire for her; the women of the court told her about the splendid life she would enjoy as Solomon’s wife. The mightiest and wealthiest king of that day offered every inducement at his disposal to accomplish his ends.

The great king Solomon, however, was in for a surprise, for the girl loved a shepherd boy from her home region and the little maiden’s heart was faithfully fixed upon her *first love*, her *true love*, her *only love* — her *Beloved!* She would not be tempted nor intimidated by all the gold and glitter lavished upon her, nor by the urgings of the women who attended her. She refused to be moved by all the king’s enticing advances and intense flatteries. She was desperately in love with her one and only Shepherd and her mind and heart were stayed on him. Throughout all her trying ordeal, she remained faithful to her lover. She adamantly said, “I am my beloved’s, and my beloved is mine. I am my beloved’s, and his desire is toward me.” Not once did she deviate from that loyalty. Nothing that the king could offer her could change her mind. Nor could his threats make her yield. She blotted out the enticements of Solomon’s glittering palace with the recollection of her beloved. How tenderly she spoke of him! How often she whispered the words, “My *beloved!*” While her body might be held captive by Solomon, her heart went winging its way to the hills to relive over and over again the tender moments she had shared with him whom she loved so much. As she roamed about the city she was constantly looking and listening for the One whom her soul loved. In the end Solomon was forced to let her go because

she stayed true to the love of her heart. Joyfully she returned to the shepherd whom her soul loved.

In former days we have used king Solomon as a type of Christ wooing his bride, the church. Let me tell you something about king Solomon. When Solomon became king he married the daughter of Egypt's Pharaoh. It is in the record that though he "loved the Lord," he practiced idolatry (I Kings 3:3), a *strange mixture*. Then there follows the story of his wisdom and prosperity, and the houses he built, one for the Lord, one for his Egyptian bride, and one for himself (I Kings 3:7-8). But he also "loved many strange women," a union prohibited by the Lord to His people. Some twenty years or so after his accession to the throne of Israel, he had "seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines" (I Kings 11:3) and, "his wives turned away his heart...after other gods...and he did evil in the sight of the Lord," and slipped into terrible idolatry. Jerusalem became filled with temples and shrines and altars built to the strange gods of his many foreign wives.

SOLOMON IS NOT A TYPE OF CHRIST! He is a type of the world, especially of the *religious world* of the harlot systems of man. He is a type of Mystery Babylon the Great, of whom it is written, "Babylon is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. For all nations have drunk the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies" (Rev. 18:2-3). And to the lovely little Shulamite held captive within the clutches of this glittering religious enticement the call goes out, "Come out of her, my people!" (Rev. 18:4).

In its spiritual application the bride of Christ is the Shulamite, Christ Himself is the Beloved, and Solomon represents the world, the realm of the carnal mind, the exalted and powerful religious realm, the distraction that once took all of us captive, and which seeks to woo our hearts away from that precious Shepherd lover who dwells right within the spirit of each of us. But in the end, as we, the elect of God, learned by the spirit of life within us what it means to remain firm in our *first love*, our *supreme* and *true love*, keeping our hearts pure and our passions reserved, Solomon in all of his glory has been forced to loose us to go to the One we love! That is the Song of songs! That is the Message of messages!

A dear friend of ours, Jackie Caporaso, has shared some precious insights into this. She writes, "God's precious sheep are as this little Shulamite. They have been taken captive to a lustful and ruthless system which thinks nothing of stripping and using them to appease their voracious appetite for fame fortune, and rulership. The young maiden knew that her heart did not belong to the king, and that none of his carefully planned enticing tactics could possibly separate her from the love of her true beloved. Many of God's precious sheep have been in the king's court, the powerful religious systems of our day. Their spiritual beauty and abilities have been exploited. They have been made to give themselves to programs which keep carnal organizations going strong. They have been pressured to build the king's desire for bigger and better harems — congregations — that he might satisfy his greedy appetites. This is a time of severe testing for the sheep. The Voice of the Shepherd is calling unto them! 'My sheep hear my voice,' Jesus said, 'and another they will not follow.' He will deliver and heal them!"

The love of the Beloved is a special one. The Shulamite is not a concubine, she's not a queen, and she's not a virgin — one of the daughters of Jerusalem. She is the only one of her mother, she's a unique reality, a special soul. That is what God is after — a *special soul*. You cannot have a relationship with someone and be intimate with them, and not spend time with them, care for them, and know them. Love is not casual, love is not sex, love is not infatuation, love is not a

one-night stand, love is not a mistress, love is not a clandestine affair. There is a deep mystery between Christ and the church! The word “church” is from the Greek word *ekklesia* meaning “the out-called.” God’s elect, chosen ones have been *called out* both from something and unto something. If you have been called out of anything, out from any realm, you *are the church* on some level! That’s what constitutes who we are. We are the “called out.” We are called out of the world, we are called out of the flesh, we are called out of our own desires, hopes, plans, and ambitions, we are called out of the worldly, harlot church systems of man, and we are called out unto the Lord. We are called out to a special relationship with God! We are called to walk with Him, to follow hard after Him, to pant after Him as the hart pants after the waterbrooks, to keep ourselves unto Him and unto Him *alone*. We are called to experience Him and know Him in the deepest measure and most intimate expression of being.

The message of the Song of Songs represents that element of our experience of Christ into which we shall move more fully as we enter into the feast of tabernacles, into the third day, into the Holiest of all. The significance of the Song of Songs is that there is an awakening of the feminine side within each of us, and the church is His bride. The reason we are collectively His church, or His bride, is because the feminine side of being, our *soul*, has been awakened within each of us individually by the Christ in our *spirit*. There are two compartments within the life of every person — there is a male and there is a female reality within each one. Within every regenerated person there is the consciousness of Spirit, the Beloved, the Bridegroom, the Great Shepherd and Bishop of our souls; and there is the Soul, the part of us that is wooed by Christ in our Spirit.

Christ is not just in some far-off heaven somewhere, for He truly dwells *within* each of us! “Christ *liveth in me*” (Gal. 2:20). “For He abideth with you, and *shall be in you*” (Jn. 14:17). In these simple words our Lord announces that wonderful mystery of His indwelling which is the fruit and crown of His redeeming work. It was for this that man was created! It was for this, God’s mastery within the heart, that Christ came to bring us to the Father. It was for this that Christ returned as the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Dwelling consciously within us He would prepare us to receive Him as our Lord — as Bridegroom. We will never understand the deep mystery of the Bridegroom and the bride until we know that Christ is the Bridegroom and that Christ lives in our spirit. If you give godly consideration to these simple truths, you cannot avoid the conclusion that THE BRIDEGROOM IS WITHIN YOU! There is a place within you, in the bridal chamber of your life, in the Holy of holies of your very being, where the Bridegroom dwells and comes out of that place and woos you into a relationship with Himself.

The reverent heart is made to wonder at the unmistakable simplicity of the ways of God. Long centuries ago the apostle penned these meaningful words, “We have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the FATHER OF SPIRITS, and live?” (Heb. 12:9). All of God’s elect know now by the spirit of wisdom and revelation that GOD is the FATHER OF OUR SPIRITS! He is not the Father of religious rituals or static creeds; He is not the Father of man-made religious organizations; He is not the Father of your flesh; He is not the Father of your carnal mind, your self-will, your fleshly desires, or your soulish emotions. You can never *know* God in any of those realms! He is not there!

God is the God of your spirit, and you must be in your spirit to be with God and touch God. Today I am sitting in my office in El Paso, Texas. If you go to Dallas you will miss me! If you go on any other street, you will miss me. If you stand outside my house on the street corner, you will miss me. You must come to the door and enter my dwelling to be where I am and know me. And you must enter in to where God is to know Him. God is the God of our spirits! We all need

to turn to the spirit. From thence is the fountain of all life! It is a blessed day for any man when he makes the amazing discovery that Christ Himself is the Bridegroom; that this Christ is in our spirit; that the Bridegroom is thus in our spirit; when our *soul* pants after God the soul turns to Christ in our spirit, and it is there that we know union with God!

The natural mind, the human will, our carnal emotions and fleshly desires are all aspects of the *soul*. The soul is our natural, human consciousness! Regardless of whether a man is walking in the mind, after his own will, or his natural emotions and desires, he is *soulish*. Every man that lives by these senses apart from the life of the spirit is a soulish man. Therefore it is very easy to discern whether a man is soulish! I would be remiss if I failed to point out that the soul can be moved upon to *act religiously* — and what a fine act it is able to perform! The soul can be taken into a meeting where a religious atmosphere is created by a man at the pulpit; with a suave and dynamic personality he tells you to stand up, sing, clap your hands, raise your hands, praise the Lord, say Amen, etc. By the rhythm of the music and movements of the body the soul is stirred and takes on the appearance of spirituality. And yet, the *source* of all this is not the sovereign and spontaneous OUTFLOW OF HIS LIFE IN THE SPIRIT, but merely the contrived actions of the soul! When none of these “good” things are motivated from within by the spirit, it is still naught but the vanity of the soul!

When we can recognize what type of person is soulish, it is not difficult to realize what kind of person is spiritual. Since a soulish person lives by the mind, will, emotion, and desire of the natural life, a spiritual person is one who does *not live by these*. A spiritual person thinks by the spirit, desires by the spirit, wills by the spirit, acts by the spirit, and speaks out of the spirit. The spiritual person is not one who acts *religious*. Most people who have a *religious aura* about them are not spiritual at all! A spiritual person simply allows the spirit to be the source and master of all their action and behavior. The spirit in them occupies the preeminent position; the soul in them is in the position of submission, under the government of the spirit and dominated by the spirit. They are not like soulish persons, who let the soul dominate in everything; they deny the preeminence of their own mind, will, emotion, and desire by entering into union with the spirit and yielding to the high desires of the spirit! Thus they allow the spirit to BE LORD in them; they allow the spirit to direct their whole being so that they become the expression of the spirit. Whenever they encounter a situation they do not draw from their mind, will, emotion, or desire; rather they draw from the life of Christ in their spirit to understand what is the *mind, the will, and the way of the spirit!* These are spiritual, living by the life of the spirit, and the soul acts only in union with the spirit, as the outward expression of the indwelling spirit. It is Christ in the spirit who becomes the Bridegroom that ultimately is fully joined to the soul — receives the soul into itself. This is the Song of songs, the Message of messages!

The wonderful goal, however, is not just our will, our mind, our emotions, and our desires *submitted* to His will and way, but ONLY HIS WILL! In the marriage union of spirit and soul, of Christ and the church, there is *one new creature*, Christ, with one mind, one will, one emotion, and one desire — HIS made OURS. This is union! Blessed union! It is not merely His mind *controlling* our mind; it is our possessing HIS mind. It is more than just “fill me” with more of God, but a being swallowed up into Him, that henceforth it is “no longer I that live, but Christ that liveth in me” (Gal. 2:20). This is UNION! This is what all of God’s elect are yearning for and experiencing more and more every day — that we have a constant outflow of our true inner nature. As Paul wrote, “Stop assuming an outward expression that does not come from within you and is not representative of what you are in your inner being...but change your outward expression to one that comes from within and is representative of your inner being” (Rom. 12:2, Wuest).

That's how you get to know yourself — when you meet the corresponding reality to yourself within yourself your true nature is awakened within you. A woman doesn't know all that it means to be a woman until she falls in love with a man! It is in that intimate and exquisite experience that all her feminine qualities are awakened within her. And it is the same with a man, when his masculine capacities are awakened within him and fulfilled in their totality. You are actually changed — expanded, broadened, increased, intensified, amplified, made complete — when you enter into a relationship with the beloved one of the opposite sex. In that union you come to know yourself in a way you never could by any other means. It causes your true feminine or masculine potentials to be called forth, expressed, utilized, and fulfilled through that exchange.

It is just the same between Christ and His bride, between the spirit and the soul! The fullness of what He is and the fullness of what we are called to be are revealed in the union of love! When our soul bows low before the spirit, yields to the wooing of the spirit's love, submits to the will and way of the spirit, to find itself in union with the spirit, that is when our true identity is discovered! As long as our soul is doing its own thing, walking in our own way, after our own desires, fulfilling only the promptings of our own mind, we know neither who we are nor why we are who we are. That is most of humanity! But as we, the firstfruits of God, seek the Lord in our spirit and enter into union with Him, the eyes of our understanding are enlightened and we are granted the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of HIM.

The Shulamite, as she went about Jerusalem searching for her Beloved, said, "I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer" (S. of S. 5:6). At night she was out looking for him and we read, "The watchmen that went about the city found me, they smote me, they wounded me; the keepers of the wall took away my veil from me" (S. of S. 5:7). The watchmen of the wall represent the ministers of the carnal church systems. It was the watchmen and keepers of the walls around the Lord's people who should have gladly assisted the Shulamite in finding her Beloved, but instead they began to mistreat her in the most brutal ways. It is truly irritating to those who are appointed to lead and tend the sheep, for those who should go before the flock and first partake of every pasture and all the fruit, to have those whom they esteem as "dumb sheep" start out and run ahead of the shepherd, and the pasture in which they are staying and keeping the rest of the flock. Nothing will stir up persecution as this will! But it is because the sheep have heard the voice of the *true Shepherd*, instead of those appointed by man!

Many of us have had this experience who have kept step with God in His on-going revelation and walked on with Him, regardless of cost or separations. And how some of us have been smitten by the watchmen! No greater indignity could be offered an oriental woman than to take away her veil. In those days it was only harlots who went about unveiled. The watchmen taking away the bride's veil denotes the removing of her covering — the misrepresentation and slurs cast upon her, the claim that she has no covering, therefore she cannot be considered acceptable in the city, for shame is cast upon her. How many churches have acted in this way to the Lord's faithful chosen ones who cry out for Him! We are not received by them, but of course we have no desire to be. We are accused of being "Lone Rangers," unsubmitive to authority, uncommitted to the brethren, and worse things. Because of the veil being torn away from her condition and distress, the Shulamite was urged on to greater love and fervency in seeking him whom her soul loved. And we, too, never before have we loved Him as we love Him now! Never before has He seemed so sweet and desirable to us, as He does now! And never before have we been so determined to find Him, to *know* Him in all His fullness as we are now!

So the Shulamite says to the daughters of Jerusalem, "I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my Beloved, that tell him that I am sick of love (love-sick)." To which they respond, "What is thy beloved more than another beloved, O thou fairest among women? What is thy beloved more than another beloved, that thou doest so charge us?" (S. of S. 5:8-9). And to those today who are following hard after Christ in all His fullness the old-order church daughters of Jerusalem say, "What is there about your message that is so much better than anybody else's message? What is there about your hope that is so much better than anybody else's hope? What is there about your experience that is so much better than anybody else's experience?" They ask out of ignorance because they have neither *seen* Him nor *known* Him as He is!

She goes into a description of Him that was rooted in her knowledge of Him. She *knew* Him! She could describe Him! She could praise and extol and say everything her heart felt about Him because she knew Him. She knew what she was after. And so do we know today who is our Beloved and so do we know what we are after. We know the beauty of His appearing, for He has disclosed Himself to us. We know the wonder of His ways, the marvel of His salvation. We know what is the hope of our sonship in Him — it's beautiful, it's altogether glorious, and there is none like unto our Christ, our Beloved! There is no hope greater than His hope, no faith more powerful than His faith, no love stronger than His love, no purpose more excellent than His purpose, no life more abundant than His life, no peace deeper than His peace, no joy more exhilarating than His joy, no righteousness more pure and holy than His righteousness, no power more triumphant than His power, and no throne higher than His throne! Aren't you glad!

Ah, yes, CHRIST is our chief, foremost, supreme, *first love*! We shall never leave our *first love*!

Chapter 33

The Church In Ephesus

continued

"Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast *left thy first love*" (Rev. 2:4).

I am moved to begin this writing by sharing from the pen of a precious brother in the Lord, Hollis Vaughn, of Marshall, Texas. He writes in his little booklet THE WINEPRESS the following fascinating story:

I shook the cobwebs from my head as I went to answer the knock which had awakened me. I don't think too clearly at two o'clock in the morning; so it was little wonder that he looked different standing there in the dark. He was obviously upset and concerned about something, so he didn't say much as he slumped into a chair next to the couch. I guess I must have appeared somewhat dazed from being jarred awake from such a sound sleep. So we sat in silence for awhile as each of us wandered through our maze of thoughts.

John had been my pastor all my Christian life. He had always been there when I needed a strong arm to lean on or a word of counsel. But he was more than my pastor, he was a dear friend. He had sat hours on end as I had poured out to him the intimate details of my mixed-up life. Never once had he condemned me. Never once had he expressed shock or disappointment. True, he had corrected me. He had many times, like a skilled detective who pieces together the evidence, pointed out the areas in my life where the enemy was able to enter and harass me. He had even rebuked me on occasion, but never had he condemned or belittled me. He was a rare individual who would never betray a confidence. But now, here he was, looking as if he needed to have someone who would listen to the deep hurts and complaints of his heart.

John breathed out a long sigh and began to speak as if he were just thinking out loud. "She doesn't really know me or understand my needs after all these years." I was now wide awake! I don't know what I had assumed John's problem was, but I most assuredly didn't think Mary could be the cause. I didn't understand her at times and often she seemed to be caught up in her own little world; nevertheless she was an exceptional woman. She was outstandingly beautiful for her age and seemed to be the ideally devoted wife. I almost felt like saying, "Cheer up, John! Things will look better in the daylight." But I restrained myself for this was not the first time he had come knocking at an odd hour of the night. I felt honored that one of such stature would come to me, but deep inside there was the unanswered question, "Why does he wait until the middle of the night to want to talk? Why doesn't he come over for lunch or discuss these things over coffee or when we go fishing? Why these bizarre hours?"

There had been so many mornings when I had stumbled about with bloodshot eyes and incoherent thoughts; and my wife would remark, "You had company last night. Pastor John

again?" She was used to these visits and never resented his coming, although I'm sure she also wondered why he didn't come around more during the daylight hours. He was so busy with the huge church that he pastored that I fully expected him to share some problem he was having with the deacon board or the music department. But Mary! I never expected that, and I suppose he sensed my shock as we sat there in semi-darkness.

"Mary just doesn't seem to understand my needs," he continued. She's so energetic and compulsive. She will dive into housework or cooking with such excitement. It is amazing how much she can get accomplished. But then at night — when I want quality time with her — she's so exhausted she can't respond. I know the children are a drain on her and so many people come to her for counsel and advice — she has little time left for me. I'm hurt, and I'm lonely and just a little angry!" I sat bewildered as I listened. As yet, John had not asked a question, for which I was grateful. I certainly had no answers. I was numb with shock. I could not imagine that this giant among men had problems of such magnitude that he would be so visibly moved. Finally admitting that he may have some marital complications, I could not possibly imagine how I could offer any solution. After all, John was my confidant. He had given a sympathetic ear to my perplexities and had given me godly counsel all these years. Perhaps, he just wanted to talk. The least I could do was listen.

"Do you know, when we first fell in love, she used to sing to me. She had an old beat-up guitar which she strummed as she sang love songs to me. It was always out of tune and she didn't play well, but I loved those times." His voice seemed to trail off into some distant memory as he continued, "Since then she's taken voice lessons and uses taped background music. The church loves it — but I miss her off-key singing and that old guitar." I watched John as he seemed to slip back into one of the rooms of his memory — trying to recapture some priceless moment long past. My heart was now aching for him as I, for the first time, saw a side of him I had never seen before. He was deeply in love with Mary, and she was hurting him. He felt rejected. I knew instinctively that he had not come for any answer nor some word of counsel that I might have. He just wanted to talk — to bare his heart.

John glanced up suddenly and caught me off guard with the fierceness of his look. "I've always wanted a large family," he blurted. I couldn't believe my ears. Their family was so large now that it was a joke to all the neighborhood. I'd never seen so many completely different children in one family. There were one or two who definitely took after John. They had his temperament and depth. The rest were like a patchwork quilt of Mary's little quirks and compulsions. I couldn't believe John was being critical or was hurt because of the size of his family. With what I'm sure amplified the incredulous feeling I was experiencing, I sputtered, "But John, you have a house full of children. They're running over each other now. Mary's not a baby factory. She's run ragged taking care of the children you now have."

I felt a little twinge of irritation at John for his unreasonable desires. His eyes locked onto mine, and his next remark left me reeling in shock and disbelief. "Most of our children do not belong to me. I did not father them. I love them and care for them as if they were my own, but I did not father them." I sat in stunned silence. I had known John and Mary for most of my life. Even before I had become a Christian they had been a "thing" in the neighborhood. Everyone knew they would marry eventually. I knew something that many did not know. Mary had been married before to a very cruel and abusive husband. He had left her bruised and bleeding on more than one occasion. I also knew that she had brought no children into that marriage. I could not believe that Mary was adulterous. I had seen her flirt with many men, but rather than be critical, I passed it off as just being her friendly, outgoing personality. There were times

when she had been extremely friendly with me — perhaps too much — but then, we'd known each other for a very long time.

"John, do you mean to tell me that Mary has been unfaithful? Are you saying other men fathered most of your children?" By this time tears were streaming down His face; and I could see the deep hurt in his eyes. He nodded imperceptively and softly continued, "It's no secret that Mary has been married before. Her first marriage left her spiritually and emotionally scarred. There is within her an area that pulls her back into that same type of situation again and again. It's as if she's trying to punish herself by some destructive action. She has come to me time and again in deep remorse and tears, begging me not to throw her out and not to stop loving her. Of course, I can't do either for my life is wholly wrapped up in her."

I walked over and put my arms around him and felt his whole body convulse with sobs. We held each other for just a moment and I was thankful that no prying eyes were viewing this scene lest it should be misunderstood. Then I asked very softly, "John, does anyone else know about this? Have you discussed this with others?" He nodded, "Yes, there are a few who know, but not many." "Has anyone talked with her, counseled her, admonished her," I asked. I was hoping this wouldn't get out of hand. What a foolish thought, for it had been out of hand for years! Again he confirmed, "There have been many who have talked with her and warned her of the consequences of her actions. But it's worse now than it has been in a long time."

Would you like for me to speak to her?" I asked. I didn't quite know what I'd say, and besides I was somewhat nettled that John had shared all these things with others before he had come to me. But that would soon be clarified. "Yes," he answered. "Go tell my wife that I want her, not her services. Tell her that I am saddened by her frenzied activity. Try to convey to her how much I miss her love songs and that I don't get joy out of her singing to others. Most of all, beg her to stop seeing her lovers and flirting with strangers. Tell her for me. Maybe she will listen to you." He sighed heavily as he rose to leave; and even as he was walking out the door, I heard myself saying as I had so many times in the past, "Please don't stop loving me. I'm sorry I have run after other lovers and have not been faithful to you! Please help me get my priorities in order!"

Does that sound like something strange to say to your pastor? Well, you see, *my pastor was actually Jesus; and Mary is this flirtatious church* with whom He is vitally concerned. This is something the Lord actually disclosed to me in the night hours as He revealed to me His wounded heart. In the book of Revelation, Jesus speaks to the seven churches commending them for their strength and faithfulness, but lovingly pointing out their failures. The first letter is to the church at Ephesus; and His reproof to her was, "But I have this against you, that you have left your first love." I feel sure, since this is the first in order, that it likely heads the list in importance.

The first complaint He shared with me was, "She doesn't understand me. She's so busy she doesn't have the energy nor time to spend in intimacy with me." Most Christians mistakenly believe that time spent in "God's house" is all that is necessary for their spiritual growth and productivity. May I suggest that most time spent in the average church service is not only poor quality but in many cases actually wasted. Most church meetings bless *us*, but not the Lord! In the majority of cases, it has been our intellect — our soulish man — which has been fed rather than our spirit!

Martha (in the scriptures) was so busy. I'm sure she was cooking and washing pot and pans — all the necessities which accompany having a guest in the home. She wanted to be a proper

hostess. She received a startling shock when Jesus told her in so many words, "Martha! With all your service, your cumbersome toil and worry, you're still missing the precious treasure that Mary has discovered by sitting at my feet. You think it is wasted time, but it is the most precious time you could spend." Our heavenly husband is after quality time spent in His presence. There is no substitute of equal value.

His next concern was how His wife sang for others and to others, not to Him. This is one of the most deadly traps into which singers fall! To my knowledge there is not one reference in scripture where singers sang solos for the congregation. After their great deliverance from Pharaoh and the host of the Egyptians, Moses and the sons of Israel sang a song *unto the Lord*. It fills almost all of the fifteenth chapter of Exodus. The entire fifth chapter of the book of Judges is an account of the song which Deborah and Barak sang *unto the Lord* because of His great defeat of Sisera, commander of the armies of Canaan. The closest thing I can recall where a man ministered in song and music to another person or persons is where David played before Saul; and the evil spirits departed and Saul's spirit was quieted. Notice, David did not play *to* Saul nor *for* Saul, but *before* him. He simply worshipped the Lord in Saul's presence and that anointed playing was more than the demons could take. I think there is a place where a person can play and sing unto the Lord in the presence of the congregation, and the Lord is pleased and the people are blessed. But that is extremely rare! Usually, "special singing" is ministry to the *house* rather than to the *Lord*. Most singers spend the bulk of their time in preparation of arrangements, enunciation, voice inflection, background music, proper microphones and P.A. systems, stage posturing and gestures. For *whom* is all this energy expended?

I'm sure the Lord is not only grieved but angry with the shepherds, whose primary responsibility is to bring people to the true Shepherd and ever direct their affections toward Him; however, they have set themselves up as the "vicar of Christ" or a Nicolaitane overlord who rules the people by cunning speech, overpowering personality or outright deceit. The bride of Christ is drawn away from her true Husband by craftiness and sleight of hand, lured into a bed of adultery where she is seduced by strangers. This immoral union brings forth children who are assumed to be sons of God; when in fact, they are sons of the devil. God loves them and cares for them, but they do not have the blood of Jesus flowing in their veins! Because of our spiritual anesthetics and easy birthing, we have invited numerous children into the family of God, promising them a life without suffering and pain. True, our family has increased in numbers and the ranks of our brotherhood have swollen; but our Father is grieved because so many are *illegitimate*. The unfortunate thing is that they truly *believe* they are part of His family!

I could almost wish that when we miss the will of the Father we, and all those about us, could hear His voice of displeasure immediately, loud and clear. In my childish way, I think it would be simpler if, on occasion, the Lord *thundered* His disapproval! Then we wouldn't run after all those strange lovers. Then we wouldn't give birth to illegitimate children. Then we wouldn't "entertain the troops." We would sing only to Him! Then we wouldn't become so exhausted trying to earn merit points and little stars by our names. Then we would have more quality time to spend in His presence. Right? WRONG!!! The truth of the matter is, God does speak to us immediately when we miss His will. It is not a voice which causes the mountains to tremble, nor does it gush forth out of fire and smoke; but it is a still small voice coming forth from the altar of His temple — deep within your bosom — if you are His child. He still thunders His disapproval at our whorish attitudes and behavior, but His voice is muffled and muted by the pandemonium of other voices. Sadly, most Christians do not even *know* the voice of the Beloved! — end quote.

REMEMBER...AND REPENT!

"Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and *repent...*" (Rev. 1:5).

The call to those in THE EPHESIAN CONDITION is to repent of having left or deserted their first love, their foremost love, or the *love of the highest*. The Greek word for repentance is *metanoia* meaning A CHANGE OF MIND. Yet that itself can miss the mark. A better rendering would be TO TAKE ANOTHER MIND. A man may change in the conceptions of his mind, thus bringing himself to another viewpoint, but with the possibility of being just as mistaken in his new opinion as he was in his former. But to TAKE ANOTHER MIND brings into being A NEW CREATURE, one who cannot revert back to the old viewpoint or adopt another faulty reasoning out of the limited powers of the old mind. So let us see that repentance has to do with the taking of another mind, a mind beyond us, not simply a new decision of our old carnal mind. It means **putting on the mind of Christ!** There is to be no mixing of the old leaven with the new bread. This is extremely important for each of God's elect in this hour as we follow on to make it fully into the camp of the overcomer who inherits the promises!

Every son of God must repent! I have heard it said that sons do not need to repent, only those in the old-order church systems must repent. But "he that overcometh" certainly will repent or he will never *be* an overcomer! By repentance the Lord is leading us to change our spiritual directions, and causing us to walk in the new paths of His will for those called to be conformed to the image of Christ, to reign with Him in His kingdom. Every son is even now repenting and preparing himself for the changes that must take place as we put on the fullness of Christ. We repent every time that the Father brings changes in our lives, as we qualify to be His instrument to bring the new order of the kingdom of God to the nations of earth. We repent of clinging to anything other than HIS HIGHEST for us, for His highest is that "first" or "paramount" love — the LOVE OF THE HIGHEST.

Because we have repented we are no longer concerned about being nominal Christians, or possessing gifts, or becoming apostles, prophets, or bishops, or getting to heaven when we die. Because we have repented, we have taken *another mind*, and we now desire only GOD'S HIGHEST AND BEST! Because we have repented we are putting on the mind of Christ and seek only those things which are above at the right hand of God, where Christ sits (Col. 3:1). We are being changed into the image and likeness of Christ, and we shall be priests of God after the order of Melchizedek, for that is what Christ is doing at the right hand of God in the heavens of God's Spirit! We shall be kings with Him, for He is a king and a priest after the order of Melchizedek. As a king and priest of God in the glory of His kingdom we shall minister that same Life, which we received from Him, to the masses of humanity, delivering them from the curse of sin and death. This ministry is reserved for the *overcomer*. And the overcomer is the one who truly *repents* of every lower realm and seeks the FOREMOST LOVE or the LOVE OF THE HIGHEST!

Then the Lord says, "repent, and do the *first works*" (Rev. 2:5). The first works are like the first love — not the childish, immature, zealous works we did when we were first converted, but the *principle works*, the works of the *highest order!* These works are the works of faith and love as we submit to Father's dealings in our lives to bring us into the fullness of His purpose. Love! That is certainly one of the "first works" as Paul said, "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love, I am become as a sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and

have not love, it profiteth me nothing. And now abideth faith, hope, and love, these three; but *the greatest of these is love*" (I Cor. 13:1-3,13).

I WILL REMOVE YOUR CANDLESTICK

"Repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will *remove thy candlestick out of his place*, except thou repent" (Rev. 2:5).

This is divine discipline! When the Lord says, "I will come quickly," He means in *judgment*. "I will come in discipline, I will come in correction, I will remove your candlestick, I will take it out of its place." The candlestick is the church! Some churches have seasons, they are there for a while and they are gone. Some are shut down by divine judgment! True, they have great pomp and programs and activities, but they no longer have a deep and genuine walk in the Holy Spirit. Why are we called to the gospel of Christ? So we can become religious technicians promoting grandiose programs? Oh, no! We are placed in the world to *shine*, to *illuminate* with the light of Christ. That is the purpose of a candlestick! "Ye are the light of the world."

What is the use of a candlestick if it has no spiritual light of Christ! The Lord tells these people that if they do not repent He will come to them in judgment, swift and effective judgment, and remove them from being the light-bearing children of God. It was a coming that might not take place! The Lord said, "I will come **if** you don't repent." Sadly, the actual Ephesian church in Asia never repented. So God allowed the light to go out. Later on the darkness of Islam swept over the land where this church had been located. There is no lampstand in Ephesus today, for there is nothing but the ruins of a once great city. In Ephesus there is no church at all! The church from the corridors of which thousands proclaimed the greatness and the glory of the Christ of God, has now passed away.

I visited Ephesus a number of years ago, and there is nothing there but scattered shells and columns of once majestic and beautiful buildings. We saw buildings that obviously the apostles Paul and John had stood in, but there was nothing there but heaps of stones and collapsing walls. And in the villages and cities of that area there are no church buildings to be seen, only mosques. The epistle to the Ephesians is read the world over, but there is no believer in Ephesus to read it. They did not repent, they did not stay focused on the "first love" and the "first works" which God was really after in their lives, so they were removed. Ephesus, of course, in keeping with the pattern of the book of Revelation, was merely a **typical church**, and the Lord's solemn warning signal flashes out to this day to be heeded by every man and movement that is of the Ephesian spirit and character. And that is about all of them!

The removal of the candlestick means the snuffing out of the *light*. It means the *lifting of the anointing*. It means the *fleeing of the presence of God*. It means the cloud will move on, while the people remain in the wilderness. It means the people will still be carrying on, singing their songs, clapping their hands, preaching their sermons, promoting their programs, doing their works, *going through the motions like a robot* — but there is no *Life*! The glory has departed from the church systems of men, the old order is dead, the spiritual light of Christ has gone out, the once glorious works of the Spirit have been removed, and God has moved on. I wonder how many candlesticks have been removed from our communities, towns, and cities, and the people do not even realize it! Because the people are still gathering together week after week, polishing their candlestick in the darkness of their carnality, they realize not that the light is missing! We see a lot of excitement, a lot of emotion, a lot of zeal, a lot of promotion and activity, and hear a lot of beautiful music emanating from church groups all across the land, yet methinks that many of them do not realize that the Lord has *removed their*

candlestick — they are no longer the true spiritual Light of Christ in the world! Having a form of godliness, they deny within themselves the power thereof. The church cries out to the world to repent, and believe the gospel. But the living Christ is crying out to the *church to repent!*

A story might be appropriate here. Before the time of electric railroad-crossing gates an old fellow was in charge of one particular crossing. Sitting in his little cabin at night, dozing in and out of consciousness, he would sometimes hear the rattle of the tracks in the distance. He would then quickly grab his lantern from the wall and run out into the night to warn any cars that a train was coming. But one time he had waited a little too long. Headlights were already coming up the road and the train was fast approaching. Hurriedly he ran down the highway, swinging the lantern in a wide arc back and forth, screaming, "Stop! Stop!" At the last minute, he jumped out of the way of the car as it raced past him and smashed into the freight. When the authorities put the old fellow on trial for negligence, his astute railroad lawyers proved beyond doubt that the young people in the car had been drinking and that the old gentleman was respected in the community and considered trustworthy. He would probably have gotten off, but the prosecuting lawyer happened to ask the old man in an unguarded moment, "In your hurry, old timer, did you think to *light the lantern?*" Ah — swinging the lantern is not enough — there must be a *light!* Ringing bells, singing hymns, clapping hands, preaching sermons, performing ordinances, having outreaches, is not enough — there must be *spiritual light* in the lampstand!

Only by yielding ourselves continually to the voice, leadings, and dealings of the Spirit can we truly *be* His light in brighter and brighter measures. The surest way not to have further light is to not walk experientially in the light that has been given us. If all we know is the *teaching* or *doctrine* of reconciliation, sonship and the kingdom, and do not experience the out-working of the *spirit* of reconciliation, sonship and the kingdom then we, too, have *knowledge* rather than *reality*, and *doctrine* instead of *life*. We have received from God His revelation! Are there areas where He has revealed His truth to us, yet we have ignored it or not yielded to its in-working? In that case, the Lord calls us to repent. Should we fail to repent He will pull down the shade of heaven upon us and no more light will be forthcoming until we *experience* what we have received! He will remove our candlestick. It's just as simple as that!

THE DOCTRINE OF THE NICOLAITANES

"But this thou hast, that thou hatest the *deeds of the Nicolaitanes*, which I also hate" (Rev. 2:6). "So hast thou also them that hold the *doctrine of the Nicolaitanes*, which thing I hate" (Rev. 2:15).

When the Lord was showing John on Patmos what the seven churches would be like, He commended the church at Ephesus because they hated the **deeds of the Nicolaitanes**, which the Lord also detested. In Pergamos, the third church, these *deeds* had become *accepted doctrine*, which the Lord also hated. For whatever reason the Lord chose not to let history record the precise teachings of the Nicolaitanes. He does, however, want us to understand just what this bunch of hooligans is about and therefore He has given us one infallible piece of evidence.

There are three named heresies among the seven churches — the Nicolaitanes, Balaam, and the woman Jezebel. None of these are identified under these names in church history, despite the frantic efforts of historians to tell us that Nicholas and Jezebel were real persons — even going so far as to blacken the good name of Nicholas of Antioch (one of the seven deacons of Acts 6:5), as the guilty party. It is said by some that Nicholas founded a movement of

apostates who had pagan feasts and were most immoral in their behavior. They taught that in order to master sensuality one would have to know by experience the whole range of it first. Naturally this spawned the most bizarre and wanton orgies and other fleshly endeavors as a necessary step on the road to perfection. Thus the historians applied to them the two Old Testament names that symbolized such extravagances: Balaam and Jezebel. Since Balaam corrupted the people of Israel and thus conquered them, it was said that Nicholas did likewise. This group was supposedly forced out of Ephesus and found a place of establishment in Pergamos. But the problem about this belief is that *it is not true*. There is absolutely no history for it. It is at best tradition, but I view it as mere myth and folklore — a fairy tale!

The names are symbolic of the heresies they represent. When a name appears in the scriptures its meaning sheds light upon the spiritual reality behind the name. What was this thing God hated but man loved and would **not** stop doing? What are these Nicolaitanes? We'll understand it when we know what the name means! The word comes from two Greek words: *nikao*, which means "to rule over or to conquer," and *laos*, which means "the laity or the people." Put these definitions together and you get a domineering ruling class within the body of Christ whose main agenda is to get the upper hand, conquer, subordinate, and subdue those who they consider "less gifted," "less knowledgeable," and "less qualified" than themselves!

In the religious world there are those who are called "clergy" and those who are called "laity." Where do you suppose these titles came from? "Laity, lay person, and layman" are all derivatives from the Greek word *laos* mentioned above! This is a title that has come to us from religious Babylon! The clergy are called the "reverends," "doctors," "pastors," "teachers," "evangelists," "overseers," "bishops," "ministers," "priests," "superintendents," "leaders," etc. These are often termed "men of the cloth" — men who wear special attire as a matter of identification as "clergy." These are the people who have the power, authority, and lordship! The rest of us poor folks are just "laity."

What were the "deeds" of the Nicolaitanes? They were exalting the "clergy" over the "laity"! The clergy class were dominating the laity, the people. The clergy were exalted whereas the laity were abased. The clergy became the authority, they became the fountain of all truth, they had the last word, and the laity were the "dumb sheep" that were instructed to follow and do what they were told. I once read that the saddest thing that happened to the church was when it stopped being a *family* and became an *audience*. Most people have missed the point completely; they conceive of the church as a drama wherein they are merely spectators. In this drama the minister is the principle actor, God is his prompter whispering His lines in his ear — should he chance to forget them — and the congregation are the critics who pass their judgment upon the performance when all has been said and done. This can be perceived by the comments of many people to the minister (actor) who has now made his way to the front door to receive the acclamation of the spectators. "Good job, preacher! You really did a good job today. You really let 'em have it!" Or the comment, "The choir was really beautiful today." The whole idea expressed seems to be that it was a drama; it was a performance, a *show*, and you express your acceptance and your approval. You are the critic and it is up to you to pass your judgment.

We have here a "caste system" of "clergy" and "laity" which has been clearly and soundly repudiated by the firstborn Son of God! The firstborn Son, the pattern Son, the proto-type of what the life of sonship is all about, said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men hold them in subjection; but it *must not be so among you*. On the contrary, whoever desires to be first among you must be your slave; and whosoever may

desire to *take rank* among you, let him be your servant: just as the Son of man came not to be served, but to serve. You are not to be called *teacher*, for One is your Teacher, and you are all *brothers*. And do not call anyone on earth *father*, for you have one Father, who is in heaven. And you must not be called *leaders*, for you have one Leader, the Christ. He who is greatest among you must be your servant. Whoever *exalts himself* shall be humbled; and whosoever *humbles himself* shall be raised to honor" (Mat. 20:25-27; 23:8-12, Amplified & Ferrar Fenton). Men **love to rule**, even though God has called all of us to **serve** one another. How many churches or groups can we point out today who observe these words of the Lord Jesus? THINK ABOUT IT!

God's people, since the days of king Saul, have been accustomed to appointing kings, priests, prophets, bishops, pastors, teachers, elders, deacons, overseers, leaders, and rulers of all kinds, to hear the word of the Lord for them, and rule over them by it, instead of **hearing and knowing the Lord for themselves**. But that old order has since passed away! It has not passed away for those who remain in religious Babylon, but God has established a new and spiritual order for His elect who are *in Christ*. This new order is not really *new*, for it is the *very same order* the Lord Jesus *gave to His disciples*! It is the order of **sonship**! And this new order of the spirit of sonship replaces all those substitutes, whether they be bishops, pastors, priests, elders, or anything else. Oh, yes, there are spiritual ministries in the body of Christ! But these spiritual ministries are *servants*, not leaders or rulers. In this new kingdom day God is making His elect to be sons of the Father with the spiritual ability to HEAR all the Lord would tell us and to KNOW Him by personal experience of His fullness. No longer do His called and chosen ones submit to the lordship of others who can hear and act "for" them, but as *brethren* in the body of Christ they share the same mind, nature, life, and power and so admonish, encourage, confirm, and bless one another as each joint supplies. **ONLY THE HEAD RULES!** There is one Head and one Leader, even Christ, who dwells within. These are such simple principles, and so divine, that one would think all men could understand, but the carnal mind *never* understands!

The word of the Lord is coming forth today! This fresh, new word is not given only to designated apostles, prophets, pastors, or teachers. It is better, rather, to avoid those who claim such titles and offices and turn your spiritual ears to the heavens of God's Spirit, and hear for yourself what your Father has to say. The word that you receive will then be confirmed by all who are walking in the Spirit and hearing from the Father. How beautiful this is! What safety there is in this order of the Spirit! Father's anointed word of life, wisdom, power, and authority is radiating out of the Spirit of the Son within us. Let us HEAR HIM and then obediently DO all He tells us to do! Christ alone is the true Head, Lord, and King of all His elect and chosen ones. His faithful and obedient elect are hearing His pure word from His pure mind. And they are fulfilling His word, walking out His righteousness and will out of His holy nature and power. They are worshipping Him in spirit and in truth, as our Lord told us to do, and not after the traditions of the church systems. By these necessary principles of consecration and yieldedness unto the Lord, those called to sonship are becoming a holy, separated people unto the Lord, prepared to serve His holy kingdom purposes in all the earth.

I do not seek to revile, but rather to speak the truth in love as I warn all who seek after life, immortality, and sonship to God to flee from the deeds and doctrines of the Nicolaitanes as you would flee from a poisonous snake or a lion in the jungle. Let us reverently consider together just how this heresy entered in among the Lord's people. What a flood of light fell upon the world in the ministry of Jesus and His apostles! Then following His ascension, by the gift of the Holy Ghost which is the spirit of Christ, the Lord came again in mighty Spirit power to indwell His people. The church was birthed, and gathered from Jew and Gentile alike, a vast

multitude into its bosom. The shadows of the law were replaced by the glorious and eternal reality of a living, indwelling Christ. In those few holy years Christ Himself within was the only Head of the church and unity and harmony flowed like a river and the body of Christ was one. There was no government but the government of the Spirit. Love and wisdom shone like the sun from the mind of God. When the human body knows no government but the government of its head, all is order and unity, and there is health and power. So also it was with the body of Christ!

And what glorious days those were! One only has to read the book of Acts to see how much God blessed His people in those days. Mighty signs and wonders were performed as God confirmed His word with signs following. The word of God, anointed by the Holy Spirit, swept the world like a prairie fire. It encircled the mountains and crossed the oceans. It made kings to tremble and tyrants to fear. It was said of those early Christians that they turned the world upside down! So powerful was their message and spirit. In spite of persecution it grew and multiplied, for God dwelt mightily in the midst of His people. The knowledge of the glory of the Lord covered the earth as the waters cover the sea.

Even before the apostles had departed their earthly life, a spirit and system had set in among the saints of the Lord and many people were wearing the Babylonish garment. They were instituting rules and regulations, laying down laws, formulating creeds, observing days, establishing sacraments and ordinances, elevating human government, becoming disciples of Paul, of Apollos, of Cephas, and of many others. The babble had begun and the mysterious *man of sin* was raising his ugly head. Before too many years had passed men began to set themselves up as "bishops" and "lords" over God's heritage in place of the Holy Spirit.

There was a whole group of leaders that rose up in the churches just about the time the first apostles were passing from the scene — the very time John received his revelation on Patmos! Church historians refer to them as **The Apostolic Fathers**. One of these was a man by the name of Ignatius. Ignatius was the second bishop of Antioch, that city in Syria from which Barnabas and Paul set out on their famous missionary journey (Acts 13-14). The ancient church historian Eusebius says Ignatius was appointed as the second bishop there about A.D. 69. A number of Ignatius' letters, written to various churches such as Ephesus, Magnesia, Tralles, Philadelphia, and Smyrna still exist. I have read these letters, as well as those of others of the so-called Apostolic Fathers, and it is quite astonishing to see with what prominence and emphasis THE DOCTRINE OF THE NICOLAITANES comes across in each!

Again and again Ignatius exhorts the saints, "Since, then, I received your whole congregation in God's name in the person of Onesimus, a man of inexpressible love and **your bishop**, I beseech you by Jesus Christ to love him and, all of you, to be like him. For blessed is he who gives you the gift, worthy as you are, of **obtaining such a bishop**. Therefore it is fitting for you to run your race together with **the bishop's purpose** — as you do. For your presbytery is **attuned to the bishop like strings to a lyre**. For if in a short time I had such fellowship with **your bishop** as was not human but spiritual, how much more blessed do I consider you who are **mingled with him** as the church is with Jesus Christ and as Jesus Christ is with the Father, so that all things are harmonious in unison! If the prayer of one or two has such power, how much more does that of **the bishop** and the whole church? Let us therefore be eager **not to oppose the bishop, so that we may be subject to God**. And the more anyone sees **the bishop** being silent, the more one should **fear him**. For everyone whom the master of a house sends for his stewardship, we must receive as the one who sent him. It is obvious, then, that one must **look upon the bishop as the Lord Himself...obey the bishop and the presbytery** with undisturbed mind."

Instead of conquering by the power of the Spirit and Truth, as in the early days, men began to substitute *their* ideas and *their* methods. Soon the glory and power, the presence of God in the morning time church began to be eclipsed, and the power of carnal-minded men gradually took the place of the awesome presence of God. Consequently men's carnal understanding was put upon the scriptures, and as the Spirit of Christ fled from their midst, men established a vast and elaborate system of *substitutes* to take the place of reality. A "falling away" of a massive and dreadful nature arose until the church of Christ became gradually the religion of antichrist!

If the early church had been organized after the manner of the harlot church systems of today, the records would have been quite different from what they are. We would have had some reference to our Lord's installation of the apostleship with great ceremony, Himself sitting somewhere in state as a Pope, receiving the apostles in scarlet robes. We would have some record of how Paul set in "the pastor" over each church, how Paul later returned to visit the churches and met with "the pastor," and how the sick should call for "the pastor" of the church, and let him pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. We would have some reference to the need for the church to be recognized and chartered by the State so its ministers could legally marry the young and bury the dead; we would have some specific examples of how Jesus and the apostles conducted funerals, performed weddings, and how the pastors did dedications. There would be some instructions about how to organize the church with a church "board," how to "call" a preacher, how to hire and fire ministries, how to promote building programs, and the importance of the choir.

I could go on and on and on — believe me, I could! There is no end to all the things we once accepted as normal, necessary, scriptural, and spiritual which have absolutely no foundation in the order of God's Spirit. Praise God, the consuming fire of HIS dealings and processings in our lives is thoroughly purging and cleansing our hearts of ALL the spirit and ways of man's religion, leading us to once and for all forsake ALL the traditions and trappings of religious Babylon, that HE may take His royal seat upon the throne of our hearts and lead us in the paths of His kingdom. The ministers of man's religion carry within them the nature of this world's bestial system, and they do everything patterned after the ways of the world — to build a name for themselves, to gain and usurp control over other men's lives, to establish a creed or a movement, to solidify a power base under them, for financial gain. The true ministries in the body of Christ carry in them the nature of Christ, taking the way of the cross, being stripped of all fame and earthly glory, going without the camp to bear reproach and shame because of what GOD has spoken into their heart. They seek no power over other men's lives, no control, nothing for themselves. They do no works that the flesh can boast in, they assume no title, no identification that the world recognizes. They build no kingdoms about them, establish no hierarchies, but are *living epistles of Christ, examples to the flock, and servants of all*.

Jesus is the Pattern Son! He is the *firstborn* among many brethren. Let us prayerfully and reverently consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our profession! He wanted nothing of the religion of the Pharisees. He held nothing but contempt for the organized religion of that day, for the blinding traditions of the learned and prestigious Rabbis, the distorted doctrines of the Pharisees who walked about with the most imposing and pretentious titles, clothed in elaborate and gorgeous vestments, loving the chief seats in the synagogue, and binding upon the people heavy burdens, grievous to be borne, with all sorts of rules and regulations, extrapolations of the law. Because He was a *Son*, Jesus' center was in nothing of earth, nothing of the traditions of men. Jesus never concerned Himself with external structures of organization, hierarchy, buildings, programs, creeds, ceremonies, promotions, or any other carnal thing. He ministered LIFE, LIGHT, LOVE, REALITY AND TRUTH. Period. He was

unusual. He would not follow the methods and techniques of the world. He would not go with the multitude.

In Jesus' message to the church at Ephesus He says that He **hates** the **deeds** and the **doctrine** of the **NICOLAITANES**. He hated it when He was here on earth, He hated it in the church at Ephesus, and He hates it today. Every son of God hates it! I hate it, and every reader of these lines who has received the call to sonship **hates it!** The rule of man is an abomination to the spirit of sonship!

Chapter 34

The Church In Ephesus

continued

"But this thou hast, that thou hatest the *deeds of the Nicolaitanes*, which I also hate" (Rev. 2:6). "So thou hast also them that hold the *doctrine of the Nicolaitanes*, which thing I hate" (Rev. 2:15).

When the Lord was showing John on Patmos what the seven churches would be like, He commended the church at Ephesus because they hated the **deeds of the Nicolaitanes**, which the Lord also detested. In Pergamos, the third church, these *deeds* had become *accepted doctrine*, which the Lord also hated. When a name appears in the scriptures its meaning sheds light upon the spiritual reality behind the name. What are these Nicolaitanes? We understand when we know what the name means! Nicolaitane comes from two Greek words: *nikao*, which means "to rule over" or "to conquer," and *laos*, which means "the laity" or "the people." Put these definitions together and you get a domineering ruling class within the body of Christ whose main agenda is to get the upper hand, conquer, subordinate, and subdue those who they consider "less gifted," "less knowledgeable," or "less qualified" than themselves!

In the religious world there are those called "clergy" and there are those who are called "laity." These are titles that have come to us from religious Babylon! What were the "deeds" of the Nicolaitanes? They were exalting the "clergy" over the "laity"! The clergy class were dominating the laity, the people. The clergy exalted themselves whereas the laity were abased. The clergy became the authority, the power, the lordship in the church. They became the fountain of all truth, they had the last word, they called all the shots. The rest of us poor folks are just "laity," the dumb sheep that just follow and do what we are told.

When there is a great move of God there always follows a move of man. I have been blessed by God's grace to be a part of some great moves of God that came into the earth in former years. These were sovereign moves of the Holy Spirit, and He moved upon those He chose to move upon. What glory there was! What power! What manifestations of the Spirit! What revelation of the Lord in the midst! What discernment by the Spirit! What liberty for the Holy Ghost to work! What love and respect for one another! It was God overflowing men beyond themselves.

Well do I remember the day when the revival reached a certain point and a meeting was called. Some of the spiritual leaders had reached the conclusion that having *begun in the Spirit* we now needed to be *made perfect by the flesh*. Oh, that's not how they expressed it! They had reached the conclusion that because of the increase in the work of God we needed a little more cohesion and structure. It was imperative upon us to take some measures to "protect" the work of God from certain extremes, from the immature, from false doctrine, and from the wolves. In that decisive moment the long arm of flesh reached out *in the name of the Lord* to put its clammy hand to the beautiful work of the Spirit! As this effort was organized the *deeds*

of the Nicolaitanes became the *doctrine* of the Nicolaitanes and a new man-made "order" was inaugurated. I do not hesitate to tell you that I fled from their midst as fast as my legs would carry me, never to return! Today there is barely a flicker of the revelation and glory of those former days.

Man seeks by the wisdom of the carnal mind and by fleshly means to *protect* and *control* the move of God — supposedly to keep it pure, to safeguard it, to preserve and maintain the status quo, and to keep out all who are not worthy. As soon as man puts his hand to the move, the Spirit flees, the anointing lifts, and the glory departs! Soon there is no life anymore — everything becomes organized, structured, controlled, systematized, just a going through the motions of what was once a beautiful flow of life and light and power. This concept of the "authority" of God's ministers shows up after every new moving of the Spirit of God in the earth! It is showing up now among sonship and kingdom people! The phraseology changes from time to time, but the basic concepts remain the same. But whatever the phraseology or methodology, it is still **THE DEEDS AND DOCTRINE OF THE NICOLAITANES!**

Where, then, *is* safety to be found? Safety lies only in such a recognition of the absolute folly of the *control* of *leaders* and the utter apostasy of the religious systems of man as will lead us to pass by **all** merely human authority, tradition, and methods to seek only and always the divine illumination and sovereign guidance of the Holy Spirit of God! Nor do we exclude ourselves from the list of those who should not be followed. We are human as the rest and our works are not yet perfect before God, though we follow after, if by any means we may apprehend that for which also we have been apprehended of God. We do hope that all who read these lines may be able to grant us this one grace — the highest compliment that we can crave — that the burden of our message is to point all men to a *personal, living relationship* with the Lord Jesus Christ and to the *infallibility of the mind of Christ within each one* who has received the spirit of sonship!

The following prophetic utterance given through sister Alma McClure speaks directly to our hearts. "O, look not ye to another, saith the Lord, the holy One of Israel! You are MY sheep; you have been purchased by MY love and sacrifice! I am the Good Shepherd, who has loved you with an everlasting love! LOOK TO ME! For I am a jealous God, and I will not share my glory with another! Why do you look to man, and heap upon him honor and glory? Why do you look to your human pastors, preachers, prophets, and writers as though they were the **source** of your salvation, your sustenance, your life? Why do you look up to them with reverence, with praise, with pride in them, and swoon at their feet, calling them **wonderful, marvelous, mighty** men and women of God? Why will you follow after men, rather than after ME? Why will you be blinded by their personalities, their eloquence, their own soulish enthusiasm, which you accept as my anointing?

"O my people! You are MY PEOPLE, and the sheep of MY PASTURE! Return, return unto ME! You have your eyes on those who are or should be MY SERVANTS! You do not even realize that your eyes, your thoughts and your hearts are not centered and focused on ME! You think you keep your eyes on me, but so often, in reality, your eyes have strayed off-center, and although you are aware of me, and your songs contain my name, and your words include praise to me — yet you have let some man or woman step in front of me! You look to the man to speak for me, and have your eyes on him!

"Know you not that when you give glory to man, you are not only opening yourselves for deception, but you are setting that man up for a fall? You are placing that one in a dangerous position, for the Lord must cause that one to come down from his pedestal! Any spark of pride

that may be hidden in his heart will be fed and grow dangerously by YOUR praise and exaltation of that man or woman! Awake, thou that sleepest, and return unto ME! I, alone, am your Good Shepherd! Come to ME, and I will feed you with the bread of life, and honey out of the Rock! I shall give you the water of Life, and cause that water to be a living well within you, springing up to satisfy your thirst, and to flow out to bring life to needy souls around you! O, come unto ME, and I will give you all that you need! I will raise up faithful shepherds, who will feed you, and will take no glory for themselves. They will continually point you to ME, and you will no longer say, 'Isn't this man (or woman) wonderful!' But you will see only ME, and say, 'Wonderful, wonderful Saviour, Redeemer, the Most High, who is King of my life!' And you shall worship ME, in Spirit and in Truth!"

Those seeking power want to control, to rule over others. They want to take charge and get their way. They're not interested in *leading by example*, by humility, love, counsel, mercy, goodness and the anointing of the Spirit. They manipulate and maneuver to be in a position of authority so they can control others and coerce them to get in line with *their* vision. Though some accomplish this as masters of deceit, hiding the real truth behind a façade of pious words and pretended spirituality, their domineering spirit becomes evident when those who are supposed to follow don't, but go on to follow the leading of the Spirit. "Anathema!" cries the ruler. "Rebellion!" cries the tyrant. "Zap!" goes the whip. Power people have little tolerance for people who persist in seeking the mind of the Lord. The religious ranks are swollen with these power grabbers! Authoritarianism is not confined to denominations. It simply appears wherever and whenever prideful, though sincere, men are in authority. Though it has recently resurged under various titles and guises, such as "shepherd," "bishop," "set man," etc., it is an error that will sap the life of God's saints wherever it gains control. From generation to generation it surfaces under different names, but its three basic tenets remain the same: (1) When we speak, it is God speaking. (2) To resist our authority is to resist God's authority. (3) Those resisters must be marked as independent, rebellious, and divisive; and must in turn be withstood and publicly denounced and humiliated.

There are precious life-giving ministries in the body of Christ! God is raising up faithful under-shepherds who care for the Lord's people and serve the elect of God. These minister in the Spirit and by the Spirit in love, humility, and grace. Some of the so-called "offices" have been greatly abused! In both the Old and New Testaments the word for "shepherd" and "pastor" is the same word in Hebrew and Greek. A pastor is simply a shepherd, and a shepherd is a pastor, both naturally and spiritually. The Spirit of God has dealt with me deeply and consistently through many years that the Lord's people should purge their conversation, purify their terminology, and remove from their thinking processes the multitude of unscriptural expressions carried over from Mystery Babylon. We have both parroted and coined a great many terms that have been so misleading and have led us astray from the way of the Spirit.

We, like the babes in the harlot's house, often refer to a minister of the gospel as "the pastor" of our church, or some other congregation of saints. To hear all the Christians today constantly talking about "our pastor," "their pastor," "your pastor," "my pastor," and "the pastor," one would certainly be led to believe this position of "the pastor" must indeed be one of the cardinal doctrines and most highly acclaimed offices in the New Testament! The fact is, precious friend of mine, the term "the pastor" is entirely *foreign* to the Word of God and *non-existent* in the early church! It is an extra-biblical term! There was no one single man in the whole New Testament writings who ever occupied a position called "the pastor." Not one church raised up by the first apostles had any such ministry as "the pastor." Oh, yes, there were "pastors" plural (Eph. 4:11) mentioned only *once* in the whole New Testament, but no single minister of God was ever elevated to the position of "the pastor" of an assembly!

There is a good reason for this! You see, the truth is that in every case in the Greek New Testament where the word for pastor (*poimen*) appears in the singular accompanied by the definite article (the), it is used in reference **solely to our Lord Jesus Christ!** Thus, He alone is THE PASTOR of the flock, THE SHEPHERD of the sheep! The sweet singer of Israel stated it so aptly in his lovely Psalm when he sang out by the spirit of inspiration, "The **LORD** is MY SHEPHERD!" That is the same as, "The **LORD** is MY PASTOR!" But tell a so-called pastor that today, and he will charge you with rebellion! Can we not see by this that any man who takes to himself this title "*the* pastor," thereby usurps the headship of our precious Lord! And those groups who have plural ministry, but one among them is designated "the senior pastor," "head elder," or some other such title, usurp even more blasphemously the position of the Lord Jesus, since these terms are the spiritual equivalent of "Chief Shepherd." And the Lord alone is the Chief Shepherd! (I Pet. 5:4).

I instructed the brethren among whom I labored in years past that they should never call me "the pastor" or "their pastor" because the Lord alone **is The Pastor!** I may be "a pastor" but I can never be THE PASTOR! The saints were taught that if one came inquiring after "the pastor" they should be told that the pastor is the Lord. If they were asked, "Who is the pastor here?" they should reply, "The Lord is the pastor here!" Should the inquirer press the point they could then explain that brother Eby is one of the ministries in the body, but **THE LORD IS THE PASTOR.** God's people, even the called out elect, have been so saturated, so thoroughly brain-washed in the errors of the carnal church systems of man, until we speak by rote the ridiculous absurdities assimilated in the pews of religious Babylon. How astounded we are when once we learn the truth and discover that the cherished teaching or hallowed practice we have unwittingly *assumed* to be godly and spiritual is not only unfounded in the Word of God, but is an abomination in the sight of God!

My beloved, if ever you hope to reign with Christ YOU MUST BECOME SUBMITTED TO THE AUTHORITY OF GOD IN THE SPIRIT — THE SHEPHERD OF ISRAEL. And I'm not talking about coming to El Paso and submitting to my ministry, or to any other man, or group of men. It is amazing how "man" conscious even many who have received the call to sonship *still are!* They are looking for a man, a leader, a star, who can bring them into the fullness of Christ, into immortality and the kingdom. There is such a man, my friend — His name is Jesus! Certainly we should walk in love and humility with our brethren, "submitting ourselves one to another in the fear of God" (Eph. 5:21). But there is only ONE HEAD of the body — the *man* Christ Jesus! Some time ago I was speaking at a Conference and it had been announced that I wouldn't be able to be there. At the last minute the Spirit spoke to me that I should go. When I walked in one of the brethren said, "A lot of people who didn't come because they thought you wouldn't be here are going to be disappointed." I replied, "That's *good* for them!" They shouldn't be following a man — they should be *gathering together unto HIM!*

There are men in this word of the kingdom who would lead you to believe that they alone have the words of life, they among all God's prophets have the true, deeper, spiritual, mystical revelation that will lead the sons to perfection and immortality. Not discerning the Lord's body, elevating their word and their ministry above all the Lord's brethren, they draw disciples after themselves. But I tell you the truth and I lie not when I say that **no man can minister to you that which he himself does not possess.** If a man tells you that he possesses the secret and the truth by which you can save your life and possess physical immortality, yet he himself has neither stopped nor reversed the aging process, only a fool would commit his life into his hands. Ah — there is ONE, my beloved, who HAS STOPPED THE AGING PROCESS, WHO HAS CONQUERED DEATH, WHO IS ALIVE FOREVERMORE, and this One holds the Key, He knows the Secret, He Himself IS the Truth, and I must tell you today HE, AND HE ALONE,

HAS THE WORDS OF ETERNAL LIFE! All true ministries in the body of Christ bear one signal mark of distinction: they do not draw followers after themselves, they **point all men to the Lord**; they do not set themselves up as the last word, the only truth, they do not ask you to submit to them, or follow them to the exclusion of the other ministries in this present truth, but they present you unto HIM WHO IS THE HEAD OVER ALL THINGS TO THE CHURCH, WHICH IS HIS BODY.

I speak the truth when I say that the greatest need in this hour is for the called out people of God to truly KNOW THE LORD FOR THEMSELVES. Let all who treasure the beautiful hope of sonship seek God, and walk with God, and know God, and hear from God, and submit to Him in all His ways, yielding to His will, obeying His word, and God Himself will be your Father and you will sup with Him, and He with you. Ask the guidance of the Holy Spirit, thrust yourself in utter abandonment upon His love and care, and before you realize it you will find yourself digging deep in the storehouse of God's treasures of wisdom and knowledge and sitting with Him at His banqueting table. He will spread a table before you in the presence of your enemies, He will lead you through green pastures; He will reveal to you fountains of living water flowing *from within*; He will cause you to rest beside cool, still streams; and HE, the Great Shepherd of the sheep will abide with you and your cup will overflow with the unspeakable riches of His grace and the wonder of His glory, wisdom, and power!

Clearly, the most faithful under-shepherd is not the Great Shepherd of the sheep. Under-shepherds do not **lead** the flock! Every flock has only one shepherd. The under-shepherds bring up the sides and the rear to make sure that every sheep *follows the shepherd*! Those who are closest to the Lord, who know Him best, and are more deeply conformed to His image, can only direct the searching soul to the Lord. They can never satisfy the hunger of the heart that is going out after Him. How we praise God for all the help we have received through every chosen vessel that He has used to draw us onward toward Him, and into a deeper relation to Himself. With what gratitude to God do we remember those whom He has used to point out to us a nearer approach to the reality of God. How tenderly we look back upon every faithful servant and child of His, who brought us new light, who stirred within us a deeper hunger for God, who opened to us an understanding of His great plan and purpose in us, who provoked us to holy jealousy and emulation through their godly lives.

How we praise God for those who warned and instructed us through the exhortation and admonition that they gave in the hour of need, or in times of weakness or immaturity. How our hunger for Reality, abandonment to God's will, and desire to follow the Lamb all the way to mount Zion, have been increased as we have seen that mysterious light which radiates from the spirits of those who have soared with Him into the heavenly heights. While we thank God for every instrument He uses in our lives, how little one or all of these precious ones can be, compared with our Beloved, if in any way they take His place and draw us to themselves rather than to Himself. We must esteem every servant and instrument of God "exceeding highly in love for their work's sake," but we must never permit them to usurp the place of the Good and Great Shepherd in our lives and affections. Therefore the elect of God in this hour have no desire for an under-shepherd to **lead** them; and when they do not yield to them, they appear as though they were a stranger. But that is not it at all — it is that the Lord Himself is becoming ALL to us!

The following confirmatory words are from Elaine Cook. "During the summer there are always numerous 'gatherings' being held. Some have 'stars' that you simply *must hear*! I was praying about this and the Lord answered me. 'In those in whom I am now coming forth, there are **no** 'stars' so-claimed by men. It is a meek and lowly people — so hidden away and obscure that

their names have never been heard in 'the spiritual market place.' They are not known for special giftings or mighty prophetic words, but **they know Me**. *This* is the standard for My 'mighties' of this day — they that **know Me!** It matters not at all if they are known and acclaimed of man, or even if their brethren know them not. 'The Lord knoweth them that are His.' 'And **I know** who is paying the price to receive the glory of *My nature*.

"My church does not yet realize that they must become *nothing* before they can have My *true power* working in them. The power of *gifts* is not from the nature of man. It is from *the gift* that I have given unto the man. I am preparing those who look not for *outward gifts* to show their spirituality, but **whose nature is like Mine** because they have been submissive to letting the fire do its work until the strength of the natural man has been utterly subdued. *These are My Man in the earth* — even that *man* that is as the fine gold of Ophir. Look for no other *man* to arise but *this one*. You shall know them by the *nature* that has been inworked into them at *great cost*" — end quote.

We are still speaking of the **deeds** and **doctrine** of the **NICOLAITANES** — those who would subvert you, rule over you, and control your walk in God. The true church is made up of people who have been quickened by the Spirit and made alive in Christ — not denominations, meetings, or programs. These people can have fellowship one with another, but their spiritual walks are individual paths, sovereignly directed by their heavenly Father. Today, the hierarchical structure of the church systems has grown into a monster that exercises a lordship over the souls of men. When one bows down to a code of limited doctrines, worldly organization, and hierarchical domination, he despises God's ever-expanding revelation, denies the leadership of the Spirit in his life, and forfeits his own spiritual inheritance.

Walking out your spiritual life under the domination of Nicolaitanism is the repudiation of one's walk in the liberty and power of the Spirit of God within. The control from the pulpit, the structured programs, orchestrated worship, and formulated creeds are the cataracts of spiritual vision. They make you blind to the on-going purposes of God and the unfolding glory of God! Yielding to their authority is the numbing of the mind of Christ within you. It is your acceptance of serfdom and your abdication of sonship. When you bow to the puppets of Babylon you can never move beyond the little patch of salvation that they control! Under the dominion of "lords" you disavow your submission to Christ the Head, relinquish your personal responsibility to the Father, cast away your spiritual birthright, and sell your soul into servitude. Still, most Christians today prefer the comfort of vassalage in the great slave camps of Babylon, rather than to walk freely with God and develop into spiritual kings and priests. This domination produces children who never grow up! As babes at the breast they are ever dependent upon a suckling church. Thirty years later they will be sitting in the same pew, believing the same things, going through the same motions, standing up when they are told to stand, sitting when they are told to sit, singing when they are told to sing, clapping when they are told to clap, and getting all their life from the actors on the platform. They never learn to feed themselves or stand tall and strong in the kingdom of God!

THAT, my beloved, is why the Lord **hates** the deeds of the Nicolaitanes! That is why I **hate** the deeds of the Nicolaitanes! That is why every overcoming son of God **hates, detests, abhors,** and **loathes** the deeds of the Nicolaitanes! To the saints in Pergamos the Lord said, in regard to them that held the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, "Repent, or I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth" (Rev. 2:16). The "sword of the Lord's mouth" is His *anointed, living WORD!* The Lord Himself is now arising in us to fight against the deeds and doctrine of the Nicolaitanes by the word of the Lord! Through the power and might of HIS WORD, the Lord will destroy the evil influences of these "blind leaders" and will bring

deliverance to His people. But, in the meantime, all true sons of God will have **OVERCOME THE DEEDS AND DOCTRINE OF THE NICOLAITANES!** Not one of God's sons will be found in the bondage of man's spiritual domination, for they will have *overcome* that bondage, as we read, "He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; **TO HIM THAT OVERCOMETH WILL I GIVE TO EAT OF THE HIDDEN MANNA...**" (Rev. 2:17). Indeed, God has "hidden manna" for His overcomers who are able to *overcome* the deeds and doctrine of the Nicolaitanes. This 'hidden manna' is **new spiritual food** that is reserved only for those who dwell in the Most Holy Place of His Glory! Therefore, the overcomers who *overcome* the deeds and doctrine of the Nicolaitanes are seen worshipping **WITHIN THE HOLIEST OF ALL.**

Amy Semple McPherson was a woman mightily used of God in the early part of the twentieth century. Many remarkable prophecies came from her lips and some of them are as timeless as the prophecies of the scriptures. Here I would share a few that have special significance for God's elect in these days. These prophecies cover the entire period of church history, from the days of the early church all the way to the manifestation of the sons of God.

THE SIEVE OF THE LORD. Behold, two hands — strong hands — hands of the Lord; and in His hands is a sieve. He is sifting, sifting, sifting His people. Once they were small, and but as dust — then could God use them, but when they ceased to be small and helpless, when they gathered themselves together in separated lumps, they became big and hard and unyielding, and the Lord wept over them. He could no longer mold or shape or fashion them. There were the lumps of unbelief, and the lumps of pride; those lumps of self and doubts and fears; those lumps of formality and ceremony; God could not put them into the body. He could not form them into that glorious body, for they were no longer yielded and submissive in His hands. Once they were small, but now harder and harder and wider the lumps had grown, until they were blind, deaf and dumb and slow of understanding. Then were formed the lumps of organization and Catholicism. Oh, the stiffness and hardness of those lumps! "I must break them; I must smite them with the hammer of my Word. I must have a broken, sifted people through whom I can have my way. I must separate a peculiar people unto myself."

THE GREAT SIEVE. Behold the hands of the Lord. He put the broken lumps into the great sieve He held in His hands. The sieve had large meshes, and as He did shake and begin the work of separation, many of the smaller lumps and dust went through the sieve. Many hearts were broken and contrite under His dealings; but the bigger lumps of doubts and fears and unbelief, He had to throw them away. He loved His people, but those who would not become broken, He had to throw aside. Many went through the sieve in those early days. Many of the smaller lumps passed through the coarse sieve, but they were still hard and lumpy.

THE SECOND SIEVE. So He made another sieve of smaller meshes, and put in His people, who had passed through the first sieve. He shook them and tried them, separated them and sifted them. Many rebelled and refused to go through, so He had to lay them aside. But some went through this second sieve, and precious were they in His sight. Those who went through the sieve had to go through the world. They had to let go one of another; they had to let go of themselves and of the opinions of people. Those who passed through the sieve had to let go all foolishness and pride. O, that sifting — that separating! The Lord gathered them in His hands. There were still a few little lumps. They were still His people; but those who would not believe and be broken, He had to throw aside.

THE FINE SIEVE. Those who had gone through the sieve were not sifted fine enough, nor little enough to be molded, so the Lord made for Himself a still finer sieve. Who can understand the plan of the Lord? Into the finer sieve He put His people, and He is sifting and trying people,

who will let Him have His way. All doubts and fears must be eliminated. All selfishness, the old nature, all desire for earthly honor, popularity, and recognition, must be taken away. All hardness, stiffness, and stubbornness must be taken away. All flesh, even *good* flesh, must be left behind. All selfish ambitions, all gossip, all earthly, idle words, and foolish communication, all falseness and shallowness, and desire for earthly leadership, must be gathered together and cast out. His people He will try again! He will sift them the second, the third time. The fourth time and the fifth time shall He sift His people. Ah! He shall have a people who can go through the finest sieve — pass the finest test, whose hearts are broken, whose spirits are mellow and yielded and who are abandoned to His will. He shall gather them together; not a grain shall be lost. But He shall gather His people together from the East and from the West, from the North and from the South — from the uttermost part of the earth He shall gather them in. He shall hold and mold them in the palm of His hand as fine dust. Once the lumps were large. They were big and great, but He could not use them. His people are a peculiar, sifted, tried people, who are as the dust of His glorious feet; **and with that dust He shall form a body, even as He did from Adam** in the beginning, so shall He form this body. They shall be yielded in His hands; they shall be pliable under His dealings. He shall make them into members of the body and fasten them together with cords of love.

FORMING THE BODY. The Head shall be joined to the neck — the neck to the shoulders. The arms shall take their places in the sockets, and they shall not be stiff, but shall be oiled, and soft and mellow with the Spirit. Their breasts shall be of Faith and Love, and shall be full. All the parts of the Body shall be in their places. The spine shall be formed together, and the loins shall be formed and rest in their sockets. From yielded dust shall be formed strong limbs — legs and pillars of marble, not to be removed. Of the humble members shall He form the feet; they shall be humble, and bear about the other members, yet without feet the body could not walk.

GIVING LIFE TO THE BODY. Then shall He breathe upon this body — upon His yielded, slain people. He shall breathe life into the nostrils. They shall walk not by flesh, but by the Spirit of the Lord. They shall be strong and do exploits! From the Head shall grow the long hair of separation and praise to God — not one missing.

COMING TO THE BODY. Soon He cometh! Ah, soon He cometh — this King of glory. His sifted, humble, tried people shall He take by the hand, and stand them upon their feet — many members, one Body, and catch them up to reign with Him upon His throne!

HE THAT HATH AN EAR

"He that *hath an ear*, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches..." (Rev. 2:7).

Some years ago Harvard astronomers dialed outer space and have been listening for an answer. Their ear, eighty-five feet in diameter, is a receiving dish located near Boston. According to a column in *USA Today*, this endeavor is the most extensive search ever conducted for intelligent life in outer space. The project is using a sophisticated, computerized radio receiver that allows the scientists to listen and to analyze 128,000 frequencies at once, twenty-four hours a day. Whether this project is still running I don't know, but listening for intelligent messages from the heavens is an exercise that EVERY SON OF GOD IS ENGAGED IN EVERY DAY! Jesus said, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith." So what was the Lord saying? Each person has two ears — one on each side of his head. But He wasn't talking about a natural ear! He was talking about a spiritual ear! He was talking about an individual who has the ability to *hear what the Spirit is saying from the*

heavens of God's Spirit! We can all hear what man is saying, but only one with a spiritual ear can hear what the Spirit is saying! How important it is that we HEAR ARIGHT!

I am reminded of the story of the man who found himself one day in total, abject poverty. Having nothing to eat and no place to spend the night, he knocked on the door of a very big house, in the rich suburb, confident that here he could get a free meal. When the man answered the door he said, "Sir, I'm hungry. Can you give me a meal?" The man said, "No, I will not do that. What I will do is give you an opportunity to earn it. Wait here." A few moments later the rich man came back with a can of paint and a brush and said, "Here you are. You go around the back of the house. You'll see a porch there. I want you to paint it. When it's finished you come back here, ring the bell, give me the paint and the brush and I'll give you a meal." Only a very short time elapsed. The front doorbell rang. The rich man answered it. There was the poor man saying, "I finished the job, now can I have my meal?" The man said, "You have painted the whole porch already?" "Yes, the only thing is, sir, it wasn't a Porche — it was a Mercedes!"

How often have heard the Lord like that! Because of our dullness of hearing, our lack of spiritual understanding, we misinterpreted the will of God and went down a path not of His bidding. Many of the Lord's people are like the story I read about Jack Harris. Jack became convinced he was losing his hearing. He went to a specialist, who gave him a thorough checkup. The doctor pulled out a gold watch and asked, "Can you hear this ticking?" Harris said, "Of course." The doctor walked to the door and held up the watch again. "Now can you hear it?" Harris concentrated and said, "Yes, I can hear it clearly." The doctor then walked out the door and into the next room and said, "Can you hear it now?" Harris said, "Yes." The doctor said, "Mr. Harris, there's nothing wrong with your hearing. You just *don't listen*."

It is true — at times we just *don't listen* to the Spirit because we are tuned in to our soul, to our own desires, to the voices of strangers, to the world, or to our own natural understanding. The carnal mind is exceedingly dull and spiritually retarded so that *truth* cannot penetrate! The carnal mind is exactly like the man in a story I read once which told of an Englishman who long ago went on horseback to a certain village to collect a sum of money. As he was returning with his gold tied to his saddle, he stopped at the roadside at noon to eat his lunch. With him was his faithful dog who was his constant companion. He untied the sack of gold and set it beside him that it might not be out of his reach at any time. After he had eaten, he fell asleep for a few moments. Then he mounted his horse and continued his journey. But he forgot his gold. The dog began to run in front of the horse and bark and turn back, but the man went on his way. Then the dog began frantically to snap at the horses heels and turn back. But still his master did not understand. At last he decided that his dog had gone mad. With great reluctance he turned in his saddle and shot the dog through the head. The faithful beast looked at him with questioning eyes; then he dropped in his tracks, and the man went on his way.

Oh, yes! That is just the spirit of religion and the carnal mind! It views the voice of the Spirit and the revelation of Truth as some kind of "madness" and often through history the church systems chose to "shoot the messenger" rather than get off their horse, get down on their knees, and search out what the Spirit was saying, and *regain their inheritance!*

The Lord is speaking to His called out, yet not everyone is hearing it. So the admonition comes, "He that hath an ear, **let him hear!**" Yes, let him know that to *overcome* in this area of *hearing* is to receive all the promises, to gain the inheritance. As Ray Prinzing has often said, you cannot live on a borrowed revelation. The Spirit must personally quicken it to you, that it becomes *life* in your own heart, and *light* upon your pathway, if you are to walk it out and

receive within yourself the promise it contains. May we continually be able to say with Samuel, "Speak, Lord; for Thy servant *heareth*" (1 Sam. 3:9). Then we will be established in the new purposes of God! When the Lord says, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches," in the minds of most people this is interpreted as saying, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what *the Bible says*." You are not going to hear what the Spirit says as long as you are only Bible-oriented. We thank God for the scriptures, for they testify of Him and of His great plan and purpose, but we will never hear what *the Spirit* is saying until we become SPIRIT-ORIENTED!

You can hear with the natural ears, you can hear *words*, you can hear the *sounds*, and it all makes sense and seems right. But there is another ear, an inner ear, a spiritual ear, a hearing in the Spirit, and he that hears with this ear will *truly* hear what the Spirit is saying! You must have this spiritual ear quickened, and I'll tell you why. Sound is vibration. The air around us is a gas. The sound that we hear is waves that make the air move and strike our ears. Sound waves are caused by the vibration, or shaking of something. It is the vibration that strikes our ear, is transmitted to the brain, and then *interpreted* as sound. That's how you hear with the natural ear.

I'm sure you've heard the old hypothetical question, "If no man is in the forest and a tree falls, does it make a sound?" In other words, is the vibration itself sound, or is it the *interpretation* of the vibration by the brain that makes it sound? We were visiting some friends in Arkansas a while back. There was a little plaque on the wall in the bedroom where we stayed which said, "If a man speaks in the forest, and there is no woman to hear it, is he still wrong?" And you know, the funny thing was that all the ladies in the house were laughing about that, they thought it was so cute; somehow they perceived it as a "put down" to the man. I read it and said, "How can that be a put down of the man? Because with some women, men are always wrong; and if it's asking if a man speaks and there is no woman to hear it, is he still wrong, it seems to me that it should be a put down to the women!" You see, it's a matter of *perception*! So we had a little fun with that! What I'm saying is that sound as vibration reaches the ear and is then *interpreted* as sound. That's how it works. You see, things that fall upon our natural senses, upon the ear, for instance, are understood and interpreted by the brain. But in the spiritual world, when we hear the living word of God, we don't hear it with the outer, natural ear at all, for if you hear it with the natural ear it will go to the brain and be *interpreted by the carnal mind*, by our natural, human understanding. It will be just a *dead letter* of the word. The living word of God is received only by the inner, spiritual ear, and then the *spirit* transmits it to the mind in purity, because the word of God is pure. When the vibration is natural and is transmitted to the brain by the *nerves* from the outer ear, we receive a carnal understanding of what is transmitted. But when the vibration is spiritual and is transmitted to the mind by the *spirit*, then the word becomes life and light! "The words that I speak unto you, they are *spirit* and they are *life*." Hallelujah!

Tony Salmon, in one of his sermon tapes, shared a beautiful illustration of this truth. He said, "I wanted to bring my dog whistle to the meeting tonight to illustrate a point. When you have a dog whistle and blow upon it there's a sound produced on a frequency that the human ear cannot hear. Now, a person who doesn't understand this would open that whistle and blow it and say, 'Aha! I can hear it!' You see, when you blow the dog whistle there is a superficial sound made which you *can* hear. Air is rushing in and there is sort of a whistle. Some people think, 'Ah, I can hear that. I can hear it as good as the dog can!' *No, you can't*. You haven't heard the high frequency — you've heard a lower frequency. There is a sound that humans can hear, but if there is a dog here and I'm blowing the whistle, *we're hearing one sound and the dog is hearing another sound*."

"This is a little scary, but this is reality. The sound we hear is reverberating on a lower wave at a lower vibration, and the limited ability of our ears can hear that; but what the dog hears is something completely different because the dog's ears are tuned to a higher frequency or vibration. Now, hear me — what we do in this gathering is blow a trumpet. I find in many meetings that the people who are getting the most excited and are saying, 'Yes, I hear, I hear, I hear that word,' are merely hearing the wind that's rushing through the whistle — they really haven't tuned their ears to hear the *higher tone of the Spirit!* My desire is that when we speak and blow the trumpet that you will go home saying, 'I have heard the voice of my Beloved.' Don't you know that when the voice came to Jesus saying, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased,' there were some who were tuned in to hear the voice of the Father and they said, 'God is speaking.' But others said, 'No — it just thundered,' because they were further away or lower down in the spirit and could only hear the wind rushing through the whistle, as it were. When Moses was up on the top of the mountain He saw God face to face and God spoke to him there; but at the bottom of the mountain the people heard only the longer sound waves coming down and all they heard was thunder!" — end quote.

I speak the truth with all soberness when I say that the *Spirit* is saying something in this hour! What the Spirit is saying cannot be heard with the outer ear of the fleshly mind of human understanding. When the word of God comes to you, my brother, my sister, can you hear what the Spirit is saying, or do you hear only the words of the vessel it may flow through? Vast multitudes of believers, even those who have received the word of reconciliation, sonship, and the kingdom, attend meetings and go away saying, "Oh, that was a good message, I really enjoyed that." But did they *hear* what the Spirit was saying? Did the Spirit *say something* to them? Was there a word *beyond the spoken words* that penetrated to the spiritual ear and spoke as the oracle of God to the inner man? When this happens, this is **the revelation of Jesus Christ!**

The church in scripture is always *feminine*. The church is called a bride, it's called a wife, it is espoused to Christ, and is the body of Christ in the same way that Eve was flesh of Adam's flesh and bone of Adam's bones (Eph. 5:21-33). The church is the *soul* of God. The church is the woman, the womb-man where the seed is planted to bring forth new life. Reverently now I would draw your attention to the word selected by the Holy Spirit in speaking of those who have the inner ear, who truly *hear* what the *Spirit* is saying. "HE that hath an ear..." Notice it is HE, the term used is *masculine*. Now the Spirit is speaking of *sonship!* He is speaking about growing up unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. This truth is made crystal clear where the Lord speaks to the overcomer, saying, "HE that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and HE shall be **my son**" (Rev. 21:7).

There is as much difference between the church and the overcomer as there is between the bride of Christ and the manifest sons of God! The church of chapters two and three of the Revelation is the woman, the womb-man where the seed is planted to bring forth the manchild of chapter twelve. It is the woman of chapter twelve who, in fact, bears the manchild. The woman is glorious beyond description, clothed with the sun of Christ's glory, with a crown of twelve stars of divine government on her head, and the moon of the cold reflective light of outward laws, rituals, ceremonies, and ordinances under her feet. This woman is typified by the two churches of Smyrna and Philadelphia against whom the Lord spoke not a word. What a beautiful and splendid woman she is!

However, **sonship** is the hope of all creation! It is the hope dearest to the heart of God. He has irrevocably purposed to rule the world by sons upon whose shoulders will rest the government of the world. The nations of them that are saved will walk in the *light* of the bride-city, the New

Jerusalem, but they will be *governed* by the *throne* in the midst of the city which is the sons of God. "To HIM that *overcometh* will I grant to sit with me in my throne" (Rev. 3:21). In the ages to come the whole universe will be ruled by sons of God who will deliver the creation from the bondage of corruption. *No promise* of world rule was ever given to the church in the whole book of Revelation! The promise is reiterated again and again to the *overcomers* who are the *sons of God* (Rev. 21:7).

The church, the bride of Christ, and the overcomers, the sons of God, make up the vast *family of God*, and at the head of that vast family stands Jesus Christ, the firstborn of the new creation, the firstborn from the dead, the firstborn of every creature, the firstborn among many brethren. The mother and her sons, with Jesus Christ the Head, are but one family, the cherished wife of the Lamb, beloved of Christ as His own soul, and the sons of God who shall rule the creation of God in a harmony surpassing the sweetest symphony the earth has ever known.

Moses served as a wonderful example and pattern of hearing the voice of God. When Moses was gone into the tabernacle, *then* he heard the voice. It is not said that the voice began to speak; rather the contrary is implied. The voice would seem to have been speaking all along, but it was only now that Moses heard it. Why did he hear it now? It was because now for the first time he had put himself in the attitude of hearing. It was when he entered into the tabernacle, it was when he consciously and deliberately and purposefully *entered into the presence of God*, that there woke within him the conviction that God had all the time been speaking with *him*.

It must be the same with us! Often we are crying in the silence of the night that no divine voice has visited us. Ah, but have we only listened for it with the ear of sense? If so, it is no marvel that we have missed its music! The voice of God cannot be heard by the ear of sense; its tones make no impression, set up no vibration, on the surrounding air, they stir not the waves of the earthly atmosphere. Its accents are too still and small to be caught by the natural ear; they are speaking incessantly, but they are drowned by the thunder, the earthquake, and the fire. If we would hear them we must enter the inner tabernacle, we must open the inner ear!

Have you not read the words of Jesus wherein He taught that miracles are only wrought by faith? Why are miracles only wrought through faith? Not because God is narrow or limited, but because truth is broad and unlimited. The eye cannot see music, the ear cannot hear colors; neither can the natural receive the spiritual! The Holy of holies is the domain of the spirit, the audience-chamber of the soul. Within its holy temple there is heard the voice of God, the voice of the Spirit. Here the mystery of life is unveiled. When we enter into the secret of God's pavilion to speak with Him, there breaks upon our hearts the wondrous revelation of all that God doth speak!

When Jesus taught the people He emphasized the need to **hear His word**. To John on Patmos He said, "He that *hath an ear*, let him hear." The great mystery is that not one of us can create within ourselves the *hearing ear*! The wise man wrote these words of truth and understanding: "The hearing ear, and the seeing eye, **the Lord hath made even both of them!**" (Prov. 20:12). That is why the Lord said, "He that *hath an ear*, let him hear." If you have a spiritual ear, then the Lord Himself gave it to you! You can no more create your own spiritual ear than you save yourself, heal yourself, or manifest yourself as a son of God. This is the calling and the work of God! I trust you are as blessed by this truth as I am. It is thrilling to realize that if we, as God's elect, have a hearing ear, it is only because HE called us, chose us, ordained us, predestinated us, quickened us, and **gave us the hearing ear!**

Perhaps the most important truth you should know at this time is that **you have an ear to hear**. It is doubtful that you would be reading this writing if you didn't have an ear to hear! Not only that, but we have within us all the divine faculties necessary to attain to the fullness of Christ. His divine power has given unto us *all things* that pertain to life and god-like-ness! There is nothing lacking of the divine resources in our lives. We have that inner, spiritual ear to hear. Now listen and hear what the Spirit is saying to His elect in this new Day! We do this by renouncing the self life of the Adamic mind and nature, by turning a deaf ear to the world and the things of it, and tuning our spiritual ear to hear His voice, declaring the pure word of the Lord.

Chapter 35

The Church In Ephesus

continued

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To *him that overcometh* will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God" (Rev. 2:7).

The closing verse of the message to the church in Ephesus includes the admonition common to the message to each of the seven churches, to *hear* what the Spirit says! Then it gives a promise to "him that overcometh." The implication is that those who overcome would be few in number because it says, "*To him that overcomes...*" It is on a singular and individual basis! No church as a whole would overcome all the conditions typified by those things the Lord condemned in each church. Only a few individuals scattered throughout the churches would *truly* overcome all things!

One of the most important truths God's elect can understand in this hour is that there are no "groups" entering into the fullness of God. If you are part of a church, prayer group, Bible study group, or any kind of corporate expression with the vision of sonship and the kingdom of God, not one of you will enter in *as a group*. All groups or congregations of saints are typified by the seven churches, not by the overcomer! Only "him" that overcometh will receive the promise! All groups are composed of people on different levels of understanding, growth, righteousness, obedience, and faith. The overcomer is that person or persons in the group who *pays the price* to apprehend the life, kingdom, and glory of God!

"Overcome" — that is a fighting word; it subdues, conquers, vanquishes, prevails, and comes off the victor! "Overcome" means *victory*. Now "victory" is a word that thrills! Everybody longs to win. If we play even the most trifling game, we prefer to come out victors. This is all the more true when the conflict is a matter of life and death. We are interested in those who win the battle rather than in those who lose. If you do not believe this, go out tomorrow and tell your friends how you struck out and lost the game. You will not be half through your story before those friends turn from you to listen to some man with a sparkle of joy in his eye to tell how he won. We all wish to win! And the glory of this message is that it points the path of victory for every one of us!

Though there are seven churches in the book of Revelation, there is in fact an *eighth church*, though not designated as such. This church will be the overcomer's manifestation! Throughout scripture and the book of Revelation there are references made to *many groups*. At times they are called overcomers, or firstfruits, or 144,000, or manchild, or witnesses, or woman, or bride, or city, or great multitude, or harlot, or Mystery Babylon, or beast, or false prophet, or something else. Groups are made up of any number of individuals sharing the same interests, values, experience, purpose, hope or attainment. One may suppose that he has come out of all groups and is walking with the Father alone, but if there are others who share his revelation

and experience he *is part of a group!* Yet, membership in the company of the overcoming sons of God is an *individual* matter! "To him that overcometh..."

To each overcomer there is an "I will give..." each promise to the overcomer is a spiritual reality of the kingdom of God! Those who will hear this word to overcome and then overcome will attain to a new and higher reality of the kingdom in their lives. The promises are not to those who *hear about* overcoming, or those who *believe in* overcoming, or those who *talk about* overcoming, or those who *try to* overcome, but the promises are to HIM THAT OVERCOMETH! Many have heard and have thrilled at the concept of overcoming and its promises, but the promises are obtained as *we overcome*.

Have you read Hugh Price Hughes' story called "The City of Everywhere?" He arrived in that city one cold morning. As he got off the train, the station was like any other station with the crowds and redcaps, except that everybody was barefooted. They wore no shoes. He noticed the cab driver was barefooted. "Pardon me," he asked the driver, "I was just wondering why you don't wear shoes. Don't you believe in shoes?" "Sure we do," said the driver. "Why don't you wear them?" asked the man. The driver replied, "Ah, that's the question. Why don't we wear shoes? Why don't we?" At the hotel it was the same. The clerk, bell boys, everybody was barefooted. In the coffee shop he noticed a nice-looking fellow at a table opposite him who also was barefooted. He said, "I notice you aren't wearing shoes. I wonder why? Don't you know about shoes?" The man replied, "Of course I know about shoes." "Then why don't you wear them?" "Ah, that's the question," said the man. "Why don't we? Why don't we?"

After breakfast he walked out on the street in the snow but every person he saw was barefooted. He asked another man about it and pointed out how the shoes protect the feet from cold. The man said, "We know about shoes. See that building yonder? That is a shoe manufacturing plant. We are proud of that plant and every week we gather there to hear the man in charge tell about shoes and how wonderful they are." "Then why don't you wear shoes?" The man replied, "Ah, that's the question!"

Let me ask you today, Don't we believe in overcoming? Do we not know the wonderful promises made to him that overcometh? Of course we do! We know about overcoming. We believe in overcoming. We talk about overcoming. We read about overcoming. In fact, we gather together weekly or from time to time and listen to great teachings and sermons about overcoming. Yet many seem to be plagued year after year with the same problems, weakness, fears, confusions, lack, limitations, and failures. Many never seem to overcome. Why don't we overcome? Ah, that's the question! Why don't we overcome? Why don't we?

"Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world," said Jesus in the hour of His passion. "Overcoming" is a big word! It means there is something to *come over*, and getting over it is a divine thing. Even the Lord Jesus was made perfect through the things that He suffered, through blessed obstacles and divine agonies. Sometimes we are asked why God permits so much evil. "Permits?" Why, He sends it! The old mystic was right who said, "There is no doer but God." Not one of the ills of life could ever touch you if He did not open the door. No matter how malignant your assailant might be, when anything has come to you which your soul pronounces unwelcome, praise God and go on — and *then you have overcome!* The evils, as we call them, of life are often not evils at all. We mix up evil with wickedness or some other negative and talk as if the two were the same. They are not! Evil is a larger term, and pain may be included in it. When we understand the ways of the Lord, we would not have suffering, trial, trouble, tribulation and pain expelled from life for all the glory that imagination can conjure up!

"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the *fiery trial* which is to *try you*, as though some strange thing had happened unto you" (I Pet. 4:12). "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that *ye may be tried*...be thou faithful...and I will give thee a crown of life" (Rev. 2:10). "And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may *sift you as wheat*: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen the brethren" (Lk. 22:31-32). If we can realize that God ordains trouble, trials, and tribulations to bring forth the gold of His divine nature from these earthen vessels, we can rejoice, as David, in our afflictions and trials and exclaim with him, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might *learn Thy Statutes*" (Ps. 119:7).

One of the fundamental laws of creation is that an opposing force is necessary for growth and to produce strength, stamina, and endurance. Any living thing that grows up without any opposition is weak and powerless. God's sons must be strong and powerful, and anything that desires to be strong, or anyone, must wrestle with a force that is contrary to them. A plant that grows in a greenhouse sheltered from the winds and rains, pampered and protected day after day, may grow large and beautiful, but it is inherently weak, and if suddenly exposed to the elements will quickly wither and die. Any man who wants to build muscular power to be strong to overcome an opponent, must spend weeks and months and years in vigorous training doing heavy exercises, lifting heavy weights, using the opposing force of gravity to develop his strength. There is a great and magnificent future ahead for the sons of God, and a great work our Father has for us to do in the age and the ages to come, and He is now preparing us and making us ready for the high and holy place He has for us. Can we not see that ALL THE OPPOSING FORCES WE NOW ENCOUNTER, and OUR RESPONSE TO THEM are working together for our good — to develop the strength, character, understanding, compassion, wisdom, faith and power we must acquire?

Sometimes it would seem as though life had no meaning at all; it is only a chaos, and the best that you can do is not to think about it or try to figure it out. Precious friend of mine, do *you* know what *your* life means? It means that this present time and experience is a school, and God has put us here to learn lessons for eternity, and all that has befallen you is fitting you to fulfill your place in the kingdom of God. God has something to do in His wonderful universe and He is preparing His sons and daughters to do it! We are put here to live something out for God, to walk something out with God.

Paul Mueller has written, "The principle purpose which is uppermost in the mind of the Father at this time is the growth and coming to maturity of His chosen remnant. Every other purpose under heaven is secondary to this greater purpose during this exceptional time. Therefore, it is essential that all who are members of this Christ body, the sons of God, should concentrate on their own spiritual maturity. Strive not to do the religious works of man, but seek rather for the fullness of Christ in your own heart and life. There is no other purpose under heaven that can equal this grand and holy purpose of the Father! Put away all the desires and appetites of the world and of the flesh, and seek only to please the Lord.

"If you really care for the masses of the world who know not God and His wonderful grace and mercy, then you will seek for His fullness in your life. If you have really heard the groans of a creation that is suffering under the burden of sin and shame, you will cease all your religious activity, which is really only the works of the flesh, and will follow hard after the Lord. Let us seek to please God as Enoch did, and we will witness a glorious manifestation of His life that will set every captive free. God, in His great wisdom, has linked all of creation's needs and travails with the glorious transformation of the bodies of the sons of God into bodies like unto

Christ's body. And it is possible that when this glorious transformation does occur, the stones, the trees, shrubs, and grass of the field, as well as all animal life, will lift *their voices* in praise to Him who has fulfilled His word and satisfied the inherent hope within every created thing" — end quote.

Our wonderful heavenly Father is working out a great purpose in His sonship company in this hour. When God first called us into the move of His Spirit in the days of the Latter Rain outpouring, we were used by the power of the Spirit to see miracles wrought. We saw tumors disappear before our eyes, ruptured discs instantly healed so that people who were bed-ridden rose up and went back to work. Multitudes of people received miracles and the baptism in the Spirit by the laying on of our hands. Angels appeared in the meetings, and mighty signs and wonders took place. Then — just as suddenly as the miracles began, they ended — the river stopped flowing and we saw that it was not working like it did.

Nothing had changed in our life, we had not lost our faith, we had not disobeyed the Lord, we had not gone into error, we had not backslidden or fallen into sin. I went to the Lord and I said, "Father, how is it that it is not like it used to be? What is happening?" After some time of searching the mind of the Spirit about this, the Lord clearly answered, saying, "Son, I have shown you my power that you might know me in that measure. But many have misused my power, and disgraced my name. Now I am doing a new thing. I will withdraw my power for a season that I may call my chosen ones aside and speak to them in the deepest part of their being. I must put my hand of dealing upon them as I did upon Moses, David, and my Son Jesus. I will call them into the wilderness of testing and I will deal with them there. I will purge, purify, instruct, mature, and perfect my sons for the day of unveiling.

"When they are prepared for it I will move again in a power a thousand times greater than you have ever witnessed! I will fill them with my glory and they will not go haywire. They will not get exalted. They will not use the power to their own ends. Neither will they use and abuse my people and fleece the flock. They will not build a kingdom around themselves. They will not drag my name down into the mire of carnality, flesh, sin, and shame. They will not touch success and then forget about me. They will obey me in all things for they shall be my sons in whom I am well pleased. They will be a people that has been cleansed and qualified BEFORE I commit the omnipotent power and authority of my kingdom into their hands. They will be my very own sons made perfect in me. They are going to do wonders, but such as you have never seen before! All nations will be moved by their word, and all things upon earth will be transformed by their touch. Through them my kingdom will come in power and demonstration and creation shall be set free." And I cried, "Oh God, let it be so!" The Lord has been faithful to His word. Today I see a vast company of sons in preparation throughout the extremities of the earth! His work in us is deep, powerful, and effective! The hour of manifestation draweth near!

There is a difference between *learning about* and *learning*. I can learn about football or baseball. I can learn why the referee whistles offside or penalizes a player for clipping. I can learn all about curve balls, strikes, stealing bases, home runs, and outs. I can enjoy watching it. I've learned about it. But when players learn a sport, that's very different. They do more than memorize rules and understand strategies. They learn it with mind and body through grueling practice and experience. Reflexes are tuned, muscles trained, body coordinated. Their learning goes on. No player becomes master of a sport in one or two practice sessions. The elect must learn Christ! "But ye have not so *learned Christ*; if so be that ye have *heard* Him, and have been *taught by Him*, as the truth is in Jesus" (Eph. 4:20-21). Such learning goes beyond rules, doctrines, or revelations! It's a process of putting off the old nature and putting on the new. It's a process of being transformed by the renewing of our mind. It's a process of

learning obedience through the things we suffer. It's a transformation into God's likeness! It's more than *learning about* Christ. It's becoming like Him!

The overcomer is one who STANDS TALL IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD. No weight on earth, however heavy, shall be able to hold down or bend earthward those who "come up over" all things. Though the weight of influence and earthly love should cling to these sons of God; though the pressures and problems and perplexities of life should crowd in upon these; though the fear of man and the desire to please man should strive to impede their way; though adversity, calamity, sorrow, tragedy, reversal, and trouble should howl at their heels, none of these weights shall be able to hold down, overcome, discourage, intimidate, upset, frustrate, perplex, or in any way affect those who dwell in union with the Christ who has overcome the world! Though all hell should strive to turn these downward, it shall not prevail; though every foe and earthly friend should conspire together, it shall make the sons of God keep their faces more prayerfully and constantly looking unto Him, their forerunner, as they follow on to know, experience, and appropriate His glorious triumph as their very own!

If you would know the fullness of the spirit of HIS MIGHT within you, if you would have His mighty power at work in and through you, then bow very low in reverence before the holy presence that dwells within you, that asks for your surrender to His guidance and will in even the least of things. Live as one given up to a power that has the complete mastery over you, that has complete possession of your inmost being, of your will, mind, emotions, and desires. Seek not, dear one, to *use* the spirit of His Might within you; let the spirit of might *have possession of you* and you shall surely stand in your lot among the overcoming sons of God! This Spirit is given to them that *obey Him* (Acts 5:32). "For as many as are *led* by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Rom. 8:14).

In the Belgian Congo, the weather was hot and dank. No breath of air stirred; leaves hung from the trees as though they were weighted. In the garden not far from the missionary home a small boy played under a tree. Suddenly, the father called to him: "Philip, obey me instantly — get down on your stomach!" The boy reacted at once, and his father continued, "Now crawl toward me fast." The boy again obeyed. After he had come about half way, the father said, "Now stand up and run to me." The boy reached his father and turned to look back — hanging from the branch under which he had been playing was a fifteen-foot serpent. In like manner, my beloved, OBEDIENCE TO THE FATHER is the route to victory over that ancient serpent, which is the devil and satan, who lurks and slithers about in our own *carnal mind*. If you have received the call to sonship, the voice of the Father is speaking in your land! He is speaking from deep within you, out of the holy sanctuary of your spirit, and you hear His voice every day.

They err who want the fullness of the Spirit and power of God *before they obey*. Obedience! It is a tender listening to the voice of the indwelling Spirit and faithfulness to obey every word that He is speaking from within our inner temple that prepares the hearts of God's sons for the fullness of God! When God commanded Israel to build Him a holy place, that He might dwell among them and be their God, He said to Moses, "According to all I show thee, the pattern of the dwelling, even so shall ye make it." And so we find in the last two chapters of Exodus, eighteen times the expression that all had been made "as the Lord commanded." It was in a house thus built, to His mind, the perfect expression of His will, that GOD CAME TO DWELL. And when the greater house, the true temple of God, came and stood in the earth His declaration was, "Lo, I come to DO THY WILL, O God! In the volume of the book it is written of me." God comes down to dwell in fullness in THE SONS OF OBEDIENCE!

I recall reading, years ago, about a man who had been traveling across America. He came to a wide river and could see on the other side the lights of a city. In order to get there to spend the night, he had to cross this strange and frozen river which was several hundred yards across. He began to walk carefully, one step at a time, until he got ten, twenty, thirty yards out over the river. At that point, being filled with fear he got down on his knees, feeling his way with his hands, afraid that at any moment the ice would give way, plunging him into the black and icy waters beneath.

Finally, his fear so overcame him that he laid himself out flat upon the ice and began to inch along, his heart pounding within. As he reached the middle of the river he heard singing coming from behind him and from one side. Hearing the crunching hooves, he saw a large wagon filled with logs pulled by four horses coming from behind him and about fifty feet to one side, galloping along across the river while the driver sang loudly. As they passed by, he, of course, got up and walked confidently the rest of the way! Ah, just as the wagon load of logs was the proof the traveler could safely cross the river, so the firstborn Son of God, who overcame all things, who was perfected, who pleased the Father, who manifested the glory of God, who conquered sin, death and the grave, and is set down with the Father in His throne, is Himself the living proof that EVERY SON OF GOD CAN OVERCOME ALL THINGS AND MAKE IT IN TO THE FULLNESS OF GOD! Jesus victoriously strode across the sea of sin, sorrow, limitation, and death and with a shout of triumph stepped onto the other side. Be encouraged, my brother, my sister, for He is the forerunner for all who stand tall in His faith and arise to "go over to the other side."

GOD'S SCHOOL FOR OVERCOMERS

So many Christians today are satisfied with merely an entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour. Their eyes are blinded to eternal values, and any efforts to lead them on to higher ground are rebuffed and resisted by a human reasoning which asks why one should waste time on them since they are saved. But our initial salvation, while it is the most astounding miracle of the ages, yet is the birth of a *mere spiritual infant*. There are many further steps which must follow this birth if one is to come into all the glories and the full heritage which is prepared for those who follow on to know the Lord. And not one of us has come all the way up to our full privileges in Christ! There is great glory and heavenly wealth awaiting those who become fully equipped unto God's ultimate purpose. Salvation is nothing more than an awakening to a never-ending heavenly God-kind of life. Then the recipient may become a heavenly billionaire, or remain a heavenly pauper. Our initial quickening (salvation) is a free gift through unmerited mercy and favor. But heavenly attainments of wealth and glory and power are given to those who have salvation, and then go on and grow up "unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."

The first three chapters of the book of Revelation, which are devoted to the overcomer, reveal through the seven overcoming promises the *seven steps* through which an overcomer grows in his walk of sonship to God. Each step represents a new level of spiritual maturity available to each member of the elect in his own lifetime. Each of the seven churches represents areas of short comings or testings which must be dealt with in our lives. It is only as we overcome in each area that we will apprehend within our lives the reality promised to those who overcome. The promise simply speaks of an attainment of the life and glory of God in our experience till we find ourselves seated with Him on His throne (Rev. 3:21). Once the seven promises are fulfilled within us, the victorious believer is then complete, mature, and has attained the first resurrection.

You have watched a violinist playing an exquisite sonata, seemingly without any effort at all, drawing his bow gently across the strings and bringing out of the instrument a depth and poignancy of tone that makes your soul tremble. *You* pick up the same bow and draw it across the same strings, and it will sound exactly like the hair of one animal being scraped over the entrails of another. It simply means that musical skill does not come naturally. You have to work and struggle for years in order to play a violin effortlessly and beautifully. Nor does perfection in the image of Christ come naturally!

According to the laws of nature, it is necessary to grow gradually by stages in order to attain perfection. In this way alone can we make ourselves ready and fit for the destiny for which we have been created! Sudden or hurried progress leaves us weak and imperfect. The oats which grow in a few weeks in Texas do not yield the same nourishment as the wheat which takes six months to ripen. The bamboo grows three feet daily in tropical climates and shoots up as high as one hundred and eighty-five feet, but it remains empty and hollow within. It cannot compare in strength and durability to the tree which grows over hundreds of years. Slow and gradual progress, therefore, is necessary for perfection. God has given us a life-time to be conformed into the image of His Son and *that is how long it usually takes!* Time is one of God's agents. He knows how to use it! He won't put authority upon a life that hasn't been subjected to time. Jesus was thirty years old before He started His ministry. Moses was eighty.

As someone has pointed out, wouldn't it be a sad thing to tell a child in the first grade, "Today we're going to study trigonometry?" The teacher must begin instead by saying, "If you had one apple and I had one apple, and we put those apples together, how many apples would we have?" God reveals to us only that with which He can trust us, and He reveals to us what we need to know in and for our day of manifestation. Jesus said that ALL THINGS are possible by faith. Now, do not go out and expect to flap your ears and fly to the moon! There is an order of things. God has a law of development. He does not create a great Sequoia tree overnight. The giant Redwoods of California were not made in a day. God causes them to grow slowly. And so God would cause us to develop and *grow* in grace, faith, love, wisdom, understanding, and power!

Psalms 120 to 134 are called Psalms or "Song of Degrees." Each Psalm represents a degree or step up the ascending pathway to Jerusalem and the house and throne of the Lord. The people of Israel sang these songs as the caravans of pilgrims made their way up the mountains to attend the feasts of the Lord in Jerusalem. On what we know as Palm Sunday Jesus began the ascent to Jerusalem. It was there that as He drew near and saw the city He wept over it, saying, "Would that thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace!" (Lk. 19:41). One still "ascends" to Jerusalem, because Jerusalem is a city set on a hill, and from all points of the compass you have to climb to get there. To the spiritual Holy City and the true House and Throne of the Lord one ascends also in a spiritual sense! This spiritual ascent from the lowlands of the flesh, the natural mind, and the human consciousness is being fulfilled in the lives of the Lord's people today. In this wonderful hour at the junction of the ages, a company of chosen ones is ascending in the Spirit up to the realm of perfection and glory and life.

Seven churches speak to us of different dimensions of growth which all the Lord's elect must pass through. The Greek word for church (*ekklesia*) means "the out-called" and speaks of people coming out of one realm to come into another realm; a people coming out of one world to enter another world; a people coming out of one mind to possess another mind. Seven churches are *seven stages* of moving out of one realm into another, out of one state of being into another state of being. The reason the Lord selected those seven churches is because He

worked out in them the mystery of the overcoming life, giving us seven promises whereby we can be more than conquerors through Him. You will see in these churches the unveiling of Jesus Christ! You will also see the veil that hides Him in these churches! And you will see the process by which the veil is removed that HE might be revealed in all of His splendor! This is what is being dealt with all through the book of Revelation — the book of the Unveiling. God is dealing with the veil and un-veiling of Jesus Christ! Here you see seven stages of the rending of the veil in the hearts of the saints in order to reveal Jesus Christ in His body. Seven is the symbolic number of completion — representing *all it takes to complete the process!*

The seven promises to the overcomer represent seven steps of ascent to the throne of God! The *first* promise is, "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God" (Rev. 2:7). The *final* promise is, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne" (Rev. 3:21). Thus the ascent is from the tree of life to the throne of God! Our first need, we learn from the promises, is Life. All subsequent promises of transformation and attainment mark the upward path to glory. None of them are attainable until we have Life. And we cannot reach the throne until we have passed through them all in succession. Each reward is greater than the preceding one!

Each step in the process of overcoming brings us closer to the authority and power of Christ's throne. We now see a new generation of Israel's pilgrims walking these steps to glory! They are the firstfruits, the pilgrims of the new order of the kingdom of God. They are nearing the highest step of the seven, and will soon make their grand entrance into the full glory of God's Christ. Each promise to the overcomer reveals a definite and powerful step in the realization of Christ in our lives. All who are apprehended of the Father unto the fullness of God are diligently walking up that ascending pathway. They are daily applying themselves to this walk! By the strength and power of the Christ within, they are walking upward one step at a time. As we walk up the ascending pathway to the throne, we experience within ourselves all that each promise to the overcomer embodies. When we have arrived at the last step, we will then have experienced within ourselves the authority, power, and dominion of God's omnipotent and universal throne! We will be able by the Spirit of God to rule over all things as sons of God!

Ray Prinzing has aptly expressed this truth thus: "The *overcomer's* path is one of *progressive development* that there might be adequate preparation for the next step, and sufficiency for the situation. If we are now yielded to the Spirit of the Lord, and God is having His way in us day by day, at the appointed hour He always has His people fully prepared for what unfolds. This is why we have the pressures of today, that they might be instruments in His hands, to develop and train us, so that when the greater battles arise, we're conditioned and ready for them. He instills the inner call and longing, urging us to go on to perfection. It becomes a paradox, for while He is our peace, and rest, etc., yet in another sense He will not let us rest, but steadily motivates us to go on into His fullness. He builds up an internal pressure that demands we respond, for He causes the vision to be so compelling that we must give heed and follow Him. What force, what pressure is urging us onward today! How unique that HE sets us on a quest to come into more of Him, even while all the time HE IS WORKING IN US to make it become a reality.

"He says, 'You will seek me, inquire for and require me (as a vital necessity) and find me; when you search for me with all your heart' (Jer. 29:13, Amplified). Yet we say, He has never been lost, we are not seeking to find a *lost God*. He is only prompting us to search Him out because of what this works within us as we seek Him. And all the time He is RIGHT THERE, and states, 'I will be found of you, says the Lord' (Jer. 29:14). Bless His wonderful name! Thus,

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prevenient GRACE takes from man every vestige of credit for the act of coming — it all originates with God! 'DRAW ME, we will run after Thee' (S.of S. 1:4). *Run* is a response to *His drawing!* He makes us so thirsty that we become desperate for Him. 'As the hart panteth after the water brooks so pants my soul after Thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God' (Ps. 42:1-2). How well the Psalmist knew this INNER URGING. It was not yet in all of his brethren, hence they could not understand him. Why must he be so insistent about seeking after God? Why can't he be satisfied with the usual religious fare? BECAUSE GOD FIRST — God first put this desire deep within his being, and God will not let him be satisfied with anything less than His divine fullness and reality" — end quote.

God's highest purpose is for every son of God to come to the full stature of Christ during the years of this life here on earth in the flesh! The term of our life in this present mortal condition is given: "The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away" (Ps. 90:10). Thus our years in this corruptible form is set by God at seventy years. But what is the purpose of our seventy years of earth-life? Paul attempted to answer this question when he wrote, "For which cause we faint not; but though our *outward man perish*, yet the *inward man is renewed day by day*" (II Cor. 4:16). Seventy years are determined as the average life-span of man in the flesh for the purpose of bringing the carnal man of sin and lack and limitation to an end, and of raising up the spiritual man to the maturity and perfection of Christ.

This is a day of instant things. In this fast-paced, fast-food society, we are used to having things as we want them, when we want them. Everything is instant. We can walk into a room and get instant light, heat, or air conditioning by flipping a switch. We get up in the morning and drink instant coffee, eat instant oatmeal, instant soup, instant mashed potatoes, and instant other things too numerous to name. If it isn't instant, then we turn on the microwave. All too often we expect instant results in our spiritual life — instant perfection, instant power, instant maturity, instant sonship! But, dear one, God doesn't believe in shortcuts! Haste in the high and holy things of the kingdom of God is freighted with grave danger. As George Hawtin once pointed out, when the almighty Creator plants a redwood tree in the womb of mother earth, He is looking forward in infinite wisdom and patience perhaps five thousand years to a day when it is a towering monarch in the forest. Think it not strange, then, that He would spend the entire span of a man's brief life-time in bringing to perfection a saint who is to rule the world as a son of God, bringing life and order out of the dreadful death and chaos that everywhere reigns upon earth. The wonder is that it does not take much longer. Let us, therefore, not be weary in well doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not.

This is the only God-ordained method by which all creation shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption! Seventy years are determined for the fulfillment of this purpose in each one of us and it is ample time for the process to be completed! I do not see that one must be re-cycled again and again, as the pagan doctrine of reincarnation asserts. Certainly God deals with humanity beyond this life, but SEVENTY YEARS IS MORE THAN ENOUGH TO COMPLETE THE WORK IF WE YIELD TO THE DEALING HAND OF GOD. Of the firstborn Son it is written, "And the child grew, and *waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom*, and the grace of God was upon Him. And he went down with them (Mary and Joseph), and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart. And Jesus *increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man*" (Lk. 2:40,51-52). It took Jesus only thirty years to attain to the full stature of sonship to God! In thirty-three and a half years He had not only demonstrated the sonship life and ministry, but had overcome all

sin, every device of satan, and the power of corruption and death itself, and ascended to the universal throne of His heavenly Father!

Although we see the seventy year span of this life-time as being provided to bring forth a matured and perfected son of God, nevertheless, we know that our God is omnipotent and not bound by time or any of the other restraints that man would place upon Him. If our mighty, omnipotent Father chooses to bring a person to the maturity and perfection of sonship in a few years or a few days, that is His prerogative to do so. Since we are living in the days when the Holy Spirit has sovereignly and supernaturally sent forth the call to sonship, and is accelerating His dealings and purpose, it is altogether possible that the Lord will set apart individuals for this sonship calling who will be brought to maturity at a much faster rate, just as He did with His firstborn Son. The Lord is well able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we may ask or even think without consulting us or conforming to ideas and doctrines we may have. On the other hand, God can reach out beyond the grave and bring back by *resurrection* those who have walked with Him as sons in this life, but who went by way of the grave because the hour of manifestation had not yet arrived. We cannot put God in a box! But regardless of the time involved in our perfection and transformation, *it is a process*, and not performed apart from Father's dealings in our lives and our growth and development into Him!

How gracious and wise is our God in all of His ways! The Bible is literally packed full of mysteries, parables, types, shadows, and allegories, which are only unfolded by the Holy Spirit to THOSE WHO FOLLOW ON TO KNOW THE LORD. Jesus once spake a parable which holds a revelation of unspeakable glory for all who would be conformed to the image of God's Son. The parable occupies just two short verses, but its message is a thing of tremendous importance to those who yearn to grow up into Christ. Jesus said, "And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these""(Mat. 6:28-29).

Consider the lilies! What gives exceptional meaning to this object lesson from the lips of Jesus is, that He was not only the author of the parable, but the creator of the lilies. It is like an inventor describing his own machine. He made the lilies and He made man and He makes the New Creation — all on the same broad principle. All together, lilies, men, and sons of God, He gives life and causes to grow and develop into beauty and maturity. So Jesus points to the miracle of nature in the plant kingdom to teach us how to live a free and natural life in Christ, a life which God will unfold for us, without anxiety or effort, just as He UNFOLDS THE FLOWER.

These wonderful words of Jesus were not uttered to inspire us to become horticulturists; we are not to consider the lilies simply to admire their beauty, to wonder at the delicate strength of stem and petal. The thing we are urged to consider is — HOW THEY GROW! Without anxiety or effort the flower blooms into loveliness; without weaving or press the leaves are formed; without artist's paint or brush the flower is tinted with exotic hues; without toiling these complex tissues spun themselves; without any effort or struggle they slowly came created from the loom of God in their "greater than Solomon" glory. Oh, the wonder of it! The lily has only to remain where it has been planted, drink deeply of the rain the Father sends upon it, and the sun He shines profusely day by day. Trusting and resting in the Father's care the lilies *grow*. Consider this, O child of God, concerned that you might not be able to attain the beautiful stature of God's Christ. Consider the lilies — HOW THEY GROW!

Everything grows without trying, and, on the other hand, nothing can grow by trying! No man by taking thought has ever added a cubit to his stature, nor has any son or daughter of God

ever approached nearer to the stature of the Lord Jesus by working at it! Jesus did not become the Son of God by working — He became the Son of God by growing! Any who thinks to reach this blessed height by anxious effort is really departing from it. Christ's life unfolded itself from a divine seed, planted centrally in His nature, which grew as naturally as a flower from a bud. Only *life* can do that! For a seed to germinate, sprout, grow, change, develop into a plant of beauty and grace requires the power of an indwelling life. Therefore the man who has within himself this great power — the life of Christ — contains within himself all that is needful to become a son of God! The man who does not have this life active in him *cannot* be transformed, but the man who has it *must be*. The life must develop out according to its type; and being a seed of the Christ life, it must unfold into A CHRIST. The end of the growth process is perfection, the mind of Christ, the character of Christ, the power of Christ!

Do not worry, dear ones, as to whether you seem to be making progress or not. There is nothing in the world that grows so fast that you can see it grow! Let God be the judge of how much or how little you have grown. Your duty and mine is to *abide in Him, resting in faith, pressing patiently* toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ. Rising spontaneously from the dust of earth, shaped into beauty by secret and invisible fingers, the lilies develop we know not how. But we do not doubt it. Every day it is done; it is nature, it is GOD. We are spiritual enough at least to understand that! But when the Christ-life within us rises slowly above the thoughts of the carnal mind, pushing up its pure nature in the teeth of the desires of the self-life, bursting forth into manifestation through the hard clods of the flesh, shaping itself mysteriously into the image of Christ, we often imagine that our own efforts and zeal have contributed substantially to the process! A strong will, we think; hours of prayer, days of fasting, faithfulness to the Lord's work, Bible reading, study, and sheer determination — these account for our growth. Not so! Spiritual stature is not the product of anxious work, self-command, self-denial, or self-control. We confess that the growth of the little lily IS A MIRACLE, spontaneous, instinctive, uncompelled, but somehow we must fret and toil and spin. Ah, Christ in us is not formed by great effort, but by a great POWER! It is the power of His indwelling Life!

Yes, there is a realm of "doing," where, like Christ, we must be about our Father's business, working the works of Him that sent us. But these are works which are the RESULT OF HIS LIFE IN US, not a means to His life. Christ is the *cause*, works are the *effect*. It is when men try to make works the cause of their becoming spiritual that they have missed the mark. There is no work on earth that can make you spiritual! But His life in us will surely manifest itself in righteousness, love, mercy, compassion, giving, blessing, touching creation. Become still, my beloved, before the God of all grace and glory and you will soon learn that you do not need to go out in search of the conditions and elements of your growth in Christ; they, rather, WILL COME IN SEARCH OF YOU!

A dear friend of ours in the city of Detroit shared this meaningful experience with us some years ago following a message I brought along this line. She said, "I will never forget my first day in school in a rural community in the South. I arrived alone, but refused to go inside. I didn't think that I would enjoy school, and was quite certain that I didn't need an education. In my childish mind I made a firm decision not to go to school at all. Quickly I passed by and went straight to my grandmother's home. Grandmother, surprised at seeing me, asked, 'Why, Veta, what are you doing here? Didn't school start today?' I actually felt that I was in command and could carry out my plans, so I replied with finality, 'I have decided not to go to school!'

"Grandmother was a wise old woman, and appeared to respect my decision. She didn't scold, but sadly said, 'I'm so sorry to hear that, Veta. I'm really disappointed that you aren't going to

school. You see, grandmother needs someone to write letters for her, and I had hoped that you would go to school and learn to write. I thought you would be the one to write the letters for me.' I loved my grandmother very much, and her words impacted my childish mind. I changed my mind, deciding to go to school just long enough to learn how to write. I left grandmother's, made my way back down the road to school, arriving late, of course, and walked in with my hat and coat on for I was certain that I would be there for only a short time.

"The teacher was very understanding and quite gentle with me. Later, I found myself at the blackboard, chalk in hand, the teacher's hand upon mine, showing me how to make the number 2 along with the letters of the alphabet. After some minutes I asked the teacher when would we get on with the writing. Suddenly the whole prospect loomed menacingly before my mind and irritatedly I inwardly shouted, 'If we don't go faster than this, I'm going to be here ALL DAY!' And I was, of course. I went back to school the next day, and the next, and the next for many years to come! I became a star student, and a joy to my grandmother."

So, God omnipotent and omniscient, has established here upon earth a School for the training of those destined to be the future rulers of the universe. This school is known as "the church." None shall ever rule upon the throne of the Father who has not graduated from this School! And what a great Teacher we have! One begins in God's School of Kingship and Priesthood in the very first grade. We start with the ABC's. God opens the class and says, "Now children, we are going to learn how to rule. To rule means to govern, to control, to be master over that which is ruled. You can never rule anything until first you overcome it *within yourself*. To *overcome* means to 'come up over' that which is over you! When, within yourself, you rise above the circumstance, the problem, the fear, the habit, the limitation, so that it no longer dominates you, you are then ready to control it, to no longer be the victim of circumstances, but the master of them." So, the nitty-gritty of everyday life is the classroom where God teaches us by experience *how to overcome*, how to *reign*, how to *bless*, how to *love*, how to *redeem* and *restore*, how to have *compassion*, how to *use power* with understanding and wisdom — how to be a King and Priest in His kingdom!

Every child of God called to sonship is now in school! We may feel that we have graduated from school long ago, but that is a mistake; we hadn't even started to school at that time. When you received the call to sonship and departed from the comfort of the religious norm, and went out in the world on your own, you really then, *started* to school. When God drew you out of the religious systems of man and separated you unto Himself you may have felt you "graduated" into a new realm — and you certainly did! You graduated from *kindergarten*! And immediately you were enrolled in the first grade of God's SCHOOL OF SONSHIP. In this school there are several courses taught, but every student must major in *overcoming*, which is the hardest course to master and finish known in any curriculum in the world today. This matter of disciplining one's thoughts, desires, emotions, habits; of training one's soul and body to function on the level of the mind, wisdom, nature, and power of Christ is of the greatest importance and spells the difference between success and failure in the Kingdom of God. To finish this course marks the difference between being in the High Calling of God in Christ Jesus, or remaining a babe in Christ, a nominal citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven.

God will never give up on us! He is investing in us with every intention of receiving a harvest and expanding His kingdom. Our all-wise Father sees our potential. He knows our capacity to grow and develop. He is keener at discerning it than we are! He is also well aware of our weaknesses, and is ready to help. "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me," said Paul. The children of God make a lot of mistakes, for children are children, both naturally and spiritually. Our ability to learn from our mistakes is part of what God uses to build

character in us. In the book of Revelation we read that it is the overcomers — those who don't leave God's school or resign from His purposes — who ultimately are given power in His kingdom. Have you made costly mistakes? Have you been stumbling and seemingly wasting God's time? Don't resign! Don't leave God's school! His investment in you is too great! He will see you through! Regardless of how difficult the lessons, *graduation day* is coming! The positions in His authority and glory are waiting! Learn the lessons that will help you to better serve in the kingdom of God. As you do, great heavenly wealth and power and opportunity to bless and restore all things lie ahead for you. Through you creation will be lifted, redeemed, restored to life and liberty and glory — and that's just the beginning!

Let us learn our lessons well — and let us never presume that we have attained to something in God that we have not yet qualified for. And never let us grasp after a place or position the Father has not conferred upon us. There is no need to DECLARE OUR SONSHIP — the Father Himself declares His sons! "This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased...hear ye Him" the voice from heaven said and will say again. Some have grown weary of waiting for the manifestation God has promised, so they have decided that what they term "classical sonship" was mistaken, and have "watered-down" the hope and settled for a lesser reality, and are calling themselves sons on a lower plane than God has called us to. Some are trying to tell us that if we get out and do all the religious things we used to do, moving in Passover and Pentecostal power, saving souls, healing the sick, feeding the hungry, blessing lives, touching humanity — that is manifest sonship. NO IT ISN'T! That is all good, there is nothing wrong with saving souls and blessing mankind! But we have been doing that for two thousand years and it has *not* brought the kingdom into all the earth, saved the nations, or delivered creation from the bondage of corruption. It has *not* eradicated sin, sorrow, and death from the planet! THAT IS NOT SONSHIP! These anxious souls just cannot *wait* for the Father's *appointed time*. The place that God has called us to will be in His time, not ours. "The heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; but is under tutors and governors until the time *appointed of the father*" (Gal. 4:1-2).

Some of us have been in school for a long, long time and have moved through many levels of God's teaching. We have been passing from grade to grade, from realm to realm, from experience to experience, from discipline to discipline, from dimension to dimension in God. We have moved through the tabernacle with all of its furnishings and compartments, and we have now come to the Holiest of all. We have partaken of the Lord's feasts one after another, and He has now brought us to the feast of tabernacles. We have arrived at the threshold of the third day. God still has plenty of time to finish His work, for His plan is a *plan of the ages*. We have passed through ages *within ourselves*. God has brought us from Abraham to the Manchild in our brief life-time, for the ages are within us.

It is vital and necessary for us to grow spiritually from faith to faith, from one dimension of faith to another, for the salvation we seek is revealed in that manner. "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed FROM FAITH TO FAITH: as it is written, The just shall live by faith" (Rom. 1:17). There are steps of spiritual progress in our walk unto the fullness of salvation. With each step of spiritual progress we take, the salvation we have been promised is revealed to us "precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little, there a little" (Isa. 28:10) until we shall stand complete in Him and as He is.

GREAT CHANGES ARE TAKING PLACE NOW IN THE LIVES OF GOD'S ELECT. We *are* being changed "from glory to glory" by the Spirit of the Lord! We are not of those who come to a certain understanding of God and His purposes and then settle down in that spiritual "place," to await a change that will come some day. Our change will certainly be *consummated* at a

time yet to come, but the changes must take place progressively within us NOW! Each step that we have taken in God has made us the more mature and victorious believer that we are now in the kingdom of our Father. We cannot hope to be transformed in that "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye" appearing of Christ if we fail to take any of the revealed steps of spiritual growth, which are revealed to us by the Spirit in the glorious promises to the overcomers out of the seven churches, and are necessary for our complete and total transformation. Each step of spiritual growth in God is an indispensable and essential part of our full salvation!

The promises of God are vast and varied. Some of them are free and can be obtained very easily. That is why so many people receive them! But if you would be a king and priest in the kingdom of God and receive the power to bless and deliver creation; if you would learn the life and authority of the government of God in preparation to take the kingdom and reign with Christ, then that is a different thing altogether. You must become a follower of them who through faith and patience *inherit the promises*. It takes patience to attain any worthy goal. It takes endurance too! No man having put his hand to the plow and looking back is fit for the kingdom of heaven. We do not attain sonship by a single bound. Neither do we qualify to reign with Christ in a moment of time. It is not something you receive one night at the altar. We have need of patience. We must through faith and patience grow up to the spiritual age of thirty. We are becoming mature ones through experience. Only such can serve as the king-priests of the Most High!

Chapter 36

The Church In Ephesus

continued

"To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God" (Rev. 2:7).

Of all the dreams the heart of man has ever entertained, none has been more desirable, precious, and worthy of attainment, regardless of the cost, than the dream of immortality. Let's be honest; if there was an elixir that was invented guaranteed to give immortality to our physical bodies, we would all buy it and drink it! Kings and emperors who have conquered the world would gladly have exchanged all they had gained for immortality. But all the wealth of all the nations that lay prostrate before their victorious swords, even combined with all the riches amassed in their vast treasure houses, could not buy them so much as one single second's extension of time.

There *is* a tree of Life! This tree of life is in the *paradise of God!* Our English word "paradise" comes to us from ancient Persian by way of the Greek language. Paradise is the transliteration of the Greek word *paradeisos* which, in turn transliterates the old Persian term *paridaeza*. This *paridaeza* denoted an enclosed park, beautifully landscaped with floral and fruit trees planted along a spring-fed stream, belonging to the king and his nobles. It is described in some of the ancient historical writings which tell of the idyllic beauty of the orchards of the king's forests, grazed by sheep, and guarded at the entrance by two soldiers whose task it was to see that intruders and spoilers were kept out. Only those who were friends of the monarch were given the pleasant privilege of passing peacefully through its gates to enjoy the sweet waters of the stream and the delicious fruit of the trees.

It is generally supposed by most professed Christians that the words "paradise" and "heaven" are essentially synonymous and that in the Bible they are both used to describe a literal park-like place on a far-away planet which is the "eternal home" of the "saved." There is an old tradition, moreover, one of the many "doctrines of the Pharisees" taught by the Rabbis in the time of Christ, that there was a realm of the world of the dead, called *Sheol* in Hebrew and *Hades* in Greek, located deep in the heart of the earth. Out of the discussions and theories of the Rabbis, there grew a popular belief that Sheol or Hades was divided into two compartments, the lower and the upper, Gehenna comprising the lower, the region of the damned with its flames and torments; the upper being Paradise, the intermediate place of bliss and rest into which, at the time of death, the spirits of the righteous entered to await the resurrection day at "the end of the world."

The earnest prayer within my heart is that God's apprehended ones may turn away from all such carnal-minded traditions, myths, folklore, and fables! Jesus warned His disciples, "Take heed and beware of the leaven (teaching) of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees...then understood they how He bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of

the Pharisees and the Sadducees" (Mat. 16:6,12). Paul also admonished, "Not giving heed to *Jewish fables*, and commandments of men, that turn from the truth" (Tit. 1:14). There is only ONE PARADISE to be found in all the pages of God's blessed Book, and that is the glorious Paradise in Eden from which Adam was banished — now opened once more to every son of Adam's race by the redemption of Jesus Christ. And the Lord's promise to His elect is: "To him that *overcometh* will I give to eat of the *tree of life*, which is in the midst of the *paradise of God*." This paradise is not, nor has it ever been, in the heart of the earth! Such ideas are mere inventions of carnal-minded men!

All the important revelations of the book of Revelation are taught by symbols. The symbols used in the Revelation, and, in fact, throughout the entire Bible, are things and circumstances concerning which we, as humans, have at least some knowledge; otherwise the symbolic language of the Bible would have no meaning to us. There are things we know about the sun, the moon, the stars, about sheep and goats, wheat and tares, rivers and trees, storms and earthquakes. So when the Bible uses these as *symbols*, certain *spiritual* lessons are conveyed to us.

In chapters two and three of the Revelation, seven wonderful promises are made to the Lord's called out people, the overcomers of this present age. All these promises are illustrated by things with which we have at least some acquaintance. Thus we read, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a *crown of life*" (Rev. 2:10). No child of God possessing a spiritual mind supposes that he will be wearing a literal crown in some far-off heaven someday! A crown signifies rulership, and the overcomers are destined to share in the highest form of life in the universe, the divine and incorruptible life of God. To receive a "crown of life" means to rule and reign in the power and nature of the *divine life*!

And then we find, "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the *hidden manna*, and I will give him a *white stone*, and in the stone a *new name* written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it" (Rev. 2:17). The expression "hidden manna" takes us back to the tabernacle in the wilderness. In the Most Holy Place of this tabernacle was the Ark of the Covenant. In this was placed a golden bowl of manna. While the manna collected daily by the Israelites corrupted, bred worms, and stank, that which they placed in this golden bowl was preserved by the power of divine life. This, then, reveals the wonderful truth of *incorruptibility* — the inward nature or state of being *beyond the possibility* of being debased, perverted, adulterated, polluted, warped, contaminated or prostituted. No spiritually enlightened person supposes that the overcomers will one day go to heaven and eat literal manna from a literal golden bowl! But all who are apprehended to the high calling of God in Christ Jesus are given to eat and eat and eat of the incorruptible bread of HIS INCORRUPTIBLE LIFE until all the death of the carnal mind and the corruption of the flesh in them has been swallowed up of His life and the day comes when in the totality of being, spirit, soul, and body, there is nothing that can be corrupted! How much more glorious this is!

As we overcome the doctrines of men and the traditions of men, we are then able to begin to eat of the hidden manna. The tree of life gives us life within, our spirit quickened by His Spirit, but the hidden manna brings us to an *incorruptible state of being*. Religious systems, dead doctrines, static creeds, empty rituals, powerless ceremonies, vain traditions, and soulish worship have all ministered death to the Lord's people and kept them in a corruptible condition. Only as we have turned from all these have we even really begun to eat of the hidden manna of truth and reality. There is a place of attainment in life where we no longer experience the ups and downs of success followed by defeat in our walk. As we are being processed, tried, and tested, we are subject to "falls" along the way. We catch a vision of high and holy realms

in God and, in moments of exceptional anointing, enter for a little while into those blessed experiences, only to have the anointing lift and the vision fade. We walk in victory over the flesh and the carnal mind in certain problem areas of our lives, only to succumb to some other weakness in an unguarded moment. Ah, there is a promise, bright and blessed, that in due time the processing will be completed, the testing will be finished, the secret inworkings consummated, the victory secured once and for all, and those who overcome will live by the hidden manna of His unchangeable and incorruptible life. And there is also a place of attainment in life where we don't have to die, leave our body, and have our corpse buried in a grave. Oh, my beloved! There is the tree of life in the midst of the paradise of God! There is hidden manna in the transforming presence of God in the Holiest of all!

The promise is also given, "To him that overcometh will I make a *pillar* in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out" (Rev. 3:12). No overcomer will be transformed into a literal pillar in a literal temple in heaven. This is a symbol of a sure and fixed position in which God's elect become not only victorious in their own lives, but put on the strength and might necessary to become a *support* to the whole economy of God! Pillars are for support. They hold up the whole structure. After experiencing His overcoming power in our own lives we then become a buttress to bear up, hold up, and maintain the kingdom purpose of God through His holy temple which will be the meeting place between God and men in the ages yet to come!

Beloved, so should we understand the blessed promise given of eating of the tree of life in the midst of the paradise of God. This does not mean that the overcoming sons of God will live in an earthly paradise, any more than the other promises mean that they will wear literal crowns, eat manna from a golden bowl, or be turned into marble columns in a temple in the sky. This paradise is something far more than a piece of real estate in the Middle East! No such place has ever been found, neither the cherubim with the flaming sword to keep men out. The paradise of God is not a physical place located on this or any other planet. It is a *realm in the heavens of God's Spirit!* It is a *state of being!* It is a higher existence for man than this cursed state we find ourselves in by physical birth. It is the realm and the state of being man was in when first he was brought forth from the creative hand of God and placed in splendor here upon earth. It is man in the garden of Eden, man living in the presence of God, man eating of the incorruptible life of God, man living above sin, sickness, fear, limitation, pain and death, man as master and lord over all things! Blessed realities one and all! In one sense man *was* the Garden. And yet, man *was in* the Garden. It was a garden within a garden, man both in a state of being and in an environment — the two corresponding. It is in THIS PARADISE that the overcomer eats of the tree of Life!

The following testimony by Sharon Dibenedetto is a remarkable witness to this beautiful truth. She writes, "On July 28th, 2002, I was in bed and was talking to the Lord. I had been praying that He would teach me how I could walk in the Paradisical realm and how I could walk in a higher realm *all the time*. The, I fell asleep. Around 3 a.m. I woke up and began to pray that the Lord would release me from all the bondages of the flesh so that I could walk with Him.

"The first thing that happened was that I saw this beautiful golden light. It was so powerful! I knew I couldn't look directly into the light because it was so bright, but I could surely *feel* it. I cannot describe in words this glorious light! Then the light came very close to me and I heard a voice say, 'Come up higher.' I felt as though my spirit was being lifted up in the light and now I could see Jesus. The light had carried me over to where Jesus was standing. I felt so overwhelmed at seeing my Lord that, at first, I couldn't even talk to Him. I just stood there for some time. I know I was praising and singing and could also hear and see a heavenly host, singing in perfect harmony, '*Holy, holy, most holy, Hosannah.*'

"The light was becoming brighter and brighter. Then I saw Jesus standing on the bank of this beautiful river. It was crystal clear, clean and pure. I exclaimed, 'Lord, I have never seen a river like this on earth!' He answered, 'There is none like this on earth. It is the same substance that is within my people. Put thy hand in the water.' I did so and was amazed to see that this river flowed in four directions. After dipping my hand in the river, I could feel something very different. Jesus asked me, 'What does it feel like?' I said, 'The water feels like pure energy and power.' I had never felt anything like this before! Then the Lord said, 'Go deeper into the water.' As I could feel the power going from my feet up my body, He said, 'Now, go down and cover thy head and come back up again.' As I came up out of the water I felt a sudden change and asked the Lord, 'What is happening?' Jesus answered, 'You are being transformed. Whatever touches this water shall be made alive. This is your new body.' Then the golden light became brighter. 'This is your celestial body. You are in the paradisaical realm and I will teach you to walk here.'

"I cried, 'O Lord, I want more! I want all of my full inheritance.' He spoke to me again, 'One step at a time, daughter. As you grow higher I will bring you higher — one step at a time.' I was praising the Lord while I was still standing in the river. I felt wave after wave of energy going through every fiber of my being. Then I felt the Holy Spirit upon me and I knew I was being baptized with fire. The light was all around me and Jesus said, 'Walk in this light. All must come to me and each will experience what you just had. You are full of light and soon it will shine forth for the whole world to see. And I will teach you how to speak life to the world! I am training my sons and my daughters in this day, as well as my warriors.'

"The light became brighter. At this time I awoke. I could still feel this golden light all around me. Even though I was awake, I was hardly aware of anything but this glorious light. It was about 4 a.m. I asked the Lord, 'Was I really in Paradise with you?' He said, 'Yes.' I went back to sleep. Again this golden light came closer and closer to me. I was so full of joy that I was just praising the Lord. I heard a voice say, 'You can now walk in Paradise at will. Practise walking here day and night without ceasing, and you will walk victoriously.' I asked the Lord, 'May I ask you to teach me how to walk in this Garden?' Standing in the light He spoke to me again, 'For you to walk in my Garden you must go deep within.'

"I said, 'Lord, *how?*' As the light shone brighter, I found myself at the edge of a beautiful Garden. In this Garden was the River of Life and the Tree of Life. Jesus said, 'Take off thy shoes and follow me. You are now walking on holy ground.' I cried, 'O Lord, I never want to leave this Garden!' He reassured me, 'You can be here in this Garden and work from this realm while your feet are still upon the earth. There is much work to be done and there are so few willing to do my work.' I could feel myself going in and out of the Garden many times. Then this voice spoke to me, 'Now you can go from this realm and into the other realm at will. You can be in Paradise and still have your feet walking and doing my will upon the earth.'

"Again, I was awake with tears of joy running down my face. I felt so different! I know I'll never be the same again. By now it was 4:15 a.m. and the sun was just beginning to rise. I knew I had been with the Lord and felt so blessed. I knew that all I had to do was to look within and walk. My spirit was in Paradise while my flesh was still here on earth. I also had heard the Lord call out the names: Abraham, Noah, Jacob, Isaiah, and Joseph — like a roll-call. I was there too and felt like they all were a part of me" — end quote.

We must remember that this is not merely a tale that leaves us more or less uninvolved. Adam is *mankind*. Adam is *humanity*. Adam is *you* and *me* and every other man who has ever lived or shall live. What happened to him in that long ago, happened to us. As he was when

banished from paradise, so we are as we come into this world. His origin is our origin. His beginning is our beginning. His experience is our experience. His destiny is our destiny. May the gracious spirit of wisdom and revelation from God give enlightenment to the spiritual eyes of all who read these lines that all may see and know of a truth that what was happening to Adam in the Garden speaks of spiritual realities even in the beginning of history, before history, beyond history, and yet in history; it is *we ourselves* of whom the Garden speaks; it is *we ourselves* who are intended, addressed, confronted, accused, expelled, redeemed, and restored. It is *our* history, truly our own! It is the beginning, destiny, guilt, redemption, restoration and perfection of every son of God! What happened to Adam there is what is happening to us here — but in reverse!

The tree of life — we are here at once taken back to the garden in Eden. There we behold the tree of life in the midst of that first paradise. Man, because of his sin, was banished from that lovely paradise and shut away from the blessings accruing from that tree. We have not seen or heard of it since the third chapter of the Bible. But here in the book of Revelation is the promise of it! In the last chapter we see mankind actually participating in this blessed reality. But it is remarkable that after reading of the tree of life in the third of the 1,189 chapters of the Bible we do not hear of it again until here. It is mentioned three times in Genesis and three times in the Revelation. So you see the Bible ends as it began — with a perfect, Edenic condition and state of being. The book of Revelation is the only book that could, logically, close the canon of the Bible. All the tangled threads of prophecy, prose, poetry, history, type, shadow, and promise find their fulfillment and consummation in the last book of the Bible — "The Revelation."

Let us *understand* the paradise of God with the tree of life in its midst! The tree of life is mentioned very simply in the opening chapters of Genesis. It was IN THE MIDDLE — that is all that is said about it! The life that comes forth from God is in the middle. This means that God, the source of life, is in the middle. In the middle of the realm in which Adam lived and the world over which he was given dominion was not Adam himself, but the wonderful tree of God's very own eternal and incorruptible life. Adam's life was to come from the middle which was not Adam himself, but God in him. This means, simply, that with God as his center man would have Life! Man was created with the capacity of *living in the Spirit* or of *walking after the flesh*. He was free to eat of the tree of life, or to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. One of man's inherent potentials was to know God in the Spirit as the center and source of his life!

But — like the tree of life — the other tree *also* STANDS IN THE MIDDLE! In the middle. Death! Within! In man's very nature. One of man's inherent potentials was to know Self as the center and source of his life. But Self would not bring life, it would mean death. Man could make the world, the outer physical realm, his bodily senses and appetites, his center. Death dwelt in that center! How do we know that sin is "in the middle" just as life is "in the middle"? Jesus understood it! He explained it! "There is *nothing* from without a man, that entering into him can defile him: but the things which *come out of him*, those are they that defile the man. For *from within, out of the heart* of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evils *come from within*, and defile the man" (Mk. 7:15,21-23). These inspired words carry us right back to the garden of Eden! There were two trees in the middle. Life and death were in the middle! Two trees in the midst of the garden of man's experience and being. "For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded *is death*; but to be spiritually minded *is life...*" (Rom. 8:5-6). Two minds — in the middle!

In the two trees of life and death in man's middle the Holy Spirit points out man's LIMIT. In these two trees is contained the BOUNDARY set by God upon man from the beginning. This LIMIT declared how low a man could fall and how high a man could rise. Man could fall as low as the tree of death, the carnal mind, the realm of the flesh could carry him — unto the whole dreadful realm of darkness and death in which is contained every sorrow, tragedy, pain, trouble, sickness, hatred, strife, heartache, ignorance, fear, and torment known to man; or, he could rise as high as the spiritual mind, the realm of the spirit could carry him — unto the eternal and incorruptible life of God in which is contained all the joy, peace, righteousness, love, faith, wisdom, glory, and power of GOD HIMSELF!

What fathomless bounds are contained in this LIMIT! Man, by walking in the Spirit, can rise as high as God in the realm of His life, or, by walking in the flesh can sink as low as the devil in the world of darkness and death. What a LIMIT! And man was destined to fall as low as he could fall and rise as high as he could rise. The totality of man's experience is to be found within this limit established by God for man. All that both death and life are would ultimately be experienced, known, and demonstrated by man. This is his limit. This is his territory. This is his destiny. Both realities are in the middle! Within man. One or the other is every man's center, the sphere of his existence. But mark it well — *both* cannot be the center of any man's life! He who eats of the tree of life will find that the death realm has no more dominion over him. And he who eats of the tree of death will discover that he becomes alienated from the tree of life. Thus, both trees, both realities are in the center of man's life, but both cannot be the center of his life! "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live" "Rom. 8:13). "This I say then, Walk in the spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh" (Gal. 5:16).

The tree of life in the midst of the paradise of God was truly "in the world" but not "of the world." The life of this tree was right within man, the life of God in his spirit, and man's spirit was not of this world, not formed of the dust of the ground, but breathed into his nostrils by the Father of spirits. "God breathed into his nostrils the *spirit* (Heb.) of life." The glorious life of Christ on earth is the essence and reality of the tree of life in the midst of the paradise of God. This tree of life within man had absolutely nothing to do with the realm of earthiness of man's soul and body, for it was heaven's own divine life breathed into man. In the tree of life God invited man to find Him as the source and center of life.

As George Hawtin once pointed out, by the tree of life man would be full of light, abounding in heavenly wisdom and knowledge, fearful in power and dominion, ethereal as a spirit and shining in the image of God. The fruit of this wonderful tree would indeed make man radiant with the resplendent glory of God as was Jesus, the second man and the last Adam, at the transfiguration, whose face shone as the sun and his raiment was as the light. In this tree of life the effulgent perfumes of the heavenly realm would be fragrance and life to man's nostrils. He would taste spiritual realities and touch heavenly things. The wisdom and power of God Himself would be wide open to him and he would walk in the presence and glory of celestial realms. The gates of *that realm* would never be shut by day or by night. Man would need to eat of no other tree nor drink of any of the waters of earth. Man would have "meat to eat" that no other creature in heaven or earth knew of and "water to drink" that none other had ever tasted. The heavens would be opened over his head and he would walk in the glory of the presence of God the Almighty.

This was the glory of the tree of life in Eden! And what was that glorious tree? "*In the beginning* was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...in HIM WAS LIFE; and THE LIFE was the light of men" (Jn. 1:1,4). This life-giving tree, the living word of God, even

Christ, was from the beginning the life and the light of man. When Eden's gates clanged shut behind our banished fore parents, man was shut up in the realm of the flesh and that blessed tree of divine life was never again seen by the wondering eyes of mortal men until the day in which Jesus stood in the earth and declared, "I am the LIVING BREAD which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever: and the bread which I will give is *my flesh*, which I will give for the LIFE OF THE WORLD" (Jn. 6:51). The reason Jesus came forth as the visible expression (His flesh) of the Father, the tree of life re-planted, was that there might be a focusing, a manifestation which would become a meeting place for us to come to know God, and become one with Him, as it was in the beginning. It is in Christ Jesus that God and creation meet, come together, and are made one! Christ who *is our life* has come and been planted in the garden of the kingdom of heaven on earth, that all may come and eat and drink and have Life!

There is an even deeper mystery to this tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. They appear as two trees; yet in reality there was only one tree, with two sides, two aspects, or two dimensions. It is stated so simply in these words, "The tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil" (Gen. 2:9). There was one tree, and yet two trees. The tree of life is Christ — the living word of God. The profound truth is that in Eden there were two words — a living word, and a word of death! Christ is the living word! But there is *another word*, and this word is *also from God*, but it is a word of death. Who planted the tree of death in Eden? Why, bless your heart, God did! "And out of the ground made *the Lord God* to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight...the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, *and* the tree of the knowledge of good and evil" (Gen. 2:9).

Paul makes these two trees, these two words, very plain when he writes, "Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of *the letter*, but of *the spirit*: for the *letter killeth*, but the *spirit giveth life*. But if the *ministration of death*, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance...how shall not the *ministration of the spirit* be rather glorious? For if the ministration of *condemnation* be glory, much more doth the *ministration of righteousness* exceed in glory" (II Cor. 3:6-9). Here we have two ministrations, two testaments, two words — the one is "the letter that killeth" and the other is "the spirit that quickeneth." But both of these words are the word of the Lord! It was GOD who gave the *law* to Moses, and it was GOD who gave us the *living word* in Christ! There are two words, and yet they are but two sides of the same word — the WORD OF GOD!

I firmly believe that the Bible is the word of God; however, when we know it only as *the letter*, it kills. Laws, rules, regulations, doctrines, creeds, outward ordinances, forms, ceremonies, facts, literalistic interpretations of man, natural concepts, carnal understanding of the written word — there is no life in any of these! There is only death. The dead letter of the word produces *dead sermons, dead churches, dead meetings, and spiritually dead believers*. The "letter of the word" is *still the word of God!* And yet there's no life. Moses preached the law, the law was from God, the law was the *ministration of death written and engraven in stones*, and everybody that received the law *died*. It was the ministration of *condemnation*. It had the power to condemn men, to judge them, to punish them, to tell them what they ought to do — but it possessed no power to give them life! It was a word of God, but it was the letter of the word. It was a word without life. It was a word void of reality. It was merely a type, a shadow, a symbol of reality.

THE TREE OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL IS THE LAW! By the law, Paul says, we know sin. The knowledge of good and evil is by the letter of the word! All the preachers

who are out there telling men what great sinners they are, and how they need to *stop sinning*, are feeding their hearers from the tree of the *knowledge of good and evil*. This letter of the word killeth, but it's still a word of the Lord! It's the word of the Lord on a lower level, stripped of its life and power. But the other side of this tree, this word, is the Word of Life! "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...*in Him was life*, and the life was the light of men" (Jn. 1:1,4). THE TREE OF LIFE IS CHRIST, THE LIVING WORD! There are two words, yet they are the very *same word* on different levels. There are two trees, yet they are but *two sides* of the *same tree*! Adam's sin and fall consisted in his choosing to live a *carnal life* on the *earthy plane*, subject to the restraint and regulation of the external law of a carnal commandment, instead of living the *spiritual life* on the *heavenly plane* by the Living Word of God!

No words could be more solemn or arresting than the statement of Jesus wherein He said, "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me...as the Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me" (Jn. 6:56-57). As the natural man must have sustenance from his physical environment to live, so the spiritual man must have sustenance from his spiritual environment to live. After he has gotten life you must give him food. What food shall you give him? Shall you feed him with knowledge, or with beauty, or with prosperity, or with blessings, or with religious exercises, or with creeds, or with commandments, or with gifts, or with power, or with programs, or with experiences? No! There is a rarer luxury than all these — so rare, in fact, that few have ever more than tasted it; so rich, that they who have will never live on any other fare again. It is this: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by *every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God*" (Mat. 4:4).

Nothing can satisfy the appetite of a son of God but this — he hungers for the bread that cometh down from heaven! Nothing else will fill him. Nothing else will satisfy him. Everyone knows the world is hungry. But the hungry world is starving. They are eating of the wrong tree! The world has many meats and many drinks, but there is no nourishment in them. They are but sugar-water. It has pleasures, and amusements, and excitement, and works; but there is no nutrition there for the immortal craving of the *spirit*. It has worldly society, and worldly books, and worldly events, and worldly knowledge, and worldly lusts. But these things merely intoxicate!

The church world is hungry, too. Starving, in fact. Oh, it has many meats and many drinks, but there is no nourishment for the spirit in them. It has impressive rituals, and stirring programs, and moving ceremonies, and splendid ordinances, and pomp, and show, and candles, and incense, and temples, and cathedrals, and priests, and preachers, and creeds, and organization, and out-reaches, and abundance of activity. Its people get all involved "in the work," and committed "to the work," and are faithful in "giving to the work." They do and do but in all this something other than CHRIST has become the center. The center becomes the movement, or the message, or the organization, or the program, or the ministry, or the experience, or the method, or the personality, or some other thing. But I declare to you that all these religious things and activities merely intoxicate and millions of Christians are drunk with them and in their inebriated hilarity think they know the living Christ.

There is no substance in them! The divine ingredients of the celestial atmosphere of the kingdom of heaven are missing. Sons of God cannot live on that depleted food. So our spirit turns its eye from them all with unutterable loathing. "Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God which is proceeding from the mouth of God." No possibility of suffering malnutrition or starving on this fare! It is eternal food for the sons of God to live upon. And

notice — sons live on every word that *is proceeding* out of the mouth of God. That is how the Greek expresses it.

Is it not dreadfully true that the vast majority of Christians are living on words that *have proceeded* out of the mouth of God? They live on a by-gone revelation, a word sent to another people at another time, a historical creed, that which God spoke through St. Augustine, through Luther, through Calvin, through Spurgeon, through Whitfield, through Finney, through the Pentecostal pioneers, or through the Latter Rain prophets! It is stale bread, spoiled meat, stagnant water, and a dead word. It is a word that God *spoke*, but not the word the Spirit *is speaking*. It is a word that in some ancient day *proceeded* out of the mouth of God, but not the word that now *is proceeding* out of His mouth. It is yesterday's manna, and it has bred worms and stinks. It is truth, but not *present truth*. But the word which *is proceeding* out of the mouth of God is His Living Word! "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit *is saying* unto the churches." The living bread of the living Christ in His living revelation to His elect sons in *this day* is meat that the world knows not of, meat that endures unto the life of the ages. In spring-time it is not sown, and in summer drought it cannot fail. In harvest it is not reaped, yet the storehouse is ever full. Oh, what possibilities of life it opens up!

How can we eat of the tree of Life that is in the midst of the paradise of God? Listen! I can tell you because I know! I know! There are many things I do not know. The things that I do know would make a very small library, I am prepared to admit, but a very precious one to me. The things that I do not know — well, there aren't enough books in the world to contain them. But I know how to get to that Tree, I know how to get the fruit of that tree which is life abundant and everlasting, I know how to get the leaves of the tree, and I know how to get the healing that comes from the leaves of the tree, which are for the healing of the nations. That is something worth knowing. Now, I *know!* I do not say that I *think*. I am not guessing. It is by coming to the living Christ and eating of Christ in the Spirit!

The words came to me some time ago — the startling and remarkable words Jesus spoke when He stood in the earth and said, "I am the bread that is come down from heaven, that if a man eat of it he shall never die. I am the living bread. I am the bread that is come down. I am the bread that is become personified in a body of flesh upon this earth. I am the bread that is from heaven." Immediately the question presented itself to me — Why was Jesus the bread that *came from heaven*? Why did He specify *from heaven*? Why did He not simply say, "I am the bread of life, I am the bread that God has provided on earth," or some other characterization? At once I was reminded of the manna that fell in the wilderness — the manna that *came from heaven*, the typical bread that God sent *from heaven* to feed the children of Israel. Why was it bread *from heaven*? Why did not God simply create it there on the ground?

Immediately the Spirit began to articulate within me the wonder of this thing! It came to me so clearly and powerfully as an illustration. Come with me for a moment and let us think of a number of astronauts who are soaring away from earth to a strange planet in some distant galaxy. Along their journey through the universe a problem develops with their spaceship. Eventually they are forced to land on an unknown planet in another galaxy. They make a successful landing, but are stranded there on the planet Timur. They don't know this world into which they have descended. As they step from their ship and begin exploration of the planet, it is discovered to have a very hostile environment. In fact, *everything* there is hostile to them! All the vegetation on Timur is toxic to the human body. They cannot eat or drink anything. They cannot breathe its atmosphere, nor can they partake of anything there, for everything in that environment is *death* to them.

The supplies they have with them from earth are finite, and will soon be depleted. So they contact earth, and immediately a rescue expedition is dispatched. As they are staring death in the face the second spacecraft from earth arrives and lands on Timur. The second group of astronauts exit from their craft and say to those who are stranded there, "We are the men who have come *from earth*. We have the bread that is *from earth*! We have that bread which is not adverse to you. We have that which is compatible with who you are, and what you are. We have the food that is biologically adapted to your earthly, human constitution. We have come from *earth*, we have the bread that is *your bread*, it is from *your world*, it is from the place of *your origin*, it is that which *pertains to you*, and if you eat this bread you will live! This bread will sustain you, energize you, nourish you, and give you expression of who you are. We are the bread that is come *from earth*!"

Now you see, the bread from earth was the bread from home! Once we understand our origin, where our "home" is in the world of *spirit*, and how we became trapped in this realm of *flesh*, which is made *death* to us, we will grasp the eternal significance of why Jesus *came down from heaven* into our darkness, into our ignorance, into our limitation, into our sin, into our false identity, into our distorted perceptions. He came down to this world of our natural life, of our carnal minds, of our physical and mortal sense of being; and He says to us as He steps, as it were, from His celestial spacecraft, "I am the bread that is *come down from heaven*! If a man eats of *this bread*, he will live and not die! I am the bread that is come from the realm that *you came from*! I am from your true world, the world of the spirit, the world of the Father, the world of divinity, the world of God, the world of eternity. I am from that world and I have come to speak a word into you. The words that I speak to you are *spirit* and they are *life*. The word that I speak is spiritually adapted to your heavenly, spiritual constitution. It is compatible with who you are, and what you are. I am the bread that is come from the heavens of God's Spirit! When you eat of this bread, of this word, you will live and not die!"

Christ Himself is the tree of Life! It is not only to taste of its fruit, but to eat and be filled with all the fruit that grows upon this divine tree; it is to feed upon Him continually until we are filled with all the fullness of Christ, and Christ in our spirit becomes the only reality. It is to turn from the flesh and the carnal mind and feed upon Christ until we are strong in Him and in the power of His might. Oh, wonderful Tree that dwelt in the bosom of the Father from eternity! Oh, marvelous Tree planted of old in Eden's fragrant garden! Oh, precious Tree planted among men as the Son of the Father, planted by the power of the eternal Spirit, and whose fruit is ours as we partake of it through faith! Oh, eternal Tree planted in the garden of our hearts, by which He brings many sons to glory and brings them home to the Father's house! How sweet is the fruit to our taste, how satisfying and life-giving every morsel of which we partake! And we can feed to the full for the fruit is ever growing in the middle of our garden, ever revealed to us, always perfect, and never passes away.

How we rejoice that we have proven there is fruit upon Him; and by feeding upon Him and Him alone, we too bear fruit to His glory. He is our Storehouse, He is the only fruitful Tree, and we can get nothing outside of Him, but we can get everything in Him. The more we feed upon Him, the more we abide in Him. The more He feeds and nourishes us, the more He becomes manifested in our lives to the glory of God. There is none other like Him among the sons of men, neither among the angels in heaven!

The closer we come to the kingdom, the more do those destined sons of God know what it is to be lifted beyond the pale of natural things to behold the glory of the realm where God lives in the Spirit. The mixture is even now being removed from the hearts of a firstfruit company and many are being enabled to SEE HIM in a new and living way! It is beholding Him that changes

us from glory to glory, from corruption to incorruption. The new spirit and the new heart are THE TREE OF LIFE, for they are naught but Christ living within. It is the glory of His presence and the power of His life that transforms the ragged garments of our mortality to raiment which is white and glistening.

Fantastic changes lie ahead for all who separate themselves unto God. Tremendous changes will transpire as soul and body come under the dominion of Christ in our spirit, for mortality shall be swallowed up of life. This corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality. Oh glorious victory! The sons of God shall arise into that blessed realm beyond time, and space, and matter, and the carnal mind, and realize and walk in the fullness of God's glory forevermore. Oh glorious and wonderful realm! It is the realm beyond the veil where we may enter and tread the highways and fields of our heavenly citizenship. It is the realm of the Son of God! It is the inheritance of the sons of God! It is the REALM OF THE TREE OF LIFE IN THE PARADISE OF GOD! The sons of God are the "tree of life" kind of men, and these are they who shall become healing for the nations, a government of wisdom and understanding, of counsel and might, of knowledge and fear of the Lord. From the life of those who enter that realm shall flow forth such glory and blessing that the knowledge of the glory of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea and nothing shall hurt nor destroy in all God's holy mountain!

In the New Jerusalem city of God there is the florescent river of life. Along this river grows the tree of life. The tree of life in Eden, on the one hand, signifies the *partaking* of divine life by man, the dispensing of God into man. The river of life, on the other hand, signifies the *outflowing* of life from man who has received life, the pouring forth of life out of the kingdom of heaven unto the barrenness of the earth realm. All life was to be found in Eden, just as it is in the New Jerusalem — the kingdom of heaven on earth. Eden was constituted debtor to the whole earth to send forth the life-giving streams. To the overcomer is given to enter into the paradise of God and partake of the tree of life; but the river of life out of Eden is the profound expression of God's purpose to not only enter into the lives of His elect, transforming them into the tree of life kind of people, but to then cause them to become a RIVER OF LIFE COMPANY, a people out of whom the life would flow! "Out of your innermost being shall flow rivers of living water." Ah, beloved, God is bringing forth His elect who live by the tree of life but shall then be a river of life, for the spirit of life within them is an ever-flowing wellspring of life and glory! Wherever God flows out by the Spirit, there He is found as life and eternal reality!

What a picture of the life of the Holy City do we find in these words — "In the midst of its street, and of the river, on this side and on that side, the tree of life, producing twelve fruits, in each month yielding its fruit!" The street of the city speaks of its movement and activity; the river speaks of the Spirit of God as the blessed current of its life, pure in crystal brightness; but in the midst of both the street and the river is the tree of life! Every movement in that city centers in Christ; He gives impulse to everything there. And He is in the midst of the river too; the very power of all that quickens, of all the Spirit's flow. And He is not only "in the midst," but "on this side and on that side." Whichever way you look you see the tree of life there, and it yields its fruit perennially. Each month — twelve kinds of fruit! Twelve is the number of divine government. It means that His life within us is the *power* in which we rule and reign in the kingdom! As it is written, "They which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:17). Oh, the mystery of it!

The scripture declares with absolute certainty that the tree of life is accessible only to the *overcomer*. The leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations, but the fruit of the tree is "to him that overcometh." *Victory* is the condition on which depends the fulfillment of that

promise! "Whosoever will" may take of the *water of life* freely (Rev. 22:17). But only He that "overcometh" may eat of the *tree*! And now, all of a sudden we feel as Tantalus must have felt in his beautiful garden, when each time he stretched forth his hand to reach the luscious fruit with which the trees of that garden were laden, a blast of wind blew the branch of the tree away, and Tantalus was left desolate — hungry as before. In a similar way we sometimes feel that the power of the incorruptible life has been withdrawn from our sight. But, the vision is not for everyone. It is not to all that the tree of life offers its fruit, but only to the overcomer. Only a specific class of people are able to put forth claims on the life symbolized by the fruit of that tree. Don't give up, saints of God! Press on, for great is your reward!

God is moving in our hearts and preparing us for a great change in which we shall move completely out of the tripartite nature of spirit, soul, and body to live only and forever in THE REALM OF THE SPIRIT. There, beyond limitation and imperfection, we shall see Him as He is and know Him even as we are known of Him. Our vision of heavenly things has been so distorted due to our looking through physical and soulical eyes. You have sometimes seen a window made of fluted glass, and you know that if you look at the street through this window everything will be distorted. The passers-by and the automobiles will appear to be warped and distorted in absurd and ugly ways. Nevertheless, you know that these things are quite alright in themselves, and that the distortion arises from your seeing them wrongly.

The pure eyes of our spirit has had to filter through the fluted shell of our carnal minds and the marvelous things of the realm of God's Spirit have been distorted into myriads of carnal doctrines, traditions, natural interpretations, childish imaginations, and religious applications of all kinds. This distorted vision of heavenly things is really what we know as "the church." It is a seeing, but a false seeing. It is a knowing, but a false knowing. The sons of God are arising to pass through the veil, to abide in the Holiest of all, to see all things as they really are in the blazing light of God's glory. Our Leader and Forerunner opened up this path to God, in which He first walked Himself, and then draws us to follow Him. The veil is the flesh! The veil that has separated man from God is the flesh! Christ came in the likeness of sinful flesh, and dwelt with us here outside the veil. Then within Himself He rent the veil! Through the rent veil of His flesh, His will, His senses, His earthly faculties, His human consciousness, yielded up to God in death, He entered beyond the veil into the Holiest. Through the rent veil He rose to the throne of God! And this is the way He has dedicated for us! He is our way. Let us arise and follow HIM!

Elect of the Lord! Seek to know Christ in the power of His resurrection. Let this be the crown of your life in sonship to God. Do not seek immortality for your body first, or only, apart from the knowledge of Christ in all His other aspects. But seek it truly as that unto which they are meant to lead you. Nothing will fit you for immortality but faithfulness in every step of putting on the MIND OF CHRIST. Seek Him as your wisdom and the wisdom will lead you into the mysteries of complete redemption. Seek Him as your righteousness and dwell clothed with Him in that inner sanctuary of the Father's favor and presence. Seek Him as your sanctification and experience His power to make you holy. Seek Him as your redemption, and live, even now, in the light of that glory. Seek Him as your joy until no earthly sorrow has any more power in you. Seek Him as your peace until you love every enemy and pray for all who despitely use you and persecute you, and you are disturbed, upset, and frustrated by nothing and no one. And as you seek to experience within yourself to the full, the power of His resurrection life, your heart will be enlarged to see the position man has been destined to occupy in the universe, as having all things made subject to him, and you shall for your part be fitted to live worthy of that high and heavenly calling!

Chapter 37

The Church In Smyrna

"And unto the angel of the church in *Smyrna* write..." (Rev. 2:8).

Smyrna was located about thirty miles north of Ephesus. It still exists today with a population of some 250,000 people. The name of the city has been changed and it is now called Izmir. I have been there and it is a very beautiful city. Smyrna was a wealthy city that rivaled Ephesus in beauty and commerce. It had well-planned harbors with fine avenues, the sea in front and an acropolis behind. It was surrounded by seven hills and today rivals San Francisco for beauty. It was filled with pagan temples of Apollo, Asclepia, Cybelle, Emperor Tiberius, and Zeus. It was famous for its superb school of medicine.

Of the seven churches, two of them received no indictment from the Lord, nor were they told to repent. The church in Smyrna was known as the "suffering church" because of their severe persecutions, and they were not told to repent. The Lord saw their trouble and tribulation, their poverty and imprisonment, their unswerving steadfastness and great faithfulness, and they did not need to be told to repent. It was in their hearts to repent when the need arose, for the work of God ran deep in their lives. Considering all they would suffer, the Lord said to them, "*Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life*" (Rev. 2:10). Another church against which the Lord laid no charge, nor did He tell them to repent, was the church in Philadelphia. The Lord saw that they kept His word and had not denied His name, or nature. Because they kept the word of His patience, by which the kingdom of God is inherited, He gave them wonderful promises.

It is my conviction that these two churches, the church in Smyrna and the church in Philadelphia, represent the Lord's elect and chosen remnant in the earth throughout the church age. They also correspond to the two witnesses of chapter eleven of the Revelation. We know that a *candlestick* represents a *church*. There are *two churches* out of the seven that received no condemnation or reproof from the Lord, and were given only great and precious promises. Of the two witnesses it is testified, "And I will give power unto my *two witnesses*, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth. These are the *two olive trees*, and the *two candlesticks* standing before the God of the earth" (Rev. 11:3-4). **Two candlesticks! Two churches!** Two given a special standing before God! Ah, Smyrna and Philadelphia, what a calling you have!

On the personal and individual level the two witnesses are the *spirit* and the *word*. The two witnesses speak of the awesome power and word of authority given to the Lord's elect on the pathway to sonship. The two witness company is not the manifest sons of God, for the manchild of chapter twelve of the Revelation represents the manifest sons who are "caught up unto God, *and to His throne*" (Rev. 12:5). Upon the throne of the Father the manchild, the manifest sons of God, "rules all nations with a rod of iron" (Rev. 12:5). Furthermore, the manchild, the manifest sons of God, receives his authority and dominion under the *seventh trumpet*, where the mystery of God is finished. The two witnesses, however, receive their ministry of power and authority under the *sixth trumpet* and they "ascended up to heaven in a

cloud." They are caught up to a heavenly place of power and authority, but *not* to the omnipotence and dominion of the *throne*! There is a glorious *prophetic realm*, prefigured by the two witnesses, that God's called and chosen elect enter prior to the manifestation of the sons. Since the great move of God that came in 1948 and the years following, I have been, with many who read these lines, a glad partaker of the glory of that *prophetic realm* of ministry. It was indeed a heavenly realm of signs, wonders, and miracles! I have tasted of the power and glory of that realm by the prophetic anointing of the Spirit! But that prophetic and revival realm ends, and it has already ended! And after the two witnesses or two candlesticks realm the next thing on God's prophetic agenda is THE BIRTH OF THE MANCHILD! That's where we *really* are in God's program of the ages.

Smyrna means "sweet smelling" and comes from the root word for myrrh. The myrrh plant is found throughout the Middle East and was used in the manufacture of an aromatic ointment. When bruised and crushed, the myrrh gives forth a lovely fragrance. Myrrh was used to embalm the bodies of the dead. Carefully the linens were prepared, and wound around the bodies of the loved ones, while myrrh was packed between the folds of the cloth. Thus was the body of our Lord embalmed! After the death of Jesus, the women, who had loved and followed Him on earth, brought one hundred pounds of myrrh and aloes to the tomb. With what grief did they take that precious body and wind about it the linen cloths! With what untold tenderness did they lay it away in the bed of fragrant spices! Thus myrrh is a type of suffering and death, and some in the church at Smyrna were to pass through bitter persecution, severe trials, and intense testings, as a picture of that which all of God's called and chosen elect must also pass through. Their sufferings, however, instead of destroying them, would give forth the rich perfume of heaven, the **life of the spirit!**

In the Song of Solomon the Shulamite's Beloved, beautiful type of God's corporate Son, Head and body, exclaims, "Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, I will get me up to the *mountain of myrrh*, and to the *hill of frankincense*" (S. of S. 4:6). The "Mountain of Myrrh" is a figure of the death of the Son of God, while the "Hill of Frankincense" bespeaks of His resurrection life, for frankincense was uniquely the fragrance of the Most Holy Place, the incorruptible realm of God in the spirit. Beloved, THE CROSS IS THE MOUNTAIN OF MYRRH! The cross includes all the trials, testings, tribulations, and processings the elect pass through in this earthly life on their journey into sonship to God. Do you desire to walk before God and men as an anointed king-priest after the order of Melchizedek? Then you must go up to the mountain of myrrh, the cross, and offer your body as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, and take up your cross and so partake of the sufferings and death of Christ, that your whole life shall be filled with His manifested attributes.

It is not enough to make an occasional trip up to the cross, for death must become a mountain to us, we must go there and stay until the day breaks and the shadows all flee away! It bespeaks of a STATE OF BEING. To **be dead** is a **state of being!** We must *abide* in the condition of the Lord's death. Today, many zealous Christians have the wrong concept. They believe they must fast, weep, pray, wait on the Lord, confess, and struggle in order to *die*. That is all good, but it is not death! To tarry at an altar is easy; to pray all night is easy; even to fast for a week or a month is easy; to confess with our mouth is easy; but to stay at the mountain of myrrh for a lifetime is not easy. We could all fast and pray for a long time without any sleep, but to stay in the Lord's death means to so identify with His death that we renounce all the works of the flesh, we repudiate all the emotions of the soul, we abandon all the imaginings, reasonings, and inventions of the carnal mind, we disclaim all the hopes, dreams and aspirations of our own will and way, and forsake all the traditions, forms, methods, and foolishness of religion, so that we simply **are dead**.

It is only then that the day breaks eternal and the shadows of this earth realm forever flee away! Let us open ourselves before the Lord. I do believe that we all have the sense that our Day has not yet fully broken. There has been a dawning within, but there is still so much life, light, and glory that must arise upon those called to sonship! We all realize that there are still some haunting shadows of limitation, sickness, fear, corruption, lack of understanding, and fleshliness about us. No matter how much we say that we are the elect sons of God, sons of Light, sons of the Day, kings and priests of the Most High, and all the rest, there is still the sense that we are not clearly in the Day. As long as we have such a realization we will spontaneously say, "UNTIL the day break, and the shadows flee away, I will get me up to the Mountain of Myrrh, and to the Hill of Frankincense!"

The more one abides in the light, the more one recognizes darkness. The more perfect one is, the more conscious one becomes of imperfections. So likewise, the more mature a saint becomes, the more he will sense his immaturity! The more alive unto God a believer becomes, the more aware he will be of death that remains. The further one walks onward in God, the greater seems to be the need for cleansing, purging, and purifying. The more one receives praise of the Lord, the more he feels the sky of spiritual life has not yet come into fullest glow. Many who have come forth from the dank tombs of religion to follow on to know the Lord, feel as if they are wandering in somewhat of a wilderness.

What then are these to do? Before the perfect light of the fullness of sonship to God can break and all shadows flee away, we must go to the mountain of myrrh and to the hill of frankincense and THERE ABIDE UNTIL the day breaks and the shadows flee away. In spite of those who say it is all NOW, we already have the fullness of Christ within, therefore we can manifest and walk in the fullness *right now* — their life gives the lie to their claims. Yet, it is true, one is always reluctant to leave the present ground of attainment and reach out further for still higher things! But we must hasten to the mountain of myrrh and to the hill of frankincense and literally steep ourselves in these rich odors. Every member of God's elect is abiding there until all the old life, the old ways, the old self-hood, the old religiousness has been so renounced and so completely yielded to Him that He will find nothing of the old creation nor of the old church order in us. Then! The day will break, there will spring up within *His resurrection life*, a transcendent overcoming power, a perfected spiritual perception, vital union between soul and spirit, the change of our vile body, and the abundant and unlimited outflowing of His life as rivers of living water! Until the day break! We all have such a longing deep within. There is a turn, and this is the Lord's moving and working within us!

HE THAT LIVETH AND WAS DEAD

"I am He *that liveth, and was dead*; and, behold, *I am alive for evermore*. Amen! And I have the keys of hell and of death" (Rev. 1:18). "These things saith He which *was dead, and is alive*" (Rev. 2:8).

The Lord announces Himself to each of the seven churches in a unique aspect of His nature and glory. To the church in Smyrna He presents Himself as the one who was dead, but is alive and that forevermore. The Head of this glorious company of the overcomers has *already overcome*! He overcame the last enemy when in the garden He said, "Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine be done." He passed through His darkest hour of battle, stared death in the face, and arose on the other side victorious over death, hell, and the grave! Every manifest son of God must obtain this same victory. The apostle Paul desired "that *ye may know (experience)*...the mighty power which He wrought in Christ, when He *raised Him from the dead*, and set Him at His own right hand in the

heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named...and hath put all things under His feet" (Eph. 1:18-21).

Christ is **victor!** He has already overcome **every enemy!** He has conquered them. They are already under His feet. They have no more power over Him! He is above them all. He doesn't get sick, because He overcame all sickness. He can't die anymore, for He arose victor over death. He cannot sin, for He was tempted in all points like we are, and yet without sin. Satan has no power over Him, for Jesus has already had His "bout" with Satan and now holds the **Universal Title** over him! He overcame the world. He overcame the flesh. Yes, friends, Jesus doesn't have any more battles to fight, any more enemies to subject, for the last enemy that anyone, anywhere, ever has to destroy is death and He has already conquered His *last enemy!*

"Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself took part of the same; that through death He might **destroy him that had the power of death**, that is, the devil" (Heb. 2:14). It is an exciting and unforgettable thing to see an army routed and fleeing in tumultuous retreat. Who can forget the vivid accounts of Napoleon as he retreated from Moscow and dotted the snows of Russia with ninety thousand bodies of the imperial army of France. Or the armies of Hitler as they retreated across France and back through Germany to Berlin? Or the five kings of the Old Testament who fled across rock and hill as they were pursued by Joshua. Indeed, it is an unforgettable thing!

But the word — "that He through death might **destroy him that had the power of death**" — announces an even worse discomfiture of another army. For it seems that a grim and ghastly giant proposed to conquer the earth. He was, indeed, the conqueror of all conquerors, for all men from the beginning of time had fallen before him. Beside him Nebuchadnezzar, Alexander, Caesar, Hannibal, Napoleon, and Hitler all paled by comparison. In fact, each of them met him and was himself defeated. His name is DEATH! He carried a black flag and took no prisoners. He dug a trench across the continents and contemptuously filled it with the carcasses of every generation. He gathered together his hosts, an army of all the weaknesses, sorrows, fears, sins, aches, pains, maladies, and infirmities which have ever plagued the human race. It was, indeed, an awesome force to behold! There were legions of cancer and columns of heart disease; squadrons of viruses and battalions of infection. There were cohorts of malnutrition and armies of accidents. There were horsemen of fear and platoons of sin. There were squadrons of war and regiments of pestilence and plague. It was, indeed, the most fearful, the most formidable army which had ever been arrayed!

He drilled them in the snows of the north and in the jungles of the south. He pitched the tents of the morgue, and threw up the embankments of the cemetery. Most he slew with a single blow of the sword; others were taken by long sieges of evil habits. He knocked with his bony hands at the doors of hospital rooms, and at the doors of bedrooms. Presidents and prime ministers, kings and sultans, czars and dictators fell alike beneath the wheels of his war chariot. He was the victor in all battles!

None could stay his hand or stop his advance, until...until that day when there appeared in Jerusalem one whose countenance was like the morning, one who strode forward unafraid and entered into the very camp of this giant himself. Death confidently reaches out its bony hands and takes this Jesus, of Nazareth, and lifts Him up from the earth and impales Him upon a cross. He then takes the mortal spear and plunges it into His heart. Jesus, with a loud cry, gives up the ghost and dies. Blackness and death cover the land and hope dies! There is none

who can stay our foe, or so it seemed that dark day when the very earth trembled and shook under the power of death!

Then — at the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, when there was but the slightest shimmering of dawn on the horizon, a token of that which was to come, suddenly out of the blackness of the tomb emerged a figure clothed in white. Out of the tomb He came, His garments glistening with light. In the midst of that darkness the Prince of Life and the King of Death had been locked in mortal combat, the like of which the world had never seen. Christ came out, not to the roar of hundreds of thousands, but He came out alone, having conquered death within Himself. Like Sampson in Gaza He tore up the gates of death and carried away the bars of the grave. Coming forth from that darksome battle in the grave, He held in His left hand the broken seal of the sepulcher, and in His right hand the key to all the cemeteries of the world! And now the whole world is standing on tiptoe, waiting with bated breath, to behold the glorious sight of the FIRSTFRUITS OF HIS REDEMPTION coming forth — the many brethren of our Lord, who are destined by God's plan and purpose to be *the next company* to fully partake of HIS VICTORY!

"For as in Adam *all* die, even so in Christ shall *all* be made alive. But each in his *own rank and order*: Christ, the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at His *parousia*. Then cometh the end (of the making alive), when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father...for He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet. And the last enemy that shall be destroyed is *death*" (I Cor. 15:22-26). Because of Christ's victory death shall be abolished for and in all men! Yet there is an order, a progressive unfolding of this wonderful work of God. The scripture quoted above clearly reveals that precise order. Jesus Himself was the first to fully and completely conquer death so that He lives, spirit, soul, and body, never to die anymore! Then by His *parousia*, which is His *presence*, His life shall so be raised up in a firstfruits company that these, His many brethren, the manifest sons of God, shall experience the full power of His resurrection and be so changed until their mortal and physical bodies are transformed and fashioned like unto His glorious body. Then, progressively, through God's great *plan of the ages*, this glorious salvation shall be ministered to all men everywhere by resurrection, restoration, and salvation. What a salvation! What a God! What a plan!

In the light of such truth as this I draw your attention to the deeply meaningful words of the apostle Peter, spoken on the day of Pentecost to the amazed multitude that gathered to witness the wonder of the mighty works wrought at the outpouring of the Holy Spirit by the risen and ascended Christ. Standing up with the eleven he said to the assembled crowd, "Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: BECAUSE IT WAS NOT POSSIBLE THAT HE SHOULD BE HOLDEN OF IT" (Acts 2:22-24).

The thrust of Peter's message was that God raised up Christ from the dead. He loosed the pains of death. And there was a remarkable *qualification*, a glorious *reason* behind this event! The reason is stated in these significant words: "Because it **was not possible** that He should be holden of it." In plain language that means that it was an utter, total, absolute IMPOSSIBILITY for the grave to hold Jesus Christ! Why? It is my deep conviction that it was impossible for death to hold the firstborn Son of God because NOTHING ELSE COULD HOLD HIM! Nothing could influence, motivate, or control Him except the *will of the Father*. He had

absolutely no correspondence to the desires and lusts and passions and demands of the fleshly realm of this world's bestial system!

That, precious friend of mine, is why death could not hold Jesus — NOTHING ELSE COULD HOLD HIM! Nothing in the whole world could hold Him. Sin could not hold Him, for He was "tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15). His mother could not hold Him, for He said, when He was told that His mother was standing outside looking for Him, "Who is my mother?" And He stretched forth His hands toward His disciples, and said, "Behold my mother!" His friends could not hold Him. His disciples could not hold Him, for He upbraided and rebuked them for their lack of understanding. "Get thou behind me, Satan!" He said to Peter when he would have dissuaded Jesus from the predestinated will of the Father. The Pharisees could not hold Him. The traditions of the elders could not hold Him. Religion could not hold Him. The hatred of His enemies, the plaudits of His friends could not hold Him. His own desires and will could not hold Him. "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me; *nevertheless, not my will but Thine be done.*" So it was but a natural thing that DEATH COULD NOT HOLD THE CHRIST, because *nothing else could hold Him!*

Therein lies the secret to life and immortality for every son of God! Paul said it this way, and it means the same thing: "For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the spirit the things of the spirit. For to be *carnally minded is death*; but to be *spiritually minded is life and peace*. For if ye live after the *flesh*, ye *shall die*: but if ye through the spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye *shall live*" (Rom. 8:5-6,13). THAT IS WHY DEATH COULD NOT HOLD THE CHRIST! HE LIVED ENTIRELY AND WHOLLY AFTER THE SPIRIT!

What hope we have today as the called out elect of God! The fact of Christ's resurrection is historic. The man who disputes it disputes the best established fact in history. He was seen by those who had despaired of His existence. He ate with them. He drank with them. He walked with them in a bloodless body. He talked with the despondent and broken-hearted disciples for nearly forty days. It was impossible to be deceived. He spoke, and was seen and heard on one occasion by five hundred, the most of whom were living at the time when Paul made the declaration that they knew Christ and had seen Him after His resurrection. They were eyewitnesses of His majesty! He proved His resurrection by telling them that if they would go to Jerusalem and enter into an upper room, and wait for the promise of the Father, the Spirit's power would come. The promised outpouring took place. Tongues of fire danced over their heads, and filled with the Holy Ghost they spoke in tongues they had never learned. Mighty signs and wonders were wrought!

The Spirit's power roared like a mighty wind and swept through, shaking the place where they were sitting. It shook Jerusalem. It shook Israel. It shook the Roman empire until it fell, to rise no more. It shook the world. The Christ returned in mighty spirit-power! He came as an indwelling Life. Men who were weak became strong. Men who were wicked murderers and devils were transformed into men of virtue and power with God. Men who were illogical became great and mighty reasoners. Men who were feeble stood up, and in their spiritual majesty tower today over all the men of their time. They are better known and have more influence today than all the Caesars put together! All history substantiates their claim. Every philosopher and potentate of their time had to recognize them so that Peter, Paul, James, John and in their degree all of these men, and many of their immediate successors, became the mightiest Powers even in a heathen empire.

Some teach that the great mark of the resurrection was the empty tomb. People travel thousands of miles and spend, annually, untold millions of dollars to get to see that empty tomb in Jerusalem. But the disciples NEVER REFERRED TO IT! They did not need an empty tomb, for **they themselves** were the witnesses and the *proof*! Christ was alive *in them*! The very same power and authority which He had manifested for three and a half years before His crucifixion was now manifested mightily through these men upon whom had come HIS RESURRECTION LIFE! After healing the lame man at the gate of the temple, Peter was called before the Sanhedrin and the record states, "And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, By what power, or by what name, have ye done this." Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, "Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel, if we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole; be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, WHOM GOD RAISED FROM THE DEAD, EVEN BY HIM doth this man stand before you whole!" (Acts 4:7-10).

The proof of the resurrection of Jesus Christ was in the very fact that HIS POWER had made this man whole! God wants a people *today* who have the evidence of the resurrection *in their lives*. The resurrection of Jesus is not a historical fact to be *commemorated*, but a present and eternal reality to be *demonstrated*! The church system did not begin to celebrate Easter until they first had lost the dynamic of the Christ *in them*. When the resurrection is the power of our lives we need no day, no sunrise service, no egg hunts, hats, or Easter bunnies to remind of it! Those are all the dead works of lifeless religion provided for those people who have no life within themselves. Every son of God has repented of such carnal-minded religious observances! Miracles are not the only, or major, proof of the Christ-life within us. The spirit of Christ, the nature of Christ, the mind of Christ, the love of Christ, the wisdom of Christ, the righteousness of Christ, the will of Christ, the faith of Christ — all these and much more are the infallible proof of HIS RESURRECTION LIFE!

When Jesus appeared to Saul of Tarsus on the Damascus road, the record states, "And when we were all fallen to the earth, I (Saul) heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And I said, Who art Thou, Lord? And He said, I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest. But arise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister **and a witness** both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which **I will appear unto thee**" (Acts 26:14-16). Years after this Paul wrote to the Galatians and said, "But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by His grace, TO REVEAL HIS SON IN ME, that I might *preach Him* among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood" (Gal. 1:15-16). The preaching of the Son of God was not merely through the words Paul spoke stating that he had seen the Lord, but the preaching or proclaiming of the Son was through the REVELATION OF THE SON in Paul's life! "TO REVEAL HIS SON IN ME, that I might preach Him..." Paul had the evidence of the resurrection in his life and this evidence transcended anything he could tell about what happened to him one day on the Damascus road.

This is RESURRECTION MANIFESTED! This is RESURRECTION DEMONSTRATED! Little wonder that Paul could say, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but **Christ liveth in me**: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by **the faith of the Son of God**" (Gal. 2:20). Ah, no, the empty tomb is no proof of Christ's resurrection! The Jews claimed that His disciples had stolen Jesus' body and hidden it. Even sweet Mary, when she arrived at the tomb, was unconvinced by the rolled away stone. To the one she supposed to be the gardener she said, "Sir, if thou have borne Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take

Him away" (Jn. 20:15). Nobody paid any attention to the empty tomb for more than three hundred years after the resurrection! You could take all the billions of people who live today on this planet, and the billions who have lived and died in all the generations past, march them past the empty tomb and it would mean nothing at all to them. There is no credible evidence or power in that empty tomb! Creation is not standing on tiptoe waiting to view the empty tomb, my friend; creation is waiting, groaning, travailing to see CHRIST MANIFESTED IN ALL HIS GLORY, NATURE, AND POWER IN THE SONS OF THE RESURRECTION!

The second man, the last Adam, has been made a QUICKENING SPIRIT. Not a *quicken*ed spirit, but a **quicken**ing spirit. "And you hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins: and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places IN CHRIST JESUS: that in the ages to come He might **show** (exhibit, put on display) the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:1,6-7).

"If ye then **be risen with Christ**, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set you affection on things above, not on things on the earth. Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; sexual vice, impurity, sensual appetites, unholy desires, and all greed and covetousness, for that is idolatry. But now ye also put off all of these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; and have **put on the new man** which is **renewed** in knowledge **after the image of Him** that created him" (Col. 3:1-2,5,8-10). Truly it is "CHRIST IN YOU, the hope of glory!"

God is raising up a people in this new kingdom Day who shall be so filled with the resurrection life of Christ that they shall be changed even in the atomical structure of their bodies. The promise is sure — "But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead **dwelt (dwelt in union, as in a marriage) in you**, He that raised up Christ from the dead SHALL ALSO QUICKEN YOUR MORTAL BODIES **by His Spirit that dwelleth (in union, as in a marriage) in you!**" (Rom. 8:11). If merely having the Spirit of God in us would quicken our mortal bodies, millions of saints throughout the church age would not have gone by way of the grave, and many who read these lines would already have incorruptible bodies. But there is a truth and a reality beyond receiving the Spirit! The firstborn Son of God not only was filled with the Spirit without measure, He also *dwelt in union* with the Spirit, *as in a marriage*. The Spirit was LORD in Him, fully and completely LORD! When nothing else could hold Him but the life of the Spirit of His Father — THEN IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE FOR DEATH TO HOLD HIM! Oh, the mystery of it! Oh, the wonder of it!

Christ is ALIVE! Hallelujah! But don't talk about resurrection unless you have been raised up with Him. Don't talk about being glorified unless the glory is shining through your life! YOU are the only witness God desires to the resurrection of His Son. And with the resurrection life of God's Christ manifested through many sons brought to glory — *who in the world needs EASTER?* Thank God, the keys of death are in the right hands now, in the hands of the one the Father sent to set creation free. He is now turning those keys in the locks of the lives of His called and chosen elect. He is even now bringing a mighty release within each called one, that death might be swallowed up of victory, and mortality be swallowed up of life! There is a way of victory over every enemy provided for every man and woman who has received the call to sonship. The key is in His mighty hand, and HE IS WITHIN US UNLOCKING THE MYSTERY OF LIFE AND THE TREASURE HOUSE OF IMMORTALITY! It is not by might nor by power, my beloved, but by the Spirit of the Lord!

THOU ART RICH!

"I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, but *thou art rich...*" (Rev. 2:9).

The saints in Smyrna were exceedingly poor in this world's goods, for their possessions had been seized and confiscated from them under the severe persecutions of the Romans and the Jews. They were an oppressed and poverty-stricken people, yet the Lord says to them, "But thou art rich!" Great heavenly wealth and glory are reserved for those who attain to the fullness of God. Let none who reads these words imagine that heavenly wealth means a "mansion in glory-land" beside a gold street! Indeed not! Bill Britton once gave a beautiful illustration of what true heavenly or spiritual riches are. Bill wrote:

"The crucial verse in this message is found in II Corinthians 8:9. 'For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might become rich.' What a word! He was rich! What was it that made Him rich, before He became poor? Was it because He owned the cattle on a thousand hills? Of course not! He was rich before there were any cattle, or any hills to put them on. Was it because He was the owner of the Bank of Heaven?

"We so often have a perverted sense of what makes a man rich. Take for instance Mr. King. He owns a large business, and makes millions every year. He has so much wealth, he doesn't really know how much he is worth. He has an ulcer that is eating him up inside. He can't eat a decent meal. His wife is an alcoholic, has had a nervous breakdown, hates him with a passion, and would divorce him in a minute if she only had the courage. His son is in prison for manslaughter, having killed a child while driving drunk. His daughter is a heroin addict, living somewhere in a large city with drug pushers. Is he a rich man? Does all his money make him rich? He is, indeed, a very poor man!

" Let us take another example. Brother Green works as a janitor in Mr. King's business. His salary is small, and he has a difficult time paying the rent on the small five room house where his family lives. He is Spirit-filled, his wife adores him, and their five children are all saved and filled with the Spirit. Three of his sons are already in the ministry. Is he poor? He is one of the richest men in town!

"What made Jesus rich? It was the very *substance of what He was!* Philippians 2:6 (Amplified) tells us that He was 'essentially one with God and in the form of God, possessing the fullness of the attributes which make God God.' Yes, He was rich! But it goes on to say in the next verse that He stripped Himself of all this, and came to earth to be like one of us. He became poor. At the close of His earthly ministry, Jesus is praying to the Father in heaven. He says, 'I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify Thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was' (Jn. 17:4-5). Wow! He says here that He had a glory with the Father before the world existed, which He does not now have. He *was* rich. But when He stripped Himself (Phil. 2:7-8) He gave up that glory. Now He has something He did not have back then. A body, given to Him by His mother, Mary. Now He is asking for that glory again. It is to be glorified with the Father's own self, nothing less. Did He receive the answer to this prayer? Absolutely! God has highly exalted Him, every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess Him as Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

"Everyone will agree that Jesus was rich, one with the Father in glory. There is no question about Him becoming poor when He stripped Himself and came to earth in human flesh. But the scripture doesn't stop there! It goes on to say that He had a purpose in becoming poor. Why did He do it? Why did He leave His riches in glory, and become poor? 'That you through His poverty might be rich.' He did it to make *us rich!* How do you spell that second 'rich'? It's

spelled the same as the first 'rich' in that verse. R-I-C-H. And what does it mean? It means the same as the first 'rich', not just to give us a lot of money. Jesus was rich — He makes us rich! What made Him rich? BEING GLORIFIED WITH THE FATHER'S OWN GLORY! What makes us rich? Exactly the same thing! Ephesians 3:19 tells us that we are to be filled with ALL THE FULLNESS OF GOD!

"The plan of God is that we shall *inherit all things* (Rev. 21:7). We are to be *joint heirs* with Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:17). One of the things Jesus has *inherited* by being the Father's Son is the *Father's name* (Heb. 1:4). And the verse that says we are joint heirs, also says that we are to be *glorified together* with Christ. But I must share Romans 8:18 with you from the Amplified Bible: 'For I consider the sufferings of this present life are not worth being compared with the *glory* that is about to be revealed TO us, and IN us, and FOR us, and CONFERRED ON us!' The next verse says that all creation waits expectantly for God's sons to be made known. That must mean that they are not yet known, as long as creation groans and waits. In John 17 He tells us that He gives us His glory, the very same glory He had with the Father before the world was! At this time He has us covered, as it were, in obscurity.

"This is our destiny, planned for us by One who is well able to bring it about. He never promised us that we would not have suffering, pain, or grief. But He did promise that every suffering would bring us an incomparable amount of His glory! (Rom. 8:17-18; II Cor. 4:17). So don't complain about your situation or your circumstances, just look at His glory! To get a picture of the heights to which Christ is taking us, consider this divine principle: The lower Jesus sinks in His poverty, the higher He takes us in the riches of our inheritance! You are His chosen, His beloved, and He will see you through in victory, I promise. Just cast your care upon Him, for He cares for you. He loves you, more than you will ever know. He came to make you RICH!" — end quote.

I will close this message by sharing from a word received from brother Paul Mueller.

"If we ever might have wondered who *the great men of the world are*, the following prophetic word of the Lord surely settles it! 'Surely these are poor; they are foolish: **for they know not the way of the Lord**, nor the judgment of their God. **I will get me TO THE GREAT MEN, and will speak unto them; for they have known the way of the Lord**, and the judgment of their God' (Jer. 5:4-5).

"The great men of the world are not the wealthy, the prosperous, the leaders of business and industry, or the politicians and governmental leaders of this world; they are the saints of God who know the way of the Lord and who faithfully and obediently keep it! They shall be exalted in the heavenly courts of the Spirit by their omnipotent and sovereign Father, and eventually shall be heard and received by the multitudes of this world. They shall be given rulership positions in that great and mighty, all-encompassing kingdom of their Father, a spiritual position that they gained through much tribulation.

"During the reign of king David, after the Lord had given him rest from all his enemies, David expressed a desire to build a house for the Lord. The Lord then spoke to Nathan the prophet and gave him His word regarding David's desire to build a house for the Lord. The Lord questioned David's desire and reminded him that God had not dwelt in any house since He brought Israel out of Egypt, but had dwelt in tents or tabernacles. The Lord also informed David that it was God who took him from following the sheep, and who made him to be the ruler over His people, Israel. The Lord said He also was with David in battles, to cut off his

enemies, 'and have made thee a great name, **like unto the great men that are in the earth**' (II Sam. 7:1-9).

"The kings and priests of God are the great men of this world! Our Father has made them to be that by the authority and power of His kingdom reign and dominion. We may be mere sons of God now, but it does not yet appear what greatness we shall have when our Father has exalted us and made us to sit with Him on His heavenly, spiritual throne, with the masses of the nations at our feet worshipping the Christ of God, of whom we are a part. Other great men are listed in the eleventh chapter of the book of Hebrews! They, along with other God-appointed kings and priests, are the great men of this world. But I hasten to add that they are not just 'men' after the flesh; they are men and women of God who have kept the way of the Lord and who have become spiritually mature 'men' in the Spirit. They have become a part of that masculine *manchild*, the SON OF MAN company, whether male or female according to the flesh. They have been gloriously changed and wondrously transformed into the image and likeness of Christ, their blessed Savior, Head, Lord, and King" — end quote.

Chapter 38

The Church In Smyrna

continued

"I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say *they are Jews, and are not*, but are the synagogue of Satan" (Rev. 2:9).

"Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the *concision*. For *we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh*" (Phil. 3:2-3). This passage is taken from Paul's epistle to the Philippians. In the course of Paul's inspired admonition to the saints in Philippi he states, "Beware of the concision." The word "concision" is an ironical expression which means mere "mutilation," that is, to cut off an essential part of; to render imperfect; to maim; to cut up; to destroy. It refers to the ritual of circumcision.

Through the entire period of Paul's ministry, he constantly waged warfare against a class of believers known as Judaizers. These Judaizers were actually Jews who made it their business to follow around in the places where Paul had ministered, creep into the midst of the believers who were both Jews and Gentiles after the flesh, whom Paul had founded on the truth, and defile these believers by proclaiming error and persuading them that in order to truly please God they must be circumcised and keep the laws given to Israel. By so doing, the law became the rule by which they measured their righteousness! They were placing their confidence of righteousness in the works of the flesh, in external observances, the things which they could or could not do, rather than in the power of CHRIST'S INDWELLING LIFE.

We find the description of these Judaizers in the fifteenth chapter of Acts. They were from Judea (Acts 15:1). They were "Pharisees which believed" (Acts 15:5). They had belonged to the church at Jerusalem (Acts 15:24). They were, or had been, in fellowship with the twelve apostles. We learn these facts in Acts 15:1-2: "And certain men which came down from Judea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved...therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them." "But!" one may exclaim, "what possible harm could be done simply by being circumcised and keeping some tenets of the law?" In answer we hear the words of the apostle Paul, "Stand fast therefore in the *liberty* wherewith Christ has made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. Behold, I Paul say unto you, that IF YE BE CIRCUMCISED, Christ shall profit you **nothing**. For I testify again to **every man** that is circumcised, that he is debtor to do the **whole law**. Christ is become of **no effect** unto you, **whosoever of you** are justified by the **law**; ye are **FALLEN FROM GRACE!** For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but *faith* which worketh by *love*" (Gal. 5:1-6).

Those Judaizers who taught legalism, law, and works, were those of whom Paul spoke when he cried out, "Beware of the concision." Beware of the *concision!* Beware of the *mutilators!* Watch out for those who would mutilate your body by cutting off the foreskin of your flesh,

while in actuality they are mutilating, cutting off, and making maim your standing in Christ by grace, making your *faith void* and of *no effect* through trust in the righteousness of the law. For says the apostle, "Thy circumcision is made uncircumcision," and again, "circumcision is that of the *heart*, in the *spirit*, and *not* in the letter (law); whose praise is not of men but of God" (Rom. 2:25,29). How clear that our circumcision is *spiritual*, in the heart and spirit of the *inner man*; but if we put confidence in the flesh we then cancel out that which is spiritual, life, and reality!

The Philippian church most certainly consisted of both Jews and Gentiles. The first convert was Lydia, who was a Jewess (Acts 16:14). Then followed the case of the girl possessed with a spirit of divination. Paul cast out the spirit, and undoubtedly the girl was saved. In Acts 16:19-21 we learn that her masters were Romans, which means in all probability that the girl was also Roman. Then followed the conversion of the Philippian jailer, who most certainly was a Gentile. It is only reasonable to conclude that the greater part of the Philippian church was Gentile proselytes to Judaism or pagans, as were the other churches founded by Paul who was the apostle to the nations.

Now note carefully what Paul says to these believers, most of whom were Gentile converts. "WE are the circumcision!" And oh, that the Lord's people today might learn this simple, yet immensely important truth! "**WE** (both Israelite and Gentile) are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have NO CONFIDENCE IN THE FLESH!" (Phil. 3:3). It is high time for us to understand that natural birth has nothing at all to do with being of the circumcision, the called and chosen elect of God! Circumcision marks those who *are His*! And the only circumcision God recognizes is of the *heart*, in the *spirit*! "Except a man be *born again* he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." Natural lineage from the house of Judah, the house of Israel, or any other race or people has nothing whatever to do with making us the called and chosen elect of God! WE are the circumcision who have **no confidence** in the **flesh**! But we, Jew, Israelite, Gentile, rich, poor, free, bond, male, female, worship God *in the spirit* through the circumcision of our hearts by faith!

We might write for the next fifty years concerning the glorious truths of sonship and the kingdom of God, but no factor of this truth is more solemn or of greater import than the words of our Lord wherein He stated, "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth *nothing*" (Jn. 6:63). Notice that Jesus did not say that the flesh profits a little, or is the first prerequisite, or has a small advantage, or that the flesh gives you a head start towards sonship. Oh, no! He said plainly, "The flesh profiteth N-O-T-H-I-N-G!" It is vain and foolish to trust in the flesh, and John the Baptist put it rather succinctly, "And begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father..." (Lk. 3:8). So you have Abraham for your father! That fact isn't worth a hill of beans! That fact will not make you a son of God, it will not get you into the kingdom, nor will it enable you to inherit the promises! In order to qualify as the Israel of God we must be quickened by the Spirit of God, worship God in the spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, have a circumcision of our heart by the operation of God, and have no confidence at all in the flesh!

John went on to say, "for I say unto you, That God is able of these *stones* to raise up children unto Abraham!" Now let me ask you, precious friend of mine, if God is able of *stones* to raise up children unto Abraham, should it be thought a thing incredible or impossible or even implausible that He should of the *Gentiles* raise up seed to Abraham? Because men walk in the natural and are thus incapable of grasping spiritual realities, even though they may profess to be spiritual, we have on every hand those who think of Israel almost wholly on the natural plane. They think with carnal minds about Jews or the ten-tribed House of Israel. There are those even in this message of the kingdom who entertain the crude notion that unless you are

a fleshly member of the so-called lost tribes of the House of Israel, you cannot be a manifest son! I verily believe that there is sufficient evidence that the peoples of Northwestern Europe and their descendants pertain to the ten-tribed House of Israel which migrated across Europe from Assyria in ancient times. It's an interesting study!

I have, however, no hesitation whatever in saying to all who read these lines, the precious black brethren in Africa, the brethren in Latin America, Indonesia, India, the Philippines, and all the other nations, ethnic groups, and diverse cultures who cherish the beautiful hope of sonship — WE, ALL of us — whatever the color of our skin or our national identity — WE are the Israel of God! WE are the circumcision, who worship God in the spirit, and have **no confidence in the flesh!** WE are the kingdom of God, who have been **born from above!** WE are the kings and priests of His kingdom! WE are the elect! WE are the saviours coming up on mount Zion! WE are the many-membered Christ! WE are God's chosen people! WE are the sons of God! And it is not because of our national or blood lines, but altogether by grace through faith. "They which are of *faith*, the same are the children of Abraham." Do you believe it?

The Jews may certainly be of the people of the Old Covenant. That covenant has been abolished because the people broke that covenant! The Old Covenant is no covenant at all, for it has forever been *done away*. It has been nullified since Christ came and brought into the earth the new order of the Spirit! The only way *anyone*, Jew, Israelite, or Gentile can be in a *covenant relationship* with God is through the New Covenant. All other covenants have been voided! There is no other covenant but CHRIST!

All who partake of this circumcision of which Jesus is the minister, are the true Israel of God. And so, contrary to popular belief, the natural Jew is, in reality, no Jew at all! That is, if the word of God means anything at all! And it does. Hear ye! "He is *not* a Jew, which is one outwardly (in the flesh); neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he *is* a Jew, which is one *inwardly*, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter" (Rom. 2:28-29). The testimony is sure: He is NOT a Jew, which is one *outwardly* in the flesh! But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly, in the heart and spirit, REGARDLESS OF WHAT HE IS IN THE FLESH. That is the gospel truth. That is the New Covenant! The inner man of the new creation is unaffected by what a man is outwardly, in the flesh. He has no confidence in the flesh, but worships God in his spirit. And, I might add, he is NOT an Anglo-Saxon-Celtic Israelite, who is one *outwardly*, in the flesh! But he is an Israelite indeed, which is one inwardly, in the spirit. Do you believe it? (For an in-depth study of this subject you may request our booklet titled ABRAHAM'S BOSOM).

Those who say they are, and without doubt are, the natural descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; who call themselves Jews and Israelites are nothing more than counterfeits and frauds. The real Jew and the real Israelite is one who is truly of *the seed* of Abraham through faith. Not by natural blood, but by the transfusion of the blood (life) of the Christ, who Himself is *the seed* (singular) of Abraham! It is all by faith, the faith of Abraham. Therefore, all who call themselves the seed of Abraham, or the circumcision, or Jews, or Israelites, without being *born of the Spirit*, are bastards, or as our Lord said, "Ye are of your father the devil." Therefore the Lord says to His called out elect, the church in Smyrna, "I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, and I know the blasphemy of them which *say they are Jews, and are not*, but are the synagogue of Satan." Ah, now we UNDERSTAND! And again He says, "Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which *say they are Jews, and are not*, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before *thy* feet, and to know that I have loved *thee*" (Rev. 3:9).

In this present hour we hear much of the Jews who are outward in the flesh. A remnant of these outward Jews has returned to the land of Palestine over the past century and has carved out there the modern state of Israel. Many Christians speak ecstatically about the prophecies that are being fulfilled in relation to the Jewish nation. Many live in excited expectation of the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem and the reinstatement of the temple worship with its sacrificial offerings and ceremonial rituals of the law. Then follow the dire predictions of the rise of the antichrist who is supposed to make a covenant with the Jews, have the whole world at his feet, and sit AS GOD in that wonderful temple. Many people are feverishly working day and night for the salvation of the Jews. But I must tell you, my beloved, the return of the outward Jews, the formation of the state of Israel, the seizure of Jerusalem, the fervent prayers at the wailing wall notwithstanding, the counsel of God standeth sure, the truth is as absolute and incontrovertible as it was the day heaven breathed the revelation into the illumined mind of the apostle of Jesus Christ — HE IS N-O-T A JEW WHO IS ONE O-U-T-W-A-R-D-L-Y; BUT HE I-S A JEW WHO IS ONE I-N-W-A-R-D-L-Y!

Let us not have our understanding distorted. Many are loudly proclaiming that the ending of the church age heralds the beginning of THE SUPREMACY OF THE JEWISH STATE OF ISRAEL as the instrument of God's kingdom on earth for the next one thousand years. I tell you today by the Spirit of the Lord — *it won't happen!* Thank God that He shall, indeed, save the Jews! Thank God that He shall also save **all nations** as He pours out His Spirit upon all flesh! And so shall be fulfilled that which is written: "Look unto me, and *be ye saved*, ALL THE ENDS OF THE EARTH: for I am God, and there is none else. I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that unto me EVERY KNEE SHALL BOW, EVERY TONGUE SHALL SWEAR (ALLEGIANCE)" (Isa. 45:22-23). And again, "ALL NATIONS which Thou hast made shall come and WORSHIP BEFORE THEE, O Lord; and shall glorify Thy name" (Ps. 86:9).

I do not doubt for one moment that the Lord is regathering the house of Judah to the land of Israel for a day of *national salvation*. That does not mean, however, that they shall then occupy some favored position in the kingdom of God! Truly I say to you, it is not given to the outward Jews, who *say* they are Jews, but *are not*, to rule the world in righteousness, administer the affairs of God's kingdom on earth, and to bless all nations. They cannot circumvent the word of the Lord Jesus to them two millenniums ago! "Behold, your house (kingdom) is left unto you desolate. Therefore I say unto you, the kingdom of God shall be **taken from you**, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" (Mat. 23:38; 21:43). There will be a day for the Jews as a whole to know Jesus as their Lord and Saviour. What a day that will be! It will come through the ministry of the sons of God in glorious manifestation. It should be clear, however, to every spiritual mind that there is a world of difference between being *saved* and *ruling* as a son of God in the kingdom! Salvation is a *gift* of free grace; but the *high calling* of God in Christ Jesus is a *prize* to be won!

There are qualifications involved in winning the prize! "To him that *overcometh* will I give power over the nations." "To him that *overcometh* will I grant to sit with me in my throne." "If we *suffer with Him*, we shall also *reign with Him*." The Jewish people through two thousand years of God's dealing with His called and chosen elect have *never suffered with Him* nor have they *overcome*. They have suffered, rather, shame and disgrace and indignities of all kinds because of their rejection of Him! They reject Him still. They despise Him still. They hate Him, even today. They will not have "that man" to rule over them! They have flunked every test and missed every opportunity to *qualify* for world rule! Therefore they won't reign with Him. In the age and the ages to come they will not reign over anything. The fig tree is cursed. The Old Covenant is abolished. They were indeed *called* and *chosen*. But they were not *faithful!* "The

Lamb shall overcome them: for He is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with Him are *called*, and *chosen*, and *faithful*" (Rev. 17:14).

All that be Jews in spirit, inwardly, are breaking down the imaginations of their hearts, and the evil of their carnal mind, and their earthly wisdom, and their knowledge, and their understanding, and all the images and idols of their hearts, and all the foolishness of the religious church systems, by the *spirit of sonship* which God has given them, that they may offer to the Lord a sacrifice and an offering in His temple, which temple *ye are*. The Jews in the spirit are beyond and higher than all the outward Jews in the flesh and their outward offerings in their outward temple, and the offerings of the Jews in spirit render base and worthless all the outward Jews' offerings that be outward and carnal, to do that which is inward and spiritual.

The outward Jews ate of their natural offerings in the outward temple; and so the Jews in the spirit do eat of their offering, Christ, in their temple within, and of their sacrifices, and then they praise God in their temple. The outward Jews' lamp always did burn in their temple, and never went out; and they were to trim their lamps in their temple; so likewise the Jews in the spirit — their lamps of divine illumination and spiritual revelation, the *living word of God*, are never to go out, but always to burn in their temple; and they are to trim and dress them so that they become a *royal priesthood* unto God, always attending in the service of the Lord in the temple, morning and evening, offering in the spirit the nature of the Lamb without blemish in the temple: and so the Jews in the spirit are morning and evening offering in the Lamb's spirit, in their temple, which is their bodies, the life, glory, and victory of the Lamb of God! They shall eat of their Lamb in their temple until His incorruptible life is raised up in them fully and there is no more death!

There were priests to eat of the showbread in the outward temple, and the showbread was always to be in the temple on the table; and so the Jews in the spirit always have their fresh bread, the present truth and reality of God's word, in their temple, to eat of it; and they are a spiritual household, and a royal priesthood unto God. And the incense and the sweet odors were to burn in the outward temple; and so the Jews in spirit always have the odors of the fragrance of *His presence* and the incense of *their worship, praise, and prayers* in the spirit and by the spirit to burn in their temple. And the Jews in the flesh were not to touch anything, nor eat anything that was unclean; no more do the Jews in the spirit touch or handle anything of the flesh, the world, the devil, or the abominations of man's religion, but they *handle Christ* in the spirit, and *feed upon Him* in the spirit, who is pure, and holy, and clean, and eternal, who is the *bread of life*.

Under the covenant of the law they were not to touch the dead, if they did they were unclean; which is a figure to God's called and chosen elect that *walk in the Spirit*, they are not to touch the dead ways of the world, nor the death of the carnal mind, nor the dead body of the flesh, nor yet the dead doctrines, methods, programs and outward observance of the carnal church systems wherein is no life; but to touch CHRIST WITH THEIR SPIRIT and HIS LIVING FLESH which He has given for our life. Therefore those called to sonship do not touch any unclean thing, only the living and the clean, that which is *spirit* and that which is *life*; for the earth is corrupted with the dead carcasses of former moves of God from which His Spirit has fled, and His life departed, which have now become lifeless ministries; and the *flesh thereof* makes it stink, and the people smell thereof and are contaminated thereby. "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my *sons* and my *daughters*, saith the Lord Almighty" (II Cor. 6:17). "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues" (Rev. 18:4).

The Jews outward were not to follow and feed upon any offering but their own; and so the Jews in the spirit are to follow no offering but Christ, and feed upon Him who is their own. Christ is the altar that all offer upon that offer up to God spiritual sacrifices: which altar is in the temple of the body. And all who quench the spirit of Christ within themselves, or substitute some external thing for the inward anointing, and suffer not the life of the indwelling Christ to arise and live through them, are such as *watch the sepulcher of Christ*, and are afraid that Christ should *arise!* I firmly believe that it is time to leave the shadowy imperfect *outward* observances and ordinances of the old order church systems which are borrowed and brought over from the outward observances of the Old Covenant, and begin to lay hold upon those spiritual and eternal realities which belong to *the kingdom of God within us*. Truly I say unto you that all who live by anything other than *the Christ within* are indeed those of whom the Lord spake, those who say *they are Jews, but are not!*

THE SYNAGOGUE OF SATAN

"I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the *synagogue of Satan*" (Rev. 2:9).

Christians generally associate Satan with all the evil in the world and the gross sins of the flesh. This, however, is an error of significant proportions! Every time — as far as I have seen it written in the scriptures — Satan, the devil, that ancient serpent has to do with **religion** — with **spiritual** and **heavenly things!** At every turn this infamous creature is seen busily engaged in steering people away from the Spirit of God; hindering the Lord's people in their fulfilling the will of God; persecuting them because of their testimony; accusing them before God; deceiving them by transforming himself into an angel of light; and sifting, trying, testing them that they may be strengthened, purified, and perfected.

Satan works through the carnal mind, but the *spiritual realm* is his arena and *heavenly things* are his concern! Satan is not some hideous creature impishly stoking coals in the depths of the underworld. Oh, no! Satan is *religious!* Satan has a *synagogue!* Satan has a *pulpit!* Satan has a *church!* The church of Satan is not the one we hear so much about with weird rituals and midnight sacrifices under the full moon. This may seem strange to some who read these lines, but as we examine the scriptures in the light that the Spirit brings we see clearly the truth of it. We do not meet Satan anywhere in the scriptures in the blood and brutality of war, in desolating famine, in the drunken stupor of the barroom, in the sensuality of the harlot's house, at the scene of some dastardly crime, or in the midst of any other of the dark evils of mankind. Oh, no!

We meet Satan first in the lovely garden of Eden, the garden of the Lord's planting (Gen. 3:1). The next time we see him he is standing up against Israel, provoking David to disobey the Lord by numbering Israel (I Chron. 21:1-2). That was a *religious* act, the carnal mind seeking comfort in numbers, rather than total reliance upon the Lord! The third time we find Satan he is in the presence of all God's sons, presenting himself before the Lord, reporting for duty (Job 1:6-7)! Then he became the instrument of testing for righteous Job, which testing was initiated by the Lord, not Satan! In the Psalms Satan is an agent of God for judgment (Ps. 109:6-7). The last time we find Satan in the Old Testament he is standing next to Joshua (Jesus) the high priest, *resisting Him* in His intercession for Israel (Zech. 3:1-2). And that is *all* we read about Satan in the Old Testament! Interesting, isn't it? In the New Testament he first appears with Christ in the wilderness, quoting scripture, preaching his doctrine, just as he did with Eve in the garden (Mat. 4:1-11). Later, he is the instrument of God for the destroying of the flesh and carnality of believers who walk after the flesh (I Cor. 5:5; II Cor. 12:7). He transforms himself

into an angel of light (spiritual illumination) (II Cor. 11:14). Finally, he appears with an army of strong and mighty angels in heaven as the accuser of the Lord's brethren (Rev. 12:3-9).

You see, my friend, Satan is nowhere in scripture associated with pornography, sexual deviation, promiscuity, or any other dark sin of the flesh — Satan is always **RELIGIOUS!** Oh, yes, he is a murderer and a liar — but these activities are in a *realm of spirit*, not in the *works of the flesh*. Cain, the scripture says, was *of that wicked one* when he slew his brother Abel. But you see, that first murder was not committed as the result of an argument in a bar over a woman — it was about *God's acceptance or rejection of a sacrifice!* It was a *religious murder!* And Satan's first lie was not that he was "working late at the office" when in fact he was out with another woman — his lie was just this, "Hath God said? God doth know...you shall not surely die!" It is a religious lie, a *spiritual deception!* Satan lies about God! He lies about truth! He lies about God's purpose! He lies about *you!* He lies *to you* about heavenly things! He murders righteousness, He destroys faith, he kills love, he ravages hope, he disputes truth, he crushes obedience and tears down all that is godly and true in Christ Jesus!

The book of Genesis is probably the most important book ever written. The word "genesis" of course means *origin* or *beginning*, and the book of Genesis gives the only true and reliable account of the basic entities and conditions of the universe and of life. Genesis yields vital information concerning the *origin* of ALL THINGS — and therefore the *meaning* of ALL THINGS! Let every man know that in the whole of the universe there is no greater truth than this one sublime truth that THE FUTURE IS BOUND UP IN THE PAST. A man's belief concerning his origin will inevitably determine his belief about his purpose on earth and his eternal destiny.

The drama of Adam and Eve in the Garden is of supreme importance because it explains the real nature of our life here on earth. It is the portrait of ourselves, our state of being, and how we fashion the environment in which we live. It is the Creator's instruction manual on spiritual and psychological anatomy. When you thoroughly understand the teaching of the garden of Eden you will understand the nature of God, the nature of man, and the nature of Satan! This parable is placed at the outset of human history and in the opening scenes of God's divine record because it is the *foundation* of all understanding, the *blueprint* of man's experience on earth and his destiny in God.

Adam and Eve in the Garden represent the whole of humanity in the first Adam. They represent you and me and every man and woman who has ever lived or shall live. What happened to them happens to us. What they were we are. Their experience is our experience. Their destiny is our destiny. May the mighty spirit of wisdom and revelation from God give enlightenment to the eyes of your understanding that you may see and know of a truth that what was happening to Adam in the Garden speaks of *spiritual realities* even in the beginning of history, before history, beyond history, and yet in history; it is *we ourselves* of whom the Garden speaks, it is *we ourselves* that are confronted, intended, addressed, accused, expelled, instructed, and redeemed. God Himself is the one who blesses and curses! It is *our* pre-history, truly our own. It is the beginning, innocence, testing, guilt, redemption, and perfection of every one of us. What happened to Adam there is what is happening to us here! Adam and Eve stand for *what* man is, *how* man is, *why* man is.

You would have thought Adam would have had to leave the Garden and go out into outer darkness in order to find Satan. But no! Satan was in the garden of God! What was the serpent doing when Eve met him that fateful day so long ago? Eve did not meet the serpent in a bar — enticing her to get drunk. She did not meet the serpent at a strip-joint — inviting her to become

a nude dancer. It was not in the form of a handsome, smooth talking hunk that Satan appeared — tempting her to lust and seducing her to commit adultery. He did not come out of a criminal world to enlist her in a gang of bank robbers, swindlers, or drug runners. Eve wasn't tempted that day to cuss, smoke, carouse, lie, cheat, or steal. Oh, no! The gross sins of the flesh were in no way involved in Satan's activity, man's sin, or his fall! What, then, was Satan doing? Why, bless your heart, he was **preaching!** The very first appearance of that ancient serpent was at a **religious meeting!** The discussion was not wine, women, and song — the discussion was about THE WORD OF GOD! It was about SPIRITUAL THINGS! The subject, in fact, was SONSHIP! "Hath God said?" the serpent hissed. "God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof your eyes shall be opened, and *ye shall be as gods!*" "Ye shall be as ELOHIM!"

Later we meet Satan in the book of Job. It isn't in the smoky atmosphere of the underworld that we encounter a fiendish, mocking Satan gleefully stoking the fires of hell while sending forth his imps to incite Job to lust, cheat, kill, lie, and steal. Rather, we read, "Now there was a day when the *sons of God* came to present themselves before the Lord, and *Satan came also among them*" (Job 1:6). Satan was among the sons of God in the *presence* of the Lord! No Al Capone or Charles Manson here! Satan appeared, not in the lowlands of the flesh, but in a high realm of the spirit!

What Satan wrought against Job was instigated and ordained by the Lord who carefully marked the bounds of the adversary's activity. Job was no baby saint, for no one less than God Himself had given testimony that Job was a perfect and upright man, one that feared God and eschewed evil! God had blessed this man with great wealth and a large family. He had seven sons and three daughters. He owned seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she-asses. His household was very great with many hired servants so that this man was the greatest of all the men of the east. The thing we want to note is that although Job was wealthy in temporal things, rich in spiritual things, and proclaimed *perfect* by the Lord Himself, he had not been "tried by fire" as sons of God must be — he was as yet UNTRIED, UNTESTED, and UNPROVEN. He was just like Adam and Eve in the Garden! He walked with God in the spirit, but was yet *innocent*.

In the midst of Job's ordeal of affliction and suffering the spirit of prophecy came upon him and he opened his mouth and spake concerning the purpose of God in it all, declaring, "But He knoweth the way that I take: *when He hath tried me*, I shall come forth as gold" (Job 23:10). Never do I cease to be amazed at how the preachers and teachers, apparently without exception, join their voices in unison with those of Job's contemptible comforters, indicting and blaming poor old Job, charging that God brought all these calamities upon him because he had sin in his life, or because he was self-righteous, or because of some other appalling fault in Job. The only reliable testimony we have of Job's true state of being is that spoken by the Lord Himself, and HE declared that Job was a PERFECT MAN! Perfect, yes; but untried! His perfection remained to be tested, proven, and demonstrated.

Now, what does God do but deliberately hand this perfect and upright man into the hands of Satan to do his worst upon him, only that he should not touch his life. It was because that God desired to *test* Job that He brought forth "the smith to blow upon the fire." Please note that it was not Satan's idea to persecute poor old Job! It was God Himself who brought up the subject! There Satan was, presenting himself before the Lord, appearing for duty, if you please, and God asked, "Where have you been?" Satan replied, "Walking up and down in the earth." "Well, Satan," the Lord asked, "have you considered my servant Job? Have you noticed that he fears God and eschews evil? Have you noticed that, Satan?" You can be assured, dear ones, that Satan *had* noticed Job, but he wasn't doing anything to him.

"Doth Job fear God for naught?" Satan retorted. "Hast Thou not made a hedge around him and about his house and about all that he hath on every side?" Praise the Lord! Yes, truly there is a hedge around the elect of God, and that hedge is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. The Psalmist recognized and rejoiced in this fact when he said, "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, HE IS MY REFUGE and my fortress: my God, in Him will I trust" (Ps. 91:1-2). "You've put a hedge around him," Satan said, "and I can't get to him!" Then he went on to say, "You must put forth **Thine hand** and touch all that he hath, and he will curse Thee to Thy face." But the Lord, who searcheth the reins and the heart, who knoweth them that are His, knows who can be trusted with affliction, and will not allow any to be tested beyond what they are able to bear. He therefore said to Satan, "Behold, all that he hath is in thy power — in thy hand — only upon himself put not forth thine hand." Later the Lord expanded the area of Satan's activity and permitted him to touch Job himself, only he must spare his life. With lightning swiftness the misfortunes fell as tribulation and affliction smote this man of God. All hell broke loose upon him! His possessions were gone. His servants were gone. His cattle, his family, and his dwelling place were as though they had never been. And now he was desperately ill, tormented with pain, and without even a bed to sleep on he lies down in the ashes of what was once his beautiful home to listen to the relentless arguments of his friends, monotonously attempting by lengthy speeches to make a fool of him and prove that his present despair was the result of his own sin and disfavor with God.

In one tragic day all Job's earthly wealth and glory had vanished as a mist before the rising sun. But did Job curse God for all this calamity? Did he even blame the devil? Was he a fair weather saint without spiritual understanding? No, indeed! He rent his mantle, shaved his head, and falling upon the ground, he **WORSHIPPED GOD** with the unmistakable words of reverence, "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: THE LORD GAVE, AND THE LORD HATH TAKEN AWAY; BLESSED BE THE NAME OF THE LORD!" Ah, Job *knew* God! He therefore *knew* that in spite of all the external evidence, in spite of how terrible and hopeless things appeared, God had *not* forsaken him, God *did* love him, God *did* see him, God was *concerned* about what happened to him, God was *in control* of everything, God had *purpose* in it all, and God was *just*. Being a perfect man Job understood the nature of God, the ways of God, he knew what God is like — how He is. Armed with this knowledge he was unshakable and unmovable as the hand of Satan moved against him. God won the contest! Job came out the victor! And Satan was defeated!

The great and wonderful truth is just this. Satan was not a wild, mischievous, uncontrollable, psychotic thug running loose around the earth wrecking violence, pestilence, destruction and death on whomsoever he would. The issue here was not a mad, malicious, hateful devil indiscriminately doing horrible things to anyone he decided to attack. That's not it at all! Satan was on a *spiritual mission* — he was the instrument of *testing*, on behalf of God, of a *son of God!* This was a spiritual battle! This had nothing to do with the gross sins of the flesh. The whole scene is set in a high realm of the spirit! Oh, yes, Satan is — **religious!**

When Jesus came in the flesh, He came into a world steeped in religion. He came into a condition brought about by centuries of teaching the law and the rites and sacrifices of the temple worship. Into this had been woven the traditions of the elders, an accumulation of those same centuries. It had come to include also the washing of pots and cups, together with ceremonies of washing of hands before eating and a multitude of other practices imposed upon the people by their leaders. The temple in the city of Jerusalem was the symbol of all this to the people. Their whole life revolved around that building and the rites and sacrifices the

priests offered in it. It was the sacred spot of the nation and of all Jews wherever they were in the world. Every Jew had that one desire to go to Jerusalem and worship.

This system of religion was imbedded in the lives of the people, and had been for long centuries. It had become a part of their life and they endured it all with the hope perennial within their hearts that some day the Messiah would come and lift not only this yoke, but that of the Roman empire as well. But when the Messiah came, they did not recognize Him. For here was all this great mass of law, ritual, and Pharisaical teaching and tradition, while the Messiah was but an unknown man, of almost unknown origin. Jesus brought a new and revolutionary way of life! It was a way of *believing*, and not a way of *doing*. It was faith in the Christ and right relationship with God in the spirit and did not consist in the doing of anything, or the keeping of external observances. It was simplicity in the highest degree, set up against organized worship of the highest degree. The revolutionary way of life which Jesus brought to the people was in exact and complete opposition to the bondage under which the people now found themselves.

The people were constantly taught and instructed that they must observe all the things the priests and Pharisees told them, or they would perish. Jesus came into their midst and said that all those things would do them absolutely no good whatever, but if they wanted *life* they should *come unto Him and drink* — merely by *believing into Him!* He was placing the Christ and faith in the Christ against all the accumulated traditions of the nation. He was assuring them that they would NOT LOSE A SINGLE THING by coming unto Him, and casting all else away from them. And they would gain *life!* But who could hear such a thing in the day of Christ! In fact, Jesus Himself said that no man could come unto Him, except the Father who had sent Him, would draw that man. It is just as true today! Ah, beloved, should you go into any church on any Sunday and say to the people, "If you will cast aside all your forms, all your traditions, all your rituals, all your ordinances, all your programs, all your cherished and time-honored creeds, all your solemn assemblies, all your myriad activities, all your committees, and SIMPLY COME UNTO THE CHRIST AND BELIEVE INTO HIM AND DRINK OF **HIM**, YOU WILL LOSE NOTHING, but you will gain the glorious and eternal *reality* of God forevermore," what kind of reception would you receive? You would actually be asking the people to give up *everything they are doing* and all the *things* they have been given by their ministers and church orders with which to serve and worship God — exchanging it all for GOD ALONE! What an unbearable burden it would be for the people to be REDUCED TO GOD! What an unspeakable loss it would be to possess *nothing* but GOD HIMSELF! You would find this an almost impossible thing to accomplish. Truly, Christ has been usurped by — **RELIGION!**

But go with me now into that long ago when Jesus walked the dusty roads with His disciples. He had asked the twelve who they thought He was. Peter promptly answered, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God!" And Jesus said to him, "Peter, flesh and blood did not reveal this unto you, but my Father which is in heaven." In other words, "This understanding didn't come from your fleshly mind. You didn't think this up by yourself. This is not the result of your own reasoning. This came into your spirit from my Father." So remarkable was this revelation to Peter that the Lord said to him, "*Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona!*" So here we have an instance of the Father working in Peter, imparting His thoughts and understanding to him.

Only minutes later Jesus began to introduce to Peter the subject of His coming suffering and death. The possibility of the death of their beloved Lord was a prospect so foreign to the thinking of the disciples that they were not prepared to comprehend His presentation of this unspeakable fate. Was He not the Messiah? Was He not the Son of God? Did He not come to establish a great kingdom? Were not they, His disciples, to reign with Him in that kingdom? With these questions in mind this talk of *death* was unthinkable and unacceptable!

Then Peter, who had just been pronounced *blessed*, took Him, and began to rebuke Him, saying, "Be it far from Thee, Lord: for this shall not be unto Thee!" Ah, when Jesus mentioned the cross and dying, Peter began to rebuke Him. Where did he find the senseless courage that would *dare* to *rebuke* the Lord? The answer was disturbingly evident — far, far too clear to be a comfort to any of us! The Lord Himself gives us the answer, for, He turned and said to Peter, "Get thee behind me, **Satan!** Thou art an *offense* unto me; for thou savorest not the things that be of *God*, but those that be of *men*." What a shocking way to talk to the great apostle Peter, the one possessing the revelation of Christ's identity, the one called blessed, the one to whom the Lord had just given the keys to the kingdom of heaven! Atrocious to say to this man of deep revelation and keen spiritual perception, "Thou savorest *not* the things that be of God, but those that be of men!" Indeed, "Get thee behind me, S-A-T-A-N!" How unthinkable!

Hearing Peter's entreaty to the Lord, which of us would not have said that this was the language of genuine affection, tender solicitude, and loving concern? No doubt we would have chimed in with some hearty "Amens"! But Jesus replies, "Get behind me — SATAN!" And our Lord was not on a name-calling spree when He uttered these words. He never uttered words in vain, without a definite meaning. Jesus did not speak merely to Satan *in* Peter. Furthermore, He did not tell Peter that his words *sounded* like the words of Satan. He simply addressed Peter AS SATAN. Peter as Satan — on what basis? That he was demented, insane? That he was a medium, calling up spirits out of the nether-world? No — merely that he SPOKE AS A MAN! Is this not also what James was saying when he described the *wisdom of man* in these words, "If ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. THIS WISDOM descendeth not from above, but is EARTHLY, SENSUAL and D-E-V-I-L-I-S-H!" (James 3:14-15). Can we not see by this that the *wisdom of man put to spiritual things* is DEVILISH!

Speaking as a man about spiritual things! Speaking with carnal wisdom about heavenly realities! On the surface there doesn't seem to be anything wrong with what Peter said. It was a good, kindly thought. What was wrong with it was that it was the product of Self, it emanated from human sympathy and not from the heart of God. You see, my beloved, Self hates the *cross!* Satan despises the *cross!* Satan is religious, but in a perverted wisdom that refuses the will of the Father, substitutes for the reality of God, mimics the power of God, twists and distorts the truth of God, and supplants the life of God.

We blame war, drunkenness, murders, pornography, greed, crime, immorality, drugs, and a thousand other evils on Satan — yet the clear testimony of scripture is that these are all the "lusts of the flesh." They are *flesh!* On the other hand, Satan's activity is in a *religious realm*, in a *spiritual dimension!*

What a cunning deception has been foisted upon mankind as Satan has concealed his true identity in the dark shroud of **religion!** Jesus never once told the drunk in the gutter, the gluttonous feasters and reveling wine-bibbers with whom He ate and drank, the woman taken in adultery, the prostitutes, the greedy tax collectors, or the man full of demons, that they were of their father the devil. Not one sinner did He ever accuse of being a child of the devil! He reserved that dishonorable distinction for the **religious leaders!**

In the twenty-third chapter of Matthew we read the sternest words that ever fell from those blessed lips. He calls those to whom He speaks — the men of the most rigid religious correctness, men of the highest social respectability, of the greatest formal piety and religious pretension; not merely "church members" as we should now call them, but the officers, deacons, elders, clergymen, superintendents, priests, bishops, archbishops, cardinals, popes

of that day, "*fools and blind,*" "*blind guides,*" "*hypocrites,*" until, in the climax of His holy indignation, He says, "*Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell!*" It is, then, the testimony of scripture, whether we are prepared to accept it or not, that it is the proud, religious character that is a truer expression of the Devil's work amongst men than the openly profane and morally debased.

Oh, yes, Satan is religious! He loves to enter into the arena of men's souls and control and manipulate men's thinking, understanding, and activity. Truly spiritual aims are geared toward unleashing the power of the new man, the inner son, the man of the spirit. Satanic aims are geared toward development of the soul. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil (the earliest doctrine of Satan) is a compendium of rules, doctrines, religious exercises tailored for the soulical man and utilized by the carnal mind that wants only to be told what to think and what to do, and to do it with great external flourish and pomp. All of this becomes the core of a religious experience and practice built on fantasy, myth, folklore, tradition, program, pageantry, ceremonies, rituals, works — everything except the power and life of the spirit! This is **religion** — and religion is the **synagogue of Satan!**

Satan in tempting, baits his hook with religion. He can hang out Christ's flag and tempt to sin under pretenses of piety. Sometimes he is the white devil of the so-called "white witches," or the "Great White Brotherhood," or the "Masters of the Far East," or of the popular church systems of man as he transforms himself into an **angel of light**. Celsus wrote a book full of error, and he entitled it, *Liber Veritatus*, The Book of Truth. So Satan writes the title of religion upon his worst temptation. He comes to the firstborn Son of God with scripture in his mouth! "It is written!" he thunders. That is the same as saying, "The Bible says!" But just because the Bible says something doesn't make it *truth* if what you are saying from the Bible is slanted, distorted, mis-applied, or merely the *letter* of the word. Thus Satan wraps his poisonous pills in sugar. Who would suspect him when he comes as a divine and quotes scripture!

In the temptation of Jesus we discover this wily adversary coming upon the firstborn Son of God with Bible in hand. Just as in Eden, he is still *preaching!* He preached to the first Adam, and now he is preaching to the last Adam. And in all those thousands of years the subject hasn't changed! Satan is still preaching SONSHIP! "It is written!" — this was the glittering weapon, the fiery dart, the master-stroke, just as when he said to Eve, "Hath God said? God doth know..." "If Thou be the Son of God, command these stones to be made bread." "It is written!" He thundered as he offered the kingdoms of earth to Jesus if he would bow to the shrewd worldly wisdom of the adversary outlined in His mind by which He could have conquered even the might of the Roman empire. An easy way to popularity was pointed out — it was suggested that He cast Himself from the pinnacle of the temple. That would prove His sonship! No harm would come to Him for God had promised to send His angels to care for Him. A son is invincible! And the multitude, amazed, would follow Him. What gave immeasurable force to the adversary's suggestions was his appeal to the awful authority of God's word. He cast about the things he offered the glow of divine approval. He enforced his ideas with the sacred sanction of the scriptures. It was with the Bible in hand that he approached the Son of man. It cast about him such an holy air! He is no stranger to the scriptures, for he is the oldest, most accomplished *preacher*, from the dawn of history! When Satan deals with God's called out and chosen elect, obviously, he must meet such a one upon the high plane on which he lives. He could get nowhere by suggesting the gross sins of the flesh to one separated unto God. It must be through the Word! It must be through a twisted, distorted, perverted word!

It is time to stop, look, and listen. What testings and provings, what strippings and purgings, those called to sonship have been passing through! The ultimate test for God's sons will not be in the bar or in the bed. The ultimate test for God's sons will not be in the church systems of man! The Lord has wonderfully purged us from these! They hold nothing for us anymore. I can testify to you that the religious systems hold nothing for me! I am not tempted in that realm. My spirit loathes them all with intensity. But there is a realm, a realm high in the spirit, a realm reserved for the sons of God — and before any of us step out of our wilderness to appear as a manifest son of God in the earth, we will meet Satan there in that high realm of the spirit. We will encounter the dragon in the heights of God's heaven! There in your own wilderness Satan will draw you into his synagogue. He will be preaching from his pulpit in his synagogue, the synagogue of Satan. He will be preaching to YOU! The subject will be SONSHIP! "If thou be the son of God..." "Hath God said? Why, God doth know..."

Satan will bring a word to you that *sounds* so plausible, so *deep*, so *spiritual*, so *divine*, that apart from the discernment of the spirit it would seem that it just *must* be the word of the Lord! It has to be the *very highest Truth!* We hear a great deal today about many wonderful things, but I tell you, my beloved, there is but a very *fine line* between the highest truth and the darkest error — between sonship to God and our own Self-godhood — a godhood outside of true blood-bought redemption and the quickening of *our spirit* by the *Holy Spirit*. How closely the *angel of light* resembles the "*glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ!*" That is where the ultimate test lies, beloved, in the highest realm of the spirit, embedded in the sublimest of all truth and the depths of the knowledge of God. This *final* test is a dimension so awesome, so terrible, so transcendent in the counsels of God that *no one but a son indeed* can perceive the truth of the matter, and respond as Jesus did, out of the heart of the Father, "It is written!" Don't think you will escape that one, my friend. Adam didn't. Jesus didn't. And neither will we.

A lifetime of walking with God has taught me that my greatest safety is in my *relationship* with the Father, in *knowing the heart of God*. It was in knowing the Father that Jesus gained the victory over His greatest, supreme, and final test. Satan knew the scriptures, but Jesus knew the Father! To *know* Him is to be *like* HIM! The Father's name, the Father's nature is being written upon all those holy sons of God who are partaking of the mind of Christ. His word is *spirit*, His word is *life*, and His life is the *power* to cast the dragon out of our heavens! The sons of God shall prevail!

"And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found anymore in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan...and I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, *Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ!*"

Chapter 39

The Church In Smyrna

continued

" I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the *synagogue of Satan*" (Rev. 2:9).

There is a sharp contrast between the "synagogue of Satan" and the "church of God." Just what is this "synagogue of Satan"? Those of the synagogue of Satan were not the true church, but of the false church. Now the word for synagogue is not the same word we use for church. In the scriptures, church means the "called out ones" or the "summoned ones." The Psalmist said about these elect people, "Blessed is the man whom THOU CHOOSEST, and CAUSEST to approach unto Thee, that he may dwell in Thy courts" (Ps. 65:4). But the meaning of synagogue is "assembly" or "gathering." This can be good or bad, but in this case it is bad, for these are they whose assembling is not of God but of their own selves. Isaiah said of them, "Behold, they shall surely gather together, but NOT BY ME: whosoever shall gather against thee shall fall for thy sake" (Isa. 54:15).

The two names, "Satan" and "Devil" are employed in the book of Revelation with correctness and precision. "Satan" means *adversary*, that which is *against* or *opposed to*. "Devil," on the other hand, means *slanderer* or *accuser*. To the people of God, that ancient serpent, which is the Devil and Satan, is **both!**

Now let us look at the typical setting and background of this term "*synagogue of Satan*." In the days of ancient Israel, the priesthood at Jerusalem was the accepted spiritual authority. Then in 586 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem, demolished the great temple of Solomon, and carried the Jews into exile in Babylon. With their temple and their priesthood gone, the Jews found themselves in strange new communities where they formed voluntary assemblages for common worship and study of the law. These congregations were called *synagogues* or *assemblies*. This institution proved so valuable that it has been continued to this day. It also provided the basic pattern for the churches which, after Paul, the Christians set up and developed along more organized lines. Among the Jews, however, the synagogue has survived in its pristine form. Any ten adult male Jews today can establish a congregation. The congregation's rabbi is a teacher, not a priest. He has no ecclesiastical authority except as an expounder of the law. In fact, he is not even necessary to the functioning of the synagogue. Any male Jew with sufficient knowledge of the prayers and the laws can conduct a religious service.

Thus, the synagogue is an "assembly" of Jewish people, just as the church is thought of today as an "assembly" of believers in Jesus Christ (although that is not the real meaning of church!). The synagogue of Satan is, therefore, the *assembly of the adversaries, opponents, slanderers, and accusers!* Those of the synagogue of Satan are the opponents of the Truth and the slanderers of the spirit of Christ! Everyone and everything, especially every *religious* thing that

stands in opposition or resistance to the spiritual life of your inner son is truly of the synagogue of Satan!

Remember, my beloved, the term "synagogue of Satan" is a *type*, a *symbol* in the book of Revelation! The *type* is found in the persecutors of the early believers — preeminently the Jews. Among all the stormy, fiery declarations of condemnation and judgment found in the letters to the seven churches, none is more striking than the Holy Spirit's identification of the "synagogue of Satan." The synagogue of the Adversary! He doesn't call the temple of Bacchus the synagogue of Satan. He doesn't call the temple of Diana the synagogue of Satan. He doesn't call the temple of Zeus the synagogue of Satan. Only the Jews had a *synagogue*! Religion that *opposes* the Spirit of God, the purpose of God, the truth of God, and the kingdom of God is the adversary of God, and the system, temple, synagogue, or assembly of those adversaries is simply the "synagogue of Satan."

Permit me to point out the apostle Paul's incredible indictment of his own former activities in the religion of Judaism. "For ye have heard of my manner of life in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it: and profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers" (Gal. 1:13-14). "Though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might have confidence in the flesh, I more: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless" (Phil. 3:4-6).

That was the same spirit of Judaism that operated in Smyrna! The church in Smyrna was bitterly opposed by the Jews of the city, who prided themselves on being God's chosen people. Actually, they were the tools of Satan, the organized religious opposers, persecutors, and condemners of those who were the Lord's people after the spirit! The synagogue which had once served as the springboard for the preaching of the gospel, fast became the bitter enemy of the new church. Throughout the world in the days of the early church the Jews moved against the believers with lies and malice. When Paul was preaching in the synagogue in Antioch we read, "And the next Sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God. But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming" (Acts 13:44-45).

The accusations against the believers were so devilish, and the smears so insidious, that the believers were styled as the dregs of society and blamed for every tragedy and disaster that struck. "But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people" (Acts 17:5). The Jews worked with cunning, even inciting the normally tolerant Roman government to attack the new religion. The Jewish-Roman cartel instigated the wholesale slaughter of those who followed Jesus.

The Roman empire made politics a religion. The Emperor was proclaimed to be a god to whom homage was to be given. Throughout the Roman empire people were free to worship any god or as many gods as they desired. There was freedom of religion. But all subjects of the Roman empire were required to recognize Caesar as Lord and God over the Empire. In essence what they did was once a year all the people would come with a small pinch of incense and all that was required was that they cast it into a fire and say, "Caesar is Lord!" The cities recognized this merely as a political exercise, you were simply saying that Caesar is Lord, and that means

that he is Lord or Ruler over the Empire. When one fulfilled his annual obligation in the worship of Caesar, he was given a treaty which granted him the right for the next year to worship any god or gods in any religion he chose.

For the believers in Jesus this was a problem! They could not acknowledge anyone as LORD other than Jesus Christ! For them Jesus had been raised up and given all power in heaven and in earth, principalities and powers being made subject to HIM. He is King of kings and Lord of lords, the Prince (ruler) of the kings of the earth! The Christians were renegades. They were rebels. All they needed to do was throw some incense into the fire and repeat the words, "Caesar is Lord," and a bill or decree was given to them releasing their family. For the year they could go back home and worship Jesus all they wanted to!

What did it mean to be an enemy of Rome? It meant that if anybody turned you in, all your property and possessions could be confiscated — Rome got 90% of what you owned and the person that turned you in got 10%. So the city was filled with informants and bounty hunters. Let me tell you who the informants were. The informants were the Jews! The Jews went looking for Christians. They would often infiltrate church services. They would sit there during the praise and worship and ministry of the word, all the while making a note of the best dressed and most prosperous looking people. They would spot those who had possessions; after the meeting they would get their names and go report them to the government as rebels against the Empire. Soon government officials would appear at their home or business; if they could not produce their treaty they would then confiscate their property in the name of the Empire, and the informant was paid his ten percent.

The above is the historical background behind the Lord's words to the church at Smyrna, "I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan." Great poverty was in the church at Smyrna. For a person to confess Jesus Christ as Lord meant not only that they committed their life to Him, but they could lose all of their property, business, and possessions. One of the ministers in the church at Smyrna was one of the most famous of the church in those early years, a man by the name of Polycarp, who had been a disciple of John who wrote the book of Revelation. His story has come down to us because of his unswerving faithfulness to the name of Jesus — even unto death. He refused to burn incense to Caesar or to confess him as Lord.

Because of his gentle and kindly spirit the Roman officials entreated him, "What harm can it do you to sacrifice to the emperor? Have pity on your great age." Upon his repeated refusal Polycarp was taken to the coliseum, where an official said, "Swear, curse Christ, and I will set you free." The serene Polycarp replied as he was led to the stake to be burned, "Eighty and six years have I served Christ, and He has never done me wrong: how, then, can I curse Him, my King and Saviour?" Having resisted every promise and threat, which they hoped would cause him to recant, it was announced, "Polycarp confessed himself a Christian." This was the signal for death! And renegade Jews from "the synagogue of Satan" with pagan Gentiles, rushed in fury to gather the firewood for his cremation. Taking his place in the midst of the fuel, Polycarp assured them that it was unnecessary to chain him, and the fire was kindled. His suffering was prolonged by a high wind that blew the flames aside, and he was at length executed by the executioner's sword.

Incredible as these facts are, the truth is that the Jews, persecuting the early believers, are *not* the synagogue of Satan! They are merely the *type*, the *symbol*! Never forget, dear ones, the book of Revelation is a book of *symbols*! Spiritually, the Jews in Smyrna were not the synagogue of Satan. What they *represent* is the synagogue of Satan! They remind us of

people today, as well as thoughts, ideas, and spirits right within ourselves, which oppose God's spirit, God's message, God's will, God's work, and God's people *in the name of religion*. The synagogue of Satan has always existed and is active in this day, although it changes form from generation to generation. It is the congregation of the *adversaries*, the congregation of the *opposers*, the congregation of the *slanderers*, the congregation of the *accusers* — both **within** and **without!** The opposition of religion against God's truth, God's Spirit, and God's elect is a synagogue of Satan — an adversary! That doesn't mean they are sinister or evil, for many of the people in the church systems today truly love God and think they are doing His will. They are just God's ordained "opposition party" to test and try His elect! Like the Jews of old, they just don't realize that GOD HAS MOVED ON! They have no idea that this is a new Day and God is doing a new and greater and more wonderful thing!

Satan is the adversary, the Devil is the accuser! When the great dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the Devil and Satan, is cast out of the spiritual heavens of our minds and consciousness and understanding, the scripture states, "And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the *power of His Christ*: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony" (Rev. 12:10-11).

There is only one accuser, only one — Satan. Of course he accuses us within ourselves as well as through religion. God is not bringing up your sins, your weakness, your failures, no matter who you are: you, me, Judas, or Hitler. If Jesus paid the penalty of your sins, He doesn't deal with your sins anymore, they are paid for and gone, taken away, the account is closed. "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and has committed unto us the word of reconciliation." What does that mean? It means that because of Jesus all men are free! And I have to accept that. I must now view all men in that light! I must bear the GOOD NEWS to them! If I then turn around and bring up somebody else's sins because I don't like them, or they did something against me, then I become their opposer from the synagogue of Satan. You see, the synagogue of Satan is not so much an institution as it is an **attitude!**

After a person is forgiven we cannot lay any charge against him. Nearly all Christians know John 3:16, but very few know, let alone live as if they believe, John 3:17: "God sent not His Son into the world to *condemn the world*, but that *the world, through Him, might be saved*." It's shocking! It's shameful! It's surprising how many of us think God would condemn us. Why? Where do we pick up these notions? GOD does not condemn people! If God was in the condemning business, He could have done that quite easily through Jesus when He sent Him to earth. With one omnipotent breath from His mouth He could have slain all the sinners and rebels! But He didn't. He spoke not a word against any sinner! *God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world.*

We find it difficult to understand such a loving reaction from a Holy God. We are often quick to find faults and shortcomings when we find someone falling short of our standards or expectations. When someone says they forgive you your trespasses, but they continue to remind you of them, they are preaching from the pulpit of the synagogue of Satan! Ah, God will not condemn any soul! I believe that with all of my heart! God has a great and unconditional and unfathomable love for every man! His only desire is to help, to bless, to deliver, to transform and make beautiful every life! He seeks to save *everyone!* He sees every person through those eyes of love and intense and yearning desire for them. He plans better and

greater things for every man, woman, and child in the world. Does that mean that nobody is punished? Not at all! Every man still reaps what he sows — in this world and in the world to come. But every man reaps what HE sows — not the condemnation and vindictive wrath of God preached by the churches! God does not condemn. He does not condemn us who are His children. He corrects us, purges and purifies us in love and everlasting faithfulness. But He does not *condemn!* Furthermore, He doesn't condemn **the world!** God is *not* a charter member of the synagogue of Satan — the Opposer!

The synagogue of Satan has many different denominations, divisions, departments, and operations. Some are without while others are deep on the inside of us. You know as well as I do that the church systems have always taught that the God of exacting justice and undiminished wrath must be appeased, soothed, turned aside from His furious vengeance, and that this feat can only be accomplished by the bold and insistent intercession of the compassionate SON, our wonderful Lord and elder brother, standing opposite Satan, before the judgment-throne of the Father, as our Advocate, our Lawyer, pleading our cause, beseeching God to be kind to us for His sake, to commute our sentence, and begging for our lives on the ground that He paid the price for the forgiveness of our sins. According to this crude hypothesis the anger of God can only be appeased by looking upon the bloody sweat and cruel, ugly death of His Son, as He stands there interceding for us.

I do not hesitate to tell you that such a teaching is utter rubbish and the brashest sort of nonsense! It springs from the Romish tradition that likens God the Father to a fearful and offended despot, spoiling for the blood of the offenders, and it makes Christ to be the one who pleads with God on behalf of the victim until the Father is consoled and placated. And if it weren't for our Advocate, Jesus, God would listen to the Devil's accusations and really lay it on to us. We could even lose our salvation because of the Devil's accusations, if it weren't that the merciful Jesus is there to prevent God from casting us into hell, by presenting His blood on our behalf. Such is a gross caricature of the truth! More than that, it is a stupid absurdity and a horrible blasphemy! It was GOD HIMSELF who *so loved* the world that He gave His only begotten Son that men might not perish! It was GOD HIMSELF that was in Christ, *reconciling the world* unto Himself, *not imputing their trespasses unto them!* It is GOD HIMSELF who *is love!* "Behold, what manner of *love* THE FATHER hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God" (I Jn. 3:1). Praise God, the Spirit is unfolding Truth in ever-increasing dimensions of glory which magnifies God's glorious nature of love and mercy, His wisdom and power, His goodness and the prudence of all His plans and purposes — completely and forever delivering us from the pews of the *synagogue of Satan!*

It is my conviction that not even Satan is senseless enough to believe that He could approach OUR FATHER and convince Him to condemn us because of our weaknesses and failures. Nowhere does the scripture state that Satan accuses the saints to God. What it *does* say is that "the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them **BEFORE** our God day and night" (Rev. 12:10). It is one thing to be accused **before**, that is, in the presence of, or in front of another person, and another thing altogether for the accuser to accuse us **TO** the other one. It should be abundantly evident that Satan does not accuse us **to** God, He merely accuses us **before** God. It is not the almighty and omniscient God, my brother, my sister, whom Satan wishes to convince of your unworthiness — it is **YOU!** Satan has no misconceptions about his ability to persuade God of your weakness and worthlessness, but if he can influence **YOU** to believe that you are unworthy of God's love and calling, that you cannot overcome to reign with Christ, that you are a failure, that you are hopeless, that it is impossible for you to attain to the High Calling of God in Christ Jesus, that it is beyond the realm of possibility for you to lay hold

upon life and immortality — he is thereby able to rob you of your hope, faith, confidence, joy, peace, and victory!

We have been taught in the past to flee from the great red dragon that lumbers through the heavens of our minds, causing us to err and to stumble day and night. It is this dragon that has been accusing us day and night before God in the temple of God which we are! You see, Satan never comes as some hideous fire-breathing monster with horns, a forked tail, and a pitchfork. He doesn't blare at you through a loudspeaker. He speaks in your own thoughts, understanding, perceptions, intuitions, feelings, emotions, and desires! The battle rages in the MIND — concepts, temptations, accusations shout at you *from within!*

The Self-life, the human consciousness, the carnal mind, the flesh — all these are a synagogue of Satan! It is there he comes and worships, it is there he comes and preaches, it is there he comes and counsels, it is there he comes and persuades. You may go to church meetings three times on Sunday and every night of the week, but if you are not dead to the Self-life, if you have not ascended into the mind of Christ above your human consciousness, if you have not silenced the carnal mind, if you have not mortified your members which are upon the earth, Satan has a little synagogue in you, a place where he has the right to come and set up his service, teach his ideas and doctrines, appear as an angel of light — illumination and revelation — express his desires and emotions, and perform some of his works.

The called out elect of God are casting Satan out of the heavens — the high places — of their minds by the swift and powerful sword of the Spirit! The sword of the Spirit used in this heavenly warfare is the word of God, the *living word of God*, and the *present truth and reality* raised up within our lives by the Holy Spirit! There are millions of people in the religious systems of man today who are synagogues of Satan. There is only a small called and chosen remnant who are becoming temples of the Holy Ghost. God is mightily moving in our lives in this Day to smash that synagogue of Satan within us by the hammer of Truth, raze it to the ground, and upon it erect within ourselves a temple of the Holy Ghost that God may be glorified in His sons. We are being brought to the place where we say with Jesus, "The prince of this world cometh, and hath *nothing in me*" — nothing in me that responds or corresponds to him in any way or measure!

I want to tell you where everything is — everything is right where you are — WITHIN YOU! *Everything!* On the positive side — God is *in you*, Christ is *in you* your hope of glory, the word of Christ dwells *in your heart* by faith, your body is the *temple* of the Holy Ghost which is *in you*, the wonderful mind of Christ is *in your mind* by the renewing of your mind, and the kingdom of God is *within you*. On the negative side — the spirit of antichrist is *in you*; the man of sin sits *in the temple of God* which is *your body*; the beast rages *in* the sea of humanity, *in* the ravenous emotions of the body; the image of the beast is seen *in you* by your outer actions of fleshly life; the nature of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters (peoples) is *in you*, the woman of your own soulish life; and the serpent is *within you*, enthroned in

the carnal mind which is enmity against God.

Men dream of a devil — a hideous and obscene monster in human form; a short, skinny elf in a red body suit, with impish face, horns, pointed ears, a spade beard, thin mustache, having a long forked tale and a pitchfork in his hand. If you ask one thousand church-going Christians to describe for you the *Devil*, would not all of them describe him in the fashion portrayed above? Or would they describe him to you as a *snake*? Millions of Christians suppose they would

recognize the Devil *instantly!* But *would they*, really? I have no hesitation whatever in telling you that the Devil of Christianity is a *myth!*

Jesus, on many occasions, drew the analogy of men as serpents — devils. In my mind, when Jesus uttered the following parabolic phrase, He was revealing one of the most important and foundational truths of all time. "Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Ye *serpents*, ye generation of *vipers*, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" (Mat. 23:25,33). John the Baptist used the same terminology, "But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of *vipers*, who hath warned you to flee the wrath to come?" (Mat. 3:7).

As in Christ's day, so today, the churches are full of *devils!* Well does this enemy of God, enthroned in the human heart, this adversary of redemption and all righteousness, know that, in the blessed hour when the "I" is crucified, all his power and all his authority and sway in that life is broken forever. His appetite is denied, his desires rejected, his plans thwarted, his suggestions repudiated, his power ignored, his base of operation is destroyed, and his work is abolished in the life of every son of God who has become identified with Christ in the cross. Once a man has embraced fully the cross of Christ and *Self* has become forever dead with Him, then it is with him even as the firstborn Son in triumph declared, "I will not talk with you much more, for the prince of the world is coming. And he has no claim on me, there is nothing in me that belongs to him, he has no power over me" (Jn. 14:30, Amplified).

Satan has no power at all when SELF is gone! His synagogue is destroyed! His pews are broken down, his pulpit demolished, his service ended! There is no platform to preach upon! There are no congregants to listen! Then he has no more power in your life or mine than he had in the life of our Lord Jesus the Christ. How unspeakably wonderful the hour for any man when Satan shall find *nothing* in him upon which he can feed or lay hold, *nothing* that responds or corresponds to him. When Self is crucified with Christ the lust of the flesh is mortified, the lust of the eyes is slain, the pride of life is put to death, all cunning, deception, and error is silenced, and the synagogue of Satan closed in that life.

The synagogue of Satan is both individual and corporate. John the Revelator sees the Adversary, the Accuser, embodied in a people, an assembly, a congregation, a system, a synagogue, to oppose, slander, and intimidate the called and chosen elect of the Lord! One dimension of the synagogue of Satan that the elect of God have experienced are those they run into today who say they serve Jesus, but who persecute those who are pressing on into deeper realms in God. As one brother shared with us, "The Jews have never persecuted me, the world has never persecuted me, but the Christians of the church systems have persecuted me. There have been many Christians who have never persecuted me, for the spirit of Christ ruled in their lives. But those who did persecute me were of the synagogue of Satan — they were *adversaries* to me!"

There is nothing more challenging than going into some denominational church and begin to share with them. If you are *very careful* you might get to visit them three or four times, because you seem to be agreeing with what they see in God. But then as you perceive the bondage of tradition and the spiritual darkness they are in, your heart of compassion goes out to them. So you begin to open the truth of God just a step beyond the realm where they dwell, that you might begin to lead them out of their darkness. As you share the treasures of truth from the storehouse of your spirit, a cloud soon passes over their countenances and they become agitated and fearful. Should you continue they then rise up against you and commence to retaliate, and should you dare to speak any further words of revelation they will eventually cast

you out. Ere many days have passed the whole religious realm in your city will be warned against you and your name will become *anathema* to all the Lord's people in all the church systems!

You shared out of love, but soon discovered who they were, because what upset them was the *light*. But if you were on the right mission, led by the Spirit, you will discover by and by that a little of the light penetrated their darkness and some precious soul was illumined thereby and began to awaken out of the deep sleep of tradition. Let me admonish you, my beloved — if we in turn abuse and persecute even the Lord's people in Babylon, instead of loving them, praying for them, and seeking only to help them, then *we place ourselves* in the synagogue of Satan, becoming an adversary to them.

A brother wrote to me some time ago quite concerned because I continually warn people about the harlot church systems of man. He said, "Brother Eby, how could you ever reach any of the people in the church systems when all the time you are criticizing and condemning them? Don't you think it would be better to present the truth to them without all the negativity?" Now, that sounds logical — on the surface! I could not agree more — should the Father send me to the church systems I would certainly go in humility, compassion, mercy, and love. But you see, dear ones, my writings are not intended for them! We do not mail our messages to either the preachers or the members of First Baptist Church, St. Mary's Catholic Church, Calvary Bible Church, First Pentecostal Church, or any other denomination! We are not criticizing them *to them!* Our message is sent to God's called out elect, to those are being called out of the religious systems by the Spirit of God! It is those God is calling out of the systems of man to know Him in deeper measures that we are commissioned to admonish, counsel, exhort, and warn to separate themselves from the blinding errors and fleshly bondage of religion. The elect of the Lord are being thoroughly purged and purified from all the doctrines, programs, methods, and spirit of Mystery Babylon! Those who profess to be called to sonship while continuing a promiscuous relationship with the lewd religious harlot, are certainly bastards, and not sons.

YET — we are not called to become adversaries to any man, but to be saviours on mount Zion, the priesthood of the Lord to *bless* and *reconcile* and *lead* all men into the kingdom of Life, Light, and Love! I tell you the truth, I know by experience that these things are so! Well do I know the heartache of *trying to awaken sleeping brethren* only to have them turn on me, despise me, hate me, and fall asleep again. Well do I know what it is to be *attacked* by the congregation of the adversaries, the synagogue of Satan. But I know as well the judgment of God in my own spirit, teaching me not to despise or strike out against any man held in the fetters of ignorance, sin, hell, or Babylon. We are called to be gentle, kind, gracious, tender-hearted, compassionate, and loving even with our enemies! We are ordained to bless them that curse us and pray for those who despitefully use us, and persecute us, that we may be the sons of our Father who is in heaven! He sends His rain upon the just and the unjust! It is here, and here alone, that we begin to tread the ground of true sonship, for the sons of God are the *priests* of the Most High God after the order of Melchizedek!

Concerning those of the synagogue of Satan the Lord tells the church at Philadelphia, which, together with Smyrna, is a type of God's called out elect, "Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before *thy* feet, and to know that I have loved *thee*" (Rev. 3:9). We should note that this promise is not given in a jeering or vindictive spirit! It rather means that the day will come when those who now misunderstand, condemn, denounce, persecute, and cast out and despise God's elect who walk in the Spirit and in the Truth will themselves come to the

knowledge of the truth, of the love of the Lord for those who follow on to know Him, and God's great plan and purpose for His people on the earth and throughout all the unbounded heavens! Thank God — ALL shall know Him, from the least to the greatest; and ALL shall see and be blessed by His wise and wonderful purpose. Then even the synagogue of Satan will at last — UNDERSTAND! That is what happened to Saul of Tarsus in that long ago on the Damascus road; and that is what will happen to all the adversaries. Blessed be the name of the Lord!

Let your heart consider what I now say, for there is another synagogue of Satan that plagues many of the Lord's people. This to which I refer is the assembly of carnal-minded, self-righteous, *law keepers* who burden the Lord's people with external commandments, rules, and regulations. It is *legalism!* Legalism is so bad because it places a person under heavy bondage, which is hard to get rid of. The law is the instrument of sin-consciousness! "By the law is the knowledge of sin." "Do this, do that," is the constant theme of the preachers while the next time they tell us, "Don't do this, don't do that." Legalism forces everything into a pattern of *works, external observances, and performance*. The ultimate fate of those who break these traditions of the elders and commandments of men is, "God will get you if you don't do what we say!" Legalism is a mark of spiritual immaturity and carnal-minded religiosity. It is an adversary to the inner spiritual life, indeed, a synagogue of Satan!

When Jesus came to redeem us, He came to redeem us not only from sin and death, but to redeem us from the **law** which gave us the consciousness of sin and is itself the very strength and power of sin (Rom. 3:20; 7:7; I Cor. 15:56; Gal. 4:4-5). Paul tells us that when Jesus came into the world He came subject to the law. "But when the fullness of time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made *under the law*, to *redeem them that were under the law*, that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Gal. 4:4-5). We have to realize that for thirty years Jesus lived on this earth without ever manifesting His sonship to God! He was sent into the world as the Son of God, but He did not manifest His sonship until after He was baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan river. He was "made of a woman" — born of a woman, speaking of His true humanity.

The Father sent the Son in the likeness of sinful flesh by giving Him a human body. The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. In this likeness of sinful flesh He looked like everybody else! He didn't look like a superman — six feet tall with a rugged, handsome face, piercing blue eyes, flaxen hair, bronze complexion, bulging muscles, and a Mr. America physique. Oh, no! He looked so much like any other Jew that He never stood out in a crowd. No one in Nazareth thought He would amount to anything beyond the norm, and when men sought for Him, He had to be pointed out to them. Nothing credible is written of Him, from the time He was twelve years old, until the day He came to John to be baptized. He operated within the limitations of the flesh. He didn't use any special powers or, except on one brief occasion, display any unusual wisdom. He worked, ate, slept, and bathed like every man. He hungered, grew weary, knew weakness, and experienced doubts, frustrations, perplexities, pain, and sorrow, for, "He was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief."

Notice further that when Jesus came He was "made under the law" — and therefore was in subjection under the law. God sent forth His Son from His throne on high, from the estate of His heavenly glory, to be made under the law with all its restrictions, requirements, and demands. He was not merely *born* under the law as a Jew, but "made" by His Father's appointment, and His own will, subject to the law to keep it all, ceremonial and moral; to perfectly fulfill it for all who were under it! Although He was the Lord of the law and its divine Author, He took His place under the law, that He might accomplish an important purpose for those who were under it. He made Himself subject to it that He might become one of them,

and *secure their release!* And, praise God, He established a perfect record in that He kept the law fully. We know very little of His life while He was under the law. Only one incident when He was twelve years old is recorded. When Jesus walked under the law He was circumcised; He sacrificed; He paid tithes; He observed the Sabbath; He kept the feast days; He attended synagogue; and in all His dealings He kept every tenet and precept of the law!

Jesus was sent into the *bondage of legalism* and required to wear that *legalistic yoke* in order that He might **shatter it to pieces with His full and free redemption!** I am absolutely certain that includes all the religious folk today who are held captive under the legalistic demands of church systems with their myriad man-made commandments of "do's" and "don'ts" laid upon people in order to make them pleasing to God. Matters not whether it is an Old Testament law about not muzzling the ox that treadeth out the corn, sowing mixed seed in one's field, stoning an adulteress, washing hands before eating, kosher food laws, holy day laws, or more modern day prohibitions against women wearing make-up and jewelry, dress codes, meats and drinks, amusements, coverings, or a thousand other laws, old and new, that the religious Pharisees impose upon the Lord's people.

The law is very *insidious!* I hear preachers, even preachers in this kingdom message, quoting Malachi 3:7-10 and laying the **law** of tithing upon God's people. Oh! How they love to use verse nine, "Ye are *cursed* with a *curse*: for ye have *robbed me*, even this whole nation." But that is a *lie!* Someone says, "Now, wait just a minute, brother Eby, are you calling the word of God a lie?" I do not hesitate to tell you that it is a lie to lay that *curse* of the *law* upon God's redeemed people because the Holy Spirit testifies that "As many as are of the *works of the law* are under the *curse*: for it is written, *Cursed* is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. The law is *not of faith*: but, the man that doeth them shall live in them. CHRIST HATH REDEEMED US FROM THE **CURSE** OF THE LAW, BEING MADE A **CURSE** FOR US: for it is written, *Cursed* is everyone that hangeth on a tree" (Gal. 3:10,12-13).

God's redeemed people are NOT under any CURSE of the law! The *law* of tithing was for the nation of Israel under the Old Covenant! Only certain *commodities* were tithed — not *money!* Only Levites could receive tithes. It was used for administering their office and to help the poor, widows, and orphans. There is no Levitical priesthood today! There was a *first* tithe that was required (Lev. 27:30). Then there was a *second* tithe for the feast days (Deut. 14:22). At the end of every three years there was a *third* tithe for the fatherless, widows, etc. But the requirements of the law, the Old Covenant, have been abolished! The laws of Moses are now — **illegal!** Paul and the other apostles NEVER taught the Gentiles to tithe! I do not live under some *divine curse* for not tithing!

The New Covenant is not a covenant of **blessing and cursing** as was the Old Covenant. The New Covenant is only a covenant of **blessing!** Jesus says, "Give, and it shall be *given unto you*; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall *men give into your bosom*. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again." The New Covenant is a covenant of **blessing** and **not cursing!** Under the New Covenant great **blessing** is promised to those who **give liberally!** If I am not being blessed, if I can't pay my bills, if I am living in poverty and want, if I am struggling to make ends meet, if my needs are not being met, it is not because I am under a curse from the law! It may be only because I have not availed myself of God's WONDERFUL PROVISION of the BLESSING that comes with GIVING!

You see, beloved, there *is* a difference between these two concepts — law and grace. Now, it may not make much difference to *me* whether I suffer lack because I'm not getting the *blessing*, or whether it's because I'm under a *curse*. But it does make a big difference to GOD! God is not in the *cursing business*! He only seeks to *bless* us! That is the New Covenant! We cannot charge God with cursing us! It is wicked to do so! If we are not being blessed it is not God's curse; it is *our fault*, not *His*! It is divinely true — you **can't out give God**! Where does the scripture say, "God *loveth* a cheerful *tithe-payer*"? Paul never said that. What Paul said was, "But this I say, He which *soweth sparingly* shall *reap also sparingly*; and he which *soweth bountifully* shall *reap also bountifully*. Every man as he hath purposed in his heart, *so let him give*; not *grudgingly*, or of *necessity*: for God **loveth a cheerful giver**. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, **always having all sufficiency in all things**, may abound to every good work" (II Cor. 9:6-8). That is the same thing Jesus said, but in different words! God has promised to bless us abundantly and meet all our needs bountifully when we are liberal, cheerful *givers*!

While we are not under the *law* of tithing, we *are* under the awesome and unbounded provision of grace — we will be incredibly, munificently, richly, lavishly, luxuriantly, profusely, plenteously, and super-abundantly **blessed** for **GIVING**! We are exhorted to give liberally in a number of New Testament scriptures — not to put us under law, but for our good, for our blessing, to unlock the treasure houses of God's blessings!

God has made a glorious provision for our blessing in all things — yet we must not *give to get*, for that motive is selfish and wrong too, but give out of a heart of love, out of the **giving nature of Christ**. I testify to you that the sons of God are the most *giving people* in the world! And they give not out of constraint, nor as under law, nor yet in response to impassioned appeals from the ministries, nor merely to receive in return, but they truly give out of the heart of the Christ within! That is the very *spirit of sonship*! Those who receive from our ministry know that we have *never* sent out a letter or notice of any kind stating a need or asking for a dime from anyone. The expenses are enormous each and every month, yet no bill has gone unpaid and we have never failed to have food on our table. I tell you, only the sons of God truly give by the Spirit! Many Christians give vast sums to various ministries, but usually it is in response to a steady drum-beat of appeals, sob stories, promotions, and gimmicks of all kinds. The sons of God give without being asked! Aren't you glad! Isn't it wonderful! You can't beat God's way!

My beloved brethren, **never** preach tithing out of the book of Malachi. That is law, and not grace! It is Old Covenant, not New Covenant! It is an abomination to lay *curses* upon God's people, to threaten them with God's judgment if they don't tithe. **THAT IS THE SYNAGOGUE OF SATAN!** I try to give far more than a tithe, and I am convinced that most of God's called and chosen elect do the same. Teach the Lord's people the wonderful opportunity for blessing through giving as Jesus taught! That, dear ones, is sonship! Multitudes of preachers and churches still want to lay the law on you. They *demand* tithes under the law. They enforce either Saturday or Sunday as the "Sabbath." They forbid you to eat pork or other meats that were unclean under the law. When men proclaim law they are preaching from the pulpit of the synagogue of Satan!

Paul makes this very clear when he says, "And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath He quickened together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses; *blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us*, and took it out of the way, nailing it to His cross. Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath: which are a *shadow* of things to come; but the *body* (substance, reality) is of Christ" (Col. 2:13-17). You

see, beloved, if we keep one law we are bound to keep the whole law, for to break one law makes one just as guilty and condemned as the man who breaks them all. That is why Christ has redeemed us from the *curse* of the law! The law is a *curse*! I tell you, it is a CURSE! Paul says that the law was *contrary to us* — an ADVERSARY! It is the doctrine of the synagogue of Satan!

If I am under the law of the Sabbath, the law of tithing, the law of not eating pork, then I am under the whole law. I should burn a bull on the altar of sacrifice so it will be a pleasing odor for the Lord (Lev. 1:9). I would be able to sell my daughter into slavery, as sanctioned in Exodus 21:7 — I would only need to determine what would be a fair price for her! If my neighbor works on the Sabbath, Exodus 35:2 clearly states that he should be put to death. We have lots of stones out here in West Texas, so it would be an easy thing to stone him! Most of my male friends get their hair trimmed around their temples, even though this is expressly forbidden by Leviticus 19:27. We would need to search the scriptures to see how they should die! I know from Leviticus 11:6-8 that touching the skin of a dead pig makes me unclean, so I would have a real problem passing a football to my grandkids! Everyone who wears a garment made of different kinds of thread (cotton/polyester blend) is under the curse of the law — I would be required to get all my neighbors together and stone them to death! Does this sound ridiculous? PAUL SAYS THAT IF YOU KEEP ONE LAW YOU ARE BOUND TO KEEP THEM ALL!

Christ has "redeemed us from the curse of the law!" The Greek word for "redeem" is an especially beautiful term. The concept is of one going into the slave market and purchasing the slave and then taking him out of the market, setting him free. Redeemed from the law! Redeemed to be no longer a slave, serving under rules, regulations, and commandments that govern the flesh. Redeemed that we might "receive the adoption of sons!" "As many as are *led by the Spirit* of God, they are the *sons of God*" (Rom. 8:14). Hallelujah! We have received placement as sons of God who fulfill the nature of the Father by the law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus!

Jesus does not drive people with the lash of the law, but He draws them with the cords of love! I never like to see God's children whipped with rods gathered from the thorny sides of Sinai. We have not come to mount Sinai, but to mount Zion! When a man tries to pummel me to my duty by the demands of the law, I kick at the goad like a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke; and rightly so, for we are not under the law, but under grace. The motive which propels a free-born heir of the kingdom is born of grace, not from the law; from Jesus, not from Moses. The law is *bondage* and therefore stands in *opposition* to our walk in the spirit and by the spirit! Law keeping is one of the cardinal doctrines of the synagogue of Satan!

All who *minister condemnation* are preaching from the pulpit of the synagogue of Satan. I was raised on this doctrine of the synagogue of Satan! As a child I was told in church that God so hated sin, that God could not look upon sin, could not excuse sin; so if I fell, if I slipped into sin, if I made a mistake, if I disobeyed the Lord, if I cussed or lusted or cheated or told a lie, and didn't confess my sin to God and get it "under the blood" before I went to bed, should I die in my sleep before the sun rose I would certainly burst hell wide open! According to the *doctrine of condemnation* living holy *keeps you saved*, whereas sin in your life causes you to *lose your salvation*. Thus, you are not saved by grace through faith — you are saved by *holy living*! Some preach what is called "eternal security," but the so-called gospel in the church I was raised in was the doctrine of NO SECURITY. And that was no "gospel" at all because it certainly was *not* GOOD NEWS!

If I "got saved" once as a child I suppose I got saved a thousand times! Because every time I got mad, said a bad word, slipped off to a movie, told a lie, or failed in any way to measure up to the church's standard of "holiness" I was lost again. I had to "get saved" all over! Oh, they didn't put it that way, but it was true anyhow, because if God cannot excuse sin, if sin *separates* us from God, if sin sends us to hell, then when you sin you are *lost!* I tell you today — there is no **hell** anywhere worse than **that one!** To live under condemnation **is hell!** The doctrine of condemnation is from the pit of hell itself, it is preached from the pulpit of the synagogue of Satan. It is preached from the same Bible the Devil quoted from when he quoted scripture to Jesus in the wilderness — the *letter of the word!* The doctrine of condemnation opposes the truth of God's unconditional love and forgiveness, it is an adversary to the fact of our reconciliation, it contradicts the word of our reconciliation which declares that God does not impute our trespasses unto us, and denies that we are justified by *grace* through *faith alone*, not of works, lest any man should boast!

Now, someone may think that this gospel of grace is going to give you the liberty to sin, for your flesh to go wild. Let me tell you something. People say that God cannot excuse sin. Well, maybe He can't, but the scripture is clear that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, **not imputing their trespasses unto them!** God has forgiven us all our trespasses! But He has also *quickened us* and made us *alive in Christ*. I will not come to perfection, maturity, the image of Christ, and sonship by trying to make my Adamic life live more godly. Adam can't do it! But there is a Life, even Christ, flowing from the very essence of my being that has absolutely nothing to do with my natural character, the Adamic life. It is a power greater than all! It is Christ who must be raised up in me, to be my life, my righteousness, my reality. Christ isn't formed in us in one day, one month, or one year. But Christ is growing up in all the elect who have received the call to sonship! Our Father does not condemn us while we are going from victory to victory, but still fall short of His holiness. All our sins are covered until we have FULLY OVERCOME! No license to sin here, just *grace, mercy, love, and great faithfulness* UNTIL WE REACH PERFECTION. Aren't you glad!

Chapter 40

The Church In Smyrna

continued

“Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, *the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried*; and ye shall have tribulation ten days” (Rev. 2:10).

I know a place where the sun shines everyday! Perhaps you are interested in finding it, too. It is a narrow area in the deserts of northern Chile, between the high Andes and the Pacific Ocean. Rain so seldom falls that one can truly say, “It never rains here; the sun always shines.” Morning after morning the sun rises brilliantly over the towering peaks to the east; each noon it shines brightly down from overhead; evening brings a picturesque sunset. Although storms are often seen raging high in the mountains, and heavy fog banks are observed far out over the sea, the sun continues to shine down on this favored and protected strip of land. One would imagine this area to be an earthly paradise; but it is not. Instead, it is a sterile and desolate desert! There are no streams of water, and nothing grows there.

Too often the Lord’s people long for total sunshine and joy and victory in this journey into the kingdom of God. We have wished to be rid of the troubles, pressures, tribulations, and infirmities ordained for our processing. But like the sunny, infertile part of Chile, our spiritual life without the trials and testings would not be creative, productive, or transforming! We must have sunshine *and* storms for the development of wisdom, strength, and maturity!

We need the clouds, the dark days, the storms, the rain, the winds, just as much as we need the sunshine, and God who is molding our lives, making us into the image of our Lord Jesus the Christ, is the One who knows what is best for us if we would be a part of HIS PURPOSE in the earth. In this connection we hear Job saying, “He knoweth the way that I take: when He hath *tried me*, I shall come forth as gold” (Job 23:10). Notice that Job does not say, “I know the way that **HE** takes,” but rather, “He knoweth the way that **I** take.”

We would like to know what God is doing! We would like to pull aside the veil and see the end from the beginning! We would like to know the way that He is taking us, but if we did, and if we could see, we would not need faith to believe and accept GOD’S WAY. So Job, in the midst of all his deep afflictions, found comfort, not in the fact that he knew the reason and the answer for all of God’s dealings with him, but he took encouragement in the truth that GOD KNEW WHAT HE WAS DOING! “He knoweth the way that I take,” he said confidently, and then his faith leaped over every barrier, and as he looked into the distant future, he cried, “When He hath *tried — tested and proved — me*, I shall come forth as gold!” What a testimony, and truly it is ours too!

Let me share with you a favorite story of mine. It clearly illustrates the sentiment of Job when he said, “He knoweth the way that I take.” The story is centered around a Chinese man. This man had everything going for him. He had all the material things he needed. He had a beloved son,

and prized horse. But one day his horse broke out of the corral and ran to the mountains. Since all his assets were tied up in this valuable horse, he lost in one brief, fleeting moment, all of his life's savings. All his neighbors, hearing that his horse was gone to the hills forever, came to offer their sympathy. They all said to him, "Your horse is gone. Oh, what bad luck." Then they cried and they tried to console and comfort him. But he said, "How do you know it's bad luck?"

Sure enough, a few days later, the horse, being well-domesticated, came back to where he could be sure there would be water and food. In the process he brought back twelve wild stallions with him. They were all quickly captured and ushered into the corral. Now when all the town heard the news, they came and they applauded and said, "Oh, thirteen horses, what good luck!" And the wise, old Chinese man said, "How do you know it's good luck?" The townspeople remembered his words the next day when his son, his *only* child, tried to break one of the wild stallions. In the process, he was thrown off, he broke his leg and was left with a limp forever. When the neighbors heard about that, they came to him again and said, "Your son, forever a cripple. What bad luck." But the wise, old man said, "How do you know that's bad luck?"

Sure enough, about a year later, a Chinese warlord came through town, conscripted every able-bodied young man, and took them off to battle. They lost the battle. In fact, every young warrior was killed. The only young man left in the village was the maimed son of the wise Chinese man, for he had never been conscripted, thanks to his limp. The moral of this story is that we do not know the way that God is taking us, or the "why" of the happenings in our lives, seemingly good or bad, but **OUR FATHER KNOWS THE WAY THAT WE TAKE AND THERE IS DIVINE PURPOSE IN ALL THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN GOOD AND EVIL IN OUR LIVES!**

Don't be afraid of suffering! For "I will be with you," saith the Lord. One of the amazing knowledges of God appearing in the scriptures is, "I will be with you — through water, through fire, through everything!" The Lord told the church at Smyrna that the devil would be permitted to cast some of them "into prison" that they might be tried, and they would be afflicted "ten days." In the spirit, prison represents a state of bondage, restriction, and limitation in which the afflicted one has lost his liberty. He is no longer in control of what is happening to him, nor is he free to decide for himself about the things that touch his life. Again and again Paul classified himself as a "prisoner of the Lord."

The condition that builds character in the life of a son, that matures us, perfects us, and makes us strong is that God surrounds us, hedges us in, and shuts us up to His dealings and His will. We love to be free and blessed, but on the pathway to sonship we lose our freedom! God will let you run free if all you want to do is be blessed and go to heaven when you die. But like Joseph of old, if you are destined for the throne, you will be thrown into a pit and cast into prison! Perfection demands suffering, trial, testing, tribulation, and proving. Sonship requires the dealings of God by which we are conformed to the image and likeness of Christ who was, Himself, perfected through the things He suffered. Character is formed through discipline and hardship! Growth, development, and maturity in God come through the chastenings of the Father!

There have been those precious folk who have said to me, "Brother Eby, I don't understand. Since I came into this walk of sonship things have gotten worse — all hell has broken loose!" That is just what you need — **IF YOU WOULD BE A KING-PRIEST AFTER THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK!** Have you not known some beautiful saints to whom you naturally betake yourself in time of trial and trouble? They always seem to speak the right word, to give the wise counsel you are longing for; you do not realize, however, the cost which they had to pay ere they became so skillful in perceiving the true nature of things and giving the word of wisdom! If you

were to investigate their past history, I doubt not that you would find that they have suffered more than most. They have been caught up in the vortex of cruel crisis, they have gone through experiences in which the golden bowl of joy was dashed at their feet, and the contents spilt. They have stood by ebbing tides, and drooping gourds, and noon sunsets; but all this has been necessary to mature them in wisdom and understanding, in discernment and judgment, and fill them with mercy, compassion, and the love of God.

To every son the Father says, “I am going to limit you here, put you through pressure there, subject you to suffering, teach you obedience, hedge you in and compass you about with infirmity, break your fleshly will and subdue your carnal mind, make you humble and pure, not because you have no sonship rights, but that it will work compassion, grace, understanding, tenderness, love, faithfulness, goodness, strength — work divine nature and character in you so that out of you will flow a river of love, forgiveness, reconciliation, redemption; and then a flow of power, enabling, and divine ability.

Oh! May God’s consuming fire consume all the self-pity which may be left in some of us. Some could have made better progress, but just at the time God was perfecting them in the sonship nature they began to feel sorry for themselves. Like children in school they think they have a hard time, till they become teachers themselves and find that it is harder on the teacher. Many young people, instead of getting their school-work done, complain, and then they fail and wonder what is wrong. When God’s consuming fire begins to work in us and the trials and pressures overtake us, if we then feel sorry for ourselves and drown in a pool of self-pity, we are disqualified.

Oh, my brother, my sister, how often we desire omnipotent power to change the world apart from the grace, wisdom, compassion and understanding by which the power must work! If God were to deliver us from all our troubles we would never help anybody, never understand the other fellow’s dilemma; and that is why God keeps us the way we are and plagues us and puts us under pressure, not because we are not sons, not that we will despair or faint, but that we say, “Lord, let it work in us that divine grace and longsuffering and compassion that will then flow out and minister to creation.” When the suffering is completed, the lessons learnt, and we are perfected in the nature of the Christ, then we can walk in the fullness of our inheritance and His glory shall be revealed through us to set creation free! Sonship is more than power — it is a *nature!*

There are no arm-chair kings in the kingdom of God! There are no country-club-elite sons! There are no honorary priests! There are no theoretical, self-appointed rulers on Christ’s throne! Oh, yes! The devil shall cast some of you into the prison of confinement, limitation, breaking, purging, suffering, patience, and endurance that you may be tried; and you shall have tribulation “ten days.” Then the Lord says, “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give you a crown of life.” “Faithful unto death” means more than just “toughing it out” until your heart stops beating! Be thou faithful unto death — He doesn’t say be faithful *until* death, but *unto* death — unto the death of your carnal mind, unto the death of your human consciousness, unto the death of your natural reasoning, unto the death of your own will and way, unto the death of your fleshly aims, dreams, hopes, plans, and purposes, unto the death of every one of your religious traditions, activities, exercises, and entanglements — and God the almighty will then CROWN YOU WITH LIFE, even the incorruptible life of God’s glorious Christ!

TRIBULATION TEN DAYS

“The devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation *ten days*” (Rev. 2:10).

Those “ten days!” Let me explain to you what those ten days mean. Ten is the number in scripture that refers to *personal testing*. The number ten, the last of the scale of numbers, each of which has a mystic meaning of its own, is naturally, in the symbolism of numbers, the representative of completeness, and here, therefore, of trial and testing carried to its full extent, and lacking nothing that could make it thorough and perfect, as a test. It comes as the climax of the whole picture of the sufferings to which the typical church of Smyrna was to be exposed. It is, furthermore, a full number, denoting that which is *complete*, yet of *limited duration*.

Let us explore this meaning a little further. Ten is a number which is very frequently employed in scripture, and it often occurs in the book of Revelation. The antediluvian world was comprised of the lifetime of ten patriarchs. Before the heart of the Pharaoh of Egypt was inclined to let the children of Israel go to serve their God, ten plagues were sent upon the land. The whole of the law of God was summed up in ten commandments. The Lord Jesus in His parables spoke of ten virgins having ten lamps, and of servants entrusted with ten pounds whom He will place over ten cities. In the book of Revelation we read of the ten horns of the great red dragon, of the ten horns of the beast, of his ten royal diadems, and of the ten kings who shall hate the whore with whom they have committed fornication. Now if we consider all these applications of the number ten, and more besides, there can be no question of the fact that it is a round number, that whatever other number is multiplied by it, must also be a round number. As such it beautifully serves as a symbol of *completeness* and *fullness*!

When we consider the passages in which the number ten is used we find that the idea that lies at the basis of its employment seems to be that of a fullness, completion, and totality of the measure of whatever it is connected to. Ten horns are the fullness of power. Ten plagues are the fullness of judgment. Ten commandments are the fullness of divine law. Ten virgins are the fullness of a realm of purity. Ten cities are the fullness of divine government in the kingdom of God. Ten kings are the fullness of power that smites and judges the religious harlot. And therefore, in our text it denotes the *fullness of tribulation*! It does not indicate that the time will be either long or short, but it indicates that a certain definite period is allotted to the devil to test and try and prove the called and chosen elect of God! This period is not determined by the devil, for the devil possesses no power of himself, but by the will and counsel of the Lord. The time is both limited and meted out to him by God. We see a beautiful picture of this in the life of Job!

It is the Lord saying to each of His sons, “You are not in a position to know how long your trials will last, but I know, and I can assure you that they will not last a day longer than is necessary for you. If the very hairs of your head are all numbered, and I take note of every sparrow that falls to the ground, you may rest assured that the minutest details of those trials and testings are being carefully weighed in my loving and omnipotent hands, and you will not be tempted above that you are able to bear. And even if the length of your tribulation and trouble were to cover the whole of your lifetime, that will be but ten short days in the unfolding of my magnificent plan for you in the age and the ages to come!”

Look up, dear one; no storm can last
Beyond the limits God hath set.
When its appointed work is past,
In joy thou shalt thy grief forget.
Where sorrow's plowshare hath swept through,
Thy fairest flowers of life shall spring,

For God shall grant thee life anew,
And all thy wastes shall laugh and sing.
Hope thou in Him, His plan for thee
Shall end in triumph and release.
Fear not, for thou shalt fully see
His afterward of peace.

“Behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that *ye may be tried*.” The plot of most melodramas involves a complication in which the hero, or protagonist, is opposed by a second character, the villain, or antagonist. The antagonist is a creature of contrast, a character necessary to define the hero. Often the protagonist, or hero, goes through a reversal, a period in which he loses power to the villain, or antagonist. If the hero regains power, the story is known as a *triumph*. If the hero doesn’t regain power, the story is a *tragedy*. The Greatest Drama of the Ages is not a *tragedy*!

The protagonist and antagonist in the drama of the kingdom of God are clearly defined in the words of Jesus: “The *thief* cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: *I* am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly” (Jn. 10:10). Out of God’s own mouth proceeds the assertion, “I have created the *waster* to destroy” (Isa. 54:16). We gather from this passage the principle that teaches us that the devil is a created entity with a definite purpose. The purpose is revealed in the opening statement of the above quoted verse, “I have created the smith (the devil) that bloweth the coals in the fire, and that *bringeth forth an instrument* for his work.” The “smith” that “bloweth upon the fire” is also the one who heats the furnace seven times hotter! “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the *fiery trial* which is to *try you*, as though some strange thing had happened unto you” (I Pet. 4:12).

Our trials and testings are associated in the scriptures with the ministry of Satan. You never thought of Satan having a *ministry*? “Then was Jesus *led up of the Spirit* into the wilderness to be *tempted (tested) of the Devil*. And when the Tempter came to Him, he said, If Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread” (Mat. 4:1-3). “And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, *Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat*: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren” (Lk. 22:31-32).

One has written, “God is constructing a temple, made of living stones, through which to manifest Himself throughout the ages to come, and Satan was created as a chisel and hammer to be used in the construction of this building. The living stones that are even now being placed in this temple have been chosen, says the Lord, in the *furnace of affliction* (Isa. 48:10). God, however, is mercy; God is love; God is compassion. He is a healer, not a destroyer. It was, nonetheless, necessary that an oven be heated in which to purify the gold — a furnace in which the wood, hay, and stubble were to be burned. But God, in His nature of love, could not perform the necessary affliction! It was for this reason that He created *an instrument* that was capable of performing this essential action in the lives of men, for in Satan God literally created a *chastening rod*. If we can realize that behind the acts of Satan is the mighty hand of God working to bring forth gold from these earthen vessels, we can rejoice, as David, in our afflictions and trials and exclaim with him, ‘It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn Thy statutes’ (Ps. 119:7). Praise God! When we begin to see the *good* that comes from the assaults of Satan on our lives, we are able to appreciate all the more the greatness of our God and the depth of the wisdom of His great mind. He is truly a God of might and power, and *all things* are in His hand — even this adversary whom we call Satan!” — end quote.

One of the fundamental laws of creation is that an OPPOSING FORCE is necessary for growth, and to produce strength, stamina, and endurance. Any living thing that grows up without any opposition is weak and powerless. God's NEW CREATION MAN must be strong and powerful, and anything that desires to be strong, or anyone, must wrestle with a force that is contrary to him! Any man who wants to develop muscular power to be strong, must spend weeks and months and years in vigorous training doing strenuous exercises, lifting heavy weights, using the *opposing force* of gravity to *develop his strength*. A man who wants to be a wrestler, doesn't just wrestle when he is in the ring. At his training center he has his wrestling partners with whom he wrestles by the hour. If he didn't do this he would be weak and powerless in the ring! A boxer has his punching bags and sparring partners, with whom he spends hours every day.

Those *opposing forces* are indispensable to develop strength and technique. A plant that grows in a greenhouse sheltered from the winds and rains, pampered day after day, may grow large, but is inherently weak, and if suddenly exposed to the elements will wither and die. But a plant that is constantly exposed to the fierce winds and pounding rains, burning heat and chilling cold, is strong and not easily destroyed. What purpose, then, is revealed in God's wonderful provision for us as explained by the apostle Peter: "Be sober, be vigilant; for your adversary (opposing force) the Devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: **whom resist** (as a sparring partner) steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same *afflictions* are accomplished in your brethren" (I Pet. 5:8-9).

I heard a story the other day of a king. This king was so insecure he built a high fortress on an island, which he surrounded with a moat, filled with fierce crocodiles. He thought he was safe, but he didn't know if he could trust the strength or the loyalty of the chief of the guards. He decided to hire the most loyal, strongest, young man to be the chief of the guards. He announced that there would be a contest and all who wanted to compete could do so. They would meet on the edge of his palace. They would have to swim the moat, through the foaming crocodiles. The young man who won would be offered the position of chief of the guards, a purse filled with golden coins, as well as the hand of the king's most beautiful daughter.

The day arrived. A host of these strong young men gathered on the edge of the moat, waiting for the bugle call to announce the commencement. Hardly had the bugle call sounded when one young man plunged into the water ahead of everybody else. He managed to escape the crocodiles and reached the other side in record time. The king came and said, "You were wonderful! Do you have anything you wish to say to the people?" The young warrior said, "Yes! I want to know who pushed me!"

This is a humorous little story, but it illustrates the wonderful truth that *sometimes God pushes us!* I really believe that the testings of God's sons come in that manner. It takes guts to leave the lowlands of Adamic life and the ruts of man-made religion and scale the dizzy heights of God and search His awesome depths. Sometimes we all need a divine shove!

Things don't just happen to the children of God,
They're part of a wonderful plan;
The troubles, reverses, the sorrows, the rod,
Are strokes of the Great Sculptor's hand.

When some dread accident strikes you a blow,
And you worry and fret and demand;

Why try so hard the mystery to know?
It's not just an accident; it's planned!

Have you been dropped from a place of power?
Do you wonder and reprimand?
Don't rebel, look to Him in that hour;
This didn't just happen; it's planned!

Persecution, tribulation come down like a storm;
Friends disappoint and withstand;
At last, all alone, bewildered, forlorn,
You look, and He smiles: "This is planned."

Do you wonder why God to affliction should call,
And why you must suffer and moan?
"No man should be moved by affliction" says Paul,
"For you know it is part of the plan."
Things don't just happen to children of God,
The blue-print was made by His hand;
He designed all details to conform to His Son,
So all things that happen are planned.
No matter what happens to those called "His own",
Events that are awful or grand;
Every trial of your life He sends from His Throne;
Things don't just happen; they're planned!

— Chuck Tober

This corresponds with what we know about all of life. Testing is a necessity of living! We test wood, steel, and stone in order to find out what they are capable of supporting. We test our ability to read, to run, and to think, but no one therefore calls them evil. We find out something about ourselves, even if that something is not always complimentary. Everything in life is tested in some manner! In this way "temptation" has a good sense as well as a bad; for example, God is said to have tempted, that is, proved Abraham in the matter of offering up Isaac. So Jesus is said to have tempted, that is, proved Philip in the miraculous feeding of the five thousand. "Jesus therefore lifting up His eyes, and seeing that a great multitude cometh unto Him, saith unto Philip, Whence are we to buy bread that these may eat? And He said this to tempt (prove) Philip, for He Himself knew what He would do." To prove Philip, to test him, see what he would answer and what was in his mind — but the word is tempt!

Every parent understands that the very worst thing that could happen to any child would be to escape all the pain of discipline, all the irksomeness of education, all the difficulty of work and experience, and be allowed in all things to please himself without any restraint. Such treatment would infallibly produce an ignorant, selfish, rebellious, irresponsible and wicked son or daughter. Just as feeding a child on cakes and sweets alone would ensure the ruin of its health. Now and again some father who has himself known hard sledding decides to make easy for his children the way of life. "I don't want them to suffer the way I had to suffer," he says. So they are not required, as he was, to get up early in the morning. They are not made, as he was, to get a job and earn their way at an early age. They are not deprived, as he was, of all the things young people want. They are placed in conditions that are wholly favorable and that make no difficult demands.

And now and then some human father who has made easy for his children the way of life finds himself wondering why they have made so little of themselves! He has given them every opportunity, and it fails him to understand why they are lacking in most of the qualities of ambition, discipline, dependability, thriftiness, and vision he had hoped to find in them. But has he given them every possible opportunity? Not at all! He has denied them the supreme opportunity that a rough road affords for the development of strength and character! And this is what happens spiritually in the lives of all those starry-eyed *faith* and *positive thinking* people who want only blessings and instant deliverance out of all their troubles!

There are no evils lurking in the carnal mind and fleshly nature of us all for which there is no deliverance except through the crucible of suffering and pain and discipline; even as the dross found mixed with pure gold in the ore can only be separated and eradicated through the fiery furnace. The more we are exposed to *adverse* circumstances, the more we have to *wrestle* with our environment, the more we are *challenged* by the world around us, the stronger we become! Saints, IF WE WOULD BE SONS OF THE MOST HIGH, WE MUST BE **STRONG** IN THE LORD AND IN THE POWER OF HIS MIGHT!

Our Father wants us to be strong! The Father of spirits did not look forward to a distant day, at the time of His begetting, expecting that a multitude of babies in diapers or grown up ninnies and dummies would stand before Him. Oh, no! How many of those who read these lines want their children to grow up one hundred percent *innocent*, *ignorant*, and *privileged*, never having experienced the slightest temptation, struggle, or adversity in any form? This is precisely why God placed the **serpent** in Eden with the tree of the **knowledge of good and evil** — that man through the experience of the *opposites* might in the experience be led to OVERCOME all things and to stand before the Son of man in the strength of character, perception of mind, and quality of life of God Himself. It is all part of our Father's wise and magnificent plan!

As someone has written, "Man shrinks from tests for they call for the best that is within one. A school teacher does not give her pupils a test so that she may have the satisfaction of failing them, but rather that she may be delighted by their display of knowledge. Automobile manufacturers do not put test cars through rugged workouts to wreck them, but rather to improve their product and find how to strengthen their points of weakness. Even so it is when the Lord sends temptation into our spiritual lives. It is not intended to wreck us, though at times that may *appear* to be the result, but it is intended for our good! They are to make us strong! They are to do for us what the sculptor does for the rude block of marble. They are to do for us what the lathe does for the rough and coarse cylinder of steel. Thus it was that Job said, 'When He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold!'"

"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy" (I Pet. 4:12-13).

"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation (testing): for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him" (James 1:12).

"When all kinds of trials and temptations crowd into your lives, my brothers, don't resent them as intruders, but welcome them as friends! Realize that they come to test your faith, and to produce in you the quality of endurance. But let the process go on until that endurance is fully developed, and you will find you have become men of mature character, men of integrity with no weak spots" (James 1:2-4, Phillips).

When the Father through His matchless grace reveals to the child of God that it is His Master Plan for the ages to come to effect a universal reconciliation, restitution, and restoration through the agency of a royal race of kings and priests who through trial, suffering, and fierce tribulation have come to the image of Jesus Christ, to reign and work with Him in the plenitude of His wisdom, the fullness of His understanding, the perfection of His holiness, the infiniteness of His love, the beauty of His justice, and the omnipotence of His power, every son having the mind of God, discerning all things, knowing all things and having the perfect nature, character, and ability to carry out the intricate and infinite will of God — then all our tribulation is freighted with vital significance!

Among that perfect, omnipotent order of kings and priests there will be no carnal minds, no fleshly actions, no selfish desires, no self-serving, no weakness, no limitation, no character flaws, no mistakes, no dissensions, no disobedience; but with justice and wisdom and righteousness and compassion and love and power shall they rule the nations, and ultimately the vastnesses of the unbounded heavens until all things everywhere are subdued unto Christ, and Christ shall present a perfect kingdom to the Father. Aren't you glad!

Now since such glories are in store for the sons of God, can any man longer question why our all-wise heavenly Father should take such pains to bring His sons to perfection? None knows better than He exactly what is needed to transform His sons from corrupt and carnal creatures of the dust to beings of divine understanding and heavenly glory. I have often said that I have strong confidence in the ability of my heavenly Father to bring me to perfection and maturity as a son of God. My Father is a great son-raiser! What a colossal success He was with His firstborn! Anyone who can raise a son like Jesus knows exactly what He is doing and can surely handle you and me, my precious brother and sister.

“We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man. For it became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect THROUGH SUFFERINGS...wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth” (Heb. 2:9-10; Phil. 2:9-10).

Beholding the glory of Jesus Christ we can understand why the Father takes such infinite care to bring all His sons to perfection! Would you dare to imagine that any of the presidents, prime ministers, kings, or dictators of this present world system would be found fit candidates to straighten out the mess this world is in? Do you think for one moment that any of the world's past or present rulers possess either the wisdom or ability to bring an end to war, terrorism, strife, bigotry, crime, poverty, ignorance, fear, deceit, greed, broken homes and hearts, sickness, pain, sorrow, and death, restoring all into perfection again? Ah — apart from many sons brought to glory there is no hope for mankind! The ages to come will be given into the hands of God's choicest sons — saints fully developed, perfected through suffering, matured through trial, proven through testing, far beyond the reach of corruption and decay, far above the realm of greed, selfishness, deception, or any such thing. Isn't it wonderful!

I am reminded of the boy who wanted to help the butterfly out of its pupa. He saw that it struggled hard to get loose. Only a few strands held it back. So the boy clipped these off. The butterfly was free! And the boy was very happy, both about the butterfly and about the little operation he had performed. But so much greater did his sorrow become when he discovered what a well-intended but destructive labor of love he had performed. The butterfly

could not fly and could not learn to fly. The exertions by which it was to have worked itself out of the pupa were what would have strengthened it and enabled it to fly!

I mentioned earlier the words of David wherein he said, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn Thy statutes" (Ps. 119:71). You may wonder as I have — what kind of theology is this? How could my present distresses work in me the qualifications necessary to be a king-priest! The Hebrew word for affliction here means, "browbeaten, troubled, abased, chastened, defiled, hurt, humbled, weakened, depressed." When you put this meaning into the verse, suddenly it reads, "It is good for me to have been browbeaten, troubled, abased, chastened, defiled, hurt, humbled, weakened, and depressed. And it all has been for one purpose — so that I could learn the Lord's statutes!" The word statutes in this verse means "engraved law." The Psalmist is saying, "It's good that I went through all these troubles — because in the process God was engraving His laws, ways, and nature in my heart!"

We've prayed to reign with Jesus
But we've not known what we asked.
Our eyes have been unenlightened
As disciples in the past
Who came with this same prayer
(Although phrased a different way)
"Lord, let us sit beside you
In the coming kingdom Day.
One upon the left, dear Lord,
And one upon the right."
And then He said to them, as us,
"Can you endure the night?
Can you endure the anguish
Of a death upon the cross?
And are you able," asks the Lord,
"To suffer that great loss
Of a horror of such darkness
That God's face is hid from view?
And can you bear exposure
Before men and angels, too?
The cup I drink is better;
Its wine is mixed with gall.
The crown I wear is made of thorns;
My royal robe's a pall.
The throne you ask to share with me
Is raised 'twixt earth and sky
And the glory of the reign from there
Is hid from human eye.
Are you able now to drink
The cup my Father gives,
And can you see that he who dies
Is one who truly lives?
That he who rules is he who stoops
To wash another's feet;
And that the cross is God's own throne
Where He and sinners meet?"

These are the questions put to me
As I bowed down in prayer;
And still the questions that He asks
Of all those who would share
The glory of His kingdom,
The greatness of His power,
The resurrection life He brings
In this world's final hour.
For there's no life until there's death,
No glory without shame,
And we must truly learn to die
If we would wear the name
That's given those who overcome
And share His glorious throne
When Christ descends and brings reward
To those He calls His own!
— Author unknown

When the hour arrives for God to move us toward overcoming, spiritual maturity, perfection, and sonship He brings undeserved trials into our life. When these experiences arrive, we don't like them at all! Our first thought is disbelief; our first inclination is to ask what we have done to deserve this! Then we question God's goodness, faithfulness, and sovereignty. If I am a son of God, why does God allow this to happen? But each crisis is actually a precisely orchestrated opportunity to bring about our spiritual perfection! The afflictions of life are God's ingenious instrument to crucify our carnal mind, and mature our spirit.

Elwin Roach expressed it this way: "Very often people's problems come when they find themselves in hardships of refinement. Straightway they reject it! They ask, 'Why would God let me go through something so terrible when He could prevent it?' The answer is simple — He is not *'letting'* you go through it — He is *'making'* you go through it! He is driving you through it as surely as an unbroken horse is driven into a corral and broken by its owner. If the horse learns obedience, forsaking its own will, it can then be used throughout the man's kingdom. If not, it will be sold for dog food and soap. If your will is not broken during this time, and you insist on maintaining your *self-expression*, I doubt that you will wind up as dog food and soap; but you will be of little value in the kingdom of God. Think about it!"

It is the elect of the Lord who have been specifically selected by the Father to partake of the sufferings of Christ through the trials and tribulations which He brings into our lives. It was the plan and purpose of God that each son of God should be tested and tried to prepare us for the glory of His kingdom we are destined to receive. Don't think that you have to suffer *great things* like martyrdom or twenty years in a rat-infested prison in order for God to accomplish His work. Oh, no! There is a vast variety of events in our everyday lives uniquely designed to test every area the Lord would put His hand on. Each of us has had a unique set of tests and trials to go through to build the character of Christ in our life. Your trials have not been harder than mine, just different. We are distinct members of the Christ body, and the Lord's processings for each one varies according to His purpose in us and the place we shall fill.

Though we shall all ultimately be joined in union with Christ as one complete corporate man, each of us will be a unique expression of the fullness of Himself, in a way that only we can express Him. The Lord has a sovereign purpose to fulfill in each of our tests and trials, and He watches over it. To know that the Father has a sovereign purpose in all that we experience and

endure may not make the trials any easier to go through. But it gives us understanding, purpose, and hope of the glory that shall be revealed in us when it is finished.

God does not lead all His chosen in the same path or deal with them in the same way. He is not pouring every son into the same mold. He does not want assembly-line believers. He is not making Fords, He is transforming people! And so the experience will be different for each one. Not even two fingerprints are alike. God made us that way, for we are different. We are all human, but each of us is a unique expression of that humanity. All of us physically are from that first man, Adam; yet none of us is alike. It is amazing what God can do with two ears, two eyes, one nose, and one mouth. He sure comes up with some funny designs! If you don't believe it, look around you. All are human, but no two are alike. One is a plumber, another a race-car driver, another a teacher. One is tall, another short, with every shade between black and white, fat and thin, beautiful and ugly, and no two in any category look alike! How different! And yet — how alike! God makes everyone different. Do not expect Him to deal with you as He dealt with someone else, even though you both be sons. He is conforming all His elect to the image and likeness of Christ, but every member of the Christ body is a unique expression of His nature and glory!

The Scripture states that Jesus was “led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be *tested* by the devil.” It is abundantly evident, since Christ is the Pattern Son, the firstborn among many brethren, that all who follow Him unto sonship shall also be led of the Spirit into their own wilderness experience to be tested by the devil. Sonship is not a doctrine to be received with the assumption that because we believe it and embrace its truths, we are therefore qualified to be the manifest sons of God. Not at all! The process by which we must all *qualify* for sonship has already been demonstrated in the life of Jesus. As He was LED OF THE SPIRIT into the wilderness to be tested by the devil, even so must we also be LED OF THE SPIRIT into our own personal wilderness, to be tested by the devil. Not every child of God is tested in this way! Is that not why the church in Smyrna was told, “Behold the devil shall cast *some of you* into prison, that ye may be tried.” SOME of you! *Not* ALL of you! Not all will be overcomers! Others are content to live in lesser realms. They will not be chastised as sons! Unless we are tried and proven in the wilderness, we have no claim to sonship. The Holy Spirit is most explicit in this regard, for we read, “But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons” (Heb. 12:8). We should therefore welcome the tests that come our way, for the Father is testing and proving us to determine the qualities of His life within us. We should submit to these tests and allow the Lord to work His righteousness within us. Then we shall be released from those tests and trials and will be declared righteous.

The apostle Peter tells us that we should not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try us, as though some strange thing had happened unto us (I Pet. 4:12-13). The fiery trial itself is difficult enough to endure, but when there is added to the suffering an uncertainty as to why it is necessary, or what the cause might be, then it becomes more difficult to bear. This frequently is the case with the people of God; when visited by afflictions of one sort or another they wonder *why* this is happening to them! It is this that Peter is explaining to us! “Think it not strange,” he says, “as though some strange thing happened unto you.”

The King James translation does not give us the full depth of thought expressed by Peter. Basically, the Greek word here translated “strange” is one that suggests the relationship between a host and a guest; that is, those who are not members of the same family. What does it mean to be a host? A host or hostess *entertains* those who come to the home, makes them feel comfortable, and ministers to their every need and want. So what Peter is saying is, when this fiery trial comes to your door and knocks, then you are to be a host to that trial. Bring it in

and entertain it! Do not act as though it were a stranger that has come whom you would like to get rid of if you could. This is, indeed, a strange word to the natural man! But that is really what Peter is saying. "Be a host to this trial, bring it in and let it have its full work in you." It is a similar word used by Paul in his reference to the experience of Abraham when visited by three angels. Paul wrote, "Be not forgetful to entertain *strangers*; for thereby some have entertained angels unawares" (Heb. 13:1).

Confirming this viewpoint of our trials is the Greek word used in this passage, and translated "happened," in the expression, "as though some strange thing happened unto you." Its literal meaning is "to walk together." The thought is that when trials visit us, and even walk together with us, we are not to think of them as strangers, or aliens, but to accept such experiences as though they were our friends, or even members of our family! Peter explains that the reason we should not think of our trials as being strange, or alien to us, is that in experiencing them we are *partakers of Christ's sufferings*, or, as the Greek text indicates, we are "partners" in Christ's sufferings. **HE WAS PERFECTED THROUGH THE THINGS HE SUFFERED!** In other words, in our trials we are sharing the common experience of all whom our heavenly Father has called to sonship to share in the glory and power of His kingdom!

Since trials and testings are so closely related to our hope of glory, we should not consider them as strange, but should welcome them into our lives just as we would welcome a beloved member of our family, get acquainted with them, and learn well the lessons which they alone are able to teach us. Just think of the blessing Abraham derived from being host to the three strangers who visited him! Instead of resenting the fact that they had called, he treated them as members of his family, and became involved thereby in the salvation of Lot from the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Most Christians today do not particularly care for this sort of scripture. That is the proof that they are not the called out elect of the Lord! Most feel that when they have believed in the Lord, and have obeyed the Lord, they should be BLESSED! They should not suffer. They should have the very best of everything, financial, material, and physical blessings galore. Can you envision Paul in the Philippian jail expressing those sentiments? Can you hear him in any way questioning his confinement because He was a man of faith and power and had preached the gospel and obeyed the Lord? Is it possible to hear Paul complain about his suffering because he had such great power with God and had done the will of God? He was not in jail because of any evil He had done! He knew the ways of God, and he gladly shared in the sufferings of Christ that he, too, might be perfected! James, too, understood this great principle when he said, "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations (testings); knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience" (James 1:2-3).

I think that in the midst of all this, if God is to be glorified, it depends on how we respond to our testings and trials. We should recall that the same sun that melts butter also bakes bricks. The sun is the same; the substances are different and in the same type of affliction some people are made better and some people are made bitter. It depends upon our faith and our calling! And that is how you can distinguish a son of God! Sons know that there is *divine purpose* in all their afflictions and tribulations, and as they truly overcome in them they are made *better!* Those who are made *bitter* by the trials are bastards, and not sons. Every member of God's called out elect is made better! You will know the elect of the Lord by the intensity of their Christ-like sufferings, and their joy and confidence in them, not by vague, empty-sounding and high-sounding religious claims they may make.

Chapter 41

The Church In Smyrna

continued

"Behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that *ye may be tried*; and ye shall have tribulation ten days" (Rev. 2:10).

Every man and woman who has even in the least partaken of revelation will recognize with deep appreciation the truth that it was in Eden's fragrant garden that our first parents encountered that ancient serpent, which is the devil and Satan. There in the garden of God they were *tested* and *tried*! Not outside the Garden, but inside. The first step in the preparation of the sons of God is when we are lifted out of the vineyards of the world, and planted in the garden of God — the kingdom of heaven on earth. Then, many and varied are the ways and paths by which the Lord in faithfulness processes and develops the people He has chosen. A most important aspect of this preparation is found tucked away among the priceless gems in that treasure house of truth which is the Song of Solomon. "Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out" (S. of S. 4:16).

Some of the following thoughts are gleaned in part from the book CHRIST AND HIS BRIDE by Cora Harris Macllraavy.

"The Garden," which both in Genesis and the Song of Solomon has the significance of the kingdom of heaven on earth, has been set up by Jesus Christ through His death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and return as the Holy Spirit. In this garden God has planted precious plants, stately trees, costly spices, and aromatic herbs. This garden is not only the universal kingdom of the Lord, not only does God's called and chosen elect live and feed and work in this garden, but we are part of it. Each of our lives is a little vineyard or orchard or spice garden which is part of God's great garden. Thus we pray earnestly that the work which the Holy Spirit must do in our "gardens" may be done to the glory of God! Very often we are more inclined to ask God to bless us, supply our needs, heal, deliver, perform miracles, and flood our souls with glory, than we are to pray that He will deal, purge, prune, dig, and uncover all that is hindering His perfection in our lives. Ah, the blessings will come, the fullness will break upon us, but the north wind must blow first!

There is a mighty cry from the yearning heart of every son of God in this significant hour, "Awake, O North Wind!" We are earnestly longing for Him to blow upon our gardens in stripping and dealing and testing, however hard it may be on the flesh. We are praying most fervently that God will send His Spirit, as the north wind, to search out the pride, to search out the self-interest and self-will, to search out the soulish passions, emotions, and desires, to search out even the hidden spirit of Babylon that remains; and that He will blow upon it until it is blasted and drops off, and we are clothed in humility, righteousness, and the mind of Christ!

We are praying that the Lord of the garden will send the Holy Spirit, as the north wind, and strip away the false assurance that believes we have more than we have, and mistakes revelation for possession. How many times we *assumed* that we had entered into possession of the nature of Christ, the mind of Christ, and the power of Christ, the immortality of Christ, and all things that God had shown us and called us to begin to possess. Many times the Lord has let us see the blessedness of the path in which we walk alone with Him, and we thought we had laid hold upon it. But when He sent by the Spirit the testings and trials to blow upon our lives, we found that He was not yet our all in all; that we were still depending upon someone else, or something else, be it our feelings, our works, our faith, our gifts, our ministries, our gatherings, rather than upon the LORD HIMSELF WITHIN.

How little we recognize our own plans, desires, schemes, and efforts, which are as suckers in our spiritual lives! How little we appreciate the place we give the flesh and our own interests, our likes and dislikes, our experiences and self-absorption, our religious activities and multiplied works, which eat the strength and life out of our relationship with God. When God sends the Holy Spirit as the north wind, He comes and uncovers the flesh and carnality within us, exposing our own thoughts, acts, and position. With a blast of conviction, He blows upon those suckers, and like a mighty wind He sweeps down upon them to try them! As they fall off, we are left apparently stripped and bare; but, in reality, we are in a better condition to bring forth blossoms and fruit to His glory than ever before!

Therefore do we with faith and confidence say, "*Awake, O north wind, and blow upon my garden!* Lord, send the testings and processings that you know I need; send the hard things that are needed to try every blossom. Blow upon the blossoms in my life that are so beautiful and look as if they would bear the luscious fruit of sonship; blow upon my gifts, my ministry, my doctrines, my works, my hopes, my plans, and doings, and prove them whether they will abide, or whether they have no beginning of kingdom fruit in them." There are dealings and revelations in each of our lives which we have gladly embraced, there are callings to higher realms in God that have made much show before our eyes, we have reveled in the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, anticipating our sonship and our place with Christ upon His throne; we have rejoiced in the glory that is to be revealed in us, and the great and powerful ministry to come with His fullness. Yet the question follows — to what degree have we yielded that God might make these things FRUITFUL so that they remain no longer merely dealings and revelations, head-knowledge and dreams, never becoming possessions in some measure for our todays!

God also sends the Spirit, as the north wind, to blow upon every relationship in our lives; upon those relationships we deem harmless, but which are not of the Spirit nor of God's will, and come between the reality and us, sapping the life of sonship out of us, and robbing the inheritance of God. Upon every relationship that is not of His choosing and to His glory, He sends the strong north wind! He separates us from everyone and everything that is hindering the maturity of HIS LIFE; He blows upon our human affections, and before His north wind our soulish attachments wither and die. Not one thing of eternal value that has been inworked in our lives can be harmed by the north wind of God's testing and proving, which only blasts and withers the superficial and unfruitful; and the sooner they fall off the better. The sooner we see ourselves stripped of our self-confidence and blindness, our false hopes and delusion that we are far beyond the place to which we have really attained in God, the better!

He blows upon our involvement with religious systems, our feverish religious activities, our running hither and thither doing the so-called work of the Lord, our trotting from meeting to meeting, from preacher to preacher, from revival to revival, and before His north wind the

anointing upon these avenues of service lifts and we are left with a bare branch from which the superficial beauty and fragrance has been stripped. It is the strong blasts of the north wind that drive our roots down deeper and deeper into the soil of HIS LIFE, until that which has gone down and out of sight, is greater and stronger than that which appears on the surface. We are astonished to behold some of the most beautiful blossoms of our lives drop off; those in which we had placed much confidence! But the blasts of God's wind which destroy the fruitless blossoms, also cause the roots of true spiritual life to go down deeper INTO CHRIST; and they become firmly rooted and grounded IN HIM. Thus stripped and with our roots going deeper and deeper into the Christ within, we learn to take the time to wait on God long enough for HIS LIFE TO ARISE WITHIN US, long enough to hear HIM SPEAK, and have Him divulge HIS WILL to our seeking heart!

To every apprehended son of God who has purposed in his heart to follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth, God will send the searching north wind of the Spirit that his garden may be stripped and prepared for fruitfulness in the kingdom of God. When He has dealt with everything, He will send the *south wind* of the Spirit in wooing and encouragement, in warm showers of faith and glory and victory, which will refresh and entice the fruitful buds to come out and develop into the fruit of the Christ-life. The more testings the Lord sends, the stronger the searching north wind blows upon our garden, the more spices and fruit are perfected, and the more fragrance and glory flow forth from our lives!

Come smell the spices that abound in the garden of the Lord! Spices of love, spices of grace, spices of compassion, spices of mercy, spices of goodness, spices of righteousness, spices of joy, spices of peace, spices of faith, spices of the mind of Christ, spices of wisdom, spices of understanding, spices of power and victory! It is not the gentle, soothing south wind that wafts abroad these costly spices of the divine nature. It is *the north wind that whips and beats it fine*, that proves whether it is divine spice, or merely an imitation of man's soul.

As the spices are bruised, the perfume comes forth, for it is the hard things that make the spices give out their odor. Let God send the north wind upon our lives until He sees that it is enough; and then let the south wind blow that the spices may flow out! Thus the heart of the Lord is made to rejoice as He walks through His garden and smells the fragrance of our spices; as He beholds the fruit that is being perfected in our lives by the working of His Spirit! It is His garden, not ours! They are His precious fruits and spices, not ours! Though they are perfected in our lives and borne upon our branches and are sometimes spoken of as ours, they are really HIS; for CHRIST WHO IS OUR LIFE IS APPEARING WITHIN US! Come, O north wind; come, O south wind; and blow upon our garden!

THE CROWN OF LIFE

"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a *crown of life*" (Rev. 2:10).

From the dawn of time the crown has been the symbol of RULE, whether by secular monarch or by sacred priest. There are two different words in the Greek New Testament which are translated "crown" in English. One of them is *stephanos*, which denotes a "wreath," or "chaplet." The other is *diadema*, meaning a "diadem." The most common term rendered "crown" is *stephanos*. This crown is usually a laurel wreath woven of fragrant branches. It was granted to winners in the Olympic Games and also as a token of public honor for distinguished service — especially military leaders who had been victorious over their enemies on the battlefield. It was also given at marriage feasts, especially in royal families, to celebrate the joy of the bridegroom in having "won" the maiden as his bride. This crown always denotes the

VICTOR'S CROWN — the crown of an OVERCOMER — one who has fought and WON! This is the crown that is promised to the overcomers out of the church in Smyrna — the ones who are faithful unto death!

Paul reminds us that the athlete trained and ran to obtain a *corruptible crown*. Those green leaves of the laurel wreath would soon dry up, turn into a faded brown and crumble into oblivion. The branches soon became dead and brittle. Have you won trophies in your lifetime? If you have lived a little while and have had a chance to look back on some of them, you have seen them begin to turn and you wonder why in the world they could have seemed so important at the time. I wonder about what Olympic stars, who spend years of grueling training working to win a gold medal, must think thirty years later when they look at their medal. What does it really amount to then? Athletes will give themselves to incredible amounts of self-sacrifice to win some perishable crown. In contrast to this, oh ye saints of God, OUR STEPHANOI are INCORRUPTIBLE CROWNS which will never fade away in death — for our crown is the Crown of Life — LIFE ITSELF!

The Victor's Crown is granted as a reward for faithfulness — it is the trophy earned by steadfastness, perseverance, and carrying the battle onward to victory. There was once a king who had a heavy stone placed in the middle of a busy road. He hid himself and watched to see who would stop and remove the cumbersome obstacle. Men of various walks of life approached it and went around it. As the king watched, some men openly cursed the king for allowing the road to be so cluttered. One by one they dodged the task of removing the heavy stone. At last, a poor peasant, on his way to town, approached the place. His back was laden with a load of vegetables which he was going to sell. He stopped and contemplated the stone. The king watched eagerly. The peasant laid his load on the ground. Taking a deep breath, he huffed and puffed as he rolled the heavy stone off the road. Turning around, he spied a money bag which had been laying beneath the stone. With trembling hands, he opened the bag. It was filled with a fortune in gold pieces. There was a note folded among the pieces of gold. It stated that the person who removed the stone could have the gold. It was signed by the king!

Beneath every task that the Lord puts in the pathway of our spiritual journey, is a hidden blessing. We, like the people in the story, have a choice. We can dodge the obstacle if we wish! But we do it to our own hurt. Our King will reward us if we faithfully *overcome* in each test! There are crowns He has prepared for the overcomer. We will receive them if we press on to victory! "Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, **if we faint not**" (Gal. 6:9). Faint (quit) in your fulfilling of the Lord's will and you will reap no reward. That is the law of sowing and reaping! "Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things **which we have wrought**, but that we receive a **full reward**" (II Jn. 8). The word translated "wrought" is also translated "gained." Either way, the message is clear: it is possible to lose rewards which we have gained! We must be faithful to the end of the journey, to the completion of the process, to receive a full reward.

"Behold, I come quickly: **hold that fast which thou hast**, that no man take thy crown" (Rev. 3:11). If, by faithfulness, we hold fast to the ground we have already gained, we will receive our crown. If we do not stay faithful all the way to the end, we will *lose* that crown which we have already gained! "The end" is not when your heart stops beating, the end is the laying hold upon the promise, the receiving of the inheritance! If we are not faithful to the end, and lose our crown, *somebody* is going to receive it! The Greek word for "take" here is *lambano*. It is also translated "receive." It is not that some other person is going to snatch your crown from you...but God WILL HAVE A PEOPLE, a firstfruits, to display the fullness of His life to creation. Should we fail to *follow on* to become that people, God will raise up another generation, just as

He did with the children of Israel who refused to believe Him and enter into the Promised Land. That is the law of the kingdom!

May God help all who read these lines to realize that if we would be overcomers we cannot be sluggards or quitters! Nothing can defeat us except our own **unbelief!** I think of a young man whose goal (in the natural world) was to become a member of the state legislature. Now that is a high goal for a man to try to reach! He strove with all his might and was defeated. So he decided that he should go into business. The result was that he went bankrupt and spent seventeen years paying off the bad debts of his crooked partner. He fell in love with a beautiful woman and death snatched her out of his arms. He then decided to go into national politics. He ran for congress and lost. Then he sought for an appointment to a government office (the U.S. Land Office) but was rejected. Then he became a candidate for the vice-presidency, and he was defeated. If any man had reason to quit, this man did! He had a young son who was the darling of his life. And the boy died! Did he give up? No, though many a lesser man would have. Today in Washington, D.C. you can look up into his face, filled with sorrow and compassion, and yet with a certain determination as he sits there in his great white chair in the Lincoln Monument and looks down upon the Union that he saved and the slaves that he freed. He didn't quit! He became an overcomer! He prevailed! And he being dead, yet speaketh. And, beloved, you may feel today that you have failed every test and opportunity that God has set before you on the journey to the Throne — but arise and shake the dust from your feet, be strong and of a good courage — the race has not ended yet! Oh, yes, IT IS THE OVERCOMER WHO RECEIVES THE **CROWN OF LIFE!**

And how true it is that we are only able to fully overcome by virtue of being made partakers of the divine nature! To be "crowned" means to be given kingly authority. As the kingly authority and dominion of the divine nature is raised up in our lives, ascending the throne of our hearts to reign within us, we are **crowned** — both **ruled by** the spirit and **made rulers** — not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of a divine life! **THE CROWN IS LIFE!** Crowned with Life! Oh, the wonder of it!

"Be thou faithful *unto death*, and I will give thee a crown of life." It is my deep conviction that He speaks not of the death that takes this old body to the cemetery, but the death that comes by the **INWORKING OF HIS CROSS** until all that pertains to the realm of carnality has been completely and forever dealt with. Then, and only then, are we **CROWNED WITH LIFE**, His life reigning within without interference or possibility of defeat.

It is hard to understand the full implications of *life* until one sees clearly that there is a dimension of *His life* which is a *free gift* and another dimension of *His life* which is given *as a result of overcoming*. This is what most Christians miss! Let us consider a few scriptures that speak of the life which is a *free gift* by faith. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (Jn. 3:16). "For the wages of sin is death; but the *gift of God* is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:23). "Therefore as by the offense of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the *free gift* came upon all men unto justification of life" (Rom. 5:18).

Now we shall examine other passages that reveal a realm of life which is **not a free gift** at all! "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation (testing); for *when he is tried*, He shall receive the **VICTOR'S CROWN OF LIFE**" (James 1:12). This "crown of life" is reserved only for the Victors — the Overcomers! Consider how great is the exhortation of Paul wherein he says, "Know ye not that they which run a race *run all*, but *one* receiveth the prize? So run that ye

may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but *we* an *incorruptible*. I therefore so run" (I Cor. 9:24-25). "To him that *overcometh* will I give to eat of the *tree of life* which is in the paradise of God" (Rev. 2:7).

That the great apostle himself had not yet (in his opinion) qualified for this "crown of life" he states plainly in his epistle to the Philippians. Harken to his words! "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may *win Christ*, and be found *in Him*" (Phil. 3:7-9). Surely Paul did not have to go through all that sacrifice, humiliation, stripping, and death in order to have Christ in his life — to be *saved!* Paul himself had explained to the Philippian jailer the simple requirement for salvation: "*Believe* on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house" (Acts 16:31). But in chapter three of Philippians Paul continues, "That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death; IF BY ANY MEANS I MIGHT ATTAIN UNTO THE RESURRECTION OF (OUT FROM AMONG) THE DEAD. NOT as though I had ALREADY ATTAINED, either were ALREADY PERFECT: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which I also am apprehended of Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:10-12).

Fortunately, Paul gives us some very vital information concerning this resurrection "out from" or "from among" the dead, without which we would be very much in the dark. He tells us just how he was planning to be included in it! He also tells us how others came to be included in the same class with him, and he states that the revelation concerning this great attainment and the way into it, is the sign of spiritual perfection (Phil. 3:11-15). Yet the popular teachers of this day have totally missed these great truths! Let us consider them very carefully. They are of the utmost importance to all who treasure the beautiful hope of sonship to God! Paul informs us that he had given up the world, he had given up his former religion among the Jews, he had given up everything, that he might suffer with Christ, with his nature transformed to die even as Christ died. "IF BY ANY MEANS I might attain unto the resurrection out from amongst the dead."

A moment's reflection will suffice to convince the reader that the apostle is not speaking here of the broad truth of "the resurrection of the dead," inasmuch as *everyone* must rise again! "There shall be a resurrection of the dead, both the just and the unjust" (Acts 24:15). In the Greek language the resurrection "of the dead" is *nekron* or *ton nekron* and is applied to all classes of people because all will be raised. But the term *ek nekron* — "out of the dead" — is not once applied to the unjust or the ungodly, or in any general sense. The resurrection of which Paul spoke was not even the general resurrection of all saints! Paul knew that he was a saved man, and as such knew there was positively no way he could escape the resurrection of the just. Now, if there were but one resurrection of the saved, as the church systems teach, then all of his strivings were altogether uncalled for and useless!

But no! Paul was not striving for something that needed not to be striven for, nor was he striving in vain. And thus he wrote to the saints at Philippi, "But whatever former things I had that might have been gains to me, I have come to consider as one combined loss for Christ's sake. Yea, furthermore I count everything as loss compared to the possession of the priceless privilege — the overwhelming preciousness, the surpassing worth and the supreme advantage — of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, and of progressively becoming more deeply and intimately acquainted with Him, of perceiving and recognizing and understanding Him more clearly and fully. For His sake I have lost everything and consider it all to be mere rubbish in

order that I may *win* Christ...that I may in that same way come to know the power outflowing from HIS RESURRECTION; and that I may so share His sufferings as to be continually transformed in spirit into the likeness of His death, in the hope that IF POSSIBLE I MAY ATTAIN TO THE RESURRECTION THAT LIFTS ME OUT FROM AMONG THE DEAD EVEN WHILE IN THE BODY. Not that I have attained this ideal or am already made perfect, but I *press on* to lay hold of and make my own, that for which Christ Jesus has laid hold of me" (Phil 3:7-12, Amplified).

Ah, my beloved, the resurrection "of" the dead is one thing, but the resurrection "out from among" the dead is a mightily different thing! If *all* the people in a building leave it at the same time, it is the coming out "of" the company; but if only *some* of the people present leave, theirs is a coming out "from" the rest of the company. It was for this resurrection "out from" the dead that Paul longed continually! This was the bright and blessed hope that shone upon his soul and cheered him among the sorrows and trials, the toils and the difficulties, the buffetings and the conflicts. Every soul who dies, both saint and sinner, must be in the resurrection "of" the dead, for, as in Adam *all* die, so in Christ shall *all* be made alive! There is no possible way of avoiding it! Christ has bought it and paid for it!

To be a partaker, however, of the resurrection "from among" the dead, and, as the Amplified Bible so beautifully brings it out, to attain to that resurrection that lifts us out from among the dead **even while in the body** — that, Paul tells us, is a special blessing and distinction for those who FOLLOW ON TO KNOW THE LORD! He says that "perfection" or "completeness" in the full stature of Christ is the prerequisite! These not only are clothed with everlasting life in the spirit, they are invested with such **incorruption** and **immortality** in spirit, soul, *and* body, as to be forever and completely beyond the capacity to sin or the capability of death! This happens while we are walking around on two feet! This is not merely never-ending spiritual life, but a CROWN OF LIFE — God's own divine and eternal life in the fullness of HIMSELF!

This, my beloved, is that resurrection "out from among" the dead, even the "crown of life" which is that *full salvation* that includes the plentiousness of His incorruptible life, nature, and power. It is the *full salvation* of spirit, soul, and body in the here and now, a victory so complete, so powerful, so divine and eternal, that there is no possibility of ever sinning or dying again. And while I have called it a "salvation," it is **more** than salvation, it is something **beyond** salvation, an attainment, the PRIZE of a quality and dimension of life the first Adam has never known! Not even in Eden! For in Eden Adam *could sin* and Adam *could die*. But these overcomers possess the very fullness of the *divine nature*! They are not merely "saved by grace," but have totally laid down their own lives and completely taken up HIS. They are an incorruptible and immortal people spiritually, soulically, and bodily.

This is the *TRUE ETERNAL SECURITY* of which men teach. Why is this resurrection such a **prize**? Why is it worth giving up everything to run the race? Because it speaks of a **realm of life** and honor and glory and dominion in the fullness of Christ which none others shall receive! It is reserved for *overcomers* alone — not for the general run of Christians who have hobbled with the world, fornicating with the harlot religious systems of man, and counted other things more precious than the **prize**!

The vast majority of believers are of the persuasion that by faith in Jesus they have received the *full measure* of eternal life — a never-ending life with God in the spirit. Multitudes of believers are unaware that there are more than one level, degree, plane, or dimension of life in the world of the spirit. But do not angels have a different level of spiritual life than sons? Oh, yes, there are various planes of life in the spirit, both in realms of light and of darkness. All men

are *not* created equal! The scriptures are clear that God's overcoming elect shall have not only a never-ending life, but a *quality* of life, a *maturity* of life, a *power* of life, a *character* of life, a *fullness* of life, a *dominion* of life, that makes them KINGS! CROWNED with life! REIGNING in life! Every little child has human life. With that human life they can play with dolls, toy trucks, and do other childish things. Yet, there is a *development* of that human life that makes some men great! They become the men of accomplishment, the heroes, men of recognition and power whose names fill our history books. In like manner, any child of God with God's life can go to heaven and play a harp! But only overcomers are CROWNED WITH LIFE — Life to reign with Christ upon His throne!

The Lord is bringing His overcoming remnant into THE POWER OF AN ENDLESS LIFE. It is greater than Pentecostal power! Pentecostal people die, but our Lord Jesus the Christ is a priest forever after the power of an endless life and He lives to die no more! This power is greater than the power to speak in tongues, prophesy, heal the sick, cast out devils, and do signs and wonders. It is greater than witnessing power, and even greater than power to raise the dead. Those raised from the dead by Pentecostal power die again! Pentecostal power lies within the "in part" realm of first Corinthians 13:8-10). When that which is *perfect*, *complete*, and *full* is come, that which is in part shall be done away!

Soon, very soon, those powers will no longer be needed because the manifest sons of God shall arise in the power of the MELKISEDEKIAN PRIESTHOOD, AFTER THE POWER OF AN ENDLESS LIFE, to deliver creation from THE BONDAGE OF CORRUPTION. A ministry is coming where there is no limited measure of the Spirit, no "in part" manifestation of the "gift" realm. There will be no need to heal the sick, cast out devils, multiply bread and fish, or raise the dead — it will be a ministry from the IMMORTAL REALM where everlasting life will flow fully and freely to all creation, swallowing up mortality in life! Death is not the grave or the coffin. DEATH IS THAT WHOLE DREADFUL REALM IN WHICH MAN HAS EXISTED EVER SINCE THE TRANSGRESSION IN EDEN. Mankind groans to be delivered, not just forgiven, not merely saved from sin and sickness and trouble and the grave, but out of death, out of the DEATH REALM altogether!

We can only speculate what it will be like to be in the full power and glory of *immortal life*! God is moving to bring His holy remnant into the power of an indissoluble life, even now. There will be a full and complete severing from the earth realm, from the carnal mind, from the death realm and all its claims. God wants a free, heavenly, celestial people, a body of sons totally detached from all that is earthly, limited, and temporal! It is possible to move into a resurrection realm in our consciousness that places us beyond time, beyond the thinking and power of the world, beyond the bondage of health, security, and death itself. Is that not the greatest power that God can give mankind — to make him an eternal *spiritual being* in the eternal glory of God? Not a disembodied spirit, but a *spiritual being* with a *spiritual body*! Ah, what a PRIZE! What a CROWN! "So let us run..."

Note, precious friend of mine, I did not say that God would make us *spirits* — but *spiritual beings*. What God is making is a NEW CREATION — something that has never been before! It is God (spirit), but not just God. It is man (form, image), but not just man. It is God and man brought together in a union producing a race of beings that are not God or man — yet GOD **and** MAN! It is the NEW CREATION! In the vast storehouse of truth embraced by the holy scriptures no part nor phase thereof is in any way more outstanding or clear than the truth that man was designed by his Creator to possess a body. Man is not designed to have his spirit flit about through eternity without a body. Jesus Christ is the first of this new creation and the

firstborn among many brethren, and He is a *spiritual being* having a glorified *human body*! He is the GOD-MAN! That, my friend, is sonship!

The apostle Paul echoes the sense of revulsion found in the heart of every man at the thought of being found "naked" or "disembodied." Speaking of the earthly tabernacle of flesh, he writes, "For we know that if our *earthly house of this tabernacle* (body) were dissolved, we have a *building of God*, an *house* not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be *clothed upon* with our *house* which is from heaven: if so be that being *clothed* we shall *not be found naked*. For we that are in *this tabernacle* do groan, not for that we would be *unclothed* (put off our body), but *clothed upon* (our house from heaven put over top of this tabernacle), that mortality might be *swallowed up* of life. Now He that hath wrought us FOR THIS SELFSAME THING IS GOD" (II Cor. 5:1-5).

There is another body, thank God! Formed of the incorruptible life of the resurrected and glorified Christ of God, the *second man*, the *last Adam*, the *God-man*, the *spiritual man* with a *spiritual body*, the firstborn of the *new creation species*. This marvelous body is from heaven, just as my present body is from earth. It is the offspring of the last Adam, just as my flesh body is the offspring of the first Adam. I do not hesitate to declare to you that as a man PUTS ON CHRIST he puts on not only the spirit of Christ, but also the *resurrection body* of Christ, and this body is OUR HOUSE FROM HEAVEN! As the pure and holy life of the Son of God is formed within us God shall also give us bodies worthy of such divine life, bodies capable of expressing all the wisdom and nature and power of that blessed realm beyond sin and death, yea, beyond time and space and matter! What a PRIZE! What a CROWN! This is the CROWN OF LIFE — the crown which IS LIFE ITSELF! Aren't you glad!

God is even now bringing forth an *incorruptible people*. Overcomers! Those who shall overcome *all things*. And of them, finally, it shall be said, "They fought many, many bouts, and were crowned *every time*!" No more weakness and failure. No more flunking two tests and passing one. Kings and priests! Reigning in God's own nature. Reconciling the world. Subduing the kingdoms. Restoring all things. As kings to reign, as priests to redeem and reconcile. Ah, beloved saints of God, let us *press on* to obtain this glorious and eternal CROWN OF LIFE!

NOT HURT OF THE SECOND DEATH

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit sayeth unto the churches; he that overcometh shall *not be hurt of the second death*" (Rev. 2:11).

This is a strange yet wonderful statement! I would draw your attention to the fact that it does not say that the overcomer experiences nothing of the second death, that he does not pass through it, or that its work is not wrought in his life; but the thought is that he will not be "hurt" by it. It is possible to pass through the most terrible experience and not be hurt by it. Listen! "And these three men Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake, and said unto his counselors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king. He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they HAVE NO HURT; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God"(Dan. 3:23-25).

Oh, to know that we can pass through the darkest night or the hottest fire or the deepest death and not be hurt by it if Jesus goes with us! How heartening and assuring to read such

promises as these: "When thou passeth through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: and when thou walkest through the fire, thou *shalt not be burned*; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee" (Isa. 43:2).

The word "hurt" is from the Greek *adikeo* meaning to be unjust, do wrong, injure, or offend. Armed with this understanding we may paraphrase Revelation 2:11 thus: "He that overcometh shall not be done an injustice, wronged, injured, or offended by the second death." The great difference between the carnal man and the child of God is that the carnal man is taken hand and foot and "cast" into the lake of fire, fighting, kicking, screaming, cursing, and resisting all the way, while the child of God willingly and obediently walks into the fiery processings of God hand in hand with his blessed Redeemer. And, one way or the other, ALL MEN MUST DIE UNTO SIN!

When the natural man becomes the spiritual man, the great change is described by the Holy Spirit as a passing from death unto life. Before the transition occurred, the practical difficulty was this: How to get into harmony with the new environment of the kingdom of God. No sooner do we enter into the kingdom of God than the problem is reversed. The question now is: How to get out of harmony with the world, the flesh, and the devil! The moment the new CHRIST LIFE is quickened within there comes a great anxiety to break with the old, for the regenerated spirit has nothing in common with the old. The former way of life now becomes embarrassing! Because of "sin in our members" it refuses to be dismissed from our consciousness. It competes doggedly with the new nature of the Christ! And in a hundred ways the former traditions, the memories and passions of the past, the fixed associations and habits of the earlier life, now press in to draw us to walk after the flesh, complicating the new walk. The complex and bewildered soul, in fact, finds itself confronted by two contrasting faculties — the flesh and the spirit — each with urgent but incompatible claims. It is a dual consciousness of a double world, a world whose inhabitants are deadly enemies, and engaged in perpetual civil war! The position is perplexing. It is clear that no man can attempt to live both lives! No man can walk both after the flesh and after the spirit anymore than one can walk down two roads at the same time.

His testimony will agree with the apostle who wrote: "For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot perform it. I have the intention and urge to do what is right, but no power to carry it out; for I fail to practice the good deeds I desire to do, but the evil deeds I do not desire to do are what I am ever doing. Now if I do what I do not desire to do, it is no longer I doing it — it is not myself that acts — but the sin (principle) which dwells within me. So I find it to be a law of my being that when I want to do what is right and good, evil is ever present with me and I am subject to its insistent demands. For I endorse and delight in the Law of God in my inmost self — with my new nature. But I discern in my bodily members — in the sensitive appetites and will of the flesh — a different law at war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner to the law of sin that dwells in my bodily organs — in the sensitive appetites and will of the flesh. O unhappy and pitiable and wretched man that I am! Who will release and deliver me from the shackles of this body of death?" (Rom. 7:18-24, Amplified).

To walk both after the flesh and after the spirit is morally impossible! "No man," as Christ so often emphasized, "can serve two masters." And yet, as a matter of fact, here is the quickened child of God being in relation to both worlds — flesh and spirit! Is it not because we *are* in our constitution both flesh and spirit? Who can deny it! Someone says, "But my old man is dead!" Yes, my friend, your *old man* is dead, but your *flesh isn't!* If you are still living in a *body* that has *fleshly desires*, your flesh is *not dead*. People get such distorted ideas about such simple

things! Because of the spirit within and the flesh without we are brought into relation with two realms — sin and righteousness, light and darkness, truth and error. Therein lies the warfare! What is to be done in such an emergency? How can the inner son deliver himself from the ever-persistent call of the flesh?

The ready solution of the difficulty is — TO DIE! Not for our "old man" to die, for he is already crucified with Christ, but for us to DIE TO SIN, or to KILL THE EVIL DESIRE LURKING IN OUR BODILY MEMBERS. We must recognize as *dead* what *God says is dead* and we must *put to death* what *God says is still alive and must be put to death*. If people who are harping only on the fact that their "old man is crucified" would read the scriptures in this light, find out what God says is dead and what God says we are to mortify or put to death, it would be quite a revelation to them! "So *kill* the evil desire lurking in your members — those animal impulses and all that is earthly in you, that is employed in sin: sexual vice, impurity, sensual appetites, unholy desires, and all greed and covetousness, for that is idolatry" (Col. 3:5, Amplified).

To die to any reality is to withdraw correspondence with it, to cut ourselves off from all communication with it. The solution of the problem will simply be this: for the spiritual life to *reverse continually* the processes of the fleshly life. The spirit man having passed from *death unto life* — the fleshly man must next proceed to pass from *life unto death*. Regeneration of the spirit in short must be followed by the degeneration of the flesh, the carnal mind. And this DEATH PROCESS is the SECOND DEATH — the DEATH OF DEATH! Now it is no surprise to find that this is the process everywhere described and recommended by the Holy Spirit! Paul asked the burning question, "Who will deliver me from this body of death?" and swift came the answer, "O thank God! — HE WILL! Through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (Rom. 7:24-25).

Listen to the words of the apostle as he presses this beautiful truth home to the hearts of the understanding saints in Colossae: "If then you have been raised with Christ to a new life, thus sharing His resurrection from the dead, aim at and seek the rich, eternal treasures that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. And set your minds and keep them set of what is above — the higher things — not on the things that are on the earth. For as far as this world is concerned you have died, and your new real life is hid with Christ in God. So KILL the evil desire lurking in your members...PUT AWAY AND RID YOURSELVES OF ALL THESE THINGS: anger, rage, bad feeling toward others, curses and slander and foul-mouthed abuse and shameful utterances from your lips! Do not lie to one another, for you have stripped off the old unregenerate self with all its evil practices, and have clothed yourself with the new spiritual self, which is ever in the process of being renewed and remolded into fuller and more perfect knowledge upon knowledge, after the image of Him who created it" (Col. 3:1-10, Amplified).

Let me repeat — all men shall die to sin! Some lovingly submit to God's dealings that the dreadful death of the carnal mind in their members may be "mortified" or "put to death," while others must be subdued and broken under the severe heat of refining fire. The former pass through the death to self — but are not "hurt" by it. By dying in a living and active faith to everything of the flesh, and living by the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit, a perfect work is wrought in which everything that is in any way opposed to God is brought to death. These become what God seeks in order to satisfy His heart! In the measure that we are identified with the cross of Christ, and made conformable to His death, in which it is no longer our will but HIS, in that measure we are "dying out" to the first death, via the process of the second death, **the death of death**, our whole being coming up in the likeness of His resurrection.

The second death — the destruction of the carnal mind and its hostility and enmity against God — is not to be feared by the called out overcoming elect of God — it is God's arrangement where all the effects of the first death shall be disannulled, and all carnal-mindedness shall cease. For us who willingly submit to this process "no man taketh our life from us, we lay it down." But for those who will not lay it down, I do not hesitate to say that IT WILL BE TAKEN FROM THEM!

Let me quote the timely words of Ray Prinzing: "Now — while we see the victory of the ultimate, a complete triumph over death, first death, second death, ALL DEATH to ultimately be brought to an end, there is a present tense application which is before us. God has apprehended in this hour, as in all preceding generations, a remnant in whom HIS SPIRIT is working, and they are becoming daily experiential partakers of His death, overcoming all the desires and lusts of the carnal mind. To those who now OVERCOME, the same shall not be 'hurt' of the 'second death,' when it is manifested in its more severe forms, as portrayed in the term of being 'a lake of fire.' Praise God, with the inworking of the Holy Spirit, enabling us to overcome all the evil of this present age, and all the carnal mind, we shall not be done an injustice by the second death. THE WHOLE PROCESS IS UNTO VICTORY. There may be suffering involved, for indeed, it means death to all our pre-conceived ideas, death to all the rebellion of our self-will, but it also means that we shall be loosed, set free from the shackles that bind, and with the inflow of His life we shall walk in the glorious liberty of the sons of God" — end quote.

Make no mistake about it! There are multitudes who shall resist God until the extreme measures He must use to subdue them are beyond our comprehension. For them the second death shall hold terror, and will prove a most painful experience. Let us die now! Let us die to sin now! Let us die to our stubborn wills now! Let us die to our fleshly ways now! Let us take the cup of suffering and submit to the refining fires now! Let us arise in the newness of *His life* now, to be conformed to His image. He that overcometh NOW shall not be HURT by the second death! Aren't you glad!

Chapter 42

The Church In Pergamos

"And by the angel of *the church in Pergamos* write..." (Rev. 2:12).

The third church was the church in Pergamos. Pergamos means "elevated," such as a citadel, tower, or an earthly elevation. This is a description of the situation of the city of Pergamos, high upon a mountain. Spiritually it stands for pride, worldliness, love of worldly things, power, pomp, fashion, money, organization, and control. These are the things the overcomers in THE PERGAMOS CONDITION must overcome!

Pergamos was one of the most beautiful cities of the ancient world. It was famous for its almost perfect weather, and was called the city of eternal spring. All who came there loved the weather because it was so consistent all year-round. It seems that almost everywhere you go where there is the combination of scenic beauty and perfect weather you find a lot of cults situated there, just as today you find them in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Sedona, and many other of the most picturesque cities of the world. That is exactly what you had in Pergamos! Pergamos was the seat of more different religions than any other city of the ancient world.

Mark Anthony came to visit Pergamos quite often because of its great natural beauty, and another frequent visitor was Cleopatra. Because of the perfect weather she would come there at certain times of the year and remain for a season. She was an avid lover of books, and with access to the vast library of Pergamos she devoted much of her time to reading. She remarked to Mark Anthony once how much she loved the library that was there in the city of Pergamos, so he sent a troop of soldiers and shut the whole place down, took the entire library of more than 200,000 volumes, loaded it onto a ship, and shipped it to Alexandria, Egypt as a gift for her. Alexandria already had one of the most famous libraries of the ancient world, and now it was a double library! What a man will do for the love of a woman — I suppose we will never understand!

The city was noted for its pagan religions and many heathen temples. Famous shrines of the gods dominated the skyline of this great religious center. The great altar dedicated to the chief Greek saviour-god, Zeus, was located in front of the temple of Athena which stood one thousand feet up on the conical hill where Pergamos was situated. The altar was 123 feet long, 113 feet wide, forty feet high, and covered with elaborate carvings. It stood on a projecting ledge of rock and looked exactly like a great throne on the side of the hill with a dominating view of the valley for at least twenty miles each way. Lorain and I visited Pergamos a number of years ago and walked over the ruins of that once great and beautiful altar of Zeus.

There was also an altar to Athena, patron goddess of Athens. Emperor worship was practiced in Pergamos, its first temple being erected in 29 B.C. Citizens were required to burn a pinch of incense at the foot of Caesar's statue, honoring him as a god. Those who refused to do so were immediately arrested and imprisoned. They also worshipped Dionysus, the god of vegetation, and Aesculapius, the god of healing. Should my reader wonder why I am sharing all this history with you, it will become clear later on in this study of the church at Pergamos.

THE TWO-EDGED SWORD

"And by the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith He which hath the *sharp sword with two edges*" (Rev. 2:12).

We must turn our faces to the Lord of all the called out elect and see Him standing in the midst with the *sharp sword with two edges* — not to destroy us, but to circumcise our hearts and minds. Too often the sword we attempt to use has only one edge, and it is so dull that it does not penetrate the heart and soul, for it is the sword of the *letter of the word*. I have heard many preachers talk about "getting out their swords" and they used them from the pulpit to cut people to pieces. But our Lord is arising in His chosen ones in this hour as the *living word*, and *that* sword is living and powerful, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart (Heb. 4:12).

The sword of the Lord is not a blade of steel, dripping with the blood of His hapless victims, but the two-edged sword of His living word of truth which proceedeth out of His mouth. Therefore, the new and greater ministry of the sons of God in the kingdom of our Father is a totally spiritual ministry which functions on the level of the **creative word of God**. And to participate in that new and greater kingdom ministry, we will have to become more spiritual, we will have to be anointed of God to hear, be quickened by, and speak in the authority of, the anointed word of our Father for this new kingdom Day! The kingdom of God will subdue all things by a *living word* of power and authority!

The two-edged sword of the Spirit cuts in both directions. The word for sword here in the Greek speaks of the Roman sword of the day. It was a new and great invention! The Roman sword was short, it had two edges both of which were sharp, and it had a sharp point. It was light weight, anyone could carry it. When it first came out it was one of the biggest jokes of the ancient world. All of the pirates and all of the barbarians carried big swords, heavy swords, ornate swords, swords that often had to be carried over their shoulders. The handle was so large you could put both hands on it because you needed it to swash powerfully enough to take off five or six heads with one swing. Of course, by the time you swung around to cut off five or six heads any thinking man could duck and you'd miss them all. You would then have to reposition your hands to grab it again and regain control of it in order to swing in the opposite direction.

The simple thought was: the bigger and heavier the sword, the more powerful it is. But the truth is, the most effective sword is one that you can handle! The lighter the weight, the shorter it is, the smaller it is, the easier it is to manage and the swifter you can move it. Someone was very brilliant who designed the Roman sword! The Roman sword was short; it was only about eighteen inches long. It had two sharp sides instead of one, and it had a sharp point at the end. There were other swords that had a sharp point, but they were thin for stabbing. Still others were heavier, but had only one sharp side, necessitating an adjustment after every swing in order to swing again in the opposite direction. But the Roman sword was so simple you could stab with it, cut in both directions, and its weight never threw you off balance.

THIS IS THE DEEP SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SHARP SWORD WITH TWO EDGES — this is the kind of sword the word of God is! The word of God doesn't have just one good point. Some people think it does — that's all they preach, just *one good point!* You will hear that one good point — the same message — every Sunday morning. Many churches preach a "salvation" message every Sunday. The saints are starving for bread and meat to grow on, but all they get, week after week, is milk. That's all they know. Some only preach against sin. Others only

preach water baptism. Still others preach only the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Some preach healing and miracles. Others preach revival. Still others preach prophecy and end-time events. Some people think the sword of the Lord cuts in only one direction, so they only cut in one direction. There is no balance in their word! Either it's all love and no judgment, or it's all judgment and no love. But the sword of the Spirit cuts both ways! This is the sword of the One who walks between the candlesticks! This is now becoming the sword of every son of God!

The two-edged sword has a side of blessing, encouragement, life, and glory; but it also has the side of correction, judgment, purging, processing, and refining. It divides between soul and spirit, it brings the sharp discernment of the mind of Christ to separate between what is of the soul — our own mind, will, emotion, and desire — and what is of the mind and will of the spirit. The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, is not the sword of the dead *letter of the word*, not a mere doctrine, but it is the *living revelation* of Christ within! God is delivering every son in this hour from the heavy, cumbersome sword of man-made creeds and doctrines, and is raising up within us the two-edged sword of His living word for this great day of the Lord! This is being accomplished by the living instruction of the Holy Spirit! Aren't you glad!

SATAN'S THRONE

"I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where *Satan's seat is...*" (Rev. 2:13).

The typical and symbolic church at Pergamos was dwelling where Satan's throne was located. The Greek word is clearly "throne," but the translators of the King James Bible softened it down to "seat." Let us not be afraid of the phrase. It is Satan's **throne!** A throne in the book of Revelation occurs frequently as the symbol of dominion, as the center whence the authority of the king emanates throughout his entire kingdom.

It is my conviction that our thoughts and comments about Satan should always be tempered with the wonderful truth that he has absolutely *no power* over a saint of God who dwells in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus! Therefore, as we discuss Satan, we recognize this truth above any other regarding Satan. Further, although we use the pronouns "him" or "he" when referring to Satan, we know "he" is not a singular person, but is the evil *spirit* that works in and through the carnal minds of the children of disobedience. It is not our purpose to magnify Satan or to give him undue recognition. Yet, we who are in Christ should know that we are engaged in spiritual warfare! It is our Father's purpose, through the mighty, conquering power of Christ in His body, to defeat every enemy, entity, and power in all realms of man, the earth, and all the unbounded heavens. Christ is bruising Satan under *our feet!* (Rom. 16:20). Satan is one of the enemies, along with sin and death, that is being defeated, first in the lives of God's elect, and ultimately in all of creation. With this purpose in mind, we present the following thoughts.

The Holy Spirit declared that "Satan's throne" was located in the place where the church in Pergamos dwelt. Let us understand this mystery! First, let me give you the location of Pergamos. The modern city of Izmir, which was ancient Smyrna, is the great city where tourists go because the airport and the hotels are there. You go about sixty-five miles south to reach Ephesus and about seventy miles north to reach Pergamos. These three were, in New Testament times, the *royal cities*, and they vied with one another. Smyrna (Izmir) was the great *commercial* center, Ephesus was the great *political* center, and Pergamos was the great *religious* center.

Satan's throne was established in Pergamos, that is, the center of cultic worship. This religious system had been started in Babylon, but was captured by the Persians in 539 B.C., who put a

stop to this religious system. Soon its priesthood moved out of Babylon, making their way to Pergamos, and the religion found a new home in Pergamos. Pergamos became the headquarters, as it were, for this pagan system. Through the worship of Caesar, Zeus, Dionysus, Aesculapius, and other pseudo gods, Satan had firmly established his *throne* in Pergamos! He set up his operation in the center of learning and the healing arts, along with idolatry, controlling peoples' souls, bodies, and spirits. This was Satan's throne in the *typical* city of Pergamos!

"Even where Satan's throne is" reveals that *religion* was big business in Pergamos and that Satan's headquarters were there! Not that Satan's headquarters were actually in Pergamos, *per se*, but the ruling power of Satan *is in religion*. This ought to settle the question for those who think that Satan is in hell at the present time! He has never yet been in the hell men talk about. But he *does* have headquarters, and we may think his headquarters are in the drug world, in the sex and pornography industry, in the military establishment, in the harlot's house, in terrorist organizations, in the bar-room, in Hollywood, in gangs, murderers, and child molesters. Not so! These all represent the *works of the flesh*, not the power of Satan! In John's day the Holy Spirit used the symbol of Pergamos, the center of *religion*, to identify the location of Satan's throne! The great fact is just this: wherever the centers of *religious systems* are, there you will find Satan's throne!

Without doubt the most powerful god of Pergamos was Aesculapius, the Greek god of healing. Aesculapius was known as *the god* of Pergamos. His chief symbol was a serpent. This licentious and debased worship included a huge serpent in the temple and a serpent image on many of the coins of the city. Aesculapius was to Pergamos what Artemis was to Ephesus, or Apollo to Delphi. Aesculapius was the god of healing. There was a great temple-hospital which could be compared at that time to our modern hospitals of today. People flocked from all over the then known world to seek cures for their ailments and diseases. has been called "the Lourdes of the ancient world." Galen, the Greek physician, was born in Pergamos. He was second only to Hypocrites in the medical history of the ancient world. The most famous title of Aesculapius in the Greek tongue was "Aesculapius Soter" or "Aesculapius the Saviour."

When we visited Pergamos we walked amid the ruins of the vast temple-hospital with its great columns lining the broad avenue. It was here that the well-known symbol of the medical profession — a serpent twined around a staff — was the dominant symbol of the god Aesculapius. It was the Mayo Clinic of that day. It was, first of all, a *temple* to Aesculapius. People were healed there by having a "sleeping encounter" with serpents! Terrence Kelshaw has chronicled for us the history of how the pagan cult worship worked and especially that at the temple-hospital of Aesculapius in Pergamos. He writes:

"A sacred road, common in Hellenistic times, connected the city of Pergamos with Aesculapian (the temple-hospital area), and this road has now been excavated. As you walk along it, the tall columns indicate where the shops used to be on either side of the road. This colonnade leads to a large square, which used to be the temple of Aesculapius. It was 120 feet high, and around the walls were paintings depicting the god of healing at work. Right in the center of the room, beneath a domed roof, stood one piece of furniture. It was a short, round, stone pillar standing four feet high and carved on the side with two intertwined snakes. The top of the stone was slightly concave and a small fire burned there continuously. This was the altar to the god Aesculapius.

"Visitors were met here by a priest and obliged to buy a measure of incense, which was to be deposited upon the flames as a votive offering of trust in Aesculapius. A slave then led the

patient through huge brass doors into a large park skirted about with colonnaded walks on all sides. Across the far side of this villa was the sacred pool, with priests in attendance, and the patient was taken there and invited to step down into ankle deep water. The priest ascertained the nature of the illness and then began to determine the 'votive offering' for healing. This meant bartering with the patient to find out what price was willing to be paid to appease Aesculapius and secure the healing. If it was enough, then water would flood into the pool. If it was not, only a trickle would appear.

"Effective healing was possible (but not guaranteed) only if the water rose to waist level. The first sum discussed was never enough! Bargaining would continue until a price was reached that was satisfactory for the god to send enough water into the pool. Unknown to the patient, a priest, hiding on the other side of the pool and listening to the process, was lifting or dropping a subterranean slab of stone that allowed a spring to feed water into the pool. The higher the price, the sooner Aesculapius sent water!

"Treatment began with sessions of psychotherapy suggesting that healing was an already established fact. Once a positive-thinking attitude was established, the patient was given a sacred mud bath and then transferred to the herbal bath where a strong drug vapor was inhaled. When sufficiently sleepy from the drug effects, a long walk along the *whispering corridor* would lead to the temple of Telesphor, a round building with six large alcoves in which were already a number of sleeping patients. Some would have been there for days, heavily drugged, and the new patient would collapse into an alcove and join them, his head fuzzily aware of heavenly voices singing and pronouncing healing in the name of Aesculapius. He had been aware of those voices since he entered the underground corridor.

"But what was not known was that the voices came from priests who were whispering softly down long shafts at ground level. It was a semiconscious, not unpleasant, floating experience of well-being, in which the 'heavenly voices' were welcome partners. In this temple there were snakes. In the night the semi-conscious sufferer might be touched by one or more of these snakes as it glided over the ground on which he lay. The touch of the snake was held to be the touch of the god himself, and the touch was held to bring the healing. Once the drug wore off, the patients made their way back to the villa, where more positive-thinking psychotherapy took place, which might be followed by a further sacred mud treatment or convalescence at the villa. There were gardens in which to walk, a library, or one could simply relax on the covered terraces" — end quote.

It will dismay some for me to say it, but the ancient serpent religion of Aesculapius has reappeared in our day, not in the same form, but out of the same demonic realm of deception. Let me explain to you the mystery. In the summer of 1965 an atheist psychologist (remember the psychotherapy at Aesculapian?) in New York City by the name of Helen Schucman began to hear an "inner voice." As the voice persisted Helen began to take a sort of cosmic dictation from "the voice" and this voice gave her distinct and clear direction on things she was to write. By this process of "channeling" over a period of seven years the well-known book, *A Course in Miracles*, was born. With more than 1,200 pages, a royal blue cover and gold-stamped lettering, the book looks like a Bible, even laid out in chapters and verses. This resemblance is intentional. After all, the Course claims as its author the central person of the Bible, none other than Jesus Christ Himself!

Before Helen Schucman began writing *A Course in Miracles* she began to have what she refers to as "higher visual imagery" or dream sequences. She began to experience this with considerable clarity. One of these sequences involved being in a boat. Helen herself relates

the incident. "The boat was moving slowly, but easily, along a straight little canal. There was just enough breeze to help the boat along. I wonder if there is buried treasure here, I thought to myself dreamily; I shouldn't be surprised if there were. Then I noticed a long pole with a large hook on the end lying on the bottom of the boat. Just the very thing, I thought, dropping the hook into the water and reaching the pole down as far as I could. The hook caught something heavy, and I raised it with difficulty. It was an ancient treasure chest, well worn from the water and the bottom covered with seaweed. There was nothing in the chest but a large black book like the spring binders used to hold manuscripts or papers together. On the spine one word was written in gold — **AESCULAPIUS**. The word was familiar but I couldn't remember what it meant. I found that it was the name of the Greek god of healing. I saw the same book once more a few nights later, this time there was a string of pearls around it." The black book stood for the revelation given in *A Course in Miracles*!

Can we not see by this that *A Course in Miracles* is inspired by the same spirit of darkness that birthed the ancient healing cult of the pagan god Aesculapius! I have the book in my library. While it does contain many thoughts that *appear* to correspond closely to kingdom and sonship truths, it is actually a New Age book and it is my conviction that it is the "voice of a stranger." I have also a video tape which is a promotional introduction to *A Course in Miracles*. At the time this video was made Dr. Kenneth Wapnick was the president of *The Foundation for A Course in Miracles*. In an interview on the video Dr. Wapnick gave an enlightening overview of the book. In this interview he explained about *A Course in Miracles*: "It is given in a Christian context, but it's a Christianity that **has nothing to do with the Jesus of the Bible.**"

Note, precious friend of mine, he does not say that the Jesus who spoke in Helen Schucman and dictated *A Course in Miracles* is not the Jesus of *tradition*, or the Jesus of *religion*, or the Jesus of the *church systems*, or the Jesus of *Mystery Babylon*. Oh, no! He states plainly and unabashedly that the Jesus of *A Course in Miracles* is **NOT THE JESUS OF THE BIBLE!** The question follows — if this Jesus who dictated *A Course in Miracles* is not the Jesus of the Bible, then which Jesus is He? I do not doubt for one moment that he is the Jesus the apostle Paul spoke of when he said, "But I fear, lest by any means, as the *serpent* beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he that cometh preacheth *another Jesus, whom we have not preached*, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted...such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel: for *Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light*. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works" (II Cor. 11:3-4, 13-15).

Another clue to the origin of this book is found in the fact that the Jesus of *A Course in Miracles* speaks through an unconverted atheist — not through holy apostles and prophets! Helen Schucman did not meet the Jesus Paul met on the Damascus road, she did not meet this Jesus in a saving, redeeming, regenerating experience by the Holy Ghost! She makes no confession of being washed from her sins in the precious blood of Jesus! She received no baptism in the Holy Spirit! She does not testify to *any* New Testament experience of salvation, justification, redemption, sanctification, or regeneration! She discovers only her own "inner voice" of the god already incarnate in her unregenerated spirit — revealed by a Jesus who is **NOT THE JESUS OF THE BIBLE!**

Now, her experience did not begin with the preaching of the gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. It began with *dreams* while she was still an atheist! In her first remarkable dream she retrieved from the canal a book, the name of which was AESCULAPIUS — the Greek god of healing! Not the book of Yahweh, not the testimony of Jesus Christ, not the word of God, but

the book of the pagan deity of healing whose symbol was — guess what? **The serpent!** This book stood for the revelation she was about to receive, which revelation, obviously, was inspired by the very same personage who taught mother Eve her wonderful revelation in the garden of Eden!

Though the Course talks about Christ, the Holy Spirit, the atonement, and prayer, it comes to dramatically different conclusions than the Bible. In several places the book even offers commentary on biblical scriptures, or as the Course states, "the upside-down thinking of the New Testament." Some of this "upside-down thinking" regards the crucifixion, and how, according to the Course, "the apostles often misunderstood it." Again and again the Course disputes the gospel preached by the apostles, elevating its own revelation above the Bible. As one teacher of the Course put it, "Jesus did not suffer and die for our sins." This idea flagrantly contradicts the word of God: "For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God" (1 Pet. 3:18). Thus, *A Course in Miracles* is a perversion of the central message of the gospel! For those who have never met Jesus in a saving experience this book is one thing. They do not know the gospel! But for those who treasure the beautiful hope of sonship to God to believe it, is another matter!

I am going to tell you plainly, accurately, and precisely what *A Course in Miracles* is all about. You see, beloved, all the gods of the pagans were *overcome* by the gospel of Jesus Christ! That is why the temple of Aesculapius is lying in ruins today, as are nearly all the pagan temples of the ancient world! I have seen them in Rome, in Greece, in Turkey, and in other nations of the world. The Lamb overcame them, for He is King of kings, and Lord of lords! They could not withstand the power and authority of the name of Jesus! Their myths, their lying signs and wonders, their deceiving oracles, their perverse and licentious rituals, their corrupt priesthoods were no match for the power and demonstration of the Holy Spirit that was poured out upon the world through the ministries of the apostles of Jesus the Christ. Oh yes, God poured out the Spirit from the very throne of the heavens and a power and authority smote the false, demonic gods of the heathen that swept their abominations from the earth!

And now, in this hour, the greatest hour since the early church, when the Lord is preparing the firstfruits of His redemption, the manchild birthed from the womb of the true church, the manifest sons of God to set creation free — that wily serpent of old, in order to *get back* at the holy seed, has manifested himself again as he did to Eve in the garden, appearing as an angel of *light*, the demon spirit of Aesculapius, impersonating the very person of Jesus the Christ, in his subtle effort to prevent the birth of the manchild, to deceive, if it were possible, the *very elect!* I have known many who received the call to sonship with joyful hope and expectation who have since been turned aside by this insidious delusion. That is why it arose in the earth at this specific time of *our* generation! It is part of the ancient serpent's effort to destroy the promised seed! And now, my beloved, as Paul Harvey says, **YOU KNOW THE REST OF THE STORY!**

AESCULAPIUS was *the god* of Pergamos — Satan's throne! And Satan's throne, ever since the serpent started his religion with Eve when he hissed, "Hath God said? God doth know!" is still in all the false forms of carnal, man-made religion, even so-called Christian religion! Adam and Eve died because the religious realm to which they subscribed through the tree of the knowledge of good and evil *sounds like a deeper revelation* but in reality **HAS NO LIFE!**

In the *typical* and *symbolic* church of Pergamos, Satan's throne was situated in the city of Pergamos which means "strongly united, elevated, height, citadel." Spiritually, Satan's throne is in the **high places of the carnal mind** — even the **religious mind!** "I know where thou

dwell, even where Satan's seat is." I know where you dwell, where you are comfortable in your religious system, where you are satisfied to settle down and comfortably remain. I know that you love the pageantry, the beauty, the forms, the sacraments, the rituals, the programs, and activities. But that place where **you dwell** is **Satan's throne!**

The firstborn Son of God understood this very clearly by the mind of the Father. He never condemned the prostitute, the fornicator, the tax-gatherer, the thieves or murderers. He never demonstrated holy anger against the Romans, the world, or the wicked. It was the *religious leaders* that He denounced! His anger was focused on the hypocrisy of the so-called carriers of God's word! He condemned those who appeared clean on the outside, but inside were full of greed and wickedness! Those who gave tithes and fasted and prayed and loved the best seats in the synagogue to be seen of men, He rebuked! Those who distorted the word of God, who turned the truth of God into a lie, who misrepresented the nature of His Father, and loaded people down with religious burdens and obligations, He called a generation of *vipers* — a brood of *snakes!*

Let us UNDERSTAND! We blame war, drunkenness, pornography, greed, crime, immorality, drugs, and a thousand other evils on Satan — yet the clear testimony of scripture is that these are all the "lusts of the flesh" and the "works of the flesh." They are *flesh!* On the other hand, Satan's activity is in a *religious realm*, in a *spiritual dimension!* What a cunning deception has been foisted upon mankind as Satan has concealed his true identity in the dark shroud of **religion!** Oh, yes, Satan is religious! The ultimate test for God's sons will be right there! There is a realm, a realm high in the spirit, a realm reserved for the sons of God — and before any of us step from our wilderness of testing to appear as a manifest son of God in the earth, we will meet Satan there *in that high realm of the spirit.* It is in the heavens of God's Spirit that the manchild encounters the great dragon! That is what the temptation of Jesus was all about in His wilderness experience. He wasn't being tempted to lie, cheat, steal, cuss, or commit adultery. Oh, no! "If thou be the Son of God" do thus and thus. To Eve he said, "Hath God said? Why, God doth know...your eyes will be opened, and you will be as God!" A *high revelation* in a *high realm of the spirit.* That is what Adam's fall was all about! Adam did not fall from grace, he fell from SONSHIP! And it was a *supposed* HIGH REVELATION IN A HIGH REALM OF THE SPIRIT that caused the fall. Eve was *deceived!* There is a very *fine line* between the highest truth and the darkest error, between divine sonship to God and our own self-godhood as taught by all the streams of what is today called "New Age."

We see this principle clearly in the story of Job. "Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them" (Job 1:6). May I reverently add that *every time* the *sons of God* present themselves before the Lord — Satan comes *also among them!* Can you not see the mystery? It bespeaks of a condition within these sons — *our mind vs. His mind, our will vs. His will, our ways vs. His ways.* It is a heavenly place within the sons of God wherein we must be tested to show whether we be sons indeed. Until every son has been completely perfected and thoroughly tested in all realms of flesh *and* spirit, it is not possible for the sons of God to come and present themselves before the Lord without Satan coming *also* among them! Does he not walk in the carnal understanding of every man?

It is written, "And the Lord said unto Satan, Whence cometh thou? Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, From going to and fro *in the earth*, and from walking up and down *in it!*" (Job 1:7). Now the Lord's questions are never for His own enlightenment. He knew well whence Satan came! Oh, yes, Satan had been "walking to and fro throughout the earth" — God knew this — for he walks in *our earth*, even that earth which *we are*, from the east to the west, from

the north to the south, from sea to sea and from pole to pole he walks in the earthly places, in the fleshly motions of our bodies, in the high thoughts of our minds, in the secret places of our hearts; he travels up and down in us from the heights of our heavens to the depths of our hells, for the dust is his habitation. The firstborn Son of God met Satan, not the Satan wearing a red suit, with horns and a pitchfork, but the Satan that spoke out of His innermost thoughts and aspirations concerning His sonship, "If I am the Son of God why don't I just command these stones to be turned to bread! I can do anything I want, any time I want! Why don't I cast myself down from the pinnacle of the temple — that will show everyone who I really am!" Jesus overcame that wily devil *in that high realm of the spirit within Himself* and when He came to the cross He was able to say, "The prince of this world cometh, and *hath nothing in me.*" In that blessed day a Son of God was at last able to present Himself before the Lord, and Satan *did not* also come with Him!

All the way to glorification this inner antagonist is present. This is why every revival that God has sent through the ages ended in apostasy. Satan — not the devil with horns and a pitchfork — but that inward devil of fleshly wisdom, carnal understanding, sense-knowledge, soulish zeal, and spiritual pride has a subtle way of identifying himself with every move of the Spirit of God, so as to corrupt it from within. Many years ago F. J. Huegel wrote: "Students of the great Welsh revival (1900 — 1903) say that the wonderful stream of divine life little by little lost its saving efficacy, as another stream from a very different source, naturally very filthy, began to mingle with the river of the water of life proceeding from the throne and from the Lamb. 'Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them.' Beware of false fire. Beware of counterfeit glow. When the *soulish* takes the place of the pure working of the Holy Spirit, you have a 'revival' whose fires, though they purport to be from heaven, are more likely to be from hell."

From the mists of the long ago Eden we read, "Now the *serpent* was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" (Gen. 3:1). The word "serpent" in our language comes from the Latin *serpo* meaning "to creep," but the Hebrew term has no relation to the form or motion of any external attribute of a serpent. The word used here for serpent is the Hebrew word *nachash* which is a primitive root meaning "to hiss or whisper." It, furthermore, means "to search or scrutinize closely, to find out by experiment, to practice divination, augury, incantation, or enchantment." According to Webster incantation means "the chanting of special words or a formula in magic spells or rites." Incantation may speak in addition of hypnotism. The serpent, then, is a HISSER, a WHISPERER, a DIVINER, an EXPERIMENTER, an ENCHANTER, a MAGICIAN, and a HYPNOTIST! And all this activity takes place from *within!* Now we understand how it was so easy for mother Eve to be *deceived!* The "inner voice," as with Helen Schucman, *sounded* so plausible, so reasonable, so *spiritual*, so *divine* — it just *had* to be the word of the Lord! It *had* to be the *very highest truth!* She was enchanted, hypnotized, mesmerized — by this *high revelation!*

We do well to consider also the word translated "subtil" in this passage. "Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field." The Hebrew word for "naked" in Genesis 2:25 is *arom*. The English word that describes the serpent's nature is "subtil," and the Hebrew word for this *arum*. Both *arom* (naked) and *arum* (subtil) are derived from *aram* which means "to be *bare*, to be *cunning*." Hebrew scholars say that originally these three words were the same word. Now, why should the expression "naked" and the term "cunning" be the same word? What is the connection? We can answer with only one word: SEDUCTIVE. By way of illustration, a *naked* woman may be a *seductive* woman! There is a close connection between the two. The ideas of *naked* and *cunning* come together in the word SEDUCTIVE or SEDUCE. Can we not see by

this that the serpent was actually more *seductive* than anything in the bestial realm! Ah, when Satan transforms himself into an *angel of light*, he is the *most seductive* thing in the world!

There was a wonderful tree set in the midst of the fragrant garden in Eden called the Tree of Life. God had given man the right to eat of that tree and in eating of it, man would possess eternal life. The simple truth is, however, that man did *indeed* eat of that tree! When one reads carefully, it becomes evident that the Tree of Knowledge of which man ate was *also* in the midst of the garden! Two trees in the middle! Thus, the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge are ONE AND THE SELFSAME TREE! They are *two sides* of the same tree! They are *two dimensions* of the word of God! The Tree of Life is "the *spirit* that giveth *life*." This is the word of God on the level Jesus spoke of when He said, "The *words* that I speak unto you, they are *spirit* and they are *life*." Then we have also "the *letter* that *killeth*." BOTH are the word of God! The Tree of Knowledge, the *letter* of the word, is God's word — but it *kills*! "In the day that ye eat thereof, ye shall surely *die*!" The Tree of Life, the *spirit* of the word, is the word of God which *quickeneth* — *makes alive*! Oh, the mystery of it!

The Tree of Knowledge and the Tree of Life is just the difference between *law* and *grace*, between *ritual* and *reality*, between *facts* and *truth*, between *doctrine* and *revelation*, between *shadow* and *substance*! Every son of God walks in the garden of God and is called to confront this tree. It is there that we must understand the difference between the voice of the Lord God walking in the midst of the garden, and the enchanting, beguiling, hypnotizing, deceiving *hiss* of the serpent!

It is there, in the Tree of Knowledge that Satan has his throne! It is the kingdom of religion, it is the voice of the stranger. It is there that the sons of God are called to *overcome*! It is not just the flesh and sin that must be overcome, it is all the negative spiritual realm found in the seven churches that must be put under our feet! And, blessed be God! To God's called and chosen elect He says, "I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my *name* (*nature*), and hast not denied my faith." What a testimony! I believe that is the word of the Lord to many who read these lines. Press on, dear ones, the spiritual perfection that wins the prize incomparable at the end of the race lies just before us!

Chapter 43

The Church In Pergamos

continued

"Thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein *Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth*" (Rev. 2:13).

In this Study we come to Antipas, the Lord's faithful martyr. Is Antipas a symbol, or was Antipas an actual individual in the church in Pergamos? There is no historical evidence for a person named Antipas who was martyred in Pergamos. So let's analyze the word. Antipas is a compound word made up of the prefix "anti" meaning "opposed to" or "instead of," and in this sense is similar to the word "anti-Christ," denoting that which is opposed to, or takes the place of, Christ. Now the name becomes very strange! The second half of the name is "pas" which most scholars agree is a Greek abbreviation for "pater" which means "father." So — just as "anti-christ" signifies that which is against or instead of Christ, so "anti-pas" bespeaks of that which is opposed to, or takes the place of, Father! It is a description of something that takes place in the lives of God's chosen elect! It is my conviction that we find here a double meaning — *a meaning within a meaning.*

The question follows — if Antipas is one who stands in opposition to, or usurps the place of, THE FATHER, how could he then be called "*My faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.*" This is indeed a mystery! Yet — is it not true that before any man can become a martyr of the Lord, all that is *opposed to the Father*, and all that *usurps the place of the Father*, must be **slain in him**? Antipas was martyred *where Satan's throne is!* He is, typically, slain in the realm of religion — right where practically *all* of the Lord's martyrs have been slain! You see, my beloved, Antipas is a type of the sons of God. What is contrary in most believers is the carnal mind and the religious spirit that usurps the place of CHRIST. That is the spirit of anti-Christ! But what is contrary in this Antipas class of people is not merely contrary to Christ, but stands in opposition to, and usurps the place of, THE FATHER. It is anti-Father! This should help us to see that this identifies them as *sons*.

What is slain in the sons of God is all that hinders their sonship to God, separating between them and the Father. The great purpose of Christ in our lives is to *bring us to the Father!* "No man cometh unto the Father, but by me." Anything that frustrates our pure relationship with the Father must be purged out of everyone called to sonship! All that interrupts our fellowship with the Father, all that prevents the knowledge of the Father, all that diminishes the glory of the Father, all that hinders our walk with the Father, all that thwarts our doing the will of the Father, all that short-circuits our obedience to the Father, all that prevents us from hearing the voice of the Father — all this must **go to the cross!**

The name Antipas identifies, not those becoming Christians, but those becoming mature sons! First, all that is contrary to the way of the Father must be *slain in us*, before *we* are able to present ourselves as a spiritual martyr for the kingdom of God. Those in whom everything that

is antagonistic to the mind, nature, purpose, and will of the Father has been brought to HIS CROSS, are then able to take up THEIR CROSS and follow Him! Can you not see the mystery? The divine implication is that Antipas is the symbol for THE WORK OF THE CROSS IN THE LIVES OF GOD'S SONS!

Antipas is characterized as "my faithful martyr." I used to think that the physical martyrs who laid down their human lives were certainly greater in the kingdom and more qualified to reign with Christ than I could ever be. I did not understand in those days that scripturally and spiritually a martyr is one who is faithful in life, as much as in death — he may never be killed and still be a martyr! Most Christians mistakenly hold to the notion that all saved people will, by the grace of God, rule and reign with Christ in His kingdom. One great cause of this error among almost all classes of believers is the failure to understand the words of the Spirit in Revelation 20:4. "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were *beheaded* for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and *they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.*"

Many try to make this include all saints! Others think it means just all martyrs! Unfortunately, the Greek word here rendered "beheaded" in our King James Bible, is not fully understood. It appears nowhere else in scripture, except this one passage. But one fact stands out clearly. It cannot allude only to those who *died* as martyrs, for the scriptures are clear that some who die natural deaths will reign with Christ upon His throne! Furthermore, there were multitudes of believers who were violently tortured and abused in the early days of the church, as well as throughout church history. In the first three centuries alone, three million martyrs gave their lives for Christ! They were sewn into sacks with vipers. They were plunged into boiling oil. They were covered with pitch and placed on sticks and lighted to illuminate the gardens of Nero for His debaucheries. They were turned out to the lions and devoured. They were crucified upside down. They were placed on red hot beds of iron. Read the history of the church!

Are all these to be excluded from this company that comes to life and reigns with Christ in His kingdom just because they were not "beheaded"? Only a few have been *beheaded*! Is this few the only ones that are granted to reign with Christ? Do you see the mystery? Ah, those who reign with Christ upon His throne are the *sons of God*! It is the *manchild* who is caught up unto God and to His throne (Rev. 12:5). In our Lord's messages to the seven churches, He says that the *overcomers* are granted to sit with Him on His throne (Rev. 3:21). Are the overcomers only those who are literally and physically "beheaded" for the testimony of Jesus, and the word of God? Only *one* of the first apostles is believed to have been beheaded! The others, with the exception of John, all died violent deaths of martyrdom, but were not beheaded. Must all of us put our heads on a literal chopping block to be beheaded in order to rule and reign with Christ? No, a thousand times no! The very suggestion is absurd. That is not the testimony of scripture. Like everything else in the book of Revelation, the "beheading" is a *symbol*! Antipas is a *symbol*! His martyrdom is a *symbol*!

In the book of Revelation a martyr is not necessarily a physical martyr any more than a beast is a literal beast, a dragon is a literal dragon, a horn is a literal horn, or the Lamb is a four-footed barnyard animal. The interpretation of this verse is clearly a spiritual one! That is the mystery. And when the blessed spirit of wisdom and revelation from God opens our eyes to comprehend the great truth of our spiritual beheading, we will have found the key to the very life of Christ. It refers to those who *live* as martyrs! A martyr's grave was very often but a

release from persecution, an easy way out. Martyrdom in the spiritual sense does not necessarily mean an untimely death. The way into glory is through death: death to self, death to the flesh, death to the world, death to the carnal mind, death to the Adamic consciousness, death to the ego, death to our own way and will, death to the religious spirit — *living the crucified life!* It is the death process within us that removes from us all that is not of God. Isn't it wonderful!

This beautiful truth has often been missed because we have not understood that the New Testament word "witness" is from the Greek *martus* which is translated "martyr" in Revelation 2:13 and 17:6. When we think of "witnesses" we do not think of people who are being killed! But neither can we think of them according to the old religious idea of someone who goes door to door passing out tracts or one who makes it a point to speak about the Lord to everyone he meets. Such are often guided more by religious zeal than by the leading and wisdom of the Holy Spirit. Scripturally and spiritually a witness is one who gives his life for the testimony he bears! And I dare say it requires an endowment of the Holy Spirit to enable us to so lay down our life for the message we declare that **WE BECOME THE MESSAGE, OUR WHOLE LIFE SWALLOWED UP IN THE MANIFESTATION OF THAT MESSAGE.** A state of being that proclaims the truth regardless of whether we speak it or explain it or not. To witness to the truth is to give your life to that truth, to *become the truth!*

The sons of God are becoming kings, priests, and judges by the authority of the Spirit of the Lord and by being beheaded, or losing their heads. The King James Bible says beheaded, those who have their heads cut off. In some of the newer translations, one says they were executed for their testimony, another says they were cut with the ax. As I looked to the Lord about this I was reminded of the words of Jesus when He told His chosen disciples, "Whosoever shall lose His life for my sake...shall save it." The head of every man, to begin with, is the old self, the ego, the carnal mind, the Adamic consciousness, the flesh. When I went to school we were taught that self preservation is the first law of nature. And how we do try to take care of this natural, flesh man! We live for him, for his needs, his desires, his perceptions, his wants, his demands. These are the things the carnal mind is most concerned about, what self wants, what the flesh desires. As we progress in God to become sons of God, this old head must be chopped off, and a new head take his place!

This old self must be put to death, with his wills and desires, and Jesus have complete Lordship over our beings. Merely believing on Him does not produce this, and just claiming by faith the "finished work" does not bring an end to the Adamic mind. How very simple it would be if that worked! Paul would never have needed to say, "*Mortify* (put to death) therefore your members which are upon earth," if the finished work did it all. It requires complete and absolute surrender to the Christ within, the "putting off" of the old man and the "putting on" of the new! Christ Himself must become the new head. This is what it means to be beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, and the word of God. Christ can only testify out of our life as the living word of God when His Headship is established in our life!

Through the intense preparations of the Spirit, we are being delivered from the carnal nature and mind, delivered from the rule of self, and are receiving the mind of Christ! Truly, we are being "beheaded" for the testimony of Jesus, and for the word of God! This means we are "losing our head," delivered of the carnal mind, released from the headship of the natural man, and are now under the true headship of Christ. All who are truly called to sonship have abandoned the wisdom and judgment of our own mind, our earthly and mortal perceptions, our opinion, our own will, and that of any fleshly or religious thing that has influenced, motivated, or controlled us, and we are now receiving His mind, His truth, His Headship, to do only His

perfect will. We have indeed been beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God! Isn't it wonderful!

We no longer worship the beast of man's carnality and ego, or the pomp and pride of the fleshly religious realm, nor do we have that "mark" on our foreheads. We have been beheaded — decapitated! We have given up our head, lost our life, surrendered our selfhood, our carnal mind, to receive the mind of Christ. By His mind we shall do the will of the Father just as Jesus did. The words Jesus spoke and the works Jesus wrought were never His own. The Anti-pas within Him, anything that was opposed to the Father, was slain within Himself. He became Himself the faithful and true witness — the faithful and true martyr! And so it is with the sons of God! We are learning to speak only when He speaks and act only when He acts. If He is healing, then we step into the stream, and we heal. If He is not healing, we keep our hands and our prayers to our self. If He is teaching, we teach. If He is not teaching, we hold our peace. If He is doing wonders, we do wonders. If He is resting, we rest. If He is doing nothing, we are content to do absolutely nothing, just as Jesus did in Nazareth for thirty years! We are being spiritually beheaded in order to be joined to Christ, and to rule and reign with Him. We are surrendering ourselves to Christ so that He controls our lives in the absolute sense of the word. Isn't it wonderful!

A few years ago Lisa Herron shared a remarkable dream with us which is beautifully confirmatory to this present truth. I don't think it needs any interpretation for all who see and hear by the Spirit will grasp its wonderful message. Lisa wrote: "When I was a teenager, and still attending the local Assembly of God (although God was dealing deeply with me even at that time), I had a dream so real that I awoke confused. I *knew* it was from God, but at that young time in my life and in my walk with the Lord, I didn't fully understand it. Here's how it went:

"We were in the 'sanctuary' of the church, having a Sunday night service. One of the elders in the church (a man I thought much of, and looked up to in my youth) was walking up and down the center isle, holding a long, gleaming sword in his hand, and he was weeping. He kept walking up and down, saying, 'Who will be willing to lose his head for the Lord?' I looked around, and no one seemed to be moving. I felt overwhelmingly in my heart that I knew that I had to do this thing, so I went to the center isle, hung my head over the end of the pew, and he beheaded me. In an instant I was upon my feet (never felt any pain) and I was looking around at the people. It felt as though my head was totally *full of light* — like my head was transparent, and there was only light there. I was so full of joy and began to implore the people, 'Please do it. It doesn't hurt at all, and you'll see things as you never did before. It's wonderful! Don't be afraid!' But no one followed" — end quote.

As we follow on to know the Father in sonship, the Lord is taking greater control of our lives. He who shall rule and reign over the earth and all the universe, must first rule and reign in the lives of His elect. Christ is indeed reigning in our lives, for we are aware that we are no longer in control of our lives! Another One, Christ, the inner son, now controls our lives according to His eternal purpose, and **it is the Lord!** You will know that Christ reigns in your life when you truly realize that you no longer control your own life. Your destiny and mine are fixed in God! Christ is now reigning in us in greater and greater measures as we grow up into the Headship of Christ.

Unless you be deceived by those who have been deceived after seeing this truth and have received error and all sorts of false ideas about how the sons of God will come forth, let me make it very clear to you that God has one means by which He is going to bring forth the

manifest sons of God. That is by the **working of the cross!** The divine message of the cross is God saying that Jesus is our true example in all things. Just as He was crucified and died on a cross, coming forth as the resurrected Son of God, so we must be crucified in order to be manifest sons of God. Jesus died upon the cross to save us from sin and death and hell, but until we **take up OUR CROSS and follow Him** we cannot ascend His throne to reign with Him. He did not die for us to give us His throne, He died for us to *save us*. The so-called "finished work" does not secure a place upon His throne for us! Not only is He our Saviour; He is also our *example*, that we should *follow in His steps* (I Pet. 2:21). As He died, so we must die. As He was crucified on the cross, so our flesh-nature must be crucified. We must come to complete death-to-self. Our human consciousness must die so that Christ can come forth in us in all His glory. Through this we will be the manifest sons of God!

Some today have abandoned the message of the cross, clinging instead to the idea that Jesus paid it all, and therefore they can reign with Him no matter how carnal or fleshly they are; their old man is dead with Christ, so there really is no further working of the cross for any of us. How I wish the cross had ended at Calvary! How delightful it would be if I did not need to "deny *myself*" or to "take up *my cross*" and follow Him! If only the throne was by grace! If only the finished work took care of it all and I could just breeze into sonship and ascend the throne on the merits of Jesus! But Galatians 5:24 *still* must be fulfilled in the life of every son of God: "And they that are Christ's have *crucified the flesh* with the affections and lusts." What *I crucify* is upon *my cross*, not His. Yet, is it not wonderfully true that my cross is simply His cross brought effectually into my life!

Yes, my beloved, in spite of His cross sons of God still have to *die to self!* This is accomplished by the Spirit of God leading us through the refining, purifying fires of testing. As the pressures and persecutions of *this world* come against those who are moving on in the Spirit of God, the very test and fire will be our purifying fire. It will teach us His ways and purge out our dross making us smaller and smaller in our own eyes. As we surrender more and more to Christ, it makes our old self die daily until he is completely dead so that Christ can come forth in us. Some deny that this is a process, but I have not met the man yet in whom perfection has *not* been a process!

"He that loveth his life shall lose it, but he that hateth his life shall keep it." Did I quote that aright? "He that *hateth his life*." Did our Lord indeed say that? Did John understand his Master aright when he so reported Him? Ah, our Lord is here speaking plainly, putting the right word, and only the right word, upon the thing. There is no doubt about it! Jesus certainly said, "He that *hateth his life*." Now, do not be offended at this noble doctrine of deep hatred preached by Christ! It is not our neighbor we are to hate; it is not our enemy: is not even our more talented, successful, and blessed friend: it is **OUR SELF!** Our very own carnal life! We have no hatred left for anyone else; it is all poured out upon our **self**. Until we are brought to the urgency of this we cannot "take up our cross" and follow Him! I have heard it said that we must love our self, and unless and until we learn to love ourselves we cannot apprehend our sonship. Not so! It is true that we *do* love ourselves! Oh, how we do! "Love your neighbor as *yourself*." That is not a command to love yourself. It is a command to love your neighbor! It is simply a statement of fact that all men do indeed *love their self!* That is why Jesus emphasized that we must hate our own life and *deny our self*, taking up our cross, in order to enter into life!

All death is not the same death. Many think that when the scriptures speak of death they always refer to the death of the body. The truth is, in the New Testament, death only occasionally speaks of the death of the physical body. When Jesus says that we must take up our cross and follow Him, He does not mean that we all must be martyrs, laying down our

bodies upon a wooden cross, to fly away to heaven. Jesus died physically upon the cross, the figure and the pattern of the death of old Adam. But Adam in us is not crucified by hanging on an outward, wooden cross. Paul says, "Mortify (put to death) therefore your members which are upon the earth..." (Col. 3:5). He also said, "I die daily." And again he said, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." In each of these passages he speaks of a death that still must be experienced within each of us, in addition to Christ's death upon the cross. And in none of these passages is he talking about leaving this body and going to some far-off heaven somewhere; he's talking about dying to that outward, external, physical, human, carnal realm of appearances of old Adam's life here and now as we walk upon this earth! That's why he's saying, "To die is *gain*." There is no gain in going to the cemetery, but to die to the carnal mind is to *gain* the mind of Christ. To die to the flesh nature is to *gain* the divine nature. God gives us the opportunity every day to die! Are we taking up our cross *daily* and following Him?

The death of the cross was the death reserved for criminals and for the vilest of men. What would you think of a person who had a gold chain about his neck with a pendant of an electric chair on it? Or a hangman's gallows? Or a guillotine? Or a gas chamber? Or a hypodermic needle? "How gross, how repugnant, how macabre, how gruesome, how insensitive," you say. "How terrible to think that anyone's mind is that death oriented!" Let me tell you something, my beloved — in the day of Christ a cross was an instrument of *execution*, no different than the gas chamber or the electric chair today! It was the place where criminals and the scum of the earth were put to death. It was not a pretty or inspiring symbol! And Jesus said we are to deny ourselves and take up our cross — our gas chamber, our electric chair, our hangman's noose — and follow Him! It's a place of execution. It's the place where you are brought to your extremity, where the natural mind, the human consciousness, the carnal life reaches its final catastrophe!

So Jesus came to reveal the cross. And it is there at the cross that Paul says of this outer, carnal, fleshly ego man, "I AM CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST." You must see that by the Spirit! If the apostle was speaking by natural understanding he would have put it in the past tense — "I **was** crucified with Christ" because it is a great historical fact that Jesus the Christ was ignominiously crucified on a hill outside Jerusalem two thousand years ago. If he was speaking of an historical event where twenty centuries ago Jesus hung suspended between heaven and earth — and if in some mystical sense we were there with Him on that cross, crucified on that cross, and died with Him *then* on that cross — he would say, "I **was** crucified with Christ." But in the Greek text the verb is in the *present perfect tense*. And while the present perfect tense denotes an action that is completed — I *have been* crucified with Christ — it may also, according to the rules of grammar, indicate an action that *is continuing unto the present*. What the present perfect tense clearly is **not** is the PAST TENSE — I **was** crucified. This is why the King James translators chose the wording, "I **AM** crucified with Christ." Thus, the cross is not merely an historical event — it is an eternal reality! The work of the cross continues! I hang on that cross with Christ, not on Golgotha's hill two thousand years ago, but in that blessed moment when by the Spirit of God I am called to embrace it! Christ **was** crucified. I **am** crucified. And I am crucified **with Him** because the cross is an eternal reality! Oh, the mystery of it!

In spite of the awful fact of Calvary's dreadful scene I would be remiss if I failed to tell you that the *cross of Christ* is not a cross of wood. The cross on Golgotha's hill was undoubtedly a wooden cross, but the cross of Christ that the apostles preached, and that they gloried in, and by which the world is reconciled to God, and which does its powerful work in us, is something more than a wooden beam! When in wisdom and holy expectation our Lord exhorted His disciples, saying, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up HIS

CROSS, and follow me," He was not making reference to a cross of wood, but to a cross that would bring death to one's own identity, will, and ways, and identify his life henceforth with the life of Christ. If He had meant a literal, wooden cross, then only those who are literally, physically crucified could ever *follow Him!* And can we not see by this that if *our cross* is not a wooden cross, then truly *His cross* was not a wooden cross! People think such shallow thoughts about these things. But we are dealing with deep, eternal, spiritual realities!

The DEATH OF THE CROSS is in some mysterious and divine way the gateway to the LIFE OF THE CROSS. The wooden Roman cross upon which Jesus was crucified was not actually HIS CROSS, for the cross of Christ IS the *power of God* unto salvation to all who believe, and that wooden cross no longer exists, having decayed back into the dust long centuries ago; yet should you find a piece of it there would be no magical, saving power emanating from it! All the handwriting of the ordinances of the law were nailed to HIS CROSS, the scripture says, but should you have been there on mount Calvary that day when Jesus hung between heaven and earth you would not have seen the first five books of the Bible nailed to the cross! By HIS CROSS the world is crucified to us, and us to the world, but the whole world is not hanging somewhere today upon that cross, being crucified to us. Such literal thoughts are absurdities. The whole world is reconciled by the blood of that cross, yet not one of us has seen any physical blood by which we were brought into fellowship with God. That is the mystery. Ah, the cross of Christ is something deeper, higher, grander, more transcendental than the pieces of wood upon which Jesus hung!

It is my deep conviction, and I say it with all reverence and respect to my blessed Lord and Saviour, but the truth is that Jesus in the natural suffered no more on the cross than thousands of others who were nailed to a tree, or thousands of others who died on the rack during the Roman inquisition, or thousands of others who were burned at the stake, fed to the lions, or made blazing human torches at the Circus in Rome. The physical suffering was no greater. The cross of Christ refers to a greater spiritual cross and a greater spiritual death, of which the "old rugged cross" was merely the symbol. The cross of Christ first had its manifestation that day in heaven, when the Word of God, "being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but **made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Himself the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.**" Fierce as was His suffering at Calvary, that fearful hour of agony and blood was but the final act of a life of the cross as step by step He descended from the majesty and glory of equality with God to the fearsome moment when in anguish He cried, "My God! My God! Why hast Thou forsaken me?" Truly, as the scripture testifies, He was the Lamb "*slain from the foundation of the world*" (Rev. 13:8). No wooden cross there! The cross did not begin at Calvary!

When God brings the cross into our lives, He doesn't bring it to us out of two millenniums ago — He brings it out of the living reality of the dimension of spirit **right now!** When by the quickening of the Spirit you saw Christ dying, you did not see Him dying twenty centuries ago, but *in spirit* you beheld Him. God brought Him out of that long ago into your NOW. God brought Him into your present. And you saw Him bleeding and dying, not two thousand years ago, but right now in this moment you beheld Him by spirit. And in spirit Paul exults with unspeakable joy, "I AM crucified with Christ!" Not then — NOW! Not I was — I AM! It is neither history nor a future event. The cross did not begin at Calvary, nor did it end at Calvary! It's an accomplished fact in the eternal NOW.

The eternal cross in the heart of God, the eternal cross of Christ, now becomes your cross and you are crucified with Him, a participator in that same eternal death to all that is unlike God, to

all that falls short of what God has chosen to be. I am crucified, nevertheless I do live, yet it's not "I" that lives, but the Christ who lives in me! That is the power of the cross! The outer sense realm, the carnal, the vain, the fleshly, the passing, is placed upon that cross and crucified in order that the inner life of the spirit might find release. We only become holy as He is holy, and pure as He is pure, when the cross becomes an eternal reality in our lives. When the cross is no longer an historical event to be claimed, or a doctrine, or a truth to be believed, but the cross is forever established in our heart, effectually working in the crucible of our experience, the cross in our heart will produce His nature within, the nature that willingly surrenders and cancels all that is not of Life, Light, and Love.

It is a great and glorious fact that your spirit has not been crucified. If your spirit were crucified you could not say, "I AM crucified, and I LIVE." When we speak of death and resurrection we speak of two corresponding, parallel principles in the present. I AM crucified, and I AM alive. Those are dual, present, and continuous realities. I am and I am! I AM crucified, and I AM living. But what is crucified? Not my inward man — but my outward man! Paul put it this way: "Though our outward man *is perishing*, yet the inward man *is being renewed day by day*" (II Cor. 6:16). The outer man, the sensual man, the soulical man, the carnal mind, the flesh — *is perishing*. He is not perishing because he is getting old and ready to go to the cemetery. Oh, no! He is perishing because of **the work of the cross in us!** This is a spiritual work!

The inward man, however, is not perishing, he is not experiencing the cross; HE IS BEING RENEWED! "He that is *joined to the Lord* is ONE SPIRIT." The spirit, the inward man, the real *you*, is not conformed to the image of God by death, but by union! Its condition is changed by **adding an ingredient.** His Spirit is added to **our** spirit. When *our spirit* is quickened by *His Spirit* we are born of the Spirit — brought alive again to God! The inner man is receiving quickening and being renewed. But the outer man is put to the cross and is dying! It was on the cross that Jesus poured out His blood (life, spirit) for the life of the world. That is the divine paradox! It is both death and life. I am crucified and I live. I am perishing and I am quickened. Something is taken away and something is added. It is divine chemistry! It is union by fusion! And an entirely NEW CREATION is the result!

"I *am being* crucified" is an alternate rendering of the Greek. The cross has very practical applications in our everyday lives. You see, my beloved, the Lord faithfully prepares the places, situations, circumstances, and experiences whereby our self-life is brought to the futility of itself and laid down. The cross is painful! This is no mystical, glorious experience by faith. The cross is the power of God working by actual crisis' in our lives whereby, like the prodigal son, we come to the end of *our self*, and we arise and go to the Father. When we forsake trust in the flesh and the way of the flesh, that the spirit might rule, death has been worked in us, releasing His life to be expressed as our life. We are crucified and we live! Aren't you glad!

We are moved to overcome self once the Holy Spirit powerfully reveals to us the nature and power of self. Self is the identity of the carnal mind. "To be carnally minded *is death*," the inspired apostle tells us. Self, when it is brought to its destination, then and there, self is death; but so long as self is acting, self is quite lively, and apparently deathless; but when self has been brought to its destination, then and there, when the cloak is pulled off of self, you will see plainly, self is death, and self has always been death, but has been dressed up in sheep's garments.

We overcome death by firstly overcoming self and every "self-opinionation" and establishing our consciousness in the recognition of God's presence, by denying self whole-heartedly, and

living in the consciousness of God's presence. Oh, how wonderful to realize we can overcome self, and can do away with self, by subduing by the spirit our selfish tendencies, fancies, and pleasures; our selfish thoughts, ideas, concepts, and ways. When we put away these characteristics of our human, earthly, carnal mentality, we "mortify" or put to death self in our constitution. We then become a NEW CREATURE in reality by walking and living after the spirit rather than after the flesh!

Now God's called and chosen elect have come to the place in consciousness in this great process of salvation where we understand that the *mystery of self* is the *mystery of death*. The way we can rid ourselves of the last enemy, and overcome the last enemy, which is death, is by ridding ourselves of self, by denying our self, by taking up our cross unto the perishing of the outer man with his desires and demands, by gaining the victory over all our self nature. When this is accomplished completely, we will have victory over death, the last enemy! As it is written, "For to be *carnally minded is death*; but to be *spiritually minded is life...*"

Ah — "If any man will come after me," Jesus said, "let him deny himself..." We thought it meant deny the liquor store, deny the theater, deny the pool hall, deny the mini-skirt, deny communism, deny the church system and the antichrist. But ME? Sweet, precious little Me? Deny MYSELF? We would rather deny the liquor store and the antichrist than to deny OURSELF! But very little will be gained by self denial, unless we also take up our cross and follow Jesus! There is a dimension of the cross that lies beyond the mere crucifixion of our old nature. That is necessary, but there is also that aspect of the cross that involves that load, burden, pain, or sacrifice which could, if we choose, be laid aside, but which is willingly carried or endured for the sake of the Father's purposes and for creation. It is that which in the natural we *would* lay aside, but spurred on by the realization that there is no other way to fulfill God's plan and bring deliverance to the world, we willingly endure OUR CROSS.

Jesus didn't have to endure the cross! "Looking unto Jesus — who **for the joy that was set before Him, ENDURED THE CROSS, despising the shame**" (Heb. 12:2). Even on the night He was taken, He declared that He could yet, at that late hour, pray to the Father, and He would send more than twelve legions of angels to rescue Jesus from such a fate! (Mat. 26:53-54). The Father would have honored His prayer! He went to the cross because He had purposed in His heart to fulfill the scriptures, and to deliver creation from the tyranny of sin, sickness, sorrow, limitation, and death, *through the cross*.

Why did the love of Christ lead Him to the cross? Because nowhere in Him did SELF rise up and say, "I have had enough of it." Nowhere in Him could self say, "I should not have to suffer so much," or "I should not have to give so much." When Judas betrayed Him, there was no place in Him where self could rise up and say, "I trusted this man to be the treasurer, and now he has sold me down the river." Or when Peter denied Him, "I gave him the keys to the kingdom, and now he denies me!" He could truly say, "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me" (Jn. 14:30). There was no ground in Him where the carnal mind could do its work. The path of sonship is truly one of denying ourselves, submitting to the cross as the Lord applies it to our lives, and following Him all the way. The road to mount Zion passes through the hill of Golgotha. This is a WALK which requires all that we have and all that we are.

There is no place where self is a more cunning and deceitful devil than in the realm of our SPIRITUAL LIFE. Volumes have been written on the crucified life — the surrender of our will to God, of becoming nothing, that He might become everything. I am sure that some of my readers have sung the little chorus that expresses this beautifully:

"Lord, take me and break me until I'm nothing,
And make me and mold me until I'm something;
Then take me and use me for your glory
Until all that I am is You."

Moses partook of this spirit when he turned away from the throne of Egypt to identify himself with his brethren, a race of slaves, that he might through suffering and sacrifice bring deliverance to them all.

Paul demonstrated the same determination when he left his place in the Sanhedrin to join the despised and persecuted followers of Jesus, that he might not be disobedient to the heavenly vision, and that he might bring salvation to the Gentiles. He was following hard after Jesus, BEARING HIS CROSS, when he declared, "I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that **bonds and afflictions abide me**. But none of these things move me, **neither count I my life dear unto myself**, so that I might...testify the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:22-24).

But taking up the cross is not enough. It must be taken up *daily*! That is what Jesus said. And by that we know the cross is more than the crucifixion two thousand years ago! That only lasted part of one day! The cross must be taken up willingly, and carried faithfully, without complaining. It is easy to make a consecration in a meeting, during the heat of an inspiring consecration call — but that has nothing to do with taking up our cross *daily* and following Jesus! Christ never took a vacation from His cross! His whole life and ministry, from the manger to the tomb, was a daily bearing of the burden of the call to sonship.

When Jesus came to earth He died to all that He was as God to become a man. But when He came to the Jordan He died again — He died to all that He was as a man to be the Son of God! When He went down into the watery grave of John's baptism to "fulfill all righteousness," He offered there all the capabilities, potentials, ambitions, desires, and talents He possessed *as a man*, bringing all to the cross, surrendering completely to the Father, reserving nothing for Himself, a burnt offering, a sweet smelling savor unto God! Finally, Jesus died to all that He was as a Son, that He might live again in the glory He had with the Father before the world was — the incorruptible, eternal, unlimited dimension of **SPIRIT**. For when Jesus was crucified, risen, and ascended, He returned to the FATHER, to the SPIRIT, where He now dwells in the life that is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent. He ascended up far above all heavens THAT HE MIGHT FILL ALL THINGS! (Eph. 4:10).

Our Lord died to all that He was as God to become a man. He died to all that He was as a man to become a Son. And He died to all that He was as a Son to be revealed in the glory of the Father! His crucifixion was the *continual laying down* of SELF, and the outpouring of LIFE. It meant dying to everything in every realm that was anything LESS THAN GOD. For us it pioneered the way of victory over the flesh, over the ego, over the human consciousness, over the Adamic value of life, which is also victory over sin, sickness, sorrow, limitation, and death.

The cross was not an accident which came to Jesus at the end of life. He was born, and lived, and died under the shadow of the cross. He knew it was there all the time, but never once did He shun the cross. Never once did He fail to take up His cross *daily*. There was never a day that He could say, "This day is my own. Today I will do my will. I will go about my Father's business again tomorrow." Never an experience came into His life of which He could say, "This is mine to enjoy. The will of the Father must wait until this is over. Then I will continue on in my

calling." Even in His times of sorrow He could not say, "My own grief is so great. It is only right that now I should be comforted! Let them minister unto me, now."

To the eyes of the world it would seem that it was only on that dark night of Calvary that "He went forth, bearing His cross." But He had been bearing His cross all His life! He had been bearing His cross before ever His baby ears heard the lowing of the cattle in the stable of His birth. He had been bearing His cross in Nazareth, the place of no good thing, as there He grew in the knowledge of the Father and His plan. He had been bearing His cross as He went forth among the people, poor, despised, lonely, misunderstood, ridiculed — willingly, that He might bring many sons unto glory! He paid the price! And we are paying the price today as we follow in His steps, forsaking all that we might apprehend that for which Christ also has apprehended us. The world may not see nor understand your cross and mine. But each of us has his own cross. And *God sees!* And he that loses his life for the sake of Christ, the same shall *save it* (Mk. 8:35). This is life more abundant — the life of SONSHIP! The life of sublime purpose! The life of transcendent power! The life of eternal glory!

Many years ago brother Bill Britton sent out a couple selected items whose message is just as true and fresh today as it was then. I do not know who was the original author of these, but I share them for your edification.

DYING TO SELF

When you are forgotten, or neglected, or purposely set at naught, and you don't sting or hurt with the insult or the oversight, but your heart is happy, being counted worthy to suffer with Christ — THAT IS DYING TO SELF.

When your good is evil spoken of, when your wishes are crossed, your advice disregarded, your opinions ridiculed, and you refuse to let anger rise in your heart, or even defend yourself, but take it all in patient and loving silence — THAT IS DEATH TO SELF.

When you lovingly and patiently bear any disorder, any irregularity, any impunctuality, or any annoyance; when you can stand face to face with waste, folly, extravagance, spiritual insensibility...and endure it as Jesus endured it — THAT IS DYING TO SELF.

When you are content with any food, any offering, any raiment, any climate, any society, any solitude, any interruption of the will of God — THAT IS DYING TO SELF.

When you never care to refer to yourself in conversation, or to record your own good works, or itch after commendation, when you can truly love to be unknown — THAT IS DYING TO SELF.

When you can see your brother prosper and have his needs met, and can honestly rejoice with him in spirit and feel no envy nor question God, while your own needs are far greater and in desperate circumstances — THAT IS DYING TO SELF.

When you can receive correction and reproof from one of less stature than yourself, and can humbly submit inwardly as well as outwardly, finding no rebellion or resentment rising up within your heart — THAT IS DYING TO SELF!

THE PADDED CROSS

"Well, here I am Lord. You said, 'Take up your cross,' and I'm here to do it. It's not easy, you know, this self-denial thing. I mean to go through with it though, Lord. I'll bet you wish more people were willing to be disciples like me. I've counted the cost and surrendered my life and...it is not an easy road.

"Do you mind if I look over these crosses? I'd kind of like a new one. I'm not fussy, you understand, but a disciple has to be relevant these days. I was wondering...are there any that are vinyl padded? I'm thinking of attracting others, you see. And if I could show them a comfortable cross I am sure I could win a lot more. Got to keep up with the population explosion and all. And I need something durable so I can treasure it always. Oh, is there one that's sort of flat so it would fit under my coat? One should not be too obvious.

"Funny, there doesn't seem to be much choice here. Just that coarse, rough wood. I mean, that would hurt! Don't you have something more distinctive, Lord? I can tell you right now, none of my friends are going to be impressed by this shoddy workmanship! They'll think I'm a nut or something! And my family would be mortified!

"What's that? It is either one of these or forget the whole thing? But Lord, I want to be your disciple! I mean, just being with you, that is all that counts, but life has to have a balance too... But you don't understand, nobody lives that way today! Who is going to be attracted by this self-denial bit? I want to, but let's not overdo it! Start getting radical like this and they'll haul me off to the funny farm — know what I mean?

"I mean, being a disciple is challenging and exciting and I want to do it but I have some rights, you know! Now let's see. No blood, O.K.? I just can't stand the thought of that, Lord.

"Lord? Lord!

"Now where do you suppose He went?"

One might soar high on the sweet wine of revelation and understand all the mysteries of how the saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom, how they shall sit on thrones, how they shall judge the world and angels in the age and the ages to come, how they shall deliver the creation from the bondage of corruption, and this is all truth, for it is a pure vision which shall be fulfilled. But I cannot be too forceful in my effort to show you, beloved ones, that long before a man ever partakes of such marvelous realities, he will have been thoroughly dealt with by the hand of God, the self-life being abased before the Lord, every rock of pride and every root of self-ascendancy purged out, so that our only desire will be to see the LORD glorified! Before we share His throne we will have learned quite well what the Spirit meant when He inspired the man of wisdom to pen these significant words: "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his own spirit than he that taketh a city" (Prov. 16:32).

Learning to rule one's own spirit is not easy, in fact it requires that our spirit be joined to His Spirit, so that we are fortified and strengthened in the inner man, and thus able to gain control over all our impulses and emotions. The varied dispositions of human nature are not easily bridled or broken; the restlessness, the defensiveness, the quick reactions to pressures, frustration, and anger; fear, worry, hurt, and self-assertion all must be overcome, conquered, rendered inactive by the overwhelming reign of HIS LIFE within. Many like to govern others, issue orders, call the shots, manipulate, control what is going on about them, in the church, etc., while they cannot bridle their own thoughts, attitudes, moods, and emotions, nor crucify the lusts and passions of their own flesh.

The Amalekites were an ancient and nomadic marauding people who lived in the southern part of the land God promised to Abraham. When Moses was leading the children of Israel through the wilderness toward their promised land, the Amalekites attacked them with a vengeance at Rephidim. The Lord took note of their unprovoked fury poured out upon His people, and there is a scripture that says, "The Lord hath sworn that the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation" (Ex. 17:16). When the scripture says "from generation to generation" we generally think this means it will last forever. But just because God said "from generation to generation" does not mean that there will not be a time when God will say, "It is over now; I will make an end of Amalek."

When the kingdom was ushered in and Saul was anointed king of Israel, the Lord spoke to Saul through the prophet Samuel, saying, "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt. Now go and smite Amalek, and *utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass*" (I Sam. 15:2-3). Saul gathered together a great army, attacked the Amalekites, and conquered them. God gave a great victory! Saul did not, however, obey the word of the Lord. He did indeed destroy all the people, but he took king Agag alive. He also saved the very best of all the sheep, oxen, and lambs to offer as a thank-you offering unto the Lord! But the Lord was not pleased with this. He was angry with Saul, and Samuel said to him, "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, *to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.*" Because of this disobedience the Lord wrested the kingdom from the house of Saul and gave it to David!

Amalek represents the flesh. We know that there must come a time in the ushering in of the kingdom in our lives when our continual warfare with Amalek, the flesh, must once and for all come to an end. The Amalek problem must be settled! It is not going to plague us forever! Yes, we have had war, the flesh wars against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh. Not only have we experienced this warfare within ourselves, but in every move of the Spirit, in every fresh realm that we have moved into in our progression into God, we found that Amalek was there, there was conflict, the flesh rose up and sought to rule, and there has been war from generation to generation. But there comes a time in the ushering in of the kingdom of God when the thrones are being set up and the Lord brings forth a kingship in His people so that the Amalek problem is dealt with.

You see, my beloved, in dealing with Amalek, the flesh, it is the preserving of the *good* that is the snare! Yes, Saul destroyed all the bad, all the vile and corrupt, but he wanted to save king Agag and the good! May God teach us in these days that in the destruction of Amalek it is the destruction of the *good* as well as the *bad* that He is after! God is moving on in this hour! As He brings us into our sonship He is causing us to take stands and positions, not against the bad of the flesh simply, but against things that are good. Of course, if you stand against things that are good and were started by God, formed by God, ordained by God, and blessed by God, it appears as if you are an instrument of the devil out to destroy the work of God! But God said once, "That which I plant, I will pluck up" (Jer. 1:9-10; 18:6-10). I rejoiced for years because I saw that "Every plant which my heavenly Father hath *not* planted, shall be rooted up" (Mat. 15:13). Now we must rejoice when we see God pluck up that which He *has* planted!

The Lord declared, "That which I build, I will destroy." We are to rejoice when we see God destroy that which He built! Unless God has done a work in our spirits by the Holy Ghost, we cannot believe that. We think that God only destroys the corrupt harlot system of religion. But our concept is that if God built it, the only one out to destroy it is the devil! But God says, "I will

destroy." May these days in which we now stand be the time when all God's called and chosen elect are prepared to lose the good as well as the bad, prepared to see God pluck up that for which we have given our life to see it planted, where we see God break down and destroy that for which we have sold ourselves out, which is LESS THAN WHAT GOD IS AFTER! When God has planted something, after a while we become idolatrous about it. Idolatry is really the self-life projecting itself into it so that it turns into an idol, because we cherish the thing God has done in us above obedience to God when He says it is now time to move on. We want to preserve it, memorialize it, make it an offering unto the Lord, because it is the very *best*. We don't understand sometimes that when we cling to what God *has done* at the expense of what He *is doing*, that which was started in the spirit winds up in the flesh! It may appear to be very *good flesh*, but it still pertains to the kingdom of Amalek.

Most of us have no problem as to our bad, we know the flesh and all that it represents must go to the cross. But all of us have areas in our lives which we think are good: a devotion, a commitment, a consecration, a faith, a knowledge of the word, a form of worship, a way of gathering, which are as much "self" as the bad temper, the wrong attitude, the sharp tongue, the worldliness, the lust, and the rest of it. God is saying that everything must go! All that falls short of His fullness and perfection, all that would be immortalized and perpetuated in our lives on a realm less than His ultimate purpose, must be brought to the cross. That which is left will only be Christ Himself being formed in us!

Chapter 44

The Church In Pergamos

continued

"I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication" (Rev. 2:14).

Across the pages of scripture there march men and women chosen of God to reveal by their lives and actions the great truths and principles of spiritual reality. The Holy Spirit has graphically painted a cameo-sharp picture of each one of them. There is a clear sketch of their characters which provides object lessons for all who walk with God and seek to fulfill His purpose in the earth. There are some who reveal the positive, men full of faith and committed to obedience to God, who wrought exploits and laid the foundations of God's ways and will for all men. Let me mention some of them. In the Old Testament, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David, Jeremiah and Daniel. In the New Testament, Mary, John the Baptist, Peter, John, Paul, Barnabas, and Apollos.

Then there are those whose lives accentuate the negative, men who profess to walk with God and be His ministers, but whose character reveals the flaws and errors which disqualify men from inheriting the promises. Some of these are Cain, Esau, Balaam, Samson, Saul, Absalom, Judas, Demas, and Ananias and Sapphira.

The Old Testament prophet Balaam has long been an enigma. He appears out of the mists of antiquity somewhat like Melchizedek — unexplainable in his origins and role of his time. He lived near the Euphrates river in the land of Pethor, modern-day Iraq. His prophecies were totally accurate; his language the most eloquent of all the Old Testament prophets; his allegories the most poetic; and his deception, by the love of fame and money, the most cunning. His notoriety had spread so far abroad that it seems his name was known in all the courts of pagan kings, soothsayers, and magicians. Yet he had conversations with the true and living God almost like Moses did! You will find his name mentioned sixty times in fifty-seven verses in no less than eight of the sixty-six books of the Bible — more than any other prophet! Yet words fail to describe his final and ignoble end.

How could Balaam — who had been the greatest prophet of the Lord up to that time (second only to Moses) — end up a soothsayer, using enchantments and divinations in an attempt to destroy the people whom God had commanded him to bless. How could he, whom God no doubt would have honored and immortalized his name throughout all time — had he stayed true — end up being slain by the Israelites as a traitor of God, an adversary of righteousness, and an open advocate of uncleanness? How could one so greatly gifted end up in such disgrace — an outcast of both the people of God and the pagan peoples to whom he prostituted his prophetic calling?

The question follows — was Balaam a genuine prophet of God? Or was he a religious racketeer? It is my conviction that the scriptures clearly reveal that he was a prophet of God, and the Lord has chosen him as an example of the reward of unrighteousness and unfaithfulness in the calling of God. Even before you finish the Old Testament, Micah tells us that we are to remember him. Notice what the prophet says, "O my people, remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him from Shittim unto Gilgal, that ye may know the righteousness of the Lord" (Mic. 6:5). In other words, Micah says you can't forget him; you can't ignore him because he is a tremendous lesson for God's called and chosen people! The New Testament mentions him three times, always in connection with apostasy. The first is found in II Peter 2:15: "Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness."

That's the first statement, a warning concerning the "way of Balaam." Then Jude, in his short epistle, says, "Woe unto them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Korah" (Jude 11). Jude warns of the "error of Balaam." The error of Balaam and the way of Balaam are not the same! Then finally, in the message of the Lord Jesus to the church in Pergamos, He says, "I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication." In this final passage we are told about the "doctrine of Balaam." Now the doctrine of Balaam is different from the way of Balaam, nor is it the same as the error of Balaam. Therefore, in our consideration of what the Lord would teach us from the life of this man, we need to recognize that these three statements give us a character analysis of Balaam. Let us go back into his history, back into the book of Numbers, chapters twenty-two through twenty-five, to understand these warnings.

As Israel approached the promised land, after forty years of wandering in the wilderness, they entered a new territory. It was the territory of certain nations which greatly feared this multitude of people advancing into their area of the world. Israel had gained a victory as they came up against the Amorites and battled with them. Naturally, the word of that military victory spread and caused concern among all these nations. And when Israel came into the territory of Moab, Balak the king of Moab was afraid to engage them in battle. Not knowing how to handle this apparent threat to his kingdom, he called for the most famous prophet of that day and engaged him to put a curse on Israel. The one that he engaged is the one in whom we're interested, Balaam, the prophet.

Balaam was a Midianite, from the same country where Moses had lived for forty years before his call to deliver Israel from the hand of Egypt. That explains in part how he knew Yahweh, the true and living God. He was brought from Aram, out of the mountains of the east. And we should note this about this man: Balaam uttered several of the most wonderful prophecies you'll find in all the word of God! When the children of Israel arrived at the east bank of the Jordan river, preparing to cross over into the land God had promised them, naturally Balak the king of Moab, occupying an adjoining territory, did not know their intentions. He perceived them as a threat to his kingdom, should they attack him and wrest his kingdom from him. Therefore, afraid to make an attack upon them but wanting to defend his kingdom, he sent messengers to Balaam. The message they bore to the prophet was this: "Come now therefore, I pray thee, curse for me this people; for they are too mighty for me: perhaps I shall prevail, that we may smite them, and that I may drive them out of the land; for I know that he whom thou blessest is blessed, and he whom thou cursest is cursed."

What a reputation Balaam had! And the messengers of Balak came to this mighty prophet not only with a plea from the king of Moab, but they brought with them a very handsome price. "And the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed with the rewards of divination in their hand; and they came unto Balaam, and spake unto him the words of Balak." The rewards of divination was simply the money they were prepared to pay Balaam for his services in cursing the children of Israel. With this money they came to him and said, "Balak has sent us, and he wants to engage your services. He requests that you come and curse this people that has recently come up out of Egypt. They are a very dangerous people! So far, they have had victories everywhere they have met the enemy, and king Balak needs your help at this crucial hour."

Ah, the very interesting thing is that this man Balaam sounds very genuine. "And he said unto them, Lodge here this night, and I will bring you word again, as the Lord shall speak unto me: and the princes of Moab abode with Balaam." Have you ever heard anything more pious than that? He sounds very genuine, does he not? Balaam honestly seems to be trying to find the mind of the Lord here! And indeed Balaam did inquire of the Lord, and he received the answer from God! "And God said unto Balaam, Thou shalt not go with them; thou shalt not curse the people; for they are blessed." That is God's clear, unmistakable, and uncontrovertible word to Balaam. "You're not to go, and you're not to curse these people, because I have blessed them!" That's God's answer. Now what will Balaam do in response to this word from God? The fact is, he still appears one hundred percent sincere and genuine, for "Balaam rose up in the morning and said to the princes of Balak, Get you into your land; for the Lord refuseth to give me leave to go with you." He says, "I can't go. I won't go. Go home to your master and tell him that!"

"And the princes of Moab rose up, and they went unto Balak, and said, Balaam refuseth to come with us." Now if the story ended there, I would have to say that Balaam is one of the most remarkable men of God of whom I have ever heard! Here's a man that has received a word from the Lord. God gives him a prophecy, and this man obeys explicitly the message. He said plainly, "I won't go. I will not curse these people!" But, unfortunately, the story doesn't end there.

As it turns out, Balak is a very determined and resourceful king. And, in my mind, I do doubt for one moment that he knew something about the character of this man Balaam. "And Balak send yet again princes more, and more honourable than they." Ah, now Balak begins to flatter the prophet by sending some of the most important men of the kingdom to confer with him. He raises the issue to a higher level of his government. "And they came to Balaam, and said to him, Thus saith Balak the son of Zippor, Let nothing, I pray thee, hinder thee from coming unto me." They make him a more attractive offer. "For I will promote thee unto very great honour, and I will do whatsoever thou sayest unto me: come therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people." Now Balak offers Balaam a cabinet position in his government! Balaam will be one of his closest advisors, and he will obey all the counsel Balaam gives him!

And now listen to this pious prophet. "And Balaam answered and said unto the servants of Balak, If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more." Now why does Balaam change the subject, and instead of referring to the high position Balak offered him, he suggests that should Balak give him his "house full of silver and gold" he still could not go beyond the word of the Lord? I will tell you why! Because that's what he wanted! With subtleness he was sowing the seed of suggestion into the mind of the king. Why mention it, if you're not thinking about it? "Why," he says, "I wouldn't go even if he gave me a house filled with gold and silver." And when he makes this

statement I can hear a lot of brethren saying, "Amen! Hallelujah for Balaam! What a testimony he's giving!"

But he's not genuine here. The words that flow out of his mouth cannot be taken at face value. Balaam has a secret agenda in the words he speaks. He's actually going to take a little less than a house full of gold and silver, but it's still going to be a good price. And king Balak will feel like he got a real bargain! May I say to you, he said this because he was a covetous man. Now listen to what follows this pious declaration: "Now therefore, I pray you, tarry ye also here this night, that I may know what the Lord will say unto me more." Now, why did he say that? He already had the word of the Lord! He had already given his answer! So why does he say in effect, "Wait here tonight, and I'll go to God again to see if He has changed his mind!" Can you not see the subtlety and shrewdness? As soon as he planted the idea of gold and silver, he announced that he would go back and inquire of the Lord once more, if perchance He might have changed His mind!

Balaam was not unlike the preacher I once heard about who came to his wife and said, "I've just received a call to pastor the church in the next town. It's a larger town. It's a much better church. The people in it are more refined and cultured, they do not cause the trouble the people here do, and they've offered me a higher salary. I'm going upstairs and pray about this to see if it's the Lord's will for me to go." His wife says, "Fine, I'll go up and pray with you." And he says, "Oh, my, no. You stay down here and pack!" Balaam, you see, is going to pray about it some more, although he already has God's answer!

However, it does look like God changes His mind, does it not? Notice the development here for it's so important. "And God came unto Balaam at night, and said unto him, If the men come to call thee, rise up, and go with them; but yet the word which I shall say unto thee, that shalt thou do." Now somebody says, "God did change His mind." No, God didn't! You see, my beloved, if you want to play games with God He will play games with you, and you will be caught in your own folly. God is no fool. He will give you enough rope to hang yourself! He is wiser than all the cunning craftiness of man! You cannot out-smart God! You remember when the children of Israel complained and murmured in the wilderness to Moses, "We want something besides manna to eat. We're tired of this stuff. We want meat!" And God says, "I'll give them flesh. I'll give them flesh till it comes out of their nostrils and they are sick of it." Later on, the Psalmist wrote, "He gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul" (Ps. 106:15).

When we demand our way over the wisdom of His way, God will let us have our way and we will reap the folly of it! There are certain things that you can keep nagging God about which He'll permit you to do. But, my friend, you'll dry up spiritually! The idea that we can ask anything our carnal heart desires and God is obligated to give it to us is a half-truth. Oh, yes, He will give you what you demand of Him, but that doesn't mean it is good for you, or that it conforms to God's best and highest for you. Do you want Him to give you every one of your prayer requests, or do you really want Him to have His way? Do you want blessed deliverance out of every problem and trial, or do you want to learn the lessons God is teaching you, that you may grow up into the stature of Christ? Do you want His will to be done, or do you want God to come over to your side and do what you want done? The interesting thing is there are times when He will do just that! There are a great many Christians that could testify to this experience. But those who demand God to bless their plans, their efforts, and their desires are not sons. If God is giving you everything you want, that is no sign of sonship! It may be a sign of THE BALAAM CONDITION!

Now this man Balaam is being permitted to go, but God is going to warn him every step of the way. And He uses something quite interesting. "And Balaam rose up in the morning, and saddled his ass, and went with the princes of Moab. And God's anger was kindled because he went: and the angel of the Lord stood in the way." Without doubt, the reason Balaam could not see the angel of the Lord was because he was thinking about a house full of silver and gold! He was a covetous man, and couldn't see spiritual things. And talk about a rebuke! God knows how to rebuke. The dumb animal on which he was riding could see the angel; it has more discernment than he does! My beloved, this is the way of Balaam. The way of Balaam is preaching, prophesying, or ministering in any capacity for money!

Hear the words of Peter again as he evaluates this man. "Who have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness: but was rebuked for his iniquity; the dumb ass speaking with man's voice forbade the madness of the prophet" (II Pet. 2:15-16). The "wages" of unrighteousness are the money people receive by departing from the perfect will and plan of God to accommodate people from whom they can profit by pleasing them. Some of the most covetous people I have met are in the Lord's work! A few of them I have met in this kingdom and sonship message! There is always a price on everything. There is always a plea for money for this project and that. Their need of your money is the object of every meeting they hold, every magazine they publish, and every letter they write. They will send you a book for your money, they will send you a tape for your money, they will send you some gold-colored trinket for your money, they will pray for you for your money, and with a thousand other crafty schemes they make merchandise of the gullible people who blindly follow them. They know the way of faith, but instead rely on carnal methods when it comes to raising finances. They coddle and flatter people at the expense of declaring the full counsel of God in order to profit thereby. There is always a gimmick to entice you to send your hard-earned money to fulfill their grandiose schemes to save the world or bring in the kingdom! Religion can be a racket. And I think every son of God is responsible for knowing what he is supporting!

Old Balaam had a message from God, but he was covetous. We're merely on the surface now; let's probe a little deeper. Look carefully at the personality of Balaam. Jude tells us this: "Woe unto them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, and run greedily after the error of Balaam for reward..." (Jude 11). Here we meet the error of Balaam. The error of Balaam was in deviating from the will of the Lord! Balaam represents a ministry or relationship with the Lord that brings a word from God. Balaam was a prophet, a true prophet of the true God bringing a true word from the Lord! Balaam was also a teacher and his student was Balak. Each of us is a teaching before we are a teacher. We teach what we are! Balaam prophesied out of the Spirit of the Lord. But Balaam taught out of who he was! What we are is much more powerful and expressive than what we say. Balaam taught Balak not only by his words, but out of his character and state of being. The word of the Lord was in his mouth, but carnality, deceptiveness, greed, and rebellion were in his heart. And that is the error of Balaam! Had you met him and said to him, "Now, brother Balaam, why are you going with these messengers? We understand that God has told you not to curse Israel. So, why are you going?" Then he would start rationalizing. He could explain his motives, and he could ascribe a worthy purpose for his conduct. That's the interesting thing!

Now let us dig a little deeper into the life of this prophet. This brings us to his doctrine. The doctrine of Balaam is satanic; it's demonic; it's hellish; it's subtle. It's the same thing that appeared in the garden of Eden to our first parents! In our Lord's message to the church at Pergamos He said, "But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of

Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication" (Rev. 2:14). Balak, you see, found that God would not permit him to curse the people of Israel. He knew he could not curse them! He understood his limit in disobeying the word of the Lord. But he still coveted the favor and the money of king Balak! So he realized that he was going to have to adopt a different approach if he was to get the silver and the gold, and that's what he had come for, after all. If you think Balaam is going back empty-handed, you are not acquainted with religious racketeers! Because he wants the rich gifts of Balak, he's going to do something now that's very devious.

He would not out-right curse Israel, but he says something like this to Balak. "Now, I can't curse them, but I can tell you how to destroy them. You go down and join them. Get the good-looking women of Moab to go down to the camp and get acquainted. The Israelite men will find the Moabite women attractive, and will commit whoredoms with them. Some of them will love your women so much they will marry them! Your women will be so beautiful, so sensuous, so enticing, so caring and loving, that the Israelite men will do anything for them. They will yield to your customs, they will compromise with your gods, they will adopt your traditions, they will pollute their worship of Yahweh, they will commit trespass against the Lord, and God will no longer fight for them."

"And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab" (Num. 25:1). As you read the terrible account that follows, you will see what happened as a result of Balaam's counsel. And so the Moabite women "caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the Lord" (Num. 31:16). With fornication came idolatry into the camp of Israel! What the devil couldn't do by cursing and fighting from the outside, he did from the inside!

The doctrine of Balaam was the doctrine and method to corrupt a people who couldn't be cursed! They were corrupted by tempting them to be joined to the women of Moab, defile their separation unto the Lord, and abandon their holy character — union with the mind, ways, methods, and spirit of the world — which is spiritual fornication. The doctrine of Balaam is union with the world, union with the fleshly ways of the carnal mind instead of a pure walk in the spirit and by the spirit. Do you know that God's elect people have never been hurt from without? The Lord's called and chosen people can only be corrupted from within! The richest years of the early church were during its persecution. While they were being imprisoned, beheaded, fed to lions, burned at the stake, boiled in oil, their property confiscated, and all the rest, there was great boldness, glory, and power upon the people of God! They increased by the thousands and the millions, shook kingdoms, and turned the world upside-down!

You see, my beloved, the devil was fighting them from the outside. He finally caught on! He couldn't hurt the church from the outside; so he joined it! Read the story of Constantine. Turn the pages of history and read how Constantine, emperor of Rome, out of considerations of state, in order to consolidate the empire under his control, made Christianity the official religion of his empire. Read the lines which tell how at the point of the spear he forced whole nations in a day into the communion of the church. Read Eusebius, the early church historian, to catch his enthusiastic conviction that the holy kingdom of heaven had come and that the kingdoms of this world had become the kingdoms of our Lord and His Christ — the carnal armies of the earth now supporting the church and bearing it onward to the full conquest of the world. Read it!

The church and the world were married together, the church and the world formed an adulterous relationship in which the church was kept and supported by human government. It

still is! Even if it is only your government-chartered, tax-exempt, non-profit religious organization, preacher friend of mine, by which carnal government dictates that you choose a name other than the Lord's name, that you appoint a board and do business contrary to the government of the Holy Spirit, and by which the government of carnal men confers upon you the "right" to marry the young and bury the dead as a servant of the civil government. "By the authority invested in me as a minister of the gospel, and by the State of Texas, I pronounce you man and wife!" Human government and fleshly armies are not the kingdom of God! With that first union of the church with human government all sorts of pagan rituals, pagan holidays, idols, cathedrals, doctrines, and practices were brought into the church. Can we not see by this that the formation of a religious organization chartered by the state is the first step into religious Babylon! The church couldn't be cursed, so it was corrupted! That is the doctrine of Balaam!

And likewise, all they who follow in Balaam's way, who have erred from the pure walk in the Spirit of God, and yet make a profession of serving and doing the work of Christ in their high-swalling words of vanity, and yet run greedily after the error of Balaam for rewards, and seek money for their preaching, prophesying, programs, books, and tapes; and that admire men's persons, flattering the people for gain, and take titles to themselves of "Reverend," "Doctor," and others of this world's recognition — are not these they of whom the Lord spoke when He said, "But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication."

Ray Prinzing once used the illustration of a young woman who goes to a nursing school, where she learns the things pertaining to the medical world, and after years of training and experience she becomes an RN. Long before this she has commenced to wear the nurses' white uniform with white shoes, stockings, and cap so that she becomes an expression of that field. You see her walking down the street and before you can even recognize her as Sue, or Helen, or whoever, you have already identified her as being a nurse, for the medical world has so absorbed her into its system, that she becomes an expression of that realm. She bears their MARK! God is raising up in this hour a people so GIVEN, YIELDED to the spirit of wisdom and holiness and power of the Christ as to be absorbed therein until it becomes, without our human effort, that we reveal HIM, for HE becomes the manifestation, HE becomes the atmosphere of our living, the sphere of our existence, so that we express only HIM at all times and in all circumstances. We are being perfected to bear the mark of GOD!

In our former days in the religious systems of man, in both thinking and actions we all bore the marks of the bestial system of this world. Did we not think like the world, plan like the world, organize like the world, promote like the world, and act like the world? Who would deny that the religious systems' whole vision, methodology, and attitude is in accordance with the world's system? Just as the church in the days of Constantine "paganized" Christianity by mingling with the worship of Christ pagan practices of idols, images, altars, incense, candles, vestments, saints (bearing the characteristics and virtues of the ancient pagan gods), Christmas, Easter, and a thousand other things, so in our day the church systems' planning and program is all in harmony with the "spirit of this age" as they continually "adapt" themselves to whatever the world is doing!

Let the devil hatch rock music out of the cesspool of the demented culture of drugs and sex, and the church will immediately "Christianize" it by giving the harmonic dissonance "Christian words." They call it "Christian Rock." It is not! You cannot have Christian rock any more than you can have Christian drug lords, Christian harlots, Christian thieves, or Christian liars! It is

not even Christianized demonism — it is demonized Christianity! The church systems are always trying to keep in step with the world, appropriate to themselves the world's program, and somehow make it "Christian." It is the doctrine of Balaam! Let a worldly book come off the press about near-death experiences, and soon "Christian" books on near-death experiences will line the bookshelves. Let diet books become the big money maker, and immediately "Christian" diet books and programs will flood the market. What great imitators the doctrine of Balaam makes God's people!

You see, precious friend of mine, those who subscribe to the doctrine of Balaam are not leaders, setting the standards for mankind, but followers, mimicking and adapting the world's standards under the pretense of serving Christ. If television talk shows are what the world is doing, then let us entertain the saints with "Christian" talk shows! Balaamites are never leaders and initiators, blazing the path for the world to follow; they are always followers and imitators as they partake of the spirit of the world and fornicate with her flesh and eat things sacrificed to idols!

David Wilkerson once wrote: "A few years ago, three pastors of large charismatic churches publicly stated they believed God would use rock-and-roll and rap music to bring in the next great revival. One of these ministers even declared that God used the Beatles to open people's hearts to the Holy Spirit. No — never! Those young men glorified sex and drugs. How could that ever be the work of the Holy Spirit? One Christian magazine predicted that the next big movement in the church would be a 'nightclub' approach — including services that feature dancing, near-beer alcohol, and comedians. One pastor told me this is already happening in churches throughout England and Europe. The churches can't hold the people's interest — so they turn them into nightclubs! At one such church, a visiting gospel singer was advised not to sing anything that mentioned sin or the blood of Jesus, because it might offend the visitors. That church's leaders were trying to create a 'comfort zone' for sinners!"

God is not well pleased with the world of believers who are all too willing to proclaim the praise of God with their lips and raise their hands in seeming consecration, even while they wear the gaudy garments of Babylonish religion, running greedily after the error of Balaam for gain, and prostituting the holy truths of God with the unholy methods and program of the world. God is well pleased with those who seek only His will, His ways, and His glory. God is well pleased with those who reject the fleeting pleasures of sin and the worthless glitter of the prestige and position of this world. God is well pleased with those who forsake the excitement and noise of the crowd, who abandon listening to all manner of fantastic oratory, who in their hearts are no longer entertained by man-made programs, soulish concerts, so-called Christian television shows, and carnal schemes of a church system that has forsaken the leading of the Spirit of God.

The Father is well pleased with those who see His hand in all the happenings of their lives and give no place or glory or credit to the devil. The Father is well pleased with those whose only desire out of a pure heart is to please Him and apprehend that for which they also have been apprehended of Christ Jesus. The Father is well pleased with those who put first things first and walk daily after the spirit and not after the flesh. The Father is well pleased with those who stop seeking gifts and seek the Giver. God is well pleased with those who stop seeking things and start seeking the Lord Himself.

If the people of God today would stop following after preachers and personalities, turning a deaf ear to the slick advertising of unscrupulous men who love to promote themselves, if they would forget about revivals and crusades and supposed signs and wonders and begin to turn

the knob of their prayer closet door, seeking not to run here and there, and do this and that, but seeking to enter into harmony with the mind of Him who worketh all things after the counsels of His own will, to do only those things they see the Father doing, to speak only those things they hear of the Father, then all the world would know that the Father is glorified in His sons even as He is glorified in His Son. Let us seek God that He might fashion our lives according to His eternal wisdom, that in us He might be well pleased!

There are some wonderfully instructive connections between the various items set forth in the seven churches of the book of Revelation in which we are called to overcome. Immediately following the Spirit's warning about the doctrine of Balaam, He says, "So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate" (Rev. 2:15). Why should the Lord hate the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes so much? And why is it mentioned again here in connection with the doctrine of Balaam? I will tell you why!

Their names tell us a lot about them. Balaam, I am told, means "conqueror of the people." Nicolaitane also means "conqueror of the common people." Their names are almost identical and speak volumes to us in the spirit as to what God hates! The doctrine of the Nicolaitanes put one man above another, a hierarchical system that makes some people "laity" and others "lords," rather than a family of sons under the Headship of Christ. All church systems of man still hold to this doctrine and system today with their hierarchy of ministers and offices. They conquer the people through the force of their titles, prestige, power, charisma, and rules and regulations, rather than serving in humility out of the ministration of the Spirit.

Balaam went beyond the Nicolaitanes, however, for he taught Balak to cause Israel to stumble through the seductiveness of women, so that they might commit immorality and be turned to other gods. Balaam did this in order to gain a reward of money, prestige, and power for himself. But he did not rule by that power he possessed — his purpose was carried out through the corruption of the people of God! This is a more refined and deadly form of conquest than mere Nicolaitanism, for it turns the heart away from the purity of the truth and an uncontaminated walk in the Spirit and by the Spirit.

And then — in the church at Thyratira we meet another unsavory character — Jezebel! She represents an even more insidious realm — the internal realm of the soul — the very root of everything! In each case the Spirit is probing deeper! He starts with the outward form, men, often good men, who seek to control and dominate the Lord's people. Then He moves to the Balaamites, those who bring the Lord's people into union with the flesh and the world, corrupting the work of God in their lives through error. Oh, yes, God will deal with us to bring us out of the various forms of Babylon. But ultimately He will bring every overcoming son of God to the root of the matter — getting the Babylon out of us! This is accomplished only through the salvation of the soul, the renewing of our mind, bringing transformation. Israel is the type — God brought Israel out of Egypt in one miraculous night. But it took forty long years of dealing in the wilderness to **get Egypt out of them** so that they could rise up in faith and obedience, enter in, and possess their land! The same pattern appears in the book of Revelation in the seven steps of the overcomer! Only at the end — in the final step of overcoming — does the overcomer finally ascend to the throne of God! (Rev. 3:21).

Some time ago a dear sister in the Lord, Sheila Taylor, shared a remarkable dream with us which has vital significance for the elect of God in this new kingdom Day. She wrote, "In this dream I was among a lot of people. I had lain down and a 2,000 foot-long snake had passed from my body through my bowels. Nobody knew what it meant or what to do with it. They hung it up over a fence, then finally made a plastic case (cheap shade of blue plastic) and put the

snake in it to preserve it. They were talking about it but without wisdom, only confusion. The Lord then spoke to me and said that I had been emptied of all sins and traditions and doctrinal teachings and errors from the past 2,000 years! He said I had been born at the cross but since then man had distorted the truth and many lies and errors had come in, that had to be taken away.

"Then I vomited. The Lord said it was the residue. I was now clean! I don't know what 'residue' consisted of. But then He gave me a glass of the best tasting wine imaginable and said, Drink! It was the New Wine. I was still lying down and the Spirit poured the wine into my mouth. There are no words to describe how refreshing it was! It was sweet and wonderful and made me feel alive all over. Then I sat up and drank more and thanked Him over and over for filling me with truth. I worshipped Him. Then I woke up. Out of all the people there I was the only one who understood what was happening. The snake was dead but no one wanted to bury it; they wanted to preserve it!"

Although this experience was very real to Sheila personally, it is my deep conviction that it is also a message to the body of Christ! Truly God is purging His called and chosen elect from **all** the Balaamite errors and abominations of the past 2,000 years! Oh, the wonder of it! God is doing a deep and thorough work by His Spirit and by the cross in our lives, and He is delivering us completely from all that is not of Him. We are even vomiting up the residue, for the deliverance must be complete and irrevocable! The message to the church at Pergamos is just this: **THE OVERCOMER MUST, IN THE THIRD STEP OF HIS OVERCOMING, REPENT OF AND FORSAKE ALL THE MIXTURE OF RELIGION** to follow the Lord, and the Lord alone, in all things and at all times. "Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth" (Rev. 2:16). Everyone who is called to sonship is now repenting of all the way of Balaam, all the error of Balaam, and all the doctrine of Balaam!

EATING THINGS SACRIFICED TO IDOLS

The doctrine of Balaam seduces the Lord's people to "eat things sacrificed to idols" (Rev. 2:14). Balaam taught Balak to seduce Israel into two things — eating and fornication. Food and sex — aren't these the two most powerful human passions! In its spiritual meaning, eating speaks of the word we feed upon; the ideas, teachings and doctrines we take into our spirits. Balaam taught Balak to seduce God's people to eat!

You see, my beloved, the Baptists preach one word, the Catholics preach another word, the Pentecostals preach a different word, the Mormons preach something else, and so on throughout Christendom. Two millenniums ago the same beloved apostle John who wrote so extensively of God's marvelous love also left us this solemn warning: "Little children, keep yourselves from **IDOLS** (that is, false gods, or false ideas and representations of the true God)" (1 Jn. 5:21). "Little children, keep yourselves from false ideas about God!" Do we have false ideas about God? I fear we do. How the world and the church are filled with them! Many people view God as a schoolboy did: "...the sort of person who is always snooping around to see if anyone is enjoying himself and then trying to stop it." Others make God out to be a tyrant, or a vengeful, wrath-filled fiend. Some paint a God so weak that the will of man is stronger than the will of God! Then others speak of God as always trying to do this and that, but the devil is ever hindering and thwarting God's purposes, getting the upper hand, defeating God's best laid plans, tripping up and overcoming the saints, until it would seem that the devil is himself the omniscient and omnipotent one!

Some have a God so capricious that He will only save you if the correct formula is repeated over you in water baptism. Vast numbers blaspheme the Holy Ghost by attributing the works of the Holy Spirit to the devil, contending that if you speak in tongues, prophesy, heal the sick, or do miracles you are of the devil, and they dispense that perverted word into their offspring (spiritual children) who do truly trust Jesus as their Saviour. Some say that Christ can only be ministered to you through the sacraments, or a particular ritual, or the ministry of their group, or membership in their movement, or by believing only the doctrines of their church and listening to no one else. Others teach their people that they cannot go to heaven if they use tobacco, drink wine, wear jewelry, put on make-up, cut their hair, go to movies, or wear or not wear certain kinds of clothing. We could pile error upon error, with "end-time" teachings about the so-called "rapture" of the saints, about a revived Roman empire, the antichrist sitting in a temple in Jerusalem, and wrath, judgment, and tribulation poured out upon the inhabitants of the world. To this we could add pagan holidays, customs, rituals, ceremonies, liturgies, works, and philosophies that have been introduced into the church realm and have become such an established part of her practice and teaching until the whole world believes that these things are surely taught somewhere in the scriptures or were established by the apostles or by Jesus Himself! Men have created out of their carnal minds a false image of God which is a religious idol!

Can you not see the mystery? All who partake of such false and polluted teachings and doctrines which misrepresent God and distort His truth are eating things offered to idols — eating a word which is offered upon the altar of a false idea and image of God! All who follow the error of Balaam, and teach the doctrine of Balaam, do indeed seduce the Lord's people to eat a word which is offered upon the altar of a false god — a false religious system which has usurped the very truth and spirit of our heavenly Father! Smoking, cussing, and drinking are not the big things an overcomer must overcome — these negative spiritual conditions existing in the realm of the seven churches are the things within ourselves we are commanded to repent of and overcome! Every son of God has repented and is repenting in the light that the Spirit brings!

SPIRITUAL FORNICATION

Finally, the doctrine of Balaam seduces the people of God to "commit fornication" (Rev. 2:14). The fornication here is a symbol, not the physical fornication of the flesh, but a joining to that which is not Christ. Women in the Revelation are likewise symbolic, either positively of the bride of Christ, or negatively of the soul, or of religious organizations and activities which are soulish rather than spiritual. These are those ministries, and multiplied millions of believers, who daily sow their spiritual seed, deposit their spiritual life of Christ, into man-made religious systems, mingling the reality of Christ with the commandments of men, joining themselves to carnal programs, promotions, methods, and worldly religious activities, satisfying their own soulish appetites and lusts in the name of the Lord. It is spiritual fornication!

Consider with me two verses of scripture in Galatians 3:3 and Philippians 3:3-4. "Are ye so foolish? Having begun in the spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?" "We are the circumcision, who worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." "The flesh" is the name by which the word of God designates our human consciousness — soul and body. The soul at creation was placed between the spiritual or divine and the sensible or worldly, that both soul and body might, in due time, be raised up into that perfect union in the spirit which would result in man attaining his destiny, a spiritual body. When the soul yielded to the temptation of the sensible it came under the power of the body — this union of soul and body became "flesh". And now the flesh is not only without the

spirit, but even hostile to it: "the flesh wars against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh" (Gal. 5:17).

More than a hundred years ago William Law wrote that this antagonism of the flesh to the spirit has TWO DISTINCT STRATEGIES. On the one hand, the flesh wars against the spirit by its committing sin and transgressing God's commands. This is the evil of the flesh. On the other hand, its hostility to the spirit is no less manifested in its seeking to serve God and do His work! This is the good of the flesh. The good and the evil of the flesh are represented in the garden of Eden as "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." When man sank into the flesh realm he then walked no longer in the spirit, but after the knowledge of good and evil. In yielding to the sensual realm of the body, the soul sought itself instead of the God into whom the spirit could have raised it. Self-knowledge, self-effort, and self-development prevailed over the life of the spirit!

And now, so subtle and mighty is this spirit of self, that the flesh, not only in sinning against God, but even when the soul learns to serve God, still asserts its power, refusing to let the SPIRIT ALONE LEAD, and in its effort to be religious, wants to serve God independent of the spirit and is still the great enemy that ever hinders and quenches the spirit. It is because of this cunning deceitfulness of the flesh that there often takes place what Paul speaks of to the Galatians: "Having begun in the spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?" Unless the soul is brought into absolute submission to the spirit, the surrender to the spirit being entire as a bride to the bridegroom, thus bringing about the marriage of the bride-soul to the bridegroom-spirit, which is the marriage of the Lamb, what has begun in the spirit, very early and very speedily passes over into confidence in the flesh!

We are living in a very wonderful age. It is an age of drive and hurry and stress and storm. One would not go very far afield today in describing our age as an age of impatience and unrest. The tragic fact in the life of the American people at this present time is the absence of quietness and repose. We believe in "drives". We slavishly pursue our careers and social involvements; we meet our husband or wife in the hall and say, "Hi!" and we are gone. It takes great effort and commitment in order to find a few minutes to spend "quality time" with the children. If nothing else is going on we have the television going to keep our mind engaged lest we discover the silence. We are in too great a rush for repose. We have little or no time for the inner chamber. We prefer the flurry of activities and the crowds, the hustle and bustle. Nothing appeals to us but the strenuous and the thrilling. Repose is too tame a thing entirely for this atomic space age!

The sad part of it is that it is no different in the church world. The church is imitating the world! Christians regulate their devotion by the clock. The church schedule is packed with flesh-appeal programs and activities that run day and night. They feel that unless every night of the week is taken up with some sort of activity, the ministry is an ineffective thing. They have the strange idea that nothing is being done unless someone is talking! So they fairly swarm to conferences and seminars and committee meetings and platform discussions and concerts and workshops and programs and conventions. The inquiry that is nearly always made concerning a religious gathering is, "Was there much of a crowd there?" They take it for granted that if the speaker was a good talker and the building was crowded, the meeting was a big success. Do you remember in "Pilgrim's Progress" the conversation between Christian and Talkative? "I thought we should have a great deal of talk by this time," says Talkative. The moments when he was pursuing his journey in silence seemed wasted!

God's purposes are not accomplished by intellect and soulful activity. The church systems go forward today like a little Samson shorn of its locks of power. It parades up and down, boasting of its accomplishments, and, like Samson, it knows not that the Spirit of God has departed from it. But even as Saul and his armies tremble in fear before the mighty Goliath, the Lord God is raising up a little David with a slingshot of the spirit of sonship to meet the enemy with all of his stratagems and come off with a mighty victory! This David company is still in preparation, far out in the solitude of green pastures and beside the still waters, learning by faith and obedience to slay their bear and kill their lion. But we are gaining new victories everyday and learning within ourselves the power of God and the ways of His kingdom! Saul's armor will not do! The sons of God are being prepared to step forth in the majesty of the name of the Lord God of Israel! This preparation does not take place with the seven brothers in the hustle and bustle of the streets of Bethlehem, but alone with God in the secret place of the Most High!

The church systems are reaching out their hands to society around them but their hands are so full that their hearts are empty. What do busy preachers or busy Christians know about the secret place of the Most High? What do they know about the total silence of the most holy place? The churches are filled to overflowing with members who are so busy running hither and thither, on errands of mercy and ministry it may be, but they are never alone with God. Undoubtedly they think that their heavenly Father is proud of them and their "Christian success," their "religious career," and their eternal, unceasing business for the kingdom of God, never giving thought to the fact that they are not unlike the successful child who is so absorbed in his pursuit of position, fame, and prosperity that he never finds a moment to stop by and chat with dear old Dad who made it all possible.

There is no real power in noise. There is never any real power in noise. The prophets of Baal discovered this long ago on mount Carmel! Many meetings today remind me of the scene on mount Carmel as the saints shout and cry and dance about, commanding God and rebuking spirits with the noise and fervor of a pagan war dance. Strength is not in bluster and noise. The very need to make noise is proof of the absence of power! The louder we pray to God and the more vociferously we shout at demons the less likely it is that we will receive an answer or that any demon will pay any attention to our word. Strength is in quietness. The life of sonship is deep rather than demonstrative. "It is the brook and not the river that goes brawling," someone said. Jesus never sweat His garments wet while preaching, nor worked Himself into a lather when healing the sick, casting out devils, or raising the dead. If the authority is there the calmest command will evoke obedience. There is no need for the president of the United States to yell and scream and work himself into a frenzy in order to give a military general orders to initiate hostilities against an enemy. The quietest directive, even a mere whisper, will do!

Oh, for the culture of the secret place! It is in solitude that we catch the mystic notes from the depths of God within. It is deep down in the depths that the righteousness and power and glory of the kingdom of God are known. By going apart one gets the vision of eternal realities. How vast the soul becomes in the presence of the Infinite! I have learned by arduous experience that our Father usually speaks in whispers, the still, small voice of the Holiest of all, but we often cannot hear these whispers for the clamor of the street. We are called to heavenly places, far above the clamor of the world and the babble of religion. For after all our home is in the heights! Our real power is in communion and union. There is a music that no one can hear until the ears are anointed. The voice of truth is a very low sweet voice.

Amid all the religious ruckus of the hour, and all the fuss and trumpet blowing of those who run after the error of Balaam, fornicating with the flesh and the carnal mind, there is a little flock that has climbed the mount with Jesus. They care not for the flamboyant humbug of the gaudy harlot's house, but, having beheld the glories of the kingdom afar off, they are pressing through surging waves of humanity to come apart to receive instruction from the King of the kingdom. At His feet they hear the call to the heavenly mark and find a door opened for them to enter in and lay hold upon the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. These are they who follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth! They lean hard upon Christ! The spirit of His sonship dwells within them! They are partakers of His mind! They have been given the knowledge of His will! They comprehend His plan and purpose in the earth, in His sons, and in the universe! They have laid aside every weight and the sin which does so easily beset them! They are running the race with patience! They esteem the hope that is set before them higher than all the pleasures of Egypt and the prestige of Babylon! They are patient in tribulation, knowing that through much tribulation we shall enter the kingdom. They continue instant in prayer to God, and He comforts them and upholds them with the right hand of His righteousness. To them the voice of the Father speaks in words of everlasting hope and assurance, "Fear not, little flock; it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Aren't you glad!

Chapter 45

The Church In Pergamos

continued

"To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna..." (Rev. 2:17).

he imagery employed in this beautiful passage is full of spiritual meaning, once we obtain the key to it. The phrase, the hidden manna, is an allusion to the ark of God which resided in the most holy place of the tabernacle of the Lord, which accompanied the children of Israel during all their wanderings in the wilderness, and which, as we are told in the book of Exodus, contained a golden pot of the manna by which they had been miraculously fed. While the manna collected daily, if kept over for a second day, corrupted, bred worms, and stank, that which they placed in the golden pot was preserved ever fresh by the power of the Shekinah glory which radiated the ark. But let us look beyond the letter of the word and hear it by the Spirit! The hidden manna reveals the truth of INCORRUPTIBILITY!

No spiritual person supposes, however, that the overcomers will one day go to heaven and eat literal manna from an actual golden bowl! But all who follow Christ into sonship to God shall eat and eat and eat of HIS INCORRUPTIBLE LIFE until all the death of the carnal mind and the corruption of the flesh has been swallowed up of His life and the day comes when, even in their bodies, this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality! Aren't you glad!

Under the old covenant they had an outward ark and in it they put the pot of manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the stone tablets of the law given to Moses. But Christ in His new covenant puts His spiritual law of His divine nature, and the rod of His divine appointment by the Spirit, and the manna of His own incorruptible life, into the hearts of His called and chosen elect. They that ate of the manna in the wilderness died, but they that eat of the incorruptible life of Christ, the spiritual bread from heaven, are filled with divine and eternal life. The new covenant is not according to the old, with its outward rod, law, and manna, for all those outward things served only until the time of reformation or change, till the seed, the heavenly and spiritual man, came, in the power of God's Life and Light, who puts the heavenly law of Christ's mind and nature, and the heavenly rod of God's appointed priesthood, and the heavenly manna of incorruptible and immortal life into the sanctified hearts of God's sons. Christ abolishes all these outward things, of the old covenant and testament, and establishes the new in the lives of His called out people!

It is quite meaningful to see that the manna is in the ark. The ark represents Christ! It is not open manna, it is not manna on the ground, in the lowlands of the corruption of our earthiness, or of carnal man-made religion; it is not manna displayed — not something you will hear on TBN! It is manna in the secret place, in the secret depths of Christ in our spirit. It is not surface and shallow, it is not for the multitudes, not even the multitudes of God's people. This is that which goes beyond the veil, hidden in the ark of Christ. Hidden manna is from heaven, truth

unfolded, enlightenment and quickening from the throne room of God! Can you not see the mystery?

Not only is the manna hidden in the golden pot, but this pot is hidden in the ark! "For ye are dead, and your (new) life is hid with Christ in God" (Col. 3:3). In the wilderness the children of Israel enjoyed the manna, but the manna they enjoyed was public manna; it was manna fallen to earth before the eyes of everyone, not manna hidden in the heavens of God's Spirit. The hidden manna is not the obvious manna that everyone else is eating, but that which is stored away in the blazing presence of God, in the ark of His covenant, in the most holy place of His glory and power. Most Christians eat of the ordinary manna, the letter of the word, the truths of God on the level that is understandable by natural minds. They never get to the depth of truth that can only be received by the quickening of the Holy Spirit! Instead of merely believing the letter of the words of scripture, every son of God is being quickened to hear the heartbeat of the Father, to receive the words of God in and by the Spirit.

The hidden manna is Christ speaking words of spirit and life from the sanctuary of our innermost being! The showbread was exhibited on the table, it was shown forth and seen of men. But the incorruptible manna is hidden in the golden pot in the ark. Multitudes today eat of the showbread in the holy place! In gatherings, in meetings, in conventions, on radio and television, in books and magazines, they eat of that bread of life that is displayed, that all can see and hear, and be strengthened thereby. But it does not give the measure of life that the hidden manna gives! It is like the milk for babes, of which Paul wrote. The hidden manna is Christ in a deeper way, Christ in the most holy place, Christ in the inner chamber, Christ in the secret place of the Most High, Christ in the heavenlies of our spirit!

This is Christ according to the order of Melchizedek, after the power of an endless life, not according to the old order of Aaron. Aaron stands in the outer court offering sacrifices upon the altar, and in the holy place lighting the lamp of a beginning, feeble light of Christ, and burning the incense of prayer and praise. Melchizedek is on the throne of God in the higher than all heavens! We may experience Christ as our showbread in the holy place and all that we experience there is immediately known by many people. We may share it in church meetings, Bible study and prayer groups, conferences, perhaps even on radio or television. We may write of it in magazines, or in a book. Sometimes the news of our glorious experience spreads across the whole land! This is nothing but the experience of Christ as the open showbread!

The overcomers are those who press deeper into the secret place of the Most High in order to partake of the Christ in realms and measures that the world, even the church world, knows nothing of! Not to the whole church in Pergamos, but only to "him that overcometh," is the promise given of the hidden manna. The Lord Jesus ministered to men in power and great glory, but as a Son He enjoyed a relationship with, and a knowledge of, the Father that the multitudes, nor even His own closest disciples, knew nothing of. And so it is with every son of God! Isn't it wonderful!

The hidden manna brings incorruptible life! And as His divine life becomes our life, transforming us from the image of the earthly man into the image of the heavenly man, then the life of God shall flow out to the nations of the world through a true manifest sonship ministry until there has been brought into being a new heaven and a new earth. Aren't you glad! "As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly" (I Cor. 15:49). This transformation comes from partaking of His life, eating His flesh and blood, that is, eating the hidden manna! No more carnality! No more death! Not only for the sons, but all humanity! By the hidden manna the sons of God shall put death under their feet, destroying

it finally, fully, and forever, as Jesus did eternally when He came and lived by the life of the Father. Not only do they win victory over death, but they now have the power of Life! Out of this temple of God shall flow a river of the water of Life to bless all creation. Even those believers who failed to attain to the status of an overcomer will be greatly blessed by those who did!

This is a supernatural manna — not the manna after the order of that which the children of Israel ate in the wilderness, for they ate and are dead. The manna in the wilderness gave the people life in a physical body, but this is a manna that will give you life in a spiritual body. "I am the living bread," said Jesus, and "this is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die" (Jn. 6:50). As the children of Israel ate the manna every day, so we must eat the manna every day! "If any man eats and continues to eat of this bread, he shall live forever," is how it is in the Greek.

Behold, I show you a mystery! The body Jesus brought out of the tomb is the eternal body of Christ. The body that came out of the tomb was the only glorified human flesh that ever existed. Jesus was the only perfect man empowered to raise His flesh body up into the state of spiritualization — a spiritual body, truly a body, but not a natural body, for now "there is a natural body, and there **is** a spiritual body" (I Cor. 15:44). The spiritual body is His body! There will never be but one resurrection body for there will never be another man besides the last Adam who is also the second man. There have only been two men — Adam and Christ. Just as our natural body came from Adam and is the very body of Adam, so must our spiritual body come from the Lord Jesus Christ and is the very body of Christ. His resurrection body, because it is the body of Christ, and for those who make up the completeness of the Christ body, enters into us making us truly "bone of His bones, and flesh of His flesh" (Eph. 5:30). That is the mystery!

When we speak of this great truth of being members of Christ's body, we are not referring to Adam's flesh body-members becoming members of Christ. Oh, no! It is not Adam's hands (our physical hands) or Adam's mouth or Adam's feet that are members of the Christ. That is how we think in the natural! Only flesh of His flesh and bone of His bones can be the members of Christ! Just as believers receive the spirit of the Son into their hearts in the power of the Holy Spirit, so does the overcomer receive that resurrected and glorified body of the Christ within, bone of His bones, and flesh of His flesh. As we continue to put on the Lord Jesus Christ, growing in His nature, life, power, and glory, we receive within ourselves in the invisible realm of the inner son, the new man, the new creation, the inward man, that same resurrection body of the Lord who ascended into the heavens and is now returning to appear in His many brethren, to be admired in all them that believe in this day.

Let us look a little deeper. Should you shed Adam's body, the natural body, the earth body, the corruptible body, this tabernacle in which we groan, that glorified body is there, raised up in the life of Christ within you, and you have a house built within you, which is out of heaven, out of Christ in the realm of the spirit, and that house IS THE LORD JESUS CHRIST — SPIRIT, SOUL, AND BODY. Can you not see the mystery? In Spanish there is a hospitable saying, when one comes to visit, "mi casa es su casa" — "my house is your house." That is what the Lord Jesus says to us today in respect to that body He brought out of the tomb in a state of glorification — "My house is your house!" This is our house from heaven, the building not made with hands, eternal in the realm of the spirit within ourselves! This is the body of immortality and incorruption the sons of God are to seek — to fully put on the Lord Jesus Christ as our house from heaven in the power of His resurrection! That is the mystery!

Is this not why the Lord said, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world" (Jn. 6:51). The living flesh of the Lord Jesus Christ is the **hidden manna** promised to the overcomer! The words of Jesus in this regard are very clear and wonderful, "Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die" (Jn. 6:49-50).

THE WHITE STONE

"To him that overcometh I will give a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it" (Rev. 2:17).

All through the Bible, and in no part of it more than in this book of Revelation, runs the idea of a correspondence between a spiritual quality and the name of the person possessing it; the precious stone represents the quality, such as courage, patience, strength, or other quality which is most characteristic of some particular person, and the name written on it is that of the wearer. The "white" stone promised to the overcomer is not meant as a description of its appearance or color, but its nature. It stands for a flawless purity, the beauty of holiness. The white stone is the white of spiritual radiance!

White is everywhere the color of that which is righteous, spiritual, divine, and heavenly, and nowhere more remarkably so than in the book of Revelation! Of the mighty Christ of God we are told, "His head and His hairs were white like wool, as white as snow." Then besides this white stone we have white raiment, white robes, a white cloud, fine linen clean and white, white horses, and a great white throne. When Jesus was transfigured on the holy mount before His disciples, the record states, "His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light" (Mat. 17:2). The white here was not the dull white like the paper these words are printed on, but glistening white — like the LIGHT! It is the character of intense white to be shining — like a diamond! It is the brilliance of the radiance of the glory of the Lord! What a stone this is — white, like the light, glistening with the brilliance of God's glory! It speaks not of simple purity as much as it does of radiating glory that emanates out of divine nature!

When the Lord said that He would give a white stone to the overcomer He used the Greek word **psefos**. This particular word appears in the New Testament in only one other instance, namely, that of Acts 26:10, wherein Paul says, "Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice (psefos) against them." Paul stated, "I gave my voice against them." The word voice is **psefos**. The Emphatic Diaglott renders the word as vote. Paul gave his consenting "vote" to the death of the saints. This same word **psefos** was translated stone in Revelation 2:17!

Liddell and Scott's Greek Dictionary presents quite an array of evidence to show that stone, or pebble, referred to by the Greek word **psefos**, does not refer to just any stone or pebble one would pick up off the ground, but is in reality a balloting stone used by the ancients in casting their votes. Elections and other decisions of the people, as well as decisions of the judges, were expressed by the use of this particular kind of stone, or pebble — **psefos Athenas**. These stones were painted white to express a favorable vote, or black to express an unfavorable decision in the situation under consideration. The Greeks still use a method of voting like this. They have a tin box divided into two parts, one side painted white and the other side painted black. A hole permits the voter to insert his hand into the box and drop a little

ballot made of lead, about the size of a pea, either into the white side of the box or into the black side.

There may also be an allusion here to conquerors in the public games, who were not only conducted, AND with great pomp into the city to which they belonged, but had a white stone given to them, with their name inscribed on it; which badge entitled them, during their whole life, to be maintained at public expense. Still other white stones had to do with instruments of hospitality, or friendship, or alliance. A stone could be inscribed and then broken so that the two parts, when fitted together, formed a sort of validation of the bearer. A white stone was given to a man who had been tried and acquitted. Then sometimes, the white stone was given to the man freed from slavery and made a citizen of the province. He carried the stone as evidence of his citizenship. Can we not see by all these uses of the white stone that the common denominator in each is the "rights" or "privileges" or "status" or "identity" of the one receiving it! In all these cases the white metaphor drawn by the white stone is a way of describing OUR PLACEMENT AS OVERCOMERS, INHERITORS, PARTAKERS OF THE HEAVENLY CALLING, SONS OF THE KINGDOM.

The ancient meaning of this Greek word used by the Spirit in the promise to the overcomer certainly gives a wonderful assurance to the overcomer! The Lord is saying that He will cast His vote in favor of those who faithfully fulfill all His will, who follow Him all the way, who overcome all things by the power of His life — declaring us sons indeed, imparting to us His power and glory, conferring on us life and immortality, and raising us up to sit with Him upon His throne! This is the adoption, the placement as sons! Can we not see that this is precisely what happened in the life of the firstborn Son when He came to the Jordan to be baptized of John? The Holy Spirit descended upon Him without measure and the voice came from heaven proclaiming, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased!" The Father cast His vote, declared His Son, imparted His power, glory, and honor, conferred His incorruptible life and nature, and sent Him forth as the manifest Son of God! On that blessed day the Father gave His Son a white stone, and in that stone a new name was written which no one else knew saving He that received it! Oh, the wonder of it!

There is another application of the white stone worthy of our consideration. In the Old Testament times, there was a wonderful stone which was concealed in the breastplate of the high priest (Ex. 28:15-30). This stone was called Urim and Thummim, meaning "Lights and Perfections." That does not mean there were two stones, only that there were two manifestations of God out of the one stone. Since the diamond, most precious of all stones, was not among those set in the breastplate itself, it could likely have been this stone which contained within itself, by the spirit and power of God, the Urim and the Thummim, which was concealed within, or beneath, the breastplate. The high priest alone knew what was engraved upon it, but the conjecture that it was the ineffable name of God is probably correct. Thus, the new name that the overcomer receives in the white stone is the very name or nature of God Himself! It is a higher revelation of Him than has ever been communicated to others! It is, as the Lord says in Revelation 3:12, "My new name." It is the very nature of CHRIST!

The "Lights and Perfections" were divine manifestations of the Spirit by which the counsel and will of God was revealed to the high priest. The high priest would inquire of the Lord and God would answer him "by Urim and Thummin." God would speak out of the stone just as He spoke out of the burning bush and out of the cloud! Christ is our high priest of the new covenant! Isn't it wonderful that out of the "lights and perfections" of the nature of God within His called and chosen elect the voice of God is heard, the purpose of God is revealed, and the will of God is known! This shows that as God gives us the white stone of the Urim and Thummim within

ourselves by the wisdom of the Spirit, in the power of His nature, and by the authority of Christ, we are able to see and hear as we have never seen or heard before! This is happening right now as the revelation of God is released in those who are overcoming, growing up into the fullness of Christ. We are now seeing all things as they really are, and all the old errors of the religious systems of man, and the false perceptions of carnal understanding, are being removed out of our thinking and experience. Isn't it wonderful!

Our Father is a very effective teacher and He teaches by the illumination of His word within the inner recesses of our being. He teaches through the ministry of the body of Christ from member to member in the flow of His life. He teaches through experience, and many times He teaches through parabolic experiences. We have an example of His teaching by a parabolic experience in the book of Jeremiah, where the Lord spoke to the prophet saying, "I want you to go and buy a fine linen girdle and I want you to put it on." Then the word of the Lord came to him saying, "Now, take the girdle, go to the river Euphrates and hide it there in a hole in the rock." It was four hundred miles to the Euphrates! So the prophet went to the Euphrates and buried the girdle in a hole in the rock by the river, as the Lord commanded. He then made the long trek back over four hundred long, hot, dusty, rocky, treacherous miles!

Some days later the word of the Lord came to the prophet again, saying, "Now, Jeremiah, go back to the Euphrates and dig up the girdle!" So he made the journey back over four hundred miles, dug up the girdle, and brought it home. In the meantime, the girdle had become marred, it had mildewed and decayed, it had rotted in that damp little hole in the rock by the river and the word of the Lord to him was this, "As this girdle has been marred, so will I mar the beauty of Judah and Jerusalem!" What a way to receive a word from the Lord! Don't you think that God could just have shown Jeremiah the girdle in a dream? Don't you think God could have given him a vision that would have encompassed everything that happened without walking 1,600 miles just to get a one sentence message from the Lord? But you see, that was a parabolic experience. It was the word of God in the form of a parable that was experienced by the man of God. He received the revelation God spoke to him out of the experience, rather than by a word out of the heavens! And how terribly effective it was!

Several years ago the Lord spoke to me in a parabolic experience. Beginning some thirty years ago, I developed a vision problem. I could read the finest print close-up, but things in the distance were blurred. Sometimes I could not tell whether a person half way across the super market was a man or a woman. At times, at night, I had trouble reading the large signs over the freeway. Many of those reading these lines know that in 1995 I had a major surgery. The neurosurgeon went in through the roof of my mouth to cut away a bone that was compressing my spinal cord at the base of the brain stem. When I came out of that surgery my eyesight was about eighty percent better! I questioned my neurosurgeon about this, and also asked an optometrist about it. They both said that they knew of absolutely nothing related to my surgery that could in any way affect my eyesight. God had done a strange and wonderful work and it improved my vision. But it wasn't whole yet.

A few years later I was riding with my son-in-law, coming home from Carlsbad Caverns in New Mexico. Just at dusk in the evening a deer presented itself in the road. Neither of us saw it, but we hit that deer at seventy miles per hour. The only injury I received was from the air bag which struck me in the eye at 200 miles per hour! Immediately, in my right eye, which was the weak eye, I could not see anything — just a blur. I wound up in the emergency room here in El Paso where they examined me and told me that what I had was severe corneal abrasion. In time it would heal. Through a process over weeks and months, when the healing was complete, I had perfect vision! I told my family and the brethren, "I guess the Lord knew I

needed a corneal adjustment — so He set it up!" God is an expert at setting things up! Isn't it wonderful!

Following this, one day the word of the Lord came to me out of my parabolic experience and the word was this: "Just as I have sovereignly adjusted your physical vision, so am I adjusting the spiritual vision of my elect!" Ah, yes, God is correcting our vision! God is enhancing our vision! The Lord is bringing us to the place of His divine perspective to see as God sees, to understand as God understands, to know as God knows! He is bringing forth in our lives a Divine Perspective to see all things according to the mind of Christ and according to the heart of the Father! When we truly see with the eyes of God, by the spirit of wisdom and revelation, that, my beloved, is the spiritual reality within ourselves of the URIM AND THE THUMMIM! Only the overcomer can receive this measure of the wisdom and knowledge of the Lord!

The white stone carries us back all the way to the mists of the lovely garden of Eden. The scripture tells us that the Pishon river, originating in Eden, flowed "around the whole land of havilah, where there is gold. And the gold of that land is good; the bdellium and the onyx stone are there" (Gen. 2:11-12). The garden of Eden is a type of the kingdom of heaven on earth, ruled by sons of God in the image of God, and here the Holy Spirit connects the garden of Eden with precious stones, symbolizing rich, beautiful, and wonderful spiritual realities of the kingdom realm of God.

In another place the Holy Spirit testifies of the precious stones in the land of Eden, when He speaks to the fallen Adam, saying, "You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering: the ruby, the topaz, and the diamond; the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper; the lapis lazuli, the turquoise, and the emerald; and the gold..." (Eze. 28:13). The symbolical picture given here is of a land fairly littered with sparkling gems of all sorts, as we read in the next verse, "You walked in the midst of the stones of fire" — that is, in the midst of the blinding brilliance of precious gems! Adam walked in a state of God's abundance! Fellowship with God in Eden meant living in the atmosphere of spiritual wealth, glory, and beauty! All the riches of God's mind, nature, wisdom, and power scintillated in Adam's spirit!

In our text in the book of Revelation the white stone is mentioned in connection with the hidden manna. Both are given together to the overcomer! In itself, manna was a reminder of Eden: for even while God's people were in the wilderness on their way to the promised land of abundance and fullness, the Lord rained down manna from heaven and their food was plentiful, delicious, and easy to obtain — as, of course, it had been in the Garden. But, there is a deeper truth yet! Just in case any might fail to get the connection, the Holy Spirit recorded that the manna was the color of bdellium (Num. 11:7) — the only occurrence of that word apart from its original mention in the book of Genesis! And this plainly tells us the color of bdellium, since we are told elsewhere (Ex. 16:31) that manna was white! Both manna and bdellium were white! "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone." The overcomer is given immortal life, but he no longer contains that life in an earthen vessel with a carnal nature, as we have all experienced up till now. Oh, no! For the overcomer is also given, along with the immortal life of the hidden manna, flawless purity, even the beauty of holiness, by the scintillating radiance of the divine and heavenly nature. That, my beloved, is the full return to Eden. Oh, the mystery of it!

To whom is the white stone with the new name given? To him that overcomes! When is it given? When he overcomes! Does God then not know what a believer is going to become? Is He waiting to see what we shall become before He entrusts us with hidden manna, a white stone, and a new name? As surely as He sees the mighty oak which He put there lying in the

heart of the acorn, so does He see the manifest sons of God lying within the seed of Christ! Why then does He wait until the man has become by overcoming before He settles what his name (nature) shall be? He does not wait — He knows from the beginning. But it is only when the new nature of Christ has grown up, become victorious, and solidified within him as stone, that the new name has truly become within. When the man has become his name or nature that God ordains for him, then he understands what the name signifies and it has become as solid and enduring as stone within him!

In the 17th century, scientists came to understand gems as "rare and noble productions of nature." They are distilled from duller rocks by processes that often involve the play of fierce heat and pressure deep within the earth's crust. And they derive their loveliness from a variety of prosaic sources. For example, precious ruby and the common abrasive emery consist of the same basic mineral, corundum; the difference between them is accounted for by the presence of minute traces of other substances. Diamond is chemically identical to graphite; only a different crystalline structure gives diamond the hardness, clarity, and flash for which it is so highly esteemed.

As diamonds and other precious stones pass through long seasons of intense heat and cold and pressure in nature's laboratory before they reach their perfection of beauty, so must every member of God's elect pass through pain and suffering before we can be perfected. And though chemists can make diamonds and other precious stones artificially, yet when we apply careful tests to them we see their defects. That's why a zircon, though it superficially resembles a diamond, has very little value when compared with a genuine diamond! So we cannot reach in a single day, or without the heat and cold and pressure, such perfection that we will have no defects in us, but by continually living in the presence of our Father, and subject to the deep dealings of God in our lives through the crucible of experience, we will become perfect even as He is perfect!

Let us, therefore, meditate upon the precious stones of earth and see by the Spirit the analogy that the Lord draws between them and His elect people who become His crown of authority, His diadem. Let us notice some common characteristics of precious stones and see how beautifully they illustrate the spiritual characteristics inworked in the lives of God's sons. Jewels are rare, precious, pure, brilliant, beautiful, and valuable!

First, jewels are rare. Think about it — if you went out in search of precious stones how long and painstakingly must you search before one is found? The majority of stones are common and therefore of very little value. Lorain and I enjoy hiking and camping in the mountains of the southwest, and it is impressive to explore the high and numberless mountains of solid stone. And yet, it is awesome to think that the stone revealed through upturned mountains is slight in comparison to the vast quantity of stone buried deep beneath the surface! Our son, Andy, was for many years a rock hound. He could tell you that the occasional precious piece is rare indeed! And is this not an appropriate illustration of the rarity of finding a mature son of God among the hundreds of millions of professed believers in the world? Rare indeed is a saint who has seen the vision of God's truth and is yielding himself to the dealings of the Father to be a son indeed! No wonder Jesus said to His small group of footstep followers, "Fear not, little flock; it is the Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

Then, too, jewels are precious. One could actually hold in his hands precious gems which would be worth more than half a billion dollars! Some jewels, because of their history, are virtually priceless. To illustrate the immense value of gems think of the Empire State Building in New York City. Thousands of skilled artisans worked for many, many months erecting this

architectural masterpiece towering over one hundred stories high. Incomprehensible amounts of steel, concrete, wood, and other materials were gathered from many quarters to go into its construction. At last this gleaming masterpiece was completed, a monument to man's ingenuity, at a cost of some twenty-eight million dollars. Yet — just one small handful of gems could be worth many, many times the value of this marvelously imposing structure! Of such value are God's elect in His eyes! For you see, the powers and processes that go into making a priceless gem exceed by millions of times the work and powers that were involved in the construction of the Empire State Building. This speaks to us of the great value of the dealings, pressures, tribulations, processings, quickenings, blessings, and workings of God in the lives of His called and chosen people! Is this not what Paul meant when he wrote, "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us!" (Rom. 8:18). Those radiating His glory, as the result of all His deep and powerful processings, are His precious ones! That is why the trial of our faith is declared to be more precious than fine gold!

The best jewels are pure. Geologists tell us that precious stones were once part of the surrounding elements in which they are found. Through the ages earth movement, pressure, and heat began a separating work, and finally that which was once mixed and impure became crystal, free from alloy, and that which was commonplace became a jewel! How often does the call of a son parallel this process! The intense heat and pressure of our trials and tribulations, and Father's crushings and provings, separate out of our lives the flinty disposition of self-will and the clay of carnality and instability. We know that the diamond was once carbon, black and soft in comparison to the clarity and hardness of the final product. In the depths of the earth, lumps of carbon are subjected to intense heat and terrific pressure, and a miracle is performed! That which was black becomes crystalline clear, and the hardest substance known to man. What a lesson! Truly the power of God can take that which is weak and black and worthless and transform it into the very image and likeness of God! Oh, the wonder of it!

All of nature in the material creation, as designed by the wisdom of our heavenly Father, is a precise natural picture of the spiritual workings of God in His new creation. Every one of God's jewels, His company of sons, is to become pure in the kingdom of the Father! The very first call of the one apprehended to sonship is to separate himself from the contaminating elements of the world in which he is found! "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and my daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (II Cor. 6:17-18).

Jewels are brilliant. How often the clear sparkle of a gem set in a ring or as an ornament of adornment catches our eye. We are fascinated by the delightful way facets reflect in varying hues the rays of light that fall upon them! The various hues represent different aspects of the divine nature such as love, goodness, grace, peace, faith, strength, wisdom, and power. All these are contained in the white light which He is! We are called to radiate the multi-faceted glory of God! Paul speaks of the "manifold wisdom" of God. Manifold means "many-splendored" or "many-faceted." Every part of God's glory is many-faceted, meaning that all are revealed in the lives of God's chosen people just as light is reflected by a diamond. This can be done only by a people processed as a priceless gem! Common stones radiate nothing of His many-faceted glory! Only to a processed, pure, gem-like, people is the word of the Lord sent, declaring, "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee...His glory shall be seen upon thee. And the nations shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising" (Isa. 60:1-3).

Jewels are also beautiful! The clear, icy sparkle of the diamond, the warm glowing red of the ruby, the cool green of the emerald, the regal purple of the amethyst, the heavenly blue of the sapphire, the warm glow of pearls, each strikingly different from other gems, yet all reflecting the light in glorious hues, none detracting from the other, but all enhancing the beauty of the whole. So are the sons of God! Our Father is clothing us with the beauty of holiness, which is the emanation of the glory of His light of life!

Our Lord's parable of the prodigal son is the portrait of the life of every son of God. The preachers generally apply the story of the prodigal son to sinful humanity who have left Father's house for the far country of sin and shame, and I have taught it that way myself. While there may be an application on that level, it is my conviction that the true interpretation of the parable is found on a much higher plane than that. You see, my beloved, there are three separate parables about lost objects in the fifteenth chapter of Luke! The first is about a lost sheep. The sheep became lost because it wandered away from the shepherd. Jesus said that He was Himself the good shepherd who would give His life for the sheep! The story of the lost sheep illustrates the condition of all mankind, lowered into this gross material realm, who have then become lost in their own consciousness from the presence of the Lord who Himself led them here. That is the true parable of lost men!

The second parable is different. There are many truths in this story of which there is neither time nor space to mention in this writing. Briefly, it speaks of a woman having ten pieces of silver, and she lost one piece. She then lit a candle, swept the house, and sought in and under everything until she found it! The woman is the church! Many of the wonderful gifts and blessings and revelations given to the church in the early days, and through various revivals and movings of the spirit of God through the centuries, in turn became lost as men were not careful to continue to walk in the Spirit of God. The fact that the woman lit a candle reveals that spiritual darkness descended upon the church and in that darkness there was a loss of something valuable that was hers through redemption; for silver is a type of redemption.

The third parable is about a Father and his sons! Can you not see the mystery? There is progression in these stories, for the first is about lost men (sheep), the second is about lost blessings and benefits of redemption, and the third is about lost sons! Not lost sinners, mind you, but lost sons! How true it is that those whom the Father appointed to sonship at some point received of the Father that portion of our inheritance which pertained to us at that time. Just as the prodigal son asked his Father for that portion of his inheritance which belonged to him, so each of us sought God for His Spirit, for His gifts, for His blessings, for His word, for His anointing, for His ministry, for His life, for His power, for signs, wonders, and miracles, and much, much more! Did we not ask for these things? Did we not seek for a double portion, for His fullness, for all He would give us? And He poured His power out upon us!

Immediately we left the Father's house (submission to God alone) and went into the far country of the religious systems. Just as the prodigal did, we squandered our inheritance and devoured our Father's living with the religious harlots of man-made church systems. We used Father's inheritance to build up the systems of men, to promote the doctrines of men, to enjoy ourselves rather than doing Father's will, to gather men to ourselves, to make a name for ourselves, and to do every carnal-minded, man-centered, flesh-oriented religious work in the name of the Lord! The glory of God was dissipated into the fleshly programs and activities of spiritual riotous living! Thank God, at long last, in the pig-pen of spiritual depravity, eating the theological swine's food of a corrupt church system, we came to ourselves. It was then that a mighty revelation broke within our consciousness! "I will arise and go to my Father!" In

brokenness and repentance we arose and returned to Father's house and threw ourselves upon His mercy!

And now, thank God! He has fallen upon our neck, He has kissed us with the kiss of acceptance, He has killed the fatted calf of the meat of the word, He has put on our feet the shoes of a pure walk in the Spirit of God, He has clothed us with the robe of true righteousness, He has placed the signet ring of His own authority upon our finger, and, miracle of miracles, in coming home we have discovered a restored inheritance! Ah, we had squandered our inheritance, but now, out of the riches of Himself, all that was squandered is ours again, and much more beside, as though we had never left home! Isn't it wonderful!

The elder brother, who represents another side of our sonship, complained because all this favor was lavished upon one who had sinned so greatly and sunk so low. Then it is that the Father makes the most remarkable statement of the whole parable! He says, "Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine." But is it not also true that "all that the Father has" is the younger brother's? The shoes, the robe, the ring, all testify to a restored inheritance! This brings a change in perception. Before, the son had said, "Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me." That was because he was the younger son — he lacked maturity. That was the perception of limitation. And, before we went away into the far country, all that we had received was "by measure." One had a "gift" of this, and another had a "gift" of that, but now the Father proclaims, "ALL that is mine, is yours!" Today the Father is revealing to His sons that we are joint-heirs with Christ; we do not each receive a portion, but we all possess the whole! "All that the Father has is ours!" That is the word of the Father to His sons. God is bringing us out of our consciousness of limitation, into the fullness of sonship! All the Father has belongs to the elder son, and all that the Father has belongs to the younger son. The one who stayed with the Father in unswerving obedience gets it all, and the one who went away and squandered his substance in riotous living gets it all! We are joint-heirs! Oh, the wonder of it! And that is the mystery of the prodigal son.

Jesus constantly affirms that all the glory that belongs to the Father belongs to the Son too. "And now, O Father, glorify Thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was." All the Father does, the Son does too. All the Father speaks, the Son speaks too. There is no separation between the Father and the Son! "The Father and I are one." "If you have seen me, you have seen the Father." There is no division of work! "The Father loves the Son and has committed all things into His hands." There is no competition! "I have made known to you everything I have learned from my Father." There is perfect unity between the Father and Son! "The Son can do nothing of Himself, He can do only what He sees the Father doing." And this is all true of the joint-heirs! What a destiny belongs to the sons of God!

I once heard the story of a poor and illiterate widow woman who lived far out in the country. She had only one son who was grown and had gone away to a far away city. There her son went into business and made good. Back home, this poor woman barely eked out a subsistence, planting a meager garden and taking in washing from her neighbors, scrubbing the clothes by hand on an old rub-board. The house she lived in continued to deteriorate; windows broken, roof leaking, steps falling down. Her clothes were faded and patched, her diet improper and monotonous. Each month the poor woman received an envelope in the mail from her son. These envelopes always contained pretty little pieces of colored paper. Being unable to read and understand what these little pieces of paper said, she always pasted them up on the wall of her bedroom to remind her of her son. After some years she died, and when the neighbors came into her house at that time they discovered this large number of money orders

made out to her by her son — all glued neatly to her bedroom wall! If only she had known what was hers she would have lacked nothing through all those years!

How we need to know what is ours as the sons of our Father! In Romans, chapter eight, Paul says, "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not **with Him** freely **GIVE US ALL THINGS**? The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God: and if children, then **HEIRS**; heirs of God and **joint heirs with Christ**; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also **GLORIFIED TOGETHER.**"

Oh, to be able to grasp the greatness of our calling! We have been born again of the very life of God! When we have matured and God has brought us experientially to the full potential of His life in us, there will be nothing impossible to us. We will even have creative powers. We will be creators! Can your faith go this far? If we are born of God we are born of the life of the Creator. This is the sonship life that Jesus lived and demonstrated! Twice out of a few rolls of bread and a couple fish, He created enough food to feed five thousand people, and He said we would do the same works He did, and even greater! I want to know the life of this God! I want to know experientially the power He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead. I want to know and experience all His holiness, love, power, and goodness. To this end I seek to completely surrender to Him and I am asking Him for grace to be able to do this.

THE NEW NAME

"To him that overcometh will I give a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it" (Rev. 2:17).

A new name in its spiritual meaning indicates a new nature. All spiritual people understand this great principle and I think we are now beginning to see into the heart of this great conception. Our earthly life is a divinely ordained process in which there is a great end to be gained, something to be vanquished, and a spiritual goal to be striven for and won. The prize of attainment is beyond the power of human wisdom to describe, yet it is more positive and real than any possession that is merely of this world. We cannot know in the fullest sense of the word what it is until it fully becomes ours, and then nothing can rob us of it in time or eternity; it is the open secret of all existence; it is to become like our Lord!

This new name is one which "no man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it." Oh, the mystery of it! That is to say that each overcomer has his unique, peculiar, distinctive relationship to God. He is to God a peculiar being, made after His own fashion, and that of no one else. For when he is perfected he shall receive the new name that no one else can understand!

Let me illustrate. In the world today we have more than six billion people. Every one of those people is an extension, projection, and reproduction as human beings of the first man, Adam. In other words, we are all human beings so far as our natural existence upon this earth. We are known as "men" or "humanity." And we are simply reproductions of that first man! We speak of ourselves as individuals. Someone says, "I am an individual." By that he means that he is separate from everyone else. We think, "I'm not like other people. I'm me. I'm something different. I'm special. I'm unique. I'm an individual." The English word "individual," however, comes from the Latin word *individuus* meaning indivisible or not divisible. It's not that which is separate — it's that which cannot be separated! It means that if I am an individual I am not separate from the rest of humanity. I am simply a unique expression of everything humanity is! It's not separation from; it's identification with! In like manner every one of us, on the spiritual

plane, is an individual — a unique expression of the word, of the spirit, of the mind, of the substance, of the totality of the being of our heavenly Father!

We all have fingerprints. It's interesting that not two fingerprints in the whole world are identical. You can't tell that by just casually looking at them. There are six billion people in the world — sixty billion fingerprints — and no two of them are alike! Yet every one of them is so similar. A fingerprint is a fingerprint. Yet each one is a unique expression of what a fingerprint is. A fingerprint represents an identity. In the case of a crime, often just a fingerprint is enough to convict a person of the crime. Each one reveals a unique identity. In other words, it's the same thing manifested in a different way! That's all any of us are in the natural, outer, physical body. We are each a unique expression of the totality of all that Adam is! We're not each a fragment of Adam, but a unique expression of HIMSELF! Spiritually, each son of God is a unique expression of the substance and glory of our heavenly Father. We're not individual sons in any kind of separation! We're just a unique expression of everything He is!

Another picture of this is the human body. Each of us began our physical existence as a single cell — one little microscopic, invisible cell. That cell divided and became two cells. The two divided and became four cells. By the time you reach the stage of an adult, they tell us we have approximately sixty trillion cells in our body! Now those cells take different forms. There are cells of our hair. There are cells of our skin. There are cells of our eyes. There are cells of our blood. There are cells of our internal organs — every part of our body is made up of these cells. Yet, all sixty trillion of these cells came from that one original cell! And the fact is that within each one of those sixty trillion cells is the DNA to reproduce a carbon copy of everything you are.

In past months and years we have seen sheep and cats and other animals that were cloned. That cute little kitten I once saw that was a clone was made from just one cell of the cat it was derived from. I don't know how many cells a cat has. But however many cells a cat has, that is, theoretically, how many kittens could be reproduced out of the one cat! Can you see the mystery? Each cell does not contain a fragment of the person — within the cell is the totality of the person! Each of us is like sixty trillion complete human beings just like ourselves! What this means is that there are sixty trillion ways of saying the same thing!

A brother told me once that he asked the Lord, "What am I in the body of Christ?" And he said the Lord responded, "You are a flake of dandruff — and you irritate!" Well, if he was a mere flake of dandruff, there were thousands of carbon copies of himself within that flake of dandruff! Isn't that a wonder? We think of individual members of the body of Christ as fragments of the Christ. Not so! Someone says, "I'm nobody. I'm just a wee little insignificant member of the body of Christ." And yet within you is the potential to reproduce the fullness of what Christ is! Manifest sons of God will not be a corporate company or collection of fragments of Christ as many have imagined. Each manifest son of God will be the full reproduction of THE SON in all the plenitude of His mind, nature, glory, and power — in a unique expression of that sonship fullness! We are not a part of the whole — we are each the whole stated a different way. Isn't it wonderful!

It means just this. You can worship God as no other man or woman can worship God! You can see God like no other man or woman can see God! You can understand God in a way no other man or woman can understand God! You can experience God as no other man or woman can experience God! You can know God like no other man or woman can know God! And above all — you can express God in a way none other can express Him! That does not

mean that other of God's elect can know or express God more than you, or less than you, or better than you — but none other can know and express God **as** you!

With every man God has a secret — the secret of the new name. In every man there is a loneliness, an inner chamber of the unique reality of life into which only God can enter. And there is likewise a sanctuary in God Himself which none can enter but the one, out of which sanctuary that man brings revelation and life and light and love for creation. That is that for which he was made — to reveal the secret things of the Father.

No one knows what the white stone contains except the one who receives it. God calls out His elect for Himself. Each is a unique expression of His fullness. There need be no anxiety about whether we are like any of our brethren — it is enough that God has made us what He wants us to be. Is that not enough? Yet each of us will manifest Him fully, in a different way! Aren't you glad! However small or insignificant we may appear in our own eyes or to others, as long as we are overcoming in that place Father has assigned us, and are growing up into Christ in our inner son, we are receiving of that new name which no man knows but we ourselves. We feel the sacredness and awe of our brother's holy and secret walk with the Father.. Yet we are one with him in the mystery of it.

Chapter 46

The Church In Thyatira

"And by the angel of the church in *Thyatira* write..." (Rev. 2:18).

The church in Thyatira has a longer message delivered to it from Jesus Christ than any of the seven churches, although it is interesting to note that the church there is the smallest of the seven, and the city of Thyatira is the smallest of the seven cities. Thyatira was a small city, but it was the gateway into the larger metropolis of Pergamos, the capital of Asia. Thyatira was located on a trade route that led right in to Pergamos. Much of the traffic that came into Pergamos from that direction had to pass through Thyatira. Thus Thyatira was a city people went *through*, not *to*. El Paso is such a city today; not very many people come to El Paso, but millions of people pass through the city on their way to Houston, Dallas, Los Angeles, Mexico, or other points of importance.

Thyatira means "sweet perfume of sacrifice" and when you study this word it speaks of a perfume that sends forth its fragrance as the result of bruising, crushing, or breaking. As we study the message to the church in Thyatira we see that the primary emphasis is upon the Jezebel spirit in that church and the "great tribulation" into which the Lord will cast her in order to judge, break, and purify her. By this we can understand the great purpose of tribulation or pressure — to cause the bruising by which the flesh is weakened and the fragrance of the Lord is sent forth out of our lives!

Most of the ingredients in the holy anointing oil with which the priesthood of Israel was anointed were made fragrant through the process of bruising and crushing. Once the spices were gathered, only as they were pierced and crushed did their fragrance go forth. It is not easy to yield to the crushing and bruising! This truly is as bitter as myrrh, though it yields fragrance in the peaceable fruit of righteousness. The elect of God have been passing through a time of purification; we have been being beaten and pressed. But it is needful for us, for there is no other route to the anointing of sonship! How we need the pressures, the trials, and the testings! Oh, we must have the dealing hand of God!

Under pressure and bruising we turn to the Lord in a deeper, more intense way, and the Spirit moves mightily on our behalf to guide, comfort, encourage, teach, chasten, correct, counsel, instruct, develop, strengthen, and perfect. In all this the Spirit operates and we are enlightened; we learn the necessary lessons of the ways and purposes of the Lord. Under this enlightening, we receive the ability to express something which issues out of Christ as the sweet incense unto God. There comes the expression of His grace, holiness, glory, and power in our walk. Then not only are we blessed, but the heart of the Father is satisfied, and creation will be touched by the fragrance of His life. THIS IS SONSHIP ANOINTING! It is not an emotional experience received at an altar; it is the power of the Father's nature revealed through a transformed life!

There is a great and magnificent future ahead for the sons of God, and a great work our Father has for us to do in the age and the ages to come, and He is preparing us and making us ready

for the high and holy place He has for us. Can we not see that all the opposing, crushing, breaking, and trying experiences we go through are working together for our good — to develop the strength, character, wisdom, and power we must possess as sons of God? Through the valley of death into the realm of life and victory is God's way to sonship, and the secret to "glorying in tribulation" is to *understand* the great purpose of trial and the glorious end of tribulation. Through much tribulation we *enter the kingdom of God!* Beautiful anointing! The time will come when the sweet fragrance of Christ will be everywhere in the reconciled universe. Nothing of self left, no stench of flesh, no blight of sin, no pain of death. Everyone and everything in the universe of bliss will come under the anointing of His life. What pleasure for God! What peace and love and unity throughout the whole vast scene pervaded by the perfume of the holy anointing!

Are we willing to go through the piercing and crushing process in order to gather a precious cargo of heavenly fragrance and incense? Are our hearts crying out for a deeper revelation of the Son of God, and for it to be operative in our lives? Do not look for the answer in the outpouring of blessings and miracles and prosperity most believers seek, but at the foot of the cross, outside the camp. Look for heaven's perfumes in a wilderness place that no one sees nor understands, excepting Jesus who gathered the first cargo of spices to the glory of the Father. This is the revelation of the church in Thyatira!

JEZEBEL

"These things saith the Son of God, who hath His eyes like unto a flame of fire, and His feet are like fine brass; I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first. Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that *woman Jezebel*, which *calleth herself a prophetess*, to *teach* and to *seduce* my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols" (Rev. 2:18-20).

There is one name in the Bible that no parents would think to give to their daughter, and that name is Jezebel. The name Jezebel sweeps across the pages of the Bible. The *typical* Jezebel of the Old Testament was the daughter of Ethbaal, king of Tyre and Sidon. The name Ethbaal means "with Baal." Prior to becoming king, Ethbaal was a priest to the goddess Astarte, also known as Ashtoreth or Ishtar. This was the goddess of sensual love and sex. From her childhood Jezebel was steeped in false religion and government. Jezebel grew up in an atmosphere of position, power, and prestige. She drank deeply of all the arts of political cunning and intrigue.

The name Jezebel means "Baal exulted," and also indicates one who is "unchaste and unhusbanded." In other words it denotes one who is lewd, sexually impure, and defiled. Jezebel's name not only reveals her character, but is also a prophecy of her life! She was so infamous for her wicked wantonness, immorality, and treachery, that lewd women down through the centuries have been dubbed "Jezebel". These women always display the spirit of Jezebel!

Jezebel married Ahab, the king of Israel. As queen of Israel, she immediately set up the altars, shrines, and temples of her false gods, and began to require the people of Israel to worship these gods. The Bible tells us that she also practiced witchcraft and that at one time Jezebel had four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and four hundred prophets of the grove who "ate at her table" (I Kings 18:19), which undoubtedly means that she supported and influenced every one of these false prophets. Baal was the god of agriculture. Baal represents the god of plenty

and increase. The goddess of the grove was Astarte, the goddess of all sensual love and sex. Temple prostitutes, sexual orgies, and all manner of uncleanness were part of the ritual of her worship.

Jezebel used her seductive and manipulative ways to control king Ahab. Ahab became a puppet in the hands of Jezebel, as do all those who refuse to deal with the spirit of Jezebel. Ahab followed her every whim to keep peace in his kingdom. It is written of him, "And he reared up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria. And Ahab made a grove; and Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him" (I Kings 16:32-33).

The great prophet Elijah came on the scene during the reign of Ahab and Jezebel. Elijah's first recorded act as the prophet of Yahweh was to inform king Ahab that it would not rain until he (Elijah) said so. After this pronouncement Elijah fled, for he knew queen Jezebel would seek to take his life. Everywhere the brooks ceased to flow, the springs became dry, the ground was parched, and the fields gave no harvest. There was no grass for the cattle and the flocks, and there was scarcely any food for the people. After three and a half years of this terrible drought, Elijah returned at the word of the Lord. Elijah met with king Ahab and told him to gather the people of Israel unto mount Carmel. We all know the story of what followed!

Ahab did as Elijah commanded and brought all the people to mount Carmel, which stands by the Mediterranean sea. And Elijah stood before all the multitude, and he said to them, "How long will you go halting and vacillating back and forth between two sides, not choosing either? If Yahwey is God, follow Him; but if Baal is God, then follow him." And the people had not a word to say. Then Elijah spoke again and said, "I am alone, the only prophet of Yahweh here today; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men. Now, let the people give us two young oxen, one for Baal's prophets, and one for me. Let the prophets of Baal take one young ox and cut it up and lay it on the altar on the wood. But let no fire be placed under it. And I will do the same; then you call on your god, and I will call on Yahweh. And the God who sends down fire upon His altar, He shall be the God of Israel."

The people answered and said, "What you have spoken is right. We will do as you say and we will see who is the true God." Then the two oxen were brought, and one was cut up in pieces and laid on the altar of Baal. The prophets of Baal stood around the altar and cried aloud, "O Baal, hear us!" But there was no answer, nor any voice. After a time the worshippers of Baal became desperate. They leaped and danced around the altar, and they cut themselves with swords and lances, until the blood gushed out upon them. And Elijah laughed at them, and mocked them, calling out, "Cry louder, for surely he is a god! Perhaps he is sitting still and meditating, or he has gone on a journey; or perhaps he is asleep and must be awakened!"

But it was all in vain! The middle of the afternoon came, and there was no answer. The altar stood with its offering, but no fire came upon it. Then Elijah said to all the people, "Come near to me." And they came near. He found an old altar to Yahweh that had been thrown down, and he took twelve stones, one for each of the twelve tribes, and piled them up to form the altar anew. Around the altar he dug a trench. Then he cut wood and laid it on the altar, and on the wood he placed the young ox, cut into pieces as a sacrifice. Then he said, "Fill four barrels with water, and pour it on the offering." He called them to do it again, and a third time, until the offering and the wood and the altar were soaked through and through, and the trench was filled with water.

Then in the sight of all the people Elijah drew near and stood all alone before the altar, and prayed in these words, "O Yahweh, The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that Thou art God in Israel, and that I am Thy servant, and that I have done all these things at Thy word. Hear me, O Lord, hear me; that this people may know that Thou, Yahweh, art God, and that Thou hast turned their hearts back again to Thyself." Then the fire fell from the Lord and burned up the offering and the wood and the stones and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when the people saw it, they fell on their faces, and they cried, "Yahweh, He is God! Yahweh, He is God!" And Elijah said to the people, "Seize the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape!"

They took them all, four hundred and fifty men; and by Elijah's command, they brought them down to the dry bed of the brook Kishon, at the foot of the mountain; and there Elijah had them put to death, because they had led Israel into sin. Then Elijah prayed with his face between his knees, for the Lord to send rain. In a little while the sky was covered with black clouds, and there came a great rain! Thus in one day a great victory was won for the Lord God, and the power of Baal was thrown down. But Jezebel was not through!

Eventually king Ahab was killed in a battle at Remoth-Gilead by the Syrians. For the next fourteen years Ahab's sons reigned successively upon the throne and Jezebel ruled Israel through her sons, just as she did through Ahab. Then God raised up a new king by the name of Jehu, whom the prophet Elisha anointed king of Israel. The Lord raised up the spiritual power and authority in Jehu to deal with the false spirit of Jezebel! Jehu brought judgment on the whole house of Ahab and at last went after Jezebel herself. When he found her he threw her down from her upstairs window, and the horses trod her underfoot. We will refer to more of the details of her overthrow in our next Study, but her blood ran in the street and the dogs came and ate her flesh and licked up her blood. She was so mangled they found nothing left but the skull, the feet, and the palms of her hands. Jehu destroyed Jezebel as God commanded him!

Thyatira is the fourth church, and in her we see the rise of the woman Jezebel. No such lady of that name is known except the wicked wife of Ahab, Israel's worst king. In the church at Thyatira we find that the **spirit of Jezebel** was alive and at work in the midst of the Lord's people! Some of the believers in the church in Thyatira were in the **Jezebel condition!**

A brother related, and I, too, remember in the days of my childhood, in the Pentecostal churches in south Alabama where I was raised, all it took for the Holy Ghost to speak was for a woman to come in with bobbed hair and with make-up and jewelry on, and it was automatic — the Holy Ghost was going to speak! "Yea, thus saith the Lord, There is one in the midst that has a Jezebel spirit!" Everybody would get all shook up because Jezebel was there. They would spend the whole night trying to get Jezebel in the altar, to get her saved and delivered from the "Jezebel spirit." But the Jezebel spirit was not a spirit of lipstick, rings, bracelets, and smart clothes — the Jezebel spirit was a *religious spirit*, a controlling and manipulative spirit that would not let God have His way.

The reign of the house of Ahab is typical of the reign of the flesh through carnal men all through the history of Israel and the church. Jezebel is typical of that internal feminine quality of the *soul* which works in union with the *flesh* and men who *walk after the flesh*. Jezebel represents the aggressive, seductive, lustful desire that influences people in a religious sense apart from the mind of the spirit. This soulical Jezebel is the instigator of all religious and spiritual perversions! She is the source of all error and carnal religious activities! The Lord Jesus said of Jezebel in the church at Thyatira, "which *calleth herself a prophetess, to teach*

and seduce my servants." Jezebel is the carnal and soulish "spirit" that prophesies and teaches in the church systems and seduces many to "commit fornication" with the world and with other false prophets of the church systems! Paul Mueller once commented about Jezebel, saying, "The worst thing about this prophetic witch of evil is that she is married or joined to those who think they are appointed to rule and reign with Christ, as Jezebel was married to wicked Ahab."

In the messages to the seven churches there are three primary individuals, teachings, or spirits that are revealed to us as standing among the Lord's people in opposition to the life of the spirit. The first is Nicolaitanism. The doctrine of the Nicolaitanes puts one man above another, a hierarchical system that makes some people "laity" and others "clergy" or "lords" rather than a family of sons under the Headship of Christ. All church systems of man still hold to this doctrine today with their hierarchy of ministers and offices. They conquer the people through the force of their seminary training, titles, prestige, charisma, rules, regulations, and authority, rather than *servicing* in humility out of the ministration of the Spirit. Then we have Balaamism. The error, way, and doctrine of Balaam goes beyond the Nicolaitanes, for Balaam taught Balak to cause Israel to stumble, to be turned away from the Lord, to be corrupted — and he did this in order to gain a reward of money, prestige, and power for himself! This is the corrupt "hireling" and "religious racketeer" system which has always been in the church, but has had a special heyday over the past sixty years in the person of big-name preachers and healers and televangelists!

Finally, in the church at Thyatira we meet the **Jezebel spirit**. The Lord starts with the outward form, men, often good and sincere men, who seek to control and dominate God's people. Then He moves to the Balaamites, those hireling ministries who bring the Lord's people into union with the flesh and world, corrupting the work of God in their lives. Oh, yes! God will bring us out of the various forms of Babylon. But ultimately He will bring every overcoming son of God to the *root* of the matter — getting the Babylon *out of us!* This is accomplished only through the *salvation of the soul*, the *renewing of our mind*, bringing transformation and union with the spirit. Israel is the type — God brought Israel out of Egypt in one miraculous night. But it took forty long years of dealing in the wilderness to **get the Egypt out of them** so they could rise up in faith and obedience, enter in, and possess their land! The same pattern appears in the book of Revelation in the seven steps of the overcomer! Only at the end — in the final step of overcoming — does the overcomer finally ascend to the throne of God! (Rev. 3:21).

Jezebel calls herself a prophetess, Jezebel teaches, and Jezebel seduces God's bondslaves to commit fornication and eat things offered unto idols. She seduces the *bondslaves!* Her attack is against the *seed of Christ within*, her assault is upon the *sons of God!* Remember, my beloved, the real things the overcomer must overcome are not the theater, the dance hall, and the bar — it's these *perverted, corrupted, fleshly, carnal, soulical and pseudo-spiritual conditions found in the seven churches!* To him that overcomes *these* are all the promises made!

Here is a group of God's people, full of good works and charity, having a form of faith and patience. But the eyes of the Lord Jesus appear among them, blazing with flames of fire. With all that is good and commendable, there is something very dangerous going on, something so seductive that Christ warns He will send judgment and make them an example to all the churches. Their good works, charity, service, faith, and patience were overshadowed by a seduction they were involved in, a seduction of a false spirit and teaching. They were under the spell of something false, a teaching that came disguised as the true word of the Lord but was in fact evil. It was the teaching and seduction of Jezebel!

Jezebel represents a realm more insidious than the Nicolaitanes and the Balaamites for it speaks of the *internal* realm of the *soul* — the very *root* of everything! She represents the mind that's sitting, not as a king, excuse me, but as queen, on our personalities. And we read about that queen further on in the book of Revelation! We read about her in the prophets of the Old Testament. Like the Jezebel of old, the Lord says of her in Revelation 18:7, "How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her: for she saith in her heart, I sit a *queen*...and shall see no sorrow." She glorifies her "self" and she sits as a "queen." This queen is the one that rules over millions of the Lord's people! This queen is one that every overcomer is called to overcome! This queen is Jezebel!

YOUR WOMAN JEZEBEL

"I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest *that woman Jezebel*...to teach." (Rev. 2:20).

While the King James Version calls Jezebel "that woman," translated directly from the Greek, the phrase would read, "Your *woman* Jezebel," or, "Your *wife* Jezebel." The term "your woman" and "your wife" have the same connotation in Greek. The Emphatic Diaglott shows the literal word for word (interlinear) rendering from the Greek as follows: "But I have against thee, because thou lettest alone *the wife of thee*, Jezebel, the one calling herself a prophetess, and she teaches and seduces the my bond-servants..." "Your woman" is your soul! Every one of us has a "woman" in us, just as psychologists tell us that every one of us has a "child" in us, and she wants to take the throne and rule. Soul wants to mingle with spirit, not in subjection to spirit, but as an independent, domineering, controlling woman, bringing duality and mixture.

On a day in the long ago an apostle by the name of Paul penned these telling words: "For I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent **beguiled Eve** through his subtilty, so **your minds (souls)** should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ" (II Cor. 11:2-3). In this significant passage Eve in the garden of Eden is contrasted with two things: the *bride of Christ* and the *mind or soul (psuche)*. The mind is a function of the soul. The vision of the bride of Christ pervades the whole of scripture, from Eden onward, with ever-increasing clearness. Eve, the mother of the human race, is the first type of this great mystery! Let us not underestimate this remarkable woman from whom the whole human race has sprung!

In that ancient shadow Adam stands as a type of the spirit, Eve is a type of the soul, and the garden of Eden is a type of the body, which Adam was to "dress and keep." Thus we see our tri-partite being symbolically portrayed in the Adam-Eve-Garden story. The Garden was the earth, the land, the habitation; and Adam and Eve were the inhabitants, in the same way that our spirit and soul are the inhabitants of the physical body. It is through our "Eve," our soulical mind, desires, will, and emotions, that we who have been espoused to Christ the bridegroom in our spirit, can be "beguiled" and turned from our single and pure devotion to Christ, entering instead into intimate associations with things of the earth realm, the flesh, the world, and the devil. When the soul-bride is turned from the spirit-husband to fornicate with the flesh and fleshly things, we become disqualified from being presented to Christ as a chaste virgin! Paul shows that just as Eve was beguiled from her singleness to Christ, so those espoused to Christ can be corrupted IN OUR MINDS from singleness to Christ.

I would now draw your reverent attention to a very significant point in the garden of Eden experience. The serpent can only speak to the woman! The serpent never spoke to Adam. The

serpent cannot tempt the spirit, for the spirit speaks of the pureness of Christ. Let me state that again. The serpent can only speak to the woman! It was Eve who was "beguiled" (II Cor. 11:2-3). It was Eve who was "deceived" and was "in the transgression" (I Tim. 2:14). Can you not see the mystery? The serpent cannot deceive the spiritual man! The serpent can only deceive that which is less than the spiritual man — that which comes out of a man — the woman, the soul. The spirit of a man cannot be deceived, that is why scripture declares that the woman was deceived. The serpent cannot be where the spirit dwells! There is war in heaven, and Michael and his angels, Christ and His many brethren, cast him out! The serpent can only speak to, prophesy to, teach and control those who settle for less than the spirit!

Thus, the woman, the soul, who hearkens unto the serpent, is deceived in all facets possible. The spiritual person is above the fray, but the woman is totally immersed into it. When the serpent spoke, the woman could have asked direction of the spirit, but she did not. The woman had not experienced God, was not conscious of God, did not know the life of God, as the man had. The woman needed to depend on the man, to consult with the man, to walk in union with the man, just as the soul needs to depend on the spirit! The woman, the soul, can hear two voices. It can hear the call of the spirit, but can also hear the call of the serpent. The woman, the soul, can rule over the flesh (Ahab), but cannot rule over the spirit (Elijah)! So the serpent seeks to make the soul, the woman, a *priestess* and a *queen* over the flesh through carnal religious doctrines and activities. The soulish person must have a kingdom even if it is not truly real. So the serpent deceives the woman with the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil — *religion!* That is the mystery.

When we can recognize what kind of person is soulish, it is not difficult to realize what kind of person is spiritual. Since a soulish person lives by the mind, emotion, will, and desire, a spiritual person is one who does not live by any of these! A spiritual person must live in the spirit, act by the spirit, speak out of the spirit and not the soul. He allows the spirit to be the master and source of all his action and behavior. The spirit in him occupies the preeminent position; it is the source of his behavior and the starting point of his action. The soul in this person is in the position of submission, under the government of the spirit, dominated by the spirit, and in loving union with the spirit. Thus he allows the spirit to be LORD in him! He allows the spirit to direct his whole being so that he becomes the expression of the spirit. Whenever he encounters a situation he does not consult his mind nor draw from his mind, desire, will, or emotion to deal with it; rather he draws from his spirit to comprehend and understand it, seeking first in the spirit for the Lord's wisdom and purpose in the matter. This is the spiritual man, living by the life of the spirit, and the soul is but a vehicle of expression for the spirit. Isn't it wonderful! It is the *one spirit*, our spirit joined to His Spirit, that ultimately is joined to the soul — receives the soul unto itself — the marriage of the Lamb within ourselves!

Jezebel, like Delilah in the book of Judges, was a harlot. The name Jezebel means "one without a husband" or "one that can't be touched." Jezebel is that soul that will not allow the Spirit of God in our spirit to touch her, or to be a husband unto her. She will not enter into union with the spirit! She spurns the purposes of God and rejects the living word of the Lord, and will stone literally or figuratively any prophet who would speak the word of the Lord. She has multitudes of lovers, she follows after men and man's way, man's methods, man's programs, man's promotions, and man's organizations; but she seeks no intimacy with the Christ of God, nor does she submit to the spirit's lordship.

Furthermore, Jezebel relates to the "strange woman" of the book of Proverbs, which speaks of a soul or a mind that is perverted and twisted and needs to change. Jezebel is your soul before it is transformed! Let me talk to you about an attitude. Let us explore that attitude, that mind-

set, that soulish condition in your life that would seduce you away from the headship of Christ. This seduction is carried out by Jezebel! Jezebel speaks of the soul-life and ever since Eve she is a woman who wants to do her own thing. She will not allow the spirit to touch her. She cannot enter into a mature relationship with the Christ within. She cannot be subject to One as her head. She cannot love and be faithful to one husband. She cannot walk only in the Spirit of God, for she is lusting after carnal, fleshly, man-centered, need-oriented, religious ways, involvements, and activities. She has roving eyes and a lustful, flirtatious, wild, rebellious nature. She wants blessings, chills, and thrills — a religious *good time* — not a marriage.

Let us look at this "strange woman." The wise man said, *"My son, keep my words...and live. Bind them upon thy fingers, write them upon the table of thine heart...that they may keep thee from the strange woman, from the stranger which flattereth with her words. For at the window of my house I looked through my casement, and beheld among the simple ones (spiritually ignorant), I discerned among the youths (immature ones), a young man void of understanding, passing through the street near her corner (church on every corner); and he went the way to her house (denomination). In the twilight, in the evening, in the dark of night (darkened fleshly understanding); and behold, there met him a woman (the untransformed soul) with the attire of an harlot, and subtil of heart. She is loud and stubborn; her feet abide not in her house: now is she without (seeking fleshly things), now in the streets, and lieth wait at every corner. So she caught him, and kissed him, and with an impudent face said unto him, I have peace offerings with me; this day have I paid my vows (I am very religious, I go to church, pray, pay tithes, and serve God in all kinds of programs and activities). Therefore came I forth to meet thee, diligently to seek thy face (to invite you to church, get you involved), and I have found thee. I have decked my bed with coverings of tapestry (creeds, doctrines), with carved works (images, programs, rituals, ceremonies), with fine linen of Egypt (self-righteousness, works). I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon (false anointing, soulish worship, emotional appeals). Come, let us take our fill of love(soulish emotional thrills and chills, blessings, excitement, good times, fun, play) until the morning: let us solace ourselves with loves"* (Prov. 7:1-18).

You will find in the book of Revelation that there is a true church and there is a false church. You will find in the book of Proverbs that there is a true church and there is a false church. In the book of Revelation they are called the bride of Christ and the whore. In the book of Proverbs the bride of Christ and the Jezebel spirit are presented under the figure of the virtuous woman and the strange woman. Proverbs chapter thirty-one gives you the characteristics of the virtuous woman, and Proverbs chapter seven gives you the essence of the strange woman. Here's how you can identify a soulish or false ministry. First of all they will flatter you! Then they will substitute emotion and religious fervor for the anointing to seduce you. The main way this harlot's anointing is seducing the church is by preachers going forth in an entertainment-based, man-centered, need-oriented thrust, keeping the Lord's people in constant need so that they can come back every week and deliver them. The constant "altar calls" in which the same people go down front time after time to be prayed for the same things, to dedicate, rededicate, and then re-rededicate again and again, to get all encouraged and blessed, to receive their weekly "fix" so they can make it through to the next meeting, is simply the young man *void of understanding* returning over and over to the harlot's house for his fill of loves!

A true ministry will grow you up unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of the Christ! A true ministry will bring you to know God for yourself, and work himself out of a job! A true ministry will not desire to rule you or dominate you! A true ministry will support you and serve you, not control you! A true ministry will give you the word of God by the Spirit and commit you

into the hands of the Father to learn by your own experience the ways and dealings of the Lord! A true ministry will encourage you to hear from God by the Spirit out of the anointing which abides *within you* through the Christ in you, your hope of glory!

It pains me to say it, but vast multitudes of the Lord's people today have been seduced by an imitation anointing. The land is filled with lying signs, wonders, miracles, and prophesying by those who will one day come before the Lord, saying, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name, and in Thy name have cast out devils, and in Thy name done many wonderful works?" Then will the Lord profess unto them, "I *never knew you*: depart from me, ye that work iniquity (lawlessness)" (Mat. 7:22-23). That's not a heaven or hell issue! The Lord is saying, "I never knew you as Lord, I never knew you in intimacy of fellowship and vital union. I never knew you as a man knows a woman. You did all those works, but *you* did those things in *my* name. You did things you wanted to do and you did it as by my authority and at my word — but *I had nothing to do with it!* I never *knew* you as Adam "knew" Eve when she conceived and brought forth a son! Nothing that you did **led to sonship!** Everything that you have done "in my name" that didn't originate out of union with me, will go up in smoke for all the world to see! Depart from me — there is a place for you, but you cannot share my throne — for you worked iniquity, lawlessness, *unauthorized activities!*" Can we not see by this that within these folks the *religious soul* is acting independent of the *spirit*. It is the spirit of Jezebel!

Now, dear saints of God, this brings us to an important thought. I must confess that I have often been distressed by the lack of *understanding* among the Lord's people. Somehow so many seem to *miss the point*. And nowhere is this more true than when we come to the harlot church systems of man! Let me make this point as clearly as I can. *The mother of harlots is not the Roman Catholic Church.* The *mother* of harlots is a lot closer home! The *mother* of harlots is still birthing her children! The *mother* of harlots is the soulish dimension of man's life that through her carnal sense-consciousness and human logic and reasoning births what *she believes* is pleasing to God, what *she feels* is the worship of God, what *she perceives* to be the work of God, and what *she determines* to be the way of God. The *mother* of harlots is our own soul — our very own *religious* mind, will, emotion, and desire! Where did the Roman Catholic Church, with all her false doctrines, pagan practices, and carnal rituals, come from? Did it not proceed right out of the soulish heart of man? You see, beloved, carnal church systems, creeds, rituals, ceremonies, and methods are not really birthed out of other carnal church systems at all — they are, one and all, birthed out of the *mother* of them all — the *soulish heart of man!*

God's people have been walking after the mother of harlots too long. We have been deceived by her prophecies, we have been misled by her teachings, we have been enticed by her attractiveness, we have been seduced by her wantonness, we have been betrayed by the spirit of Mystery Babylon right within the midst of us! We have walked by the direction of the soulish nature rather than by the leadership of the spirit. It is time for "our woman" to keep silence in the church! I do not hesitate to tell you that most of the men I have met in my life-time who were concerned about "women preachers" were themselves under the control of the loudest-mouthed woman of all — their own soul! They were so stuck in their soulish dead-letter-of-the-word understanding that they could never hear the spirit! But now we have the word of the Lord Jesus Himself — it is time for "our woman" to be brought under subjection! This is one of the vital *keys* to overcoming! It is time for the spirit to BE LORD in the house of God! When we reach the place where we willingly refuse to accept as spiritual that which thrills and chills and *seems right* to the soulish realm, where we willingly refuse to identify with that outer world that stimulates the soulish affections, casting ourselves upon Jesus Christ who

Himself *is* the truth, the light, the reality — then the spirit takes the throne of our life to reveal out of our innermost being the wisdom and the power of God.

This should help us see how it is that when the *soul speaks* — **Jezebel prophesies!** The soul is always prophesying! The soul is just bubbling over with all kinds of revelations out of the tree of knowledge! The soul wants to serve God just as Jezebel wanted to run the kingdom of Israel, but always in a manipulative, carnal, perverted way. The soul is assertive, aggressive, creative, articulate, seductive, controlling, and demanding. The soul will invent a thousand ways to serve God, none of which are sanctioned by the spirit, born of the spirit, or led by the spirit. Eve and Jezebel are both cut from the same cloth and instead of living by the tree of life they live by the tree of knowledge. The soul wants to serve God independent of the spirit and always quenches the spirit in favor of carnal means and methods. Furthermore, *self-knowledge*, *self-effort*, and *self-development* are major subjects in the Seminary of the Soul! The New Age mandate, "*Know thyself*," is a prophecy from Jezebel. The mandate, however, from the School of the Spirit is: "*Know the Lord!*" The **Lord** is *in our spirit*. Our **Self** is *in our soul!* That is why the firstborn Son of God said again and again, "Except a man deny himself, and come after Me, he cannot be my disciple." Again He proclaimed that we must hate our *self*.

In making the above statement, I am fully aware that such a thought runs contrary to what is being proclaimed in some circles of this kingdom word today. Some time ago I received a little article, part of which I quote: "I am experiencing a gradual, yet constant, awakening to Reality. I am experiencing my true identity. I am experiencing who I am. I am experiencing I am one; *there is no other*. I am experiencing being that which I am. I am experiencing all things coming to me from within — **from Me** — for there is **no other** — there is **no transfer**, for nothing is really coming. It is already here. I am experiencing *no need to seek anything; for I am that which I might be tempted to seek*. I am experiencing the truth that all that one experiences is within one's *consciousness* (mind, awareness, soul), **which I am.**"

Oh, yes! The work of God is within! Oh, yes! God is the Father of our spirits! And yes, the seed of God is within every man! But if all of the above article is true, then we have absolutely no need for the preaching of the Gospel, no need for Jesus Christ, no need for the body of Christ, no need for the word of God, no need to be filled with the Holy Spirit, no need to *seek* the Lord, or to *seek* the kingdom of God, no need for any moving of God on any level beyond our *Self*, for there is **no transfer, nothing coming, I am everything, there is no reality beyond ME!** My "consciousness" is ALL! That sounds very deep and very spiritual, but may I reverently suggest that it is, in fact, the seductive voice of the *Soul*, the deceiving claim of the *Self*, the bewitching call of the *Woman*, the false prophecy of that woman *Jezebel!* It is like the tree saying, "I am, and outside of me there is nothing. I don't need the sun, I have no need for the rain, and the soil is of no use to me. I am the only reality!" Ah, "he that is *joined to the Lord* is one spirit" — not he who discovers his own reality *apart from the Lord in his own self-consciousness!* If *my spirit* has not been quickened by *His Spirit* then I know nothing and will never amount to anything. If there is no God outside of me, no God above me, no God beyond me, no God before me — pray tell me just who created all things, who upholds all things, who fills all things, who was before all things! Do *you* uphold all things? If you and all other men in the world suddenly ceased to exist, would there then be no God anywhere? Would the universe spin out of control and self-destruct? Let me tell you something. There is no man on Mars, no man on Venus, no man on Jupiter, and no men throughout vast stretches of the endless vastnesses of the universe. If the God *in me* is the only reality anywhere, then there is no God on Mars, there was no God who was there directing and creating when Mars was formed, there was no God who established the laws of the universe, and the whole Bible story

of God's dealings with men, God's revelation to men, God's appearing to men, God's manifestations to men, God's pouring out His Spirit on men, God saving men, God reconciling men, God quickening men, God's *giving* to men is all a lie and irrelevant to anything! Watch out for *Jezebel*! Watch out for the *soul*! She will pass herself off for the SPIRIT!

The supreme mission of the prophet Elisha was to destroy that which had destroyed the anointing and work of God in the land of Israel. So Jehu (the king) went into Jezreel and the scripture says that when he arrived Jezebel got her face all painted, her hair tired, and looked out of the window high upon the wall. The painted face wasn't what made her Jezebel — she was Jezebel before she put the paint on and had already done great damage. But she had herself all made up this day because she heard that something was going to happen in town. The painting of the face has the meaning of painting the eyes. Painting the eyes has the meaning "to allure, to look more appealing." What Jezebel was actually doing was appearing at the window high upon the wall with the tawdry appearance of a harlot. She counted on Jehu being a *man*, and she thought she could *seduce* her way out of her problems. Jezebel tried all her alluring and deceptive ways to dissuade Jehu from his appointed task! King Jehu, whom Elisha had anointed, was on his way to get her! Jezebel hoped to flatter her way out of king Jehu's advance to take her captive or destroy her! She plotted to get into a high place, up on the wall of the city, into a high and elevated position in the church, as it were, where she could see all that was going on and manipulate and control and create a resistance to the thing the prophet of God had said he was going to accomplish. But Jehu was on a mission for Yahwey and wasn't having any of it!

Terry Crisp wrote once about the marks of harlotry: "In the natural, the spirit of harlotry was generally evidenced in a woman's countenance, and in her attire. It was easy to spot a prostitute by her appearance; by the way she excessively painted her face, and seductively dressed herself, the message she sought to convey was unmistakable. This is why the Lord admonished Israel to "clear her face of the marks of harlotry." He knew that as long as she adorned the countenance of an available woman, seeking to enhance her features in order to attract the attention of others than her husband, she would not be true to Him. No matter what she told Him, or how she tried to convince Him that she was doing it all for Him, the intents of her heart were obvious; the *image she projected* told the story! It was a manifest token that she was **not** committed to a monogamous relationship; and she was **not** ready to settle down and become **one** with Him. The underlying truth was that she sought *independence* from her Husband!"

Jezebel is the spirit of harlotry — mixture. Mixing the truth of God with the carnal philosophies of the world; mixing the revelation of Jesus Christ with pagan eastern religions or other strange voices; mixing the move of the Spirit of God with the promotions of man; mixing the work of God with the efforts of the flesh; mixing the light of Christ with the darkness of the carnal mind. It is the soul joined to anything — except the spirit!

Thyatira is the stronghold of Jezebel. It is the place of corrupt self-proclaimed ministry. They can't wait on God to develop something in them. They must be *saying* something and *doing* something *for* God! They will prostitute the life of God in them with anything which will be to their benefit. They care nothing about purity and will accept any mixture as long as they can profit by it. They receive their "life force" from more than one source. They seek out many lovers — join themselves to many causes, trying to receive life from each. Bigger crowds, bigger buildings, bigger television ministries, bigger, bigger, bigger — not *better*! Not more godly! Not more mature! Not after God's own heart! All the works of man are soulish; man's

works exist in this world for the sensual, for the sole purpose of gratifying the desires of the carnal souls of all mankind. Religious souliness is for the same purpose!

God has now called His elect to *overcome* the Jezebel spirit! Every son of God *has* overcome the spirit of Jezebel! Our spirit can only be satisfied by communion with our Father in the spirit! Our spirit must find its life from God, for He is the Father of our spirits! The carnal soul, on the other hand, rejoices at the sound of a man's voice, for the soul is fed and sustained by many voices of man. The soul is always playing the harlot, seeking many lovers other than the Lord *alone* in the spirit. The false prophetess, Jezebel, who becomes later in the book of Revelation the great whore which sitteth upon many waters, with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication, is the fleshly, carnal wisdom within all of us organized into a world religious empire.

The carnal mind is enmity against God; it is that which resists and is hostile to the Spirit of God, for it seeks not a husband to be lord over it, but rather uses its subtle and beguiling ways to be joined to her fleshly lovers. Thus, Jezebel, who is also the great whore, lies in the inmost recesses of our soul! It is the wisdom of the flesh. That is the mystery! Jezebel is the wisdom of the flesh in man, which proceeds out of the soul, which is the mother of all the religious abominations which are committed against the Lord. All outward religious creeds and activities not born of the Spirit of God are, as Joseph Salmon wrote, "but bastards of this strange woman, the brats of this great adulteress. And happy, yea, thrice blessed shall that Man be called, who shall take and dash these children of the great whore against the stones. This Man is Christ, who shall come in power and great glory in a Christian, and destroy, and dash in pieces the conceptions, bringings forth, and appearances of fleshly wisdom in us."

Joseph Salmon goes on to say, "Now see O Man! whether this whore be not your fleshly wisdom. Look into your soul, and behold and see, how opposite your fleshly wisdom is to anything that is good or goodness. What means those often resistings of the spirit in you, O Man! Do you not see how the whore deceives you? What conception, bringing forth, or appearance of God is there in you, but the wisdom of the flesh seeks to devour it (as the dragon the manchild), by violent attempts, and oppositions. This is what crucifies the Lamb afresh, and puts him to open shame. And all this is done by that bloody whore that harbors in your bosom.

"Now therefore know, O Christian! that this whore appears to you in all your spiritual performances, and sacrifices to the Lord. If you but observe, you shall see her appear in prayer, in humiliation, in fasting, nay, in all outward ordinances, you shall see your wisdom in all these things, steal your heart from the Lord, by attributing something to form, flesh and creature: so that **we are apt oftentimes to bless ourselves in our spiritual performances, and sing a requiem to ourselves in our fleshly forms**; so that hereby, all our duties are but the sacrifices of the whore, the vows of our fleshly wisdom which she appears in, to delude us.

"Now, woe and alas for us! that we should even be deceived by this whore, in those things wherein we think she appears least, herein is plainly seen her mystical apparition. **This whore meets you, O Man, in all your religious performances**; and there does she attribute all the goodness of all that is done, to her self. And you also gave consent to it, and to commit fornication with her. Now when the whore has thus estranged the heart from the Lord, then she propounds her own way to the creature; she will persuade the creature...to go and feed upon the husks. And here the soul commits adultery, in subsisting on the shadow, forsaking the Fountain, running to broken cisterns, and so commits a great evil against the Lord. And thus

poor naked man runs from God , as from an enemy, behind the trees...he will cover himself with the fig-leaves of his own fleshly wisdom, and so commits adultery with the mother of harlots" — end quote.

Chapter 47

The Church In Thyatira

continued

Thyatira is the fourth church, and in her we see the rise of the woman Jezebel. No such lady of that name is known except the wicked wife of Ahab, Israel's worst king. In the church at Thyatira we find that the **spirit of Jezebel** was alive and at work in the midst of the Lord's people! Some of the believers in the church at Thyatira were in the JEZEBEL CONDITION!

The reign of the house of Ahab is typical of the reign of the flesh through carnal men all through the history of Israel and the church. Jezebel is typical of that internal feminine quality of the *soul* which works in union with the *flesh* and men who *walk after the flesh*. Jezebel represents the aggressive, seductive, lustful desire that influences people in a religious sense apart from the mind of the spirit. This soulical Jezebel is the instigator of all religious and spiritual perversions! She is the source of all error and carnal religious activities! The Lord Jesus said of Jezebel in the church at Thyatira, "Which *calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce my servants.*" Jezebel is the carnal and soulish "spirit" or attitude that prophesies and teaches in the church systems of man and seduces many to "commit fornication" with the world and with other false prophets in the church systems! Paul Mueller once commented about Jezebel, saying, "The worst thing about this prophetic witch of evil is that she is married or joined to those who think they are appointed to rule and reign with Christ, as Jezebel was married to wicked Ahab."

Jezebel calls herself a prophetess (one with the word of the Lord), Jezebel teaches, and Jezebel seduces God's bondslaves to commit fornication and eat things offered unto idols. She seduces the *bondslaves!* Her attack is against the *seed of Christ within*, her assault is upon the *sons of God!* Remember, my beloved, the real things the overcomer must overcome are not the theater, the dance hall, and the bar — it's these *perverted, corrupted, fleshly, carnal, soulical, and pseudo-spiritual conditions found in the seven churches!* To him that overcomes *all these* are the promises made!

THE JUDGMENT OF JEZEBEL

"Behold, I will *cast her into a bed*, and them that commit adultery with her into *great tribulation*, except they repent of their deeds. And I will *kill her children with death*; and all the churches shall know that I am He which searcheth the reins and hearts..." (Rev. 2:22-23).

The kind of God we have revealed in the holy scriptures is a God of both mercy and judgment — the two sides of love. He is not a nebulous nonentity of sentimentalism. He is a God of character! We thank God today that He is a God of compassion, love, and mercy — and there would not be one of us alive today to breathe His fresh air if it were not for His amazing love toward us. But there is *a purpose in judgment*, and it is always a purpose of love. There is a deep, clear purpose in everything God does. And His love for us, deep and tender, is the fire

burning under that purpose. The character of God must be kept ever in mind. The leading trait of His character is expressed, not by the word "purity," nor "righteousness," nor "justice;" but by the word "love." Though if we knew the real meaning of love we would find it includes these others, and more. The purpose in judgment is two-fold. It is a purpose *toward sin*, to get rid of it. And God's attitude here is uncompromising! No exceptions are ever noted. And there is a purpose *toward men*. Now regarding the purpose toward men, it is *disciplinary*. The whole thought is to change the man! It is love working, love for the man. It is the same purpose as the *surgeon's*. He thrusts his keen-edged blade, not to hurt or destroy life, but to save it! He is driving hard against the disease. The knife that cuts and hurts is held steady by the kindly purpose in his heart.

We must learn this fact early: our Father loves us just as much when He is subjecting us to surgery, as when He sends His blessings and gifts and brings us into the sunshine of His glory. Precious friend of mine, He loves us most when He is dealing severely with us, "for whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth" (Heb. 12:6). "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit He taketh away; and every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth (prunes) it, that it may bring forth more fruit" (Jn. 15:1-2). Ah, the Father reaches into your life and mine and prunes away that which is not fruitbearing — and it hurts! But, as some Puritan divine said years ago, "The husbandman is never so close to the branch as when he is trimming it." The Father is never more close to you, my beloved, than when He is reaching in and taking out of your heart and life those things that hinder the development of HIS LIFE and the manifestation of HIS NATURE.

The Lord said of Jezebel, "I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not" (Rev. 2:21). Thank God! He gives us a space to repent! He sees into the depths of our being. He reveals what He sees to us. Like a parent correcting a child, He gives space to repent. He doesn't just slap us around! If we will not heed His warnings, then come His feet of brass that burn as a furnace! Can we not see? Do we yet understand? He casts her into a bed of trouble rather than pleasure, He throws all who fornicate with her into great tribulation, He kills her children. This is the judgment which comes. This is the judgment which will redeem Zion! This is the judgment which washes away the filth of the daughters of Zion and the blood of Jerusalem! This is a revelation of the Lord which starts at the house of God (I Pet. 4:17) and then flows out from that house to all creation! The sons are the firstfruits — every other man must at God's appointed time pass through the same dealings, the same revelation and purpose of the Father. When the process is completed God will be ALL IN ALL, everything to everybody, the indwelling and controlling factor of every life (I Cor. 15:28, Amplified).

You may remember the story of the man who was trying to get his mule into the barn. The man was tugging on the rope and pulling with all his might. He got behind the mule and pushed; he put his shoulder to its back but he could not budge the mule who just stood there, stiff-legged, and would not move. He could not get it into the barn! A fellow walked up and watched for quite a while. Finally, he said, "Mister, I'll get your mule into the barn for you if you like." The man stopped in astonishment and said, "Can you?" He said, "Of course, it is easy." The stranger walked over and picked up a two-by-four, came over to the mule, quietly lifted the two-by-four, and whacked him on top of the head, right between the eyes. The mule went a little cross-eyed! Then he hit him behind the ears. Before the mule could quite straighten up again, he struck him underneath the chin. With that he took hold of the rope and with two fingers led the mule into the barn! The owner stood there astonished. The fellow came out again and said, "You see, mister, actually this mule is a very cooperative critter. You just got to get his attention!"

Sometimes God has to GET OUR ATTENTION. And to do that He chooses to use events which are instruments of His judgment. God told Moses that the reason for His judgment upon the Egyptians was to make them know that He is God. Everything God does shows us something about who He is, but in this instance of judgment God particularly expressed that His intent was to show Himself to the Egyptians. And He was successful in this, for in chapter eight of Exodus Moses records the Egyptians telling Pharaoh, "This is the finger of God."

Taken to the isle of Patmos, John was made to see a "great multitude" of saints which no man could number, from every nation, kindred, people, and tongue, standing before the throne of God and before the Lamb. Each was clothed in a white robe and held a palm branch in his hand. The white robe speaks of purity; the palm branch denotes victory. Being made pure by the inwrought righteousness of Christ also brings victory over self! Asked by one of the elders, "Who are these, clothed in white robes, with palms in their hands, and whence have they come?" John answered, "Sir, you know." And the elder said to him, "These are they which have come out of GREAT TRIBULATION; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Each of these white-robed saints had to experience *great tribulation!*

Can we not see by this that these are the very people, nominal Christians, who had been followers of Jezebel, the false prophetess, the soulish religious works and worship which were not born of the Spirit of God. And the false soulical ministry of the church systems, which led them to commit spiritual fornication and to eat spiritual food that was defiled by idols — by false images and conceptions of God. Were we not all there at one time? Some of us repented when the Lord corrected us, and we have continued to repent as the Lord has revealed the deception within our hearts. Others of us have been dealt with by the judgments of the Lord in our lives, and then we repented! To Jezebel and her followers the Lord said, "Behold I will cast her into a bed (of trouble), and them that commit adultery with her into **great tribulation**, except they repent of their deeds."

It is significant to note that the term "great tribulation" appears only twice in the book of Revelation, and in neither case does it apply to the *nations* or to the *world!* Both times it has to do with the Lord's own people! The idea that the book of Revelation is about the "great tribulation" that has come, or is yet to come, upon the nations of earth is a *myth*, a *fable*, *folklore*, and a *fairy tale!* That is not what the Book says! The Lord Jesus said that He would cast the spiritual fornicators of the church age into *great tribulation* unless they *repented*. What do you suppose would be the purpose of the great tribulation? Why, bless your heart, it would be to influence and motivate them to *repent!* It would be God's two-by-four hitting them over the head to **get their attention!**

Then John sees a great multitude that has *come out of great tribulation*. A wonderful transformation has taken place in them through the process of the great tribulation. They have now "washed their robes" and have "made them white in the blood of the Lamb." They were already the Lord's people! This is not sinners coming to wash their robes from the filth of sin and the world they walked in before they were saved. No! These are the very people the Lord had said He would cast into great tribulation except they repented! These were believers *in the church of Thyatira!* Through this great tribulation they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood (life) of the Lamb. They have washed their robes from the defilement of their own *untransformed souls*, and from the *soulish defilement of religion and religious doctrines, activities, and systems!* As a result of the Father's chastisement by this great tribulation, God's purpose is accomplished in their lives. Cleansed and purified by the Lamb, they are transformed and brought very near to His throne of love, grace, and power!

Let us understand clearly just who these white-robed saints of God are! They are the redeemed of God who have washed their robes from the defilement of the false doctrines, empty rituals, lifeless ceremonies, fleshly methods, soulish worship, and carnal programs of the church systems of man. White robes in the book of Revelation denote "the righteous acts of the saints" (Rev. 19:8). It is the righteousness of Christ with which they are clothed, resulting in righteous, truly *spiritual acts* manifested out of their lives upon this earth. All of them have endured the strippings, purgings, prunings, threshings, refinings, and purifying dealings of God and have been thoroughly chastened and corrected by the Father!

This great multitude is seen coming out of the great tribulation clothed in the white robes of Christ's righteousness and waving palm branches of victory and praise to God! This great tribulation is not a seven-year tribulation here at the end of the church age. Not at all! It is the symbol of the Lord's chastisements upon His people throughout the age, upon all whom He has set His hand to purge and purify unto Himself. Many of these saints were in the great movements and revivals throughout the age when the Lord moved mightily by His Spirit to bring a people out of the existing errors and carnal systems of man, into a closer and purer walk with Him in the Spirit. The Lord led them through the processings of His Spirit, which made them pure and righteous in God's sight while they walked this earth in the midst of worldly sin and religious corruption.

These are the ones "coming out" of "the great tribulation" having their robes washed in the blood of the Lamb! How many are there? "*A great multitude that no man could number.*" It is the "great" tribulation because of the "great" multitude! No man can experience more than his own tribulation. This "great tribulation" has lasted throughout the two thousand years since Christ came and began to form His body in the earth. All through the age He has called out people after people, company after company, from the apostate church systems of their day, and now, praise His name, there is a great multitude that *no man can number!*

It should be obvious to every spiritual mind that the great multitude that no man can number is not the same company as the 144,000 sealed ones that *can be numbered*. Not that 144,000 is a literal number, but it is the number of *divine government* ascribed to a select called and chosen company who reign with Christ upon His throne. Both companies are described in the same chapter of the Revelation, chapter seven. But there is a difference! As the spirit of revelation and understanding floods our minds, we are left without question as to the meaning of all this. The difference can be seen in the *position* of the two companies. God's kings and priests are always referred to in relation to the *throne*. Jesus said that to the overcomer it is granted to sit with Him **in His throne**, even as He overcame and is set down with His Father in His throne (Rev. 3:21; 21:7). Then in chapter twelve the *manchild* is caught up to God and **to His throne** and rules the nations with a rod of iron (Rev. 12:5). Later, in chapter fourteen, the 144,000 stand with the Lamb (who is in the midst of the throne) **upon mount Zion**, again the figure of the throne, for king David ruled Israel from his throne on mount Zion (Rev. 14:1).

The "great multitude," however, is not "on" the throne — it is "before" the throne of God and the Lamb! Neither do they "rule" or "reign" over anything, but they "serve" God day and night in His temple, and He that sitteth **on the throne** shall dwell among them. They are a blessed company indeed! They are very near the throne, and dwell in the light of the throne, and in the presence of Him who sits upon the throne, and receive great and eternal and unspeakable blessings from the throne! They are the vast multitudes of the redeemed out of the age who have walked with God in a pure walk in the Spirit in the measure of light they had. And while they are a redeemed and sanctified and spiritual people, they are *not* the sons of God who reign with Christ upon His throne. They have not taken the spiritual steps that cause them to

fully grow, mature, and progress all the way into God to become kings and priests. They have not attained unto the measure of the stature of the *fullness* Christ. Yet, they are the Lord's own people, precious in His eyes! He who sits on the throne of the Lord — Christ and His many brethren — dwells among them; they live in the wonderful, rewarding, sustaining presence of the King of kings and the Lord of lords!

"Therefore they are *before* the throne of God, and *serve* Him day and night in His temple: and He that *sitteth on the throne* shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither shall they thirst any more; neither shall the sun (the illumination of the outer court) light on them, nor any heat (processing). For the Lamb which is *in the midst of the throne* shall *feed them*, and shall lead them unto living fountains of water (life in the Spirit): and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes" (Rev. 7:15-17).

No saint of God can **escape** the great tribulation! You will not be raptured out before it comes, for it is already here! It is not some horrible judgment of vindictive wrath and unrestrained vengeance poured out upon the nations, my friend; it is God's own process of discipline and purification for ALL WHOM HE IS REDEEMING AND TRANSFORMING INTO HIS IMAGE AND LIKENESS!

THE REINS AND HEARTS

By the work of this great tribulation and judgment Jezebel is *destroyed!* It is not the people involved who are destroyed, but the carnal soul in all its assertiveness and fleshly lewdness — the **spirit of Jezebel within!** How can we know this is a truly *inward* work, rather than the Lord dealing with people and movements in the outer world? We know this first by revelation of the Holy Spirit, but the truth we know is confirmed in these words: "And all the churches shall know that I am He which *searches the reins and hearts*" (Rev. 2:23). This refers to the inward life of our being — reins and hearts. That's where the work is, and when it is finished all the churches will know that God has searched, judged, and cleansed His people in the inward parts!

"Reins" is an old English word derived from the Latin *renes*, meaning "kidneys." "Renal failure" is the medical term today for kidney failure. Renal, of course, is the adjective form of the old English "reins" or the Latin *renes*. The kidneys are the organ which separates many of the toxins out of the blood to prevent the body from becoming poisoned. People who suffer kidney failure have to go on dialysis, a mechanical method of removing the toxins from the blood, which substitutes for the kidneys. The kidneys, in a spiritual sense, speak of that faculty which is able in our spiritual life to separate between flesh and spirit, between soul and spirit, between truth and error, between the precious and the vile. The kidneys are truly our faculty of DISCERNMENT! To lack spiritual discernment is to suffer *spiritual kidney failure!* Because the vile things of the soul, the flesh, and the spirit of error are not filtered out of our lives, our spiritual life becomes *poisoned or polluted*. The Lord, the Spirit, is the one who searches the reins and the hearts — He examines our discernment and the source of our life, to determine our true spiritual condition!

Our reins or spiritual kidneys give us the ability to discern and separate the good from the evil and the soulish from the spiritual. Jezebel and her followers were all suffering spiritual renal failure! They had no discernment by the spirit, so they were carried away by every wind of doctrine, soulish emotion, and carnal reasoning. Of all the virtues needed by God's called and chosen elect in this significant hour, methinks that discernment is among the serious. There are many people in this hour who talk about being overcomers, manifest sons of God, kings and priests after the order of Melchizedek, deliverers of creation. and many other wonderful

things, yet they themselves are unable to discern truth from error, the soulical from the spiritual, fleshly manifestations from divine operations of the Spirit of God, or kingdom-building preachers from a true son of God.

I am often appalled at the vast number of saints I find across the land who treasure the beautiful hope of sonship to God, while at the same time ignorantly devouring books published by occult publishing houses, authored by deceivers who deny the Lord who bought us, laced with pagan heresies of eastern philosophies, and many other weird beliefs out of the kingdom of darkness. There are many like that today who cannot **discern** truth from error! I care not how profuse your knowledge of the doctrines of sonship, reconciliation, and the kingdom of God; if you are lacking in keen spiritual discernment you are still disqualified from the high calling of manifest sonship. You suffer from renal failure and stand in need of a mighty healing! God provides no spiritual dialysis!

There is placed within every true son of God that inward sensitivity to spiritual realities. We are made conscious, by this spiritual sensitivity, to the spiritual atmosphere about us in our own walk with God, in those we meet, and any gatherings we may attend. Perhaps the most important function of our reins has to do with our personal contact with God in the spirit! In this we are made aware of the presence and life of God and convictions are given to us concerning His word, His will, and His ways. So little are we taught about this and so little do we understand, that often we disregard that "still small voice" within. It is soon quenched and the spirit is grieved, and this inner sensitivity is lost. If it is lost, we need to repent and earnestly seek the Lord that there may be a restoration of that which was lost!

By this inner function of the reins we are told of the spiritual quality of a ministry, of prophecy, preaching, teaching, testimony, prayer, and worship. By this same operation of the reins within one is made aware of the motives in ministry. Among the things that are sensed are love, truth, humility, righteousness, gentleness, sincerity, genuineness, and dependence on God. On the negative side we may sense pride, error, self-esteem, deceitfulness, impurity, envy, strife, carnality, or a kingdom-building spirit. This inner spiritual sense is DISCERNMENT! It is a "knowing" not derived from the physical senses, information, observation, soulical intuition, or suspicion. Some have called it "inner witness," others have called it "inner light," but it is a quickened ability in the powers of the new creation man which flows out of the mind of Christ enabling one to perceive the spiritual states and motives of men, teachings, manifestations, and spirits, though to the natural man this knowledge may be hidden.

I have found that even among good men there is a tendency to mistake one's natural perception and soulical intuition and cognition for that of the spirit. What most people know as intuition, including psychic powers, are of the soul, not the spirit. How necessary it is to walk close to the Lord Jesus and take care that we do not confuse that which is soulish with the spiritual! By a careful guarding against critical, suspicious, and uncharitable attitudes, and a concern for God's glory alone, we will be kept from error in this realm. Many people have a keen sense of natural perceptiveness and soulical intuition by which they detect conditions, but this is not discerning by the Holy Spirit! As a result they may think that which is natural is of God and be mistaken or deceived. Natural discernment fails when it comes to the great mysteries of the spiritual realm and activity. The natural or soulish man receiveth not the things of the spirit, for they are *spiritually discerned!*

More than forty years ago a preacher and his lovely wife appeared in a Convention we held in Florida. This man possessed a dynamic personality, oozing with charisma, was wonderfully articulate, and had a fantastic testimony. At the invitation of the brethren I was associated with

at the time, he spoke to the Convention in one of the evening sessions. The audience sat spellbound and the whole atmosphere was charged with excitement as he related how God had poured out upon him a powerful and supernatural visitation of the Spirit while pastor of a Baptist church in the state of Michigan. Some strange and awesome things transpired in his ministry at that time and in that church. But many rejected the wonderful things that were happening, and even his own family did not understand the unusual manifestations of the Spirit in his life.

Misunderstanding, then opposition, and finally hostility arose, and the battle raged until finally his persecutors were successful in having him committed to the State Mental Hospital. On and on the story went, climaxing with his sensational escape from the asylum on a bicycle, and the dramatic dealings of God which propelled him into a vibrant kingdom ministry. The people were deeply moved and the ministers were ecstatic! But deep within my spirit, as I listened attentively that crisp January night, a bright red flag was hoisted by the Holy Spirit. I knew distinctively by that inner voice that something was wrong — seriously wrong. While he was yet speaking, amidst great rejoicing and praising God, I turned to Lorain and said, "I don't believe a word that man has said!"

The brethren, however, received him with open arms and opened numerous doors for him across the land. They flew him and his companion to the mission station in Haiti. While there his wife received an astounding vision of the judgment soon to be visited upon America. Another group of brethren took him up and opened many doors for him in various states. He soared to higher and higher heights as the days swiftly passed. Then suddenly — six months later — the lid blew off! A precious prophet of God also discerned that something was amiss. He traveled to the town in Michigan where this man said that he had been the pastor of a Baptist church and began to do an investigation. What he found out was startling. He discovered that this preacher had, indeed, been pastor of a Baptist church there, but he was dismissed, not for any outpouring or unusual manifestations of the Spirit, but for gross immorality. Furthermore, it was true that he had spent time in a mental institution, but again *not* because of any spiritual experiences! He had a wife and several children back in that town whom he had abandoned, and the woman now traveling with him was not his wife at all — she was his mistress!

The brethren confronted him with the truth and he promptly confessed that his whole testimony was a fabrication, a lie, and his ministry a fraud. When asked why he did it, he replied, "God has raised me up in this hour **to see how many of His people can be deceived!**" And when the news reached me, the Spirit witnessed within me, "Amen!" Yet — how sobering this is! What an indictment! How terribly awesome! For out of the thousands of saints and ministries exposed to this fraud, only one prophet and myself (as far as I know) *discerned* him!

God is setting judgment in the midst of His elect today! We are not playing games. God is not playing games. Sonship and the revelation of the holy mysteries of God are not playthings for the entertainment of the immature. There are qualifications for every attainment in God, and the council is set. The Holy Ghost is closely examining candidates for the sonship ministry. The Lord Himself, the One with eyes as a flame of fire, and feet as burnished brass, walks in the midst of His called and chosen people searching the reins and the hearts! The qualifying time is **now**. Matters not how many great visions and deep revelations you have received, or how many wonderful acts of God you can perform. It is impossible for a person void of **discernment** to be a manifest son and rule and reign with Christ! There are no manifest sons with spiritual renal failure — you can count on it!

Sadly I confess that the land is filled today with those excitable souls who love the excitement of gifts, prophecies, visions, meetings, conventions, personalities, and new and deeper revelations without number, but have not an ounce of spiritual discernment. These gullible souls swallow every ridiculous absurdity peddled in the name of "deeper revelation." Tell such starry-eyed super spirituals that not everything they see, read, or hear in the name of the kingdom message is the truth, or of God, and they gaze upon your ignorance with the sympathetic understanding generally reserved for a lunatic.

I shall never forget a "Kingdom Convention" I attended once. It was sad — a monstrous mixture of flesh and spirit, truth and error, of the precious and the vile. Assembled was a great host of people from all parts of the United States and other countries. Some of these people were very spiritual, others exceedingly fleshly. There were true prophets of God there with a word from the Lord, and others who were merely pretenders, prophesying vanities off the tops of their heads. There were profound truths of God ministered, while others consumed the valuable time rambling about in a multitude of meaningless absurdities. The pastor's wife rose to receive the offering. Among other things, she declared that God had revealed to her that there were twelve persons present who were to give \$10.00 each, and seven who were to give \$20.00 each. These she instructed to bring their offering to the front where she would lay hands upon them and confer "the deacon's blessing" on the twelve and "the apostle's blessing" on the seven! For an hour it dragged on, pleading, coaxing, persuading, appealing, to get the amount she wanted.

Deeply grieved in my spirit I was prepared to rise, walk to the pulpit, and read the scripture, "Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money" (Acts 8:20), after which I purposed to walk out of the Convention. At that instant the Holy Spirit thundered in my spirit, "No, *you don't!*" I sat still. Back in the audience a prophetess arose, weeping, and began to prophesy the word of the Lord, saying, "Yea, my people, it is time that you learn the difference between that which is of God, and that which is of man. It is time that you know the difference between that which is of the flesh, and that which is of the spirit. It is time that you discern the difference between that which is truth, and that which is error."

As the Spirit traveled through this dear sister, it came to me so powerfully; my eyes were opened to behold by the spirit the wonder and magnitude of what the mighty God was doing in that place that day. HE had assembled His people together from far and near. HE had drawn both the babes and the mature, the tares and the wheat, the men of God and the pretenders, the fleshly and the spiritual, the true and the false. HE had set them side by side, the sons and the bastards, drawing forth a manifestation from each. And by this *judgment was set in the midst!* How terrible! The Lord would then and there test, try, and prove His people, that it might be manifest **who among them could discern** between light and darkness, flesh and spirit, and truth and error. Every man was justified or disqualified through the judgment of the Lord! Those justified would press forward into deeper depths and higher heights of glory. Those disqualified went their pitiful ways to sink ever deeper into the bottomless pit of flesh, fruitlessness, delusion, and darkness.

Precious saint of God, have you been asking the Lord to give you discernment? The first step that you must take is to be able to discern *yourself!* God cannot trust you to discern others or the great powers of the spiritual world, until you can discern between your own soul and spirit. That which prepares you for all discernment, is to draw so near to God that you will see yourself in His light, and then everybody and everything from His viewpoint. You must dwell in His presence and smell His odors until you will instantly detect any strange odor that comes

near your life. The story is told of a Chinese boy who wanted to learn about jade. He went to study with a talented old teacher. This gentleman put a piece of the stone into the youth's hand and told him to hold it tight. Then he began to talk of philosophy, men, women, the sun and almost everything under it. After an hour he took back the stone and sent the boy home. The procedure was repeated for weeks. The boy became frustrated — when would he be told about jade? But he was too polite to interrupt his venerable teacher. Then one day when the old man put a stone into his hands, the boy cried out instantly, "That's not jade!"

Ah, the Lord brings every son into such submission and intimacy with Him, that we discern the least uprising within ourself, or any temptation thereto when it is afar off. God is teaching us to become so quiet as to our own self-effort and fleshly activities, that our life is like still waters; and any strange sound will alarm and arouse us to prayer and watching. He has drawn us apart from the false odors of the flesh, the strange scents of religious Babylon, and the stench of the spirit of the world, for none can learn discernment in the harlot's house.

I well remember sitting on the platform of a large meeting many years ago. We were cooperating with this meeting in hope that through fellowship with these people we might be able to reach some of them with the word of reconciliation, sonship, and the kingdom. A well known minister from a large Charismatic church on the west coast was the guest speaker. After giving his testimony, he called those with needs to the platform for prayer. With great flourish he entered into his "word of knowledge" ministry by which he told various ones what their problems were. I had sensed, all through the ministry that night, something strange. Like a lightning bolt from the sky, the Spirit spoke from within myself, "This is not of me — this man is operating in a **psychic gift**, not by the mind of the Spirit of God!" "*This isn't jade!*" Then followed this piercing inquiry, "What are YOU doing here?" At that moment I would have welcomed a trap door to open beneath me, permitting me to just quickly and silently disappear! At that rebuke from the Lord I learned a valuable lesson — we do not make people pure by mingling with their mixture!

KILL HER CHILDREN WITH DEATH

"And I will *kill her children with death...*" (Rev. 2:23).

The Lord searches the reins and the hearts, deep within the inner life. Yet, there is also an outward dealing for the Lord says, "I will kill her children with death." The "children" of Jezebel, the offspring of the religious nature of the soul, are all those carnal religious thoughts, attitudes, ideas, concepts, doctrines, works, methods, activities, manifestations, movements, systems, and kingdoms which are born of the flesh. This is not a battle to kill people, or literal flesh! People go around saying that God is going to kill babies. Hogwash! These are symbols, types, and shadows of spiritual realities. God is going to kill the *soulish children* that are the offspring of the carnal mind of the soul. Every union bears fruit, and the fruit is the children.

It is of utmost importance that all of God's elect see this great truth, because once we grasp it, we understand the severity of the Father's dealings with the spirit and works of *religion* in our lives which are, one and all, the children of Jezebel. The power of the Christ comes with eyes blazing with fire, and feet burning as in an oven, to slay all the religious children in our lives! Oh, yes, He will kill each and every one of them, and He will reduce us to God. This is a spiritual battle that shall end the prophesying of the Jezebel-soul within ourselves, and will bring down the rule and dominion of the self-life. Just as Jezebel of old came to her ignoble end by being trampled to death by the horses of Jehu, so shall all the ways of carnality and souliness be destroyed from the lives of all God's called and chosen elect. So also the *Four*

Horses of the Apocalypse (Rev. 6:1-8) shall trample under foot all the wiles of the Jezebel spirit within every son of God! As soon as these four horses have finished their work in us, we read, "And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the *souls* that were slain because of the word of God" (Rev. 6:9). These are *souls* that have been brought to death, all their carnal, soulish manifestations ceased. The spirit is now Lord! In this connection Paul Mueller wrote some time ago, "Our feminine souls are being crucified to be renewed and resurrected, then to be married to our masculine spirits, in preparation for our transformation." Aren't you glad!

I have a word from the Lord for Jezebel. "All your children shall be killed!" saith the Lord. They cannot live because there is no life in them. Anytime there is in our life, or in the church, the Jezebel spirit, and we do not allow the spirit to move and touch us, but we follow after other lovers that we esteem higher than the Lord Himself, everything we produce out of that attitude and union — *dies*. It comes to naught. "So whether you repent, or whether you don't, Jezebel, I'm going to kill every one of your children! They cannot live! They will not live!" If you want to know how the Lord is going to kill your children, I'm going to tell you how He's going to kill your children. "O daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed; happy shall he be, that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us. Happy shall he be, that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones" (Ps. 137:8-9).

Everything that Babylon produces; everything that the soul, apart from the spirit, generates; all that the church systems by self-effort, carnal wisdom, and fleshly zeal bring forth; for all of this God has a man, a corporate man, a new creation man, a man in the image of God, a man in the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, *full* of faith and the Holy Ghost who shall smash the images of Baal and dash the children of Jezebel, and establish the order of the kingdom of the Lord in the midst of God's people in the earth. This heavenly man refuses to accept anything less than the life and power and wisdom and glory of the Son of God. "And **all the churches shall know** that I am He that searches the reins and the hearts." That is the scope of the ministry of GOD'S MAN in this wonderful day of the Lord! Aren't you glad!

Jehu, by the word and anointing of God, took care of Jezebel without even touching her. It happened by the word of his mouth, by the spirit and authority of a spoken word. With the words of his mouth he looked up on the wall, and there were some brethren standing around, and he said, "Here's what I want you to do. GRAB HER AND THROW HER DOWN!" A word of authority is coming in the mouth of God's sons today, and they are commanding concerning Jezebel, "Throw her off the city wall!" This has already happened within all who are entering into this new kingdom Day, for Jezebel has already been cast off the wall of our personal city. But I tell you something else. The most dangerous place you can be in this new Day of the Lord is in the church system. "And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that *ye receive not of her plagues*. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities. Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, *death*, and *mourning*, and *famine*; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord who judgeth her" (Rev. 18:4-8).

It's a dangerous day to be involved in organized religion! I'm not trying to be rude, crude, or vindictive in any way, but there are a lot of things going on right now in the midst of God's people that are highly esteemed and getting the attention of the whole world, but it's just Jezebel raised up upon the city wall. It's almost a circus atmosphere in the Charismatic and Pentecostal scene, drawing the crowds, catering to soulish excitement, with all kinds of theatrics and showmanship, as men look at the lying signs and wonders going on about them, but pay no attention to the deep and eternal work of God to be wrought *within*. It's time for

Jezebel to be thrown off the wall! I'd like to grab her right now! But God has a time and a way, and it's not by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord!

Once Jezebel was thrown from the wall and trampled by the horses, the dogs came and ate her flesh and licked up her blood. The dogs love Jezebel. She's dog food! There are a lot of dog ministries around, trying to lick her blood and eat her flesh — to receive an impartation of the death that is in her. That's alright, let them eat her, let them devour her — she's still dead in *your life!* God has thrown her down from her high place in the lives of all God's elect. Jezebel can no longer have any influence over those called unto sonship. She can no longer control, she can no longer manipulate, she can no longer deceive, she can no longer seduce the called out of the Lord!

Chapter 48

The Church In Thyatira

continued

"And he that overcometh...to him will I give *power over the nations*: and he shall *rule them with a rod of iron*; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father" (Rev. 2:26-27).

Generally all Christians, of whatever persuasion, interpret these words to mean that the Lord's people shall rule and reign from the throne of God's glory over the physical nations of the world, thereby bringing the kingdom of God to pass in the earth. I have taught it that way myself! There are many, many scriptures that clearly point to a rulership of God's elect over the kingdoms of man, over all the nations of earth, in fact, over the endless vastnesses of infinity — indeed, over *all things!* That rule is given to man — God's Man!

As I have been taught by the Holy Spirit and have progressed in the unfolding revelation of His truth I have come to see, however, that the above passage is not the best one to teach this beautiful truth from! Remember, we are dealing here with *symbols*, and the symbols portray the spiritual work of God within His people as related to their "overcoming." When a carnal person reads this promise his response is, "Oh, I'm going to sit on the throne, I'm going to have power and authority, I'm going to be the boss, I'm going to tell people what to do, I'm going to demand respect, I'm going to crack the whip and make things change in this old world!" That's exactly what the carnal nature wants to do! From a child it wants to be an authority over everybody else, it wants everyone to bow down before it. With great earnestness I pray that God will open the understanding of all who read these lines, for it is of perfect truth that I tell you that the Lord is not talking about the outward, external realm of authority and dominion. He is speaking of **spiritual authority, spiritual power, and spiritual dominion** that begins in that spiritual "land" which *we are!*

We have now come to the fourth step in our progressive journey as we continue to overcome. We have eaten from the tree of life. We have escaped being hurt by the second death. We have been filled with the Spirit of God and have begun to feast upon the hidden manna. We have received a white stone and have been given a new name as revealed to us by Christ, and the next step is to be given power over the nations. As we continue to overcome, the Spirit of God leads us to continue to grow in Christ and in the victory, glory, and power of His kingdom. At this fourth stage of our overcoming are we truly ready to rule over the nations with a rod of iron, and break them to shivers by the power of the word of the Lord? *I think not!*

Much of the book of Revelation is rooted in the events, conditions, and arrangements set forth symbolically in the Old Testament. The tree of life is drawn from the Old Testament. The hidden manna is taken from the Old Testament. The white stone and the new name are from the Old Testament. It is here that I see the key to what the Spirit is speaking about when He says, "To him that overcometh will I give power over *the nations*." Over what nations? Which

were "the nations" that Israel of old was given power over? The imagery here is drawn from Israel's *conquest* of the land of Canaan! To *conquer* is to *overcome* — that is the precise meaning of the word overcome in the Greek language! When Israel came out of the wilderness to enter in and possess the land God had promised them, for which purpose He had brought them out of Egypt by a mighty hand and had watched over them for forty years during their wilderness wanderings, the record states, "When the Lord thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out *many nations* before thee, the Hittites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than thou; and when the Lord thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt *smite them*, and *utterly destroy them*; and thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor show mercy unto them: neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the Lord be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly. But thus shall ye deal with them; ye shall *destroy their altars, and break down their images, and cut down their groves, and burn their graven images with fire*. For thou art an *holy people* unto the Lord thy God: the Lord thy God hath *chosen thee* to be a *special people unto Himself* above all people that are upon the face of the earth" (Deut. 7:1-6).

At that time in history, Israel's new land was occupied by the seven "ites" — by seven heathen nations who were exceedingly vile and corrupt, which they had to conquer, drive out, destroy, and possess. As we compare the above scripture passage with the Lord's admonition to the overcomers in the seven churches we see revealed not only the "nations" we are given power over, to break them to shivers, but we see also the Balaamite and Jezebel conditions as the Lord explains to Israel *why* they must destroy these nations and make no covenants with them, nor make marriages with them, nor preserve at all their images, idols, and groves. Our new land in this new day of the kingdom of God is **the fullness of Christ!**

THE LAND

In the scriptures all the outward, physical, material, and earthly things that we see, touch, and enjoy are not the real things. I do not mean by that that they are merely illusions and don't actually exist; they are, however, but outward symbols, shadows, and figures of the true. The true and eternal are the things of the spiritual world! Paul was explaining this mystery when he wrote, "For ever since the creation of the world His invisible nature and attributes, that is, His eternal power and divinity have been made intelligible and clearly discernible through the things that have been made — His handiworks" (Rom. 1:20, Amplified). Day by day we see, use, and experience so many material things — we walk on the ground, we open doors, ride in automobiles, eat food, drink liquids, bathe in water, sleep in beds, wear clothes, and contact a thousand other objects. Yet none of these things are truly real! They are but shadows, pictures, types, and figures. The food we consume every day is not the real food. The water we drink is not the real water. The light that radiates our atmosphere and falls daily upon our pathway is not the real light. Even the country we live in is not the real land, but a figure pointing to something higher and grander.

Then, what are the real things? The real things, my beloved, are SPIRIT! The spiritual flesh and blood of Christ are the real food. The life of God by the Spirit is the real water. The radiating presence and revelation of Christ is the light to us. Christ Himself is the reality of everything to us! Even our physical life is not the real life. That is why Christ said, "I am come that ye might have life, and that ye might have it more abundantly." "He that has the Son has life," said the apostle. All natural life on this planet is merely a figure, pointing to Christ who *is*

our life. If a man's spirit has not been quickened by HIS Spirit, that man knows not life nor does he have life. "He that hath not the Son of God hath not life."

We all live in houses of some kind — some live in shacks, some in mobile homes, others live in modest dwellings while still others occupy mansions. But whatever the nature of our residence, it is not our dwelling place; it is not the real one! Moses, who had been brought up in the palaces of the Pharaoh of Egypt, who also lived with Israel in tents in the wilderness, understood this great truth and prayed, "Lord, *Thou hast been our dwelling place* in all generations" (Ps. 90:1) And again, "He that *dwelleth in the secret place of the most High* shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty" (Ps. 91:1). What wonderful depth there is in the words of the apostle John, "No man hath seen God at any time...hereby know we that we *dwell in Him*, and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit...God is love, and he that dwelleth in love *dwelleth in God*" (I Jn. 4:12-16). Yes, the Lord is the real habitation to us!

Have you ever realized that Christ is also the very land you are living upon, the country of your citizenship? Christ is the land! You may be proud of the piece of real estate you own, the location is perhaps ideal, the community splendid, the setting picturesque, the view enthralling, and it may be quite valuable. But that is not your land! You may also be very patriotic, loving the country of which you are a citizen, cherishing your life there, and even willing to die defending it. Yet, that land is *not your land!* Your real estate, your nation, and even the earth itself are nothing but a figure pointing to Christ. Christ is the real land to us!

In the hidden language of the Spirit, the symbol of "land" often has the meaning of "inheritance." In some cases it deals with our inheritance, in other references, the inheritance of the Lord. And in addition to these, many other varied ideas are conveyed by the word "land." In the Old Testament the Lord always referred to a piece of Land. God called out Abraham, telling him that He would bring him into a certain land, which was the land of Canaan. All the way from the book of Genesis to the end of the Old Testament the Lord stressed that special land again and again. "The land...the land I promised Abraham...the land I gave to your fathers...the land I brought you into...I will bless you in the land..." It was always the land, the land, always the land! When Israel sinned God drove them out of the land; but He always promised to bring them back into the land. Many people are still focused on that land over in the Middle East. Jewish, Christian, and Moslem pilgrims from all over the world travel to that land and many are expecting the kingdom of God to be established in and from that land.

Many times we hear people express the desire to go to the "Holy Land." I have been to the land of Israel, and believe me, there is *nothing holy* about it! It is interesting to visit the country and see the geography where so many historical events took place in the purposes of God. But preachers and broadcasters are literally making a mint of money conducting tours to the so-called holy land! Songs have been written about walking where Jesus walked. Many people want to go to the holy land and see the stable where Jesus was born. They want to see the house in Nazareth where Mary and Joseph lived with the boy Jesus. They want to see the hill of Golgotha where Jesus was crucified. They want to see where Jesus was buried in the tomb. They want to see the tomb of David and all the other *supposedly* sacred places. And there are a great many tour guides there who for a price will take these gullible pilgrims to any of the places they desire to visit. But most of these sites are not genuine — they are fabrications!

I have even heard preachers get greatly excited about going to the upper room and having the Spirit of God come upon them mightily, as they describe it. Far greater than they ever knew before! I have seen people actually go into ecstasies over such stories. It saddens me to say it, but what they are experiencing is *intense soulish excitement*, not the Spirit of God! You see,

that upper room where the hundred and twenty were filled with the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost *no longer exists!* In A. D. 70 the whole city of Jerusalem was completely destroyed. The soldiers of the Roman army plowed it under and leveled it completely. So there cannot be any upper room there! The rubble from that original upper room is buried some thirty feet beneath where men walk today. But the gullible tourists still go and feel their goosebumps.

Incredible as it may seem, the land of Israel is but a figure of the true land — Christ as everything to us! Abraham from the beginning understood this clearly, even if modern-day Christians don't! The writer to the Hebrews tells us, "By faith Abraham when he was called, obeyed and went forth to a place which he was destined to receive as an inheritance; and he went, although he did not know or trouble his mind about where he was to go. By faith he dwelt as a temporary resident in the land which was designated in the promise of God, in a strange country, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs with him of the same promise. For he was waiting expectantly and confidently, looking forward to *the city which has fixed and firm foundations, whose Architect and Builder is God.* Now those people who talk as they did show plainly that they are in search of a *fatherland — their own country.* But the truth is that they were yearning for and aspiring to a *better and more desirable country, that is, a heavenly (spiritual) one.* For that reason God is not ashamed to be called their God..." (Heb. 11:8-10,14,16, Amplified).

Now we know what is meant by **the land!** It was but a shadow and figure of the true land, the heavenly land of the Spirit, where the called and chosen elect of the Lord dwell in Christ in God! Everything that God prepared naturally for the children of Israel was concentrated in that land. "For the land, whither thou goest in to possess it, is a land of hills and valleys, and drinketh water of the rain of heaven: a land which the Lord thy God careth for: the eyes of the Lord thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year" (Deut. 11:10-12). They were called to live on the land and to enjoy all the provision and abundance of God. They were to be formed into a kingdom in that land, observing the statutes, judgments, laws, ways, and will of the Lord in the land. They were to become a kingdom of priests and an holy nation in the midst of the land so that through them all the nations of the earth might be blessed! All the promises, provisions, plans, and purposes of God were concentrated in the land.

All these types are fulfilled in Christ as a piece of land! All the promises, provisions, plans, and purposes of God for mankind are concentrated in Christ! Christ is the true, real, appointed, abundant, fruitful, heavenly land to us! Our citizenship is in Christ in the heavens of God's Spirit! We are not of this world, nor of the earthly Jerusalem, nor of the physical seed of Abraham, nor of the land of Canaan in the Middle East! God has given us a citizenship in the heavenlies where we are seated together in Christ Jesus! God has given us this heavenly, spiritual, incorruptible, eternal, all-sufficient land that we may become a kingdom of priests, an holy nation, and that through us as the very sons of God all the nations of the earth shall be blessed!

"In Christ" is the place where all things that were lost in Adam are restored unto us and to all mankind. It is the place where the true word of the Lord flows as rivers of living water, and the deceiver has no power to deceive anymore. It is the place where all the trees of the land bear the fruit of the Spirit and all will partake to the full. It is the place where the leaves of the tree of life are for the healing of the nations. It is the place where the wolf dwells with the lamb and the leopard lies down with the young goat, the cow and the bear graze together, for all the aspects of the bestial nature within have been subdued, tamed, and transformed by the law of the land, the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus! It is the land where death shall be swallowed up in

victory, where the corruptible puts on incorruption, and the mortal puts on immortality, as the last enemy is conquered and we fully possess our land and inheritance.

Today we are at the border of the land, and we are beginning to conquer and possess it! We are hearing the rallying trumpet! The sharp, piercing, clear word of the Lord is calling us to press on. This is what Jesus has prepared for us! This is the Father's house of many mansions. This is why He has led us to overcome daily our personal battles, small or great, intimidations, doubts, weariness, pain, tribulations, discouragements, fears, emotions and all things that stand before us and our full possession. Indeed, Canaan represents that place in God where the sons of God who have valiantly fought their own battles, and led by Jesus are putting all enemies under their feet, are possessing their heavenly land of fullness in Christ!

We are now *rooted* and *grounded* in Christ (Col.2:7). A plant or a tree is rooted in the soil, in the land; and the Lord's people become trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, rooted and established in the land which is Christ! Christ is the land where every son of God dwells, where he lives, where his roots are, where he grows, where he becomes fruitful, where he fulfills all the will and purpose of God! Christ is the sphere, the realm in which we live and breathe and walk and work and from whence all creation shall be delivered and blessed! He is our land, our kingdom, and we dwell in Him and walk in Him. Just as God called Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees, and just as God called Moses and the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt, to give them the land of Canaan, so has the Lord now called His elect out of the world, out of the old-order church systems, out of all our old carnal, fleshly, worldly, and religious ways and bondages, that we might inherit the land which **Christ is**. Christ is a good land, a large land, and a fruitful land! This land is our eternal inheritance! Isn't it wonderful!

The old land of Israel is no longer "the holy land," for God has now made **us** holy and in Christ we are the land of His habitation. "Be ye therefore *holy*, as your Father in heaven is holy." While that old land of Canaan has always been, and still is today, a land of sin and carnality and false religion and constant wars and troubles, the kingdom of God is a heavenly, spiritual land of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost! Jesus pronounced doom upon that earthly land and further stated that the kingdom of God would be taken from the people of that land and given to a nation (people) bringing forth the fruits thereof. WE are that holy nation and God's royal priesthood, a special, chosen people showing forth the virtues of Christ our King! As long as the Jews, the mis-guided Christians, and the great nations of this world continue to believe that the people in the earthly state of Israel are the chosen people of God, there will never be peace there. But when once the church world and the nations see, by the manifestation of the sons of God, that God has moved His true Israel people out of that old land and has brought them into Christ, the true land, and our eternal inheritance and resting place, they will all cease supporting that carnal, fleshly people and erroneously treating them like privileged people, as they have been doing for so many years. Then, and only then, will the peace of the kingdom of God be established among all the nations and peoples of the Middle East!

THE LAND IS OCCUPIED!

God has promised to give us the land, which is the fullness of Christ. There is just one problem with this beautiful hope. THE LAND OF PROMISE IS OCCUPIED! It is infested! It is not vacant, ready to be taken over by God's elect. It presently is occupied by God's enemies. Seven mighty nations occupy the land! The Hittites, the Amorites, the Girgashites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, the Jebusites, and the Canaanites. Each and every one of them is "greater and mightier" than Israel (Deut. 7:1). These enemy nations have walled cities replete

with towers, huge gates, and citadels. They are fortified strongholds with massive arsenals of bows and arrows, swords, and daggers plus special weapons like the steel-edged Canaanite battle-ax. They have chariots of iron! The people of Canaan are tall and strong; their warriors renowned (Deut. 1:28).

The promised land was lived in by brutal and ruthless tribes who practiced devilish idolatries, including the worship of their own sexual lusts and the burning of their children in the fire as sacrificial offerings. Their abominable, degrading, disgusting patterns of behavior had been inviting the wrath of God during the time that Israel was multiplying in Egypt. When we say that Christ is our land of promise, this doesn't mean that Christ Himself is full of wickedness and abominations! You see, my beloved, the land is the realization of Christ *within ourselves*. The land is not in some far-off heaven somewhere. The land is within us! And in that land of the experiencing of Christ within ourselves we find a great number of hindrances, problems, bondages, fears, perceptions, ideas, concepts, fleshliness, carnality, habits, sin, sickness, and death — all enemies of the realization of Christ.

The realization of Christ as the totality of our life is experienced in three areas — our spirit, soul, and body. Christ is the land of promise, but Christ is entered into and possessed through the experiencing of Christ in spirit, soul, and body. That is the land! This land is occupied by enemies, and Christ is not realized without a battle. It's not news to any of us that we are in the midst of a war between two kingdoms: the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. Neither is it news to us that **we** are the battleground! More particularly, the major focal point of the battle is our mind. There the battle rages at its greatest intensity, because the war is a struggle for our hearts and our loyalties — the very souls and lives of men.

Israel increased in strength and became an army and strong in faith during the time it was wandering in the wilderness, and all the while God was preparing the people for the coming fight against the inhabitants of Canaan. In like manner, throughout two thousand years of the church's (and our own) wandering in the spiritual wilderness of religious carnality, testing, and proving, the elect of the Lord have been gathering strength and faith and becoming an army to drive out the enemies of God in our spiritual land of Canaan.

Beautiful, inspiring, and challenging are these words from brother Ray Prinzing. "There is another point which also must be reckoned with, and that is, the deeper your life in Christ, the deeper the conflict also. One of the indications of the degree of our spiritual maturity, is the degree of spiritual warfare which we face. Divine wisdom is revealed in that God does not send His 'spiritual babes' to fight the fiery contests of the 'conflict of the ages.' Nor does a revival-like atmosphere, with the blessings and shoutings of victory betoken what the battle is like. The shout of the multitude with whom you keep 'holy day' is much different than the sound of travail in the dark valley. God retains the sole authority of the battle. HE IS THE CAPTAIN OF THE HOSTS, and He knows full well that a new believer cannot face the 'dark night of the soul' until they have been prepared for it, so steadily He leads and works His purpose within, to fit us for the battle.

"We have a beautiful type of this in the Old Testament: 'And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent (change their mind) when they see war, and they return to Egypt: but God led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red sea...' (Ex. 13:17-18). It was later, after they had learned to trust Him, after they had received His commandments, after they had been *put in order* according to their ranks and divisions, that God permitted them to face a few battles. Furthermore, just

conquering the wilderness alone, with its severe dealings of proving and inner discipline were enough, so that in all of their wilderness journey they fought but few battles, and met with few enemies, compared to those they would later encounter in the land of Canaan, where they would face the walled cities, and the giants, kings and nations which they would have to overcome.

"Dare we say that the stronger the battle, the greater the temptations, the more it is a sign that we are developing and growing in grace? Great testings are often a sign of great grace and great faith, not a sign that we are weak and of little faith. The Lord knows that HE has processed you to the point that you are now ready to face some of these battles. However, don't suddenly begin to look at your own strength and sufficiency, and begin to take pride that you must be 'arriving,' it is not your strength, but HIS IN YOU that is equal to the need.

"Israel could not have fought the Hittites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites until they had come into the land where these enemies dwelt. The very fact that they were not in this intense conflict while they were wandering around in the wilderness was proof that they had not yet come into the land of Canaan. But once they found themselves face to face with the giants and the walled cities, they knew they were '**in the land,**' and the battle was the proof. Therefore, the very power of your trial and testing may become one of the strongest proofs that you are really entering into the land of promise, since these pressures are peculiar to that land. Canaan's battles are fought in the land of Canaan, not down in the land of Egypt, nor even yet in the wilderness" — end quote.

In this, our generation, a righteous remnant is coming out of their wilderness of trial, testing, and chastisement. Our days of wandering, murmuring, rebellion, immaturity, and vacillation are ending! Our wilderness journey has also ended! There is a specific people in the earth today who witnessed the mighty power of God as He revealed Himself in signs and wonders, and thereby led us out of our enslavement in the Egypt of the world of sin and death. We have also endured the testings and chastisements of the Lord through the provings of the wilderness. Many who read these lines will bear witness that this is true, and now the spirit of sonship groans and travails within you for the fullness of Christ and the glory of the kingdom of God. You have faithfully obeyed in all the deep dealings of the Lord as experienced by all other sons of God, and those experiences made you the overcomer that you are.

There are many other of the Lord's people who have walked with God in the light they have received, and have also walked through testings and wilderness experiences. But unless the spirit of sonship drives and compels them on this journey into the promised land of the fullness of Christ, they will not profit from the unique trials of the wilderness that prepare one to cross the Jordan and possess their land. Rather than increasing in faith and following Joshua-Jesus into the kingdom land, they are of those who perish in the wilderness. We are not critical of them, for they are the Lord's people and have at least come up out of Egypt and have eaten the manna and drunk from the rock. The primary work of God in this hour is with His elect remnant whom He has called to rise up and take the land so that all nations might be blessed and creation delivered.

Now we are crossing the Jordan, in spiritual type, and are entering the new land of the kingdom of God or the fullness of Christ on the earth! We may have held the erroneous idea that upon entering the new land of the kingdom we would at once know absolute peace, joy, kingdom blessings, power, and incorruptible life. Perhaps we once thought that by entering into the kingdom of God the entire order of things within and without would change overnight. But I

call you to remembrance, my beloved, that the new land of Canaan was the place where Israel of old **faced their enemies and conquered them**. Even so do we now confront our enemies in this new realm of the kingdom of God! Israel conquered their enemies under Joshua's leadership after they crossed the Jordan, not before! Even so shall the Lord lead us in conquering all our enemies when we have crossed over our spiritual Jordan. The truth is, the most powerful and entrenched of our enemies are across Jordan in the new land! Israel of old entered this new promised land first, and then they saw their enemies and conquered them. All that happened with Israel then is written for our admonition and instruction, for those natural events are the figures of the spiritual events within the lives of God's elect by which we enter into our land of the fullness of Christ within ourselves.

Only now are we discovering our enemies! As we cross over our Jordan all our enemies, including death the last enemy, must be driven out before we shall inherit the kingdom of God in all its glorious fullness. But the battle is not ours! Our enemies are also the Lord's enemies, and HE has promised to drive them out before us as we walk forward in obedience to Him! Here in this new land of the fullness of Christ we shall be fully saved in spirit, soul, and body. Then death, the last enemy, shall be totally conquered within ourselves and defeated. Some say that it is in crossing the Jordan that death is overcome, but such is not the case! Death is the "last" enemy that shall be destroyed, not the first! The battle only *begins after* we have crossed our spiritual Jordan! Jordan is simply the "crossing over" of leaving our wilderness wanderings behind and stepping forth in faith and obedience to enter in and begin possessing the land of our inheritance! As we enter into this land and begin to conquer the enemies and possess our inheritances, we will know that we are truly His people and that He is our God!

Complete and perfect obedience to the Lord is required of every one who shall follow Jesus across Jordan and possess the kingdom of God. Every part of our being must be under His control, for there is no way we can do His will unless our entire being is in subjection to the Lord. The part of our being that stands in our way is our human consciousness, the self, what we are and think and know and can do naturally. The natural part of us is not subject unto the Lord, nor ever can be. Call it what you want to, self, the flesh, the carnal mind or nature, or any other description; these are all one and the same, and this is what stands in the way of us fulfilling the purposes of God and doing His will.

This old nature cannot be reformed! Reformation is of no use; many try it, but all you have is a whited sepulcher full of dead men's bones — dressed up on the outside, but full of death and corruption on the inside. We must be *transformed*, not *reformed*! There has to be a complete transformation of our entire being! The old nature has to go, and a new man take its place! It is impossible for the old nature (natural man) to be in obedience to the Lord. Only the Christ within us can be obedient to the will of God! When He said, "I come to do Thy will, O God," it was not only the man Christ Jesus, who walked the shores of Galilee, that was speaking here, but also the Christ that is within us. He comes to dwell in these temples, to take control of these vessels, to conquer, crush, drive out, and destroy every enemy, that in our land the will of God may be done.

The Father has given unto the Son power over all flesh, as He said, "As Thou hast given Him power over all flesh..." (Jn. 17:2). Because He has this power over the flesh He is able to subdue it unto Himself. "But our citizenship is in heaven, and out of it we await a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His body of glory, by the power which enables Him even to subject all things unto Himself" (Phil. 3:20-21). What a word that is! Only HE within us has the power to do this! The Father has given Him this power over the flesh to subdue it unto Himself. He alone can bring about this transformation in

our beings. That is the mystery! On the one hand the Lord says, "You drive out the enemies," while on the other hand He says, "I will drive out the enemies from before you." He alone can make the enemies within us subject to the will of God. He can subdue this flesh of ours, and all that is within it, so it is necessary for us to turn it over to Him that this transformation can take place. As we turn our body over completely to His control He will go before us and give us the victory! We must be obedient and follow our Joshua!

Our enemies must be **destroyed**! On the plains of Moab, near Jericho, the Lord told the people, "And ye shall dispossess the inhabitants of the land, and dwell therein: for I have given you the land to possess it" (Num. 33:53). The Lord told them how to divide the land among their tribes. He also told them to drive out all their enemies; otherwise, those enemies would vex them. Then He said, "this is the land that shall fall unto you for an inheritance, even the land of Canaan with the coasts thereof" (Num. 34:2). Oh, yes, the land is yours, but you must dispossess its inhabitants! The Lord was faithful to them, and He is now faithful to us as we press forward in faith and obedience to expel every enemy from our land of promise.

In one sense the enemies are to be dispossessed, but in truth they are to be **destroyed**. The word of the Lord to Israel was, "Thou shalt smite them, and *utterly destroy them*; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor show mercy unto them: neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. But thus shall ye deal with them; ye shall destroy their altars, and break down their images, and cut down their groves, and burn their graven images with fire" (Deut. 7:2,3,5). The Lord stated the same thing to the church in Thyatira in these words, "And he that overcometh...to him will I give power over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; *as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers...*" (Rev. 2:26-27).

The city of Thyatira being a crafts city, and also a place where pottery was made, understood this reference very well. Once pottery is made and there is something wrong with it, there is nothing you can do. You can't take a piece of clay that has baked in the kiln and reduce it back to clay. It just won't work, once the clay has been thoroughly baked in the fire it is finished. The only thing you can do is to break this thing up. This is not talking about *people* — it's speaking of the rule of the "nations" of carnality within each of us! There is only one thing God can do to these strongholds in our lives, and that is to thoroughly smash and crush them to shivers (little pieces) that the righteous rule of God might arise in their place.

Great and mighty things were destined to take place when Israel set foot in their promised land of Canaan! Although the enemies were formidable, the Lord promised that He would drive out all those enemy nations from before them. He also said, "Then will the Lord drive out all these nations from before you, and ye shall possess greater nations and mightier than yourselves. Every place whereon the soles of your feet shall tread shall be yours: from the wilderness and Lebanon, from the river Euphrates, even unto the uttermost sea shall your coast be. There shall no man be able to stand before you: for the Lord your God shall lay the fear of you and the dread of you upon all the land that ye shall tread upon, as He hath said unto you" (Deut. 11:23-25).

Imagine what it would be like for a nation of some two million people to march into another country with the intention of possessing it and driving out all who live there, with the fear and dread of them put on those nations by the Lord! It was not by their numbers, for these nations were greater than they; neither was it by their military power that these nations would be defeated, for they were mightier than they! It would be because the Lord Himself would fight for them in every one of their battles. And God is teaching us today that same wonderful truth!

There is sufficient wisdom, grace, and power in the Christ within each of us to conquer every enemy that occupies our land!

Just before going to battle against Jericho, Joshua came face to face with a messenger of the Lord. He told Joshua to remove his shoes. The message was just this: Come out of the way you've been walking because now you are going to walk in a high, holy realm. Canaan requires a whole new kind of warfare that we have never fought before. This messenger's sword was drawn and the sword is the word of God. Not the written record, but the *living revelation of God's will in our lives*. In this realm it is no more the dead letter of the word, but the inner voice of the spirit by which the commands of our general and commander, Jesus, are disclosed to us. This message causes us to see and think and understand and act differently than we have before. It is a *new way!* The word of the Lord has come to let us know we don't have to fight this battle, for we have gotten out of our shoes and the Lord has gotten into our shoes! Now we will be able to *walk in the Spirit*, and we will not fight our own battle any more. As the power of the Lord goes before us, and overshadows us, the fear and dread of us will fall upon every enemy and they shall flee from before us! The way we used to fight is over. Now the victory shall be the Lord's!

Just before entering the land, Joshua, as I have mentioned, saw a mighty man standing before him with his sword drawn in his hand. When Joshua asked the man if he was for them or against them, the man replied, "Nay: but as captain of the host of the Lord am I now come" (Jos. 5:13-15). Today, in and by the Spirit the eyes of God's called out people are being opened to see that man with his sword drawn in his hand ready to do battle with our enemies **"as captain of the host of the Lord."** Oh, yes, we see the Lord! The Captain of our salvation, the Author and Finisher of our faith, our Forerunner who for us has entered in to that within the veil, our Head and King and Commander is prepared to do battle on the battlefields of our lives against every one of our enemies, including the flesh, the carnal mind, the devil, the world, sin, sorrow, fear, and death! Nothing that would hinder or prevent us from receiving our inheritance and fully possessing it shall stand before this mighty Conqueror! IT IS THE LORD!

Once the victory has been secured in "our land" then we shall become a holy nation, a royal priesthood, kings and priests to bless all the nations of earth. Don't even think about ruling over those nations out there in the world until first you have conquered the nations that occupy your own land of inheritance! Mighty spiritual power shall be released in the earth when the elect of the Lord have possessed their land by dispossessing all their enemies. Our victory in our land will change all the world! When the enemies of our land have all been routed, including death itself, we shall then have great power to bring the whole earth and all nations under the dominion of the rule of the kingdom of God. Those mighty enemies of God — the three-fold Babylon world systems — political, economic, and religious — all created by the same Canaanite carnal mind of the Adamic man, shall fall before the greater wisdom and power of God in His sons, for the Christ-man of the spirit is coming forth to begin the new creation and make *all things* new. That is the divine purpose for the sovereign, kingdom reign of God through His sons!

Chapter 49

The Church In Thyatira continued

“And he that overcometh...to him will I give *power over the nations*: and he shall *rule them with a rod of iron*; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers...” (Rev. 2:26-27).

As I have been taught by the Holy Spirit and have progressed in the unfolding revelation of His truth I have come to see that this beautiful promise does not apply specifically to the rule of the sons of God over the external physical nations of the earth. The book of Revelation is a book of *symbols*, and the symbols connected with the seven churches portray the spiritual work of God within His elect as related to their “overcoming.” Much of the symbology of the book is rooted in the Old Testament. In the promises to the overcomers the tree of life is drawn from the Old Testament. The hidden manna is taken from the Old Testament. The white stone and the new name are rooted in the Old Testament. It is here that we find the key to what the Spirit means when He says, “To him that overcometh will I give power over *the nations*: as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers.”

The question follows — the overcomer is given power over *which nations*? Which were “the nations” that Israel of old was given power over? The imagery here is drawn from Israel’s *conquest* of the land of Canaan! To *conquer* is to *overcome* — that is the precise meaning of the word overcome! At that time in history, Israel’s new land of promise was occupied by seven “ites” — seven nations greater and mightier than they, seven nations that were exceedingly vile and corrupt, which they had to conquer, drive out, *break to shivers*, destroy, and possess! In the hidden language of the Spirit, the symbol of “land” has the meaning of “inheritance.” The land of Canaan which Israel possessed is a figure of the true land — our inheritance in Christ! Our new land in this new day of the kingdom of God is **the fullness of Christ!** All the New Testament scriptures bear witness to this great truth — our inheritance is **in Christ**, and the full possession of our inheritance means **Christ as everything to us!**

POSSESSING THE LAND

Canaan — what volumes the name speaks to us! Many are the songs written about Canaan Land, yet the masses of believers entertain the mistaken notion that Canaan is a type of heaven — that bright glory world above with streets of gold, walls of jasper, and gates of pearl. This cannot be, because the great mark of Canaan was that the land had to be conquered and that God gave such glorious victories over the strong, entrenched enemies. There is warfare in Canaan! There are giants in Canaan! There are hoards of enemies in Canaan! The battles in Canaan make the experience in the wilderness look like a Sunday School picnic. The possession of Canaan was for victory and through victory. The children of Israel crossed the Red Sea to escape the enemy. They crossed the Jordan to conquer the enemy! Canaan speaks to us of our inheritance in Christ in the kingdom of God.

If we are going to possess the kingdom, we are going to have to fight for it! The powers that are there will contest every foot of it; as soon as we start to possess our inheritance in God, we will come face to face with them, and we will find they are not easily defeated. In that land of experiencing the fullness of Christ within ourselves we find great strongholds of hindrances, problems, bondages, discouragements, fears, misperceptions, carnal ideas and concepts, fleshly desires, habits, limitations, sin, sickness, and death — all entrenched enemies of the realization of the mind, nature, victory and power of Christ. We are no threat to them until we begin our march to possess our inheritance!

Multitudes of Christians are settled upon their lees — they are satisfied with the joy of sins forgiven and hope to make heaven their home at last. There is no desire in their hearts to attain to anything of value in the kingdom of God, to appropriate all that Christ is as their own reality, or to gain any position of responsibility and usefulness in the age and the ages to come. It is said of faithless Israel in the wilderness, “They despised the pleasant land” (Ps. 106:24). Canaan was a land of fruitfulness, of heights and depths and beauty and glory and power, a type of our inheritance in Christ in the kingdom of God; but some of the people thought it would cost them a great deal to possess it, and they would rather go without it.

I have read of certain Spaniards that lived where there was a great store of fish, but they were so lazy they would not exert themselves to catch them, but begged of their neighbors. Such sinful sloth is upon the masses of Christians that fill the pews of the church systems in this hour, and though the fullness of Christ is offered them, they will not yield to the leadings and dealings of the Holy Spirit to possess it. They have only some faint wishes or desires. If only they can pay their bills and stay reasonably healthy and get “blessed” at church, they are content with that measure of Life. Oh, men would be glad for the full realization of the Christ Life if it would drop as a ripe fig into their mouths, but they have no desire to pursue it, and their unsanctified hearts would abuse, misuse, prostitute, and profane it were it given into their hands. We cannot have the world without labor, or any success or position or rank or responsibility without applying ourselves, and do we think to have the full inheritance of our promised land in Christ without paying the price?

When God told the children of Israel to go into the land of Canaan, He said, “I have given it to you.” In a little while He added this striking admonition, “Go in to possess it.” These were potential terms. In the divine and sovereign council of heaven God had already deeded the land to them, but they were not qualified yet to possess it. Is that not how it is with the so-called “finished work” we hear so much about! The land was full of giants, and walled cities, and fierce armies, which required a struggle for its possession. But — consider, precious saint of God, how vast and rich the land is! The land is unsearchably great, unlimitedly rich. The dimensions of the land are the length, the breadth, the height, and the depth of the fullness of Christ. The land is all the riches and the glory of Christ Himself! The land is peace, joy, righteousness, incorruptible and immortal life, wisdom, knowledge, power, dominion and glory. All this is ours as children of God, but only as we grow up into Christ and truly put on Christ do we become mature and arrive in the position to assume this responsibility of possessing our possessions. We are talking about the full stature of Christ within ourselves, not gold bath tubs in heaven. By a mature understanding and a divine faith we see the way to enter the land and take possession of all the riches and glory of full sonship to God!

Why have we not, then, fully possessed our land? The thing that kept Israel out of their land was a heart of unbelief. “Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that

heard it. So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief” (Heb. 4:1-2; 3:19). You remember how those that spied out the land of Canaan brought back an evil report. On the one hand they said that the land was exceptionally good, but on the other hand they said it was impossible to enter. The people were giants, they said, and the cities fortified and great. They asserted that Israel could never conquer the land; if they tried they would be utterly defeated and devoured.

Ah, how often that wily devil of unbelief speaks the very same things within us! Does he not say, “Don’t talk about overcoming the enemy. Don’t talk about walking in the nature of God. Don’t think about attaining to perfection — nobody can be perfect in this world! Don’t talk about conquering death — everybody dies until the resurrection! Don’t think about being manifest sons of God — that is just wishful thinking! Don’t talk about becoming exactly like Christ, to do the works He did — nobody can measure up to Him! Don’t try to put on the mind of Christ, don’t think about ruling and reigning with Christ — it might go to your head! Don’t talk about being kings and priests after the order of Melchizedek — that is too high for you! All these things are good and wonderful. But it is absolutely impossible for you to possess them!”

I do not doubt that even while some have been reading this message that devil of unbelief has whispered such things in your ear! “You cannot possess the land, you cannot attain to the high calling of sonship, you will never stand among the manifest sons of God — you are too weak, you are now old and feeble; you can’t preach or teach or explain the Word; you are beset by physical ailments and disease — silly of you to think of overcoming sin and death! You have already failed so many times to please your heavenly Father; God never answers your prayers, anyhow; you have no one to fellowship with, to encourage and strengthen you; you have too many problems and hang-ups; you are young and inexperienced, others have walked in this truth for years; your own home is out of order, you are bedeviled by a carnal, opposing spouse and unruly, rebellious children; don’t even think you could enter the good land of the kingdom — it is far beyond your ability! You can never make it!”

Oh, yes! Those ten “spies” do give an evil report, don’t they! That little devil of unbelief lurking within the carnal mind in each of us is just waiting for the opportunity to inject his deadly venom and deliver to us the evil report — “You are not able to go up and possess your inheritance!” Never believe him! “The inhabitants are giants,” he will tell you, “and the cities have walls that the chariots run upon. You will be defeated and you know it. You’ll go by way of the grave at last. You will miss the unveiling of the glory of Christ in the earth, you will not be a member of God’s overcoming, conquering army.” All this is an evil heart of unbelief. But we are called in this hour to take our stand with Joshua and Caleb and proclaim by the faith of the Son of God within that **WE ARE ABLE TO GO UP AND TAKE THE LAND!**

The mighty power of God within us is able to do exceeding, abundantly above all that we ask or think, above all that we dream or imagine. God will do the work as we follow on in patience, faith, and obedience, even as He did for Israel of old. “Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it.” That is the confession of the heart of faith born of God! The Lord has promised it, but we must possess it. He has given it, but we must experience it. It is our portion, but we must take it. The fullness of Christ is not presently our possession, but HE will cause us to take it, HE will enable us to possess it. Our heavenly Joshua, Christ Himself in us, is taking the lead in His army; He will go before us; He will fight the battle for us! All we need is such a vision. Joshua received such a vision, and thereby the faith and assurance that God was with him. And armed only with that faith, trust, and obedience, he possessed the land!

The myth that the “finished work” of Christ secures for us all the provision and purpose and glory of God, that Jesus paid it all and did it all, therefore we can enter the land essentially unscathed, that it costs nothing, that there is no striving, no pressing, no warfare; that all you have to do is believe and confess — these myths must forever end! The hour is late, the day of unveiling is at hand. Only an unreserved commitment, only an indestructible faith, only a radical thrust will burst this manchild of the ages and herald the dawn of that blessed age when the glory of the Lord shall fill the earth as the waters cover the sea, and all peoples and all nations shall come and walk in the light of the Lord, and there shall be no more curse anywhere forever. Sons of God — let us arise and enter in and possess our land!

We all want victory in one brief skirmish. How many times did some of us go forward in response to an invitation in a church or revival meeting, expecting that in one divine encounter we would conquer all our enemies, henceforth to possess our inheritance. We consecrated ourselves to the Lord, we tarried at the altar, hands were laid on us, prophecies went forth over us, demons were cast out of us, we laid all on the altar, we prayed through, each time expecting that this was the final battle. And how many know it didn't work! Somewhere we missed the point — there are *seven nations* in this land that must be subdued! Seven is a complete number, representing *every enemy*, including the last enemy, death. You see, we did not yet understand in those days the plan and way of God for our overcoming. God's word to Israel in the wilderness should be weighed with diligent meditation, thought, and prayer. “And the Lord thy God will put out those nations before thee **little by little: thou mayest not consume them at once...**but the Lord thy God shall deliver them unto thee, and shall destroy them with a mighty destruction, **until** they be destroyed. And He shall deliver their kings into thine hand, and thou shalt destroy their name from under heaven: there shall no man be able to stand before thee, **until thou have destroyed them**” (Deut. 7:22-24).

Tony Salmon once put it this way: “God is not out to kill or destroy men. Mankind is not His enemy! And God is not the enemy of mankind! God so *loved* the world that He gave His Son. God was in Christ *reconciling* the world unto Himself. Jesus is the Saviour of *the world* and of *all men*. God does precision warfare. He doesn't want to take any human casualties with Him. During the Gulf War we had precision warfare like never before. We're learning how to take out military fields, airports, oil derricks, and military installations without harming the civilian population. Our fight is not with the civilian population. We must see that our Father is doing the same kind of warfare on the inside of us! He's not out to get you — He's after everything on the inside of you that prevents HIS UNVEILING — He wants to be seen on the inside of you.

“Woe to anything that stands up in His temple and tries to prevent that unveiling! Anything that stands up in His temple which we are, to *defy* that unveiling, has automatically made itself His enemy. God is coming swiftly, He's coming in vengeance to destroy *your* enemies and *His* enemies. God is not after you, He's after your enemies! We haven't separated ourselves from the enemies that are on the inside of us. The enemies on the inside of us are not US! Fleshly thinking, natural reasoning, the carnal understanding of the word of God, all of our hatred, variance, discord, doubt, fear, lust, all of our greed — those things are not US! They are squatters, they are trespassers, for they inhabit *our land* which is *His land*, and God is angry at them, He's after them, because He wants to be revealed, He wants to appear and be king in His land.

“The Lord of glory is going to be seen in His temple and He won't allow any enemy to stand. What He requires of us is that we view these things as our enemies, the way He does! Once we view them as enemies, as squatters and trespassers, then we can isolate them from ourselves and see them as enemies separate from ourselves. Once we truly see this we can sit back and

watch God do His wondrous work! All the judgments of the book of Revelation have the seven churches in mind. It is the judgment that *begins at the house of God!*

“Have you ever had one of these enemies that you thought was dead suddenly stick its ugly head up and attempt to exercise dominion over you? Many times I have heard saints (myself included) gasp in horror as they say, ‘I thought these things were gone! I was delivered of these things long ago!’ This exclamation is usually followed by pinning the blame on themselves; sentencing themselves to discouragement, feelings of failure, and self pity. The enemy would have us think that these trespassers have returned to their seat of authority to reign as king over us, when in fact God’s deliverance, which is total and complete, is revealed in us and through us, in divine stages, not all at once. ‘I will **not drive them out before thee in one year,**’ the Lord said, ‘by **little and little** I will drive them out from before thee, until thou be increased (mature, fruitful, able to produce offspring), and inherit the land’ (Ex. 23:29-30)” — end quote.

There is a scripture which relates the remarkable story of the report of the twelve spies Moses sent to spy out the land of Canaan, and this experience of the children of Israel is very meaningful to God’s elect today as we set our faces to possess *our promised land*. When the spies returned ten of them said to Moses, “We came into the land whither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and honey; and this is the fruit of it. Nevertheless the people be strong that dwell in the land, and the cities are walled, and very great: and moreover we saw the children of Anak there. The Amalekites dwell in the land of the south: and the Hittites, and the Jebusites

, and the Amorites, dwell in the mountains: and the Canaanites dwell by the sea, and by the coast of Jordan...the land through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it are men of great stature...giants...and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight. And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had spied out” Num. 13:27-33).

Ten out of the twelve men Moses sent to scout out the land of Canaan, after getting a first-hand look at the promised land, returned on the edge of despair. The size of the grapes — as large as melons — could not remove the gloom from their faces, for what good is milk and honey in a land that “eats its inhabitants.” In a well-fortified land whose citizens are giants? When the people of Israel heard this pessimistic report, they lost heart, for it seemed that continuing with the plan to take over the land of Canaan would be tantamount to signing their own death warrants. It’s easy to understand their fear after the scouts’ vivid and daunting descriptions. Nevertheless, the Lord blamed the Israelites for their cowardice. In fact, their lack of faith brought the wrath of God against that entire generation, which was sentenced to die in the wilderness, never having entered the land.

Today God has set before His elect a much greater land! Since the late 1940’s and the early 1950’s God’s people have been hearing these glorious revelations of sonship, inheritance, and the kingdom of God. But what good is it to know these things if we continue to hesitate to enter in and lay hold upon them? We are not the first people who have come to the threshold of the kingdom! One generation has already died in the wilderness of fear and unbelief. If you and I do not arise and walk in what God has so mightily sent before us by His Spirit, then we, too, shall go by way of the grave and wait for our children or our children’s children to get us out! The creation is groaning for *real deliverance*, not merely some deeper teaching or higher concept. Someone must come forth and declare, “We are able to go up and take the land! Let us arise and cross over this Jordan!”

Why did God, who certainly knew about the giants and the fortified cities, command Moses to send spies in the first place? Why didn't God simply allow the Exodus to keep moving, replete with the cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night, the miraculous manna and the glorious tabernacle, without confronting the people with the option of battle? Why the command, "Send thou men that they may spy out the land of Canaan" (Num. 13:1-2). The Lord had a wonderful purpose in mind, and it certainly *wasn't* intelligence gathering! The verse in which God instructs Moses to send men to spy out the land uses the Hebrew word *v'yaturu* — a form of the verb *latur* — while the usual word meaning "to spy" is *leragel*, as seen in Genesis, where Joseph calls his brothers spies (Gen. 12:9).

What *latur* really means is to **lust after** (this definition comes from Rabbi Schlomo Riskin, chief rabbi of Efrat, Israel). God didn't want these men to spy out the land — but rather to lust after it, to desire it intensely! It wasn't enough to report back that, yes, the fruits were good, and yes, the cities were fortified, and yes, the inhabitants were giants and we looked like grasshoppers in their eyes. What this advance guard was *supposed* to demonstrate, despite the instinct of the heart to tremble and the spirit to quake, was an overriding passion. Without such passion, Israel could never step forward with faith and determination to *possess the land!* Hence, God's intention in sending the "scouts" was that they see the land, desire the land, be inspired with passionate love for it, inspire the people with vision, faith, zeal, and devotion — and *enter in!*

This is the spirit God is raising up in His elect in this hour! It is no longer merely a *wish*, or a *desire*, or a *hope*, or a *longing* to possess our inheritance in Christ, but we are truly consumed by such a love, such a passion for Christ in all His beauty, majesty, wisdom, power, glory, and fullness that it becomes a *divine necessity!* *We will not be denied!* Sonship to God has now become our all-consuming passion; our desire is so intense, our hope so fervent, our expectation so strong that we cannot settle for less! Now we are pressing forward, fully believing and expecting that God will put every enemy within our land under His feet and deliver us into the fullness of the power and glory of the kingdom of God! We are yielding to Him in every way we know for that divine purpose.

God always has His witnesses to His truth and His purpose, and in Joshua and Caleb, of the twelve scouts sent to search out the land of Canaan, He had such a witness. When the time came to enter in, Caleb wanted for his inheritance the mountain wherein he had seen those giants forty years before. "Give me this mountain!" he thundered. He would not be denied. Among those of us who started in this last move of God that came in 1948, that got a glimpse of that land flowing with milk and honey, are a few who have the true report — those who know God is able to bring us into the fullness of sonship to God. There are many today who, like the ten scouts, have lost the vision and have watered down the purpose of the Father. They refer to the original revelation of sonship as "classical sonship," and, of course, they have now come up with the new and improved version! But somehow their version always falls short of the revelation so powerfully imparted in the days of God's sovereign visitation. I do not hesitate to tell you that those who are ready to settle for something less than what GOD HAS SPOKEN are of the faithless scouts, and they will sink down into a lesser glory and their bones will bleach in the desert. Joshua and Caleb were the only two that entered into what God had promised Abraham and his seed from the beginning. And it is interesting to note that the portion that Caleb desired was Kirjath-arda which became Hebron. Hebron is where David later ruled for six and a half years until made king over all Israel. This is very significant, for it became a place of rulership. Do we desire the spiritual high places enough to demand the mountain, drive out the giants, and reign over the land of our inheritance? Yes, God has always had His two witnesses, and He has them today as well. They do not deny there are obstacles before one enters into

that which is our inheritance, the fullness of Christ, but they are sure of one thing — GOD IS ABLE TO GIVE US THE LAND!

Thank God for that inborn confidence and assurance in the hearts of God's called and chosen elect that the hour for the unveiling of the sons of God is at hand; that the ultimate purposes of God for His Christ-body are about to be revealed; that we stand now on the brink of Jordan prepared and ready to follow the ark of the Lord into a NEW EXPERIENCE OF CHRIST; to "cross over" from our wilderness of wandering into the life and victory and abundance and authority of the land of Canaan! The message sounds forth as a trumpet across the land — the Lord has prepared great and mighty things for His people: things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, and which have not entered into the heart of man (I Cor. 2:9).

Therefore, give all diligence to enter into the REALM OF THE SPIRIT wherein are known and touched and experienced all these unseen, unheard of, and unthought of things. That blessed realm brings the fullness of Christ and the kingdom of God. It brings righteousness and love, the mind of Christ and the image of God, life and immortality, victory and authority over all things, and blessing and deliverance for all mankind. Truly the heritage is ours for the possessing! And if no man from the ascension of Christ until now has entered into it, it still does not make one whit of difference. The fact remains — the fullness of Christ is ours for conquest! The popular church has rejected the possibility of possessing it; they would rather settle for a palm branch to wave in the sky, and a harp to play on a golden street, than to press on in to the measure of the stature of the fullness of the Christ.

Although the Israelites, under Joshua, entered into the land with wonderful victories, the complete conquest of Canaan did not take place until much later, for we read that Joshua "made war a long time with those kings" (Jos. 11:18). New kings, still loyal to those already killed, kept springing up and had to be destroyed. Some, in fact, were not annihilated but were left to test Israel, to see whether they would remain faithful to the Lord (Judges 3:1-4). The war against the self-life and all its attributes and powers is a prolonged and on-going conflict. Not a day goes by that the flesh does not send one or more of its kings and their armies to assail those who love the Lord in truth and seek His kingdom. Each manifestation and defeat of one king brings to light other and more formidable manifestations of the carnal mind and nature. The flesh has many arms in its arsenal! But thank God, "the weapons of our warfare are *not carnal*, but *mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ*" (II Cor. 10:4-5). Oh, yes! God will give us the victory!

The land must be "possessed." That was the Lord's word to Israel of old and it is His word to His elect today. The word "possess" is the Hebrew word *yarash* meaning "to tread on grapes," indicating the necessity of treading on the enemies as a conqueror. The causative form of the verb *yarash* means to cause a change in the power structure on the land — bringing down the kings, nobles, rich, and powerful, so that a new order may be set up. It is exactly what Elaine Cook wrote: "When, after forty years of wilderness journeying they were ready to enter the land, what did they find? Because they had endured the waste howling wilderness and had now crossed over Jordan, did they find that the enemy in the land was suddenly subdued without a struggle of any kind? Did they just proclaim, 'We are the sons of God! We have come to take the kingdom and possess it!' and find that the giants in the land fled from them in fear and left the land for them to inhabit without any interference at all? If that's what you believe, you need to look at the **blueprint** again! Yes, they had crossed over Jordan. Yes, they had experienced circumcision. But, **no** — the enemies did **not** flee away in terror from them! When I last read the account it said that they had to *actively possess each step of the way* — one foot at a time

as they walked. Potentially, it was *all theirs*, but they had to overcome each enemy and dispossess him before they could take possession of the land. They couldn't just 'declare' it done!" — end quote.

This is what is taking place in the life of every overcomer as we "possess" our land of the fullness of Christ. The enemies are entrenched, they have occupied our lives for a long time, but the Christ in us is mightier than all! As we gain victory after victory by the wonderful power of Christ in us the enemies *are being routed* one by one and a new governmental order of the mind of Christ, the righteousness of God, and the will of the Father, is being established in our land!

CONQUERING THE LAND

The time for crossing over the Jordan into the land of promise had arrived. Drums of war rumbled in the background as the armies of Israel gathered in solemn array. Leaders of the twelve tribes encircled a central fire within the camp. All were seated but Joshua and two men who had just returned from a reconnaissance mission. They had scouted the enemy and were about to suggest a strategy of attack. The two advance scouts addressed the council to make this report, "Truly the Lord hath delivered into our hands all the land; for even all the inhabitants of the country do faint because of us" (Josh. 2:24). The enemy is already defeated. Israel could go to battle in the strength of knowing the Lord had secured the victory!

All Israel was on tiptoe in expectancy. This was the time which this particular generation had looked forward to. For thirty-nine long years they had wandered in the wilderness as their disobedient fathers fell one by one and were buried in the desert. God called Moses up into the mountain; there Moses died, and the angels of God buried him. Joshua began to prepare the people for the crossing, according to God's instructions. The day before the crossing Joshua gave the people certain definite instructions. Chief among these instructions was this word, "Sanctify yourselves: for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you" (Josh. 3:5)

One of the reasons for this particular instruction was set forth in this line, "You have not passed this way before" (Josh. 3:4). Most of us enjoy routine, and going down the old familiar roads. There we see familiar places, faces, and experiences, and we feel comfortable with that which we are used to. There are not many surprises on the old paths, but neither is their much change or progress! Now the people of Israel were looking forward with eagerness to the moment when they would enter the new road! Joshua said to these eager people, "The road before us is new. We have never walked this path before. You have not passed this way before. You must be cautious but not unbelieving. You must be thoughtful and you must be obedient. You must walk in faith today and tomorrow" (Josh. 3:3-6).

As it was for them, so it is for us today! Unknown realms lie before us. Many of the Lord's people are comfortable with the old ways. They prefer to go to church and do the same old things Christians have been doing for two thousand years. They fear change, and do not believe that God is bringing in an entirely new order. But God's called and chosen remnant has heard the voice of Joshua-Jesus saying, "You have not passed this way before. The road before you is new. Sanctify yourselves: for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you! You must be obedient and walk in faith today and tomorrow." We who have received the call to sonship have been called to paths where our feet have not walked. We cannot continue on eating manna in the wilderness and drinking water from the rock. There is a new order in God that challenges us! We will face unveilings of glory of which we have never dreamed! God is doing a new thing! A new day has arrived! A new feast of abundance and fullness is

prepared! It is now time to arise and cross over our spiritual Jordan. The hour has come to begin to possess our land!

It wasn't Moses who led the children of Israel from the wilderness into the promised land, but it was Joshua — the Hebrew name for Jesus. Moses was a shepherd, but Joshua was a military general. When our Joshua-Jesus has made the determination that it is time for us to cross over and take our land, then there is nothing that is going to stand in His way. He is a great military mind, the general and captain of our salvation! Whether we are set to battle the giants, or the Canaanites, or the Jebusites, or whatever enemy lies before us, He declares, "This is *our land*, this is *our promise*, this is *our inheritance*, this land belongs to us and we are taking it by the word of our God!" Our heavenly Joshua is a great warrior and He will bring us into our land. He will drive out every enemy and defeat every foe. Not one of our problems, weaknesses, besetting sins, or the power of corruption can stand before Him!

The children of Israel were commanded to "Arise and go over this Jordan." Jordan is a type of *crossing the barrier or boundary* to break forth into the new. It is the point of entrance. The Hebrew word *abar*, meaning "to cross over" or "to pass over," is used more than twenty times in the first four chapters of the book of Joshua. Besides emphasizing the decisive nature of this moment in the history of the nation of Israel, it distinguishes this event from what happened at the Red Sea. This word is never used to describe the passage through the waters of the sea. Two other words for crossing over are used in Exodus 14:22 and 29; they mean "enter" or "walk." The reason for this is that the verb *abar* implies crossing over a *boundary*, whether physical like a river valley, political like a nation's border, or spiritual as to enter into a new realm in God.

The snows from mount Lebanon had been melting and they poured into the valley making Jordan a raging torrent. The Canaanites stood on the opposite bank and laughed at the Israelites. They are certain there is no need for alarm, for Joshua will have to wait for spring floods to recede before his army can cross. But their laughter solidifies in their throats as they perceive that there is a strange moving in the Israelitish army. Joshua gives the command, "Forward, March!" How will they cross? Will they go down to a watery grave? Has he lost his mind? One mile ahead of the army go two priests bearing gently and cautiously the Ark of the Covenant — the very presence and glory of God! I can see them with the eye of the mind as they approach the raging, muddy waters. It appears the waters grow the more unruly the nearer they come. But onward they march! What faith! What unswerving trust!

Carrying out God's strategy, the priests advance to the edge of the water, and as they touch the rim of the water, Jordan trembles, and as if answering the order of the Almighty Commander, jumps to attention, standing a half mile high. Walls of water! But God was fulfilling His promise to Joshua! The host goes over dryshod and moves into the promised land by obedience. So the unconquered and unexplored territories of the fullness of Christ can be obtained as we, in obedience to our heavenly orders, by the living word of God we now hear out of the spirit of sonship within our hearts, launch out into the deep with Joshua-Jesus as our Commander! By that same faith we do now leave the wilderness of our previous in-part experiences with God behind, and following the presence of God which goes before us we dare to step our feet into the waters of impossibilities that separate us from the land we are to possess! One step at a time we go forward, not looking back, that we may safely, by the power of God, make our entrance into the borders of our new land of the kingdom of God!

RULING OVER THE NATIONS

Wondrous things await the elect of God, things which it is not lawful for a man to utter in the hearing of uncircumcised ears and hearts. Long ages have come and gone since that first glorious dawn when the Creator uttered the portentous decree, "Let there be light," and there are vast ages that lie yet unborn before us. Our present dispensation is closing, we are already overlapping into another. Almost all Christians are spiritually aware of this, regardless of what level of experience in God they have attained to. Glories greater far than this age has disclosed are already beginning to burn. Dawn with blushing hues is advancing in the eastern skies, stretching forth her golden fingers to draw aside the shades of night and open the gates of day. Soon will come the explosive fulfillment of divine promises that pertain to that wonderful age to come, of which we have merely "tasted" its powers (Heb. 6:5). Our blessed Lord and Christ shall see the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied, and that glory is to be revealed in us. The groaning earth is waiting, creation is longing for deliverance. The seas are roaring and the earth is quaking.

There are wars and rumors of wars and terrorism that strike fear into the hearts of men. Among the ruthless surging tide of unbridled crime, drugs, rebellion, immorality, disease, suffering, poverty, sorrow and injustice, we hear the groans of the dying. The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain! Men's hearts are failing them for fear in looking after those things which are coming upon the earth. The cry of the oppressed is entering into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. The night has been long, and is so cold and dark. But the Day Star is arising! The morning cometh! Already the flashes of light are climbing the eastern sky. Heaven and earth will soon be ablaze with the glory of the revelation of the manifest sons of God!

Why has God not brought deliverance to this sin-cursed world during the past two millenniums of church history? Ah, God be praised! There are co-heirs in whom the glory is to be revealed. There are "many brethren" to be manifested in the image of the "firstborn." The number of these is not yet complete, but the revelation has burst forth out of the sovereign voice of God from His holy temple, and the hour is at hand. When all the heirs of the kingdom are gathered out of this dark age, God will unveil His many-membered Christ to the world. The long-awaited manifestation of the sons of God will take place, and creation will be delivered from the bondage of sin, decay, and death and brought "into the glorious liberty of the sons of God" (Rom. 8:21).

Creation cannot possibly be delivered during the church age! The gospel may be preached with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, and it leaves the creation in the same bondage of corruption. The gospel of this age has been designed to *call out a people for His name*, to form the many-membered inChristed body in the earth. That is the testimony of scripture, and this age is not intended that it should do anything else! But when the sons of God are manifested with Christ in His glory, it will be the signal for the deliverance of creation from the bondage of corruption. The godly and glorious and incorruptible race of the second Man who is the last Adam is at hand, God's NEW MAN. HE will bring the cure! HE will enlighten the minds of the people and turn their hearts to the Lord! HE will heal the broken world! He will rebuke sin and sorrow and disease! HE will bind death! HE will rifle the grave! HE will deliver

creation! Isn't it wonderful! But we must possess and inherit **our land** before the nations and all creation can be set free! That is the mystery!

God, away back before the mountains were formed, or ever the sun and moon appeared, had perfected His plans for the future rulers of the works of His hands. Those plans called for a planet named Earth, and for His future rulers, His own sons, to be placed there for their training in God's school of dominion. And those plans called for a tempter to ensnare the original pair, who were made to be deceived and subjected to a realm where they could *learn* to overcome and rule, first *within themselves*, then over the earth, and finally over all things of God's vast creation. "For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him who hath subjected the same in hope" (Rom. 8:20). God had a better plan for men than a garden — a very beautiful garden, of course, yet a garden in which nothing ever happened and no one ever learned anything or got anywhere. If there had never been a fall, then there could be no salvation, and man could never have learned through grace to rule his enemies *within* and *without*. The fall with its plan of redemption provided the perfect school where a man could experience in a practical way the *principles of dominion!*

It is in the realm of *sonship*, this realm of *maturity*, this realm of *overcoming*, that the increase of God's government is known. As Christ's life grows within us, His government increases within. We find that more and more we are able to reign over all His enemies within ourselves! We all have inherited characteristics, learned ways, acquired traits, developed habits, and have personality quirks carried over from childhood, that are in opposition to the spirit and nature of the Christ. His government must increase within us until all those things are so ruled over by the mind of Christ that no one would ever suspect that they ever existed in our life!

Many who know me would be surprised to hear that at one time in my life I suffered from an inferiority complex! Some people have been stubborn all their life and rebellious. They want to have their own way. Some people are hard, critical, domineering, and unforgiving. They've been that way all their life. Some are fearful, or always beat down by problems and circumstances. Others have fallen again and again to the lusts of the flesh, to greed, immorality, drugs, drunkenness, etc. Others have awful tempers, fly off the handle, use vile language and say terrible things. And some are self-righteous, holier than thou, super-spiritual, always right, and know it all! You can't tell them anything. By the indwelling life of Christ we have all been given the power to lay down our life, and there is another government that is being raised up within us! As this government unfolds in our lives we find that all these enemies are conquered, driven out, possessed, and dethroned! The increase of His kingdom delivers us from all enemies that have occupied our land! Christ is King in us. He *rules!* He *delivers!* He is mighty to *save to the uttermost!*

I say to you today by the authority of God — if God's kingdom is coming in you, if His government is increasing in you, then His government is absolutely capable of ruling in righteousness and peace and power over every situation and circumstance. I do not say it will all happen overnight or tomorrow. But nothing is too hard for the government of the almighty Christ! You do not have to settle for things as they are. YOU can change them! He that is in you is mighty, and He will make you an overcomer right where you are. You must overcome *within yourself* before you can expect to see changes in those about you. You have been

apprehended as a king-priest after the order of Melchizedek! You have power to conquer, power to possess, power to inherit, power to bless, power to reconcile, power to redeem, power to change and transform all things! When we have fully possessed our *own land* and clamed our *own inheritance* we shall then be qualified to rule nations and worlds and galaxies!

God wants His government to so increase in us that we change the complexion of all things about us. God is raising up His elect in this hour to sit with Christ *right now* upon His throne! Oh, yes! His divine authority is beginning to operate in and through our lives in that undistinguished place where we are. Don't tell me that you are in some spiritually mystical way reigning in a high place in the Spirit over Russia and Europe and Asia and Africa and America, calling the shots of what is happening in the political, social, judicial, military, and economic realms, if you aren't ruling right where you are. Peace and righteousness and blessing will be established wherever we go! It is our ministry to bring the kingdom of God to bear on all situations great and small. The kingdom of God is not just in word, not something we talk about or read in papers, it is not a doctrine, and it is not just a revelation — the kingdom of God is that power which is *working in us!* Aren't you glad!

Turning inwardly we find that there have been so many kings that have ruled within us, kingdoms entrenched in our thinking, perception, desires, ways, and actions. These "seven nations" are represented again in the book of Revelation as the "seven heads" of the beast. These seven heads are called "seven mountains" and mountains are the figure for *kingdoms*. The seven heads are thus seven kingdoms — the same seven nations Israel had to conquer in their promised land! Can you not see the mystery? "To him that overcometh will I give *power over the nations...as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers.*" It's amazing the nations that have been resident in us! All these must be dealt with by the spirit of His Life! These kings are being subdued in every member of God's elect and brought to naught that His kingdom may take its rightful place in our lives. Christ must fully reign within us until He has thoroughly and completely conquered all the "land" within us. Now we stand in the new land of His kingdom, fully believing and expecting that He will put every enemy within us under His feet. We are cooperating with Him in that divine purpose!

Chapter 50

The Church In Thyatira

continued

“And he that overcometh...to him will I give *power over the nations*: and he shall *rule them with a rod of iron*; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers...” (Rev. 2:26-27).

The imagery here is drawn from Israel's *conquest* of the land of Canaan. To *overcome* means to *conquer* — that is the meaning of the word “overcome” in the Greek text. At the time Israel entered into their new land of promise it was occupied by seven “ites” — seven *nations* greater and mightier than they, seven nations that were exceedingly vile and corrupt, which they had to *conquer, subdue, break to shivers, dispossess, rule over, and destroy!* In the hidden language of the Spirit, the symbol of “land” has the meaning of “inheritance.” The land of Canaan which Israel possessed is a figure of the true land — our inheritance in Christ! Our new land in this new day of the kingdom of God is **the fullness of Christ!** Our spiritual inheritance is **in Christ**, and the full possession of our spiritual inheritance means **everything Christ is experientially realized within ourselves!**

The great mark of Canaan was that the land had to be *conquered* and that God gave such glorious victories over the strong, entrenched enemies. There is warfare in Canaan! There are giants in Canaan! There are seven great and mighty nations that must be subdued in Canaan! If we are going to possess the kingdom we are going to have to fight for it. The powers that are there will contest every foot of it; as soon as we start to possess our inheritance in God, we will come face to face with them. In that land of experiencing the fullness of Christ within ourselves we find great strongholds of hindrances, problems, weaknesses, bondages, discouragements, fears, misperceptions, carnal ideas and religious conceptions, fleshly desires, habits, sin, sickness, and death — all entrenched enemies of the realization of the mind, nature, victory, and power of Christ. But God has promised to drive out *all* these enemies from before us, giving us dominion over all these nations with rest, blessing, abundance, glory, and power in the land of our inheritance!

What are some of these nations the Lord has promised to deliver into our hands as we enter in to possess our spiritual land of promise?

Let us look at these seven nations!

The first is the Hittites. Hittite means *terror*, coming from a word meaning to prostrate or break down by confusion and fear. Terror is the emotion people feel when facing the unknown or when threatened, as Israel was when they took the first step to conquer their land. It is the emotion we come face to face with when we hear the doctor announce, “You have cancer,” or the stock market falls a couple thousand points right when we are ready to retire. There is also *spiritual terror* inflicted by what Lynn Hiles calls *terrorist preachers*. When I was a boy, the churches in which I was raised painted such a picture of God as One who is so exacting,

demanding, judgmental, and vindictive, that if you went to bed at night with one little unconfessed sin in your life, not under the blood of Jesus, and should the “rapture” take place during the night, you would be left behind! I tell you that in those days I could not truly love God for *being afraid of Him!* The coming of the Lord sent no thrill of glory through my soul; the very thought of His coming struck terror in my heart! God was so high and holy, so awesome and exacting, so stern and demanding that I was sure I could never be quite ready to stand before His fearsome presence. How my ransomed soul exults with joy unspeakable and full of glory that God has driven that false Hittite religious spirit of terror out of my land so that I now may KNOW HIM AS HE REALLY IS! Do you think we should be afraid of someone as gracious and merciful as our *heavenly Father?* Should we cringe before Him like a dog that expects a kick? What has God done to us that we should be afraid of Him? God so *loved* the world that He gave His Son for us! **God is Love!**

It is a fact that most fear has its root in the **unknown**. People fear what they cannot see, or what they do not understand, or what they imagine to be. It's no wonder, then, that since religion deals with an unseen world — with spirit beings, the hereafter, eternity, future punishments and rewards, heaven and hell — that people's **fears** play a very important role in most of the world's **religions**. You must admit that fears of pain, suffering, or death; fears of coming judgment, tribulation, or wrath; fears of spiritual punishment and unknown, unnamed torments in hell; all of these fears virtually *dominate* most of the religions on earth!

Those who are God's called and chosen elect in this great day of the Lord are now being delivered from all fear and terror, for they understand by the deep inner revelation of the Spirit that all things are in our Father's hands and all that happens in our lives is part of His wise purpose for our growth and development in Him. *He is in control*, no matter how dark or hopeless things *seem*, and He will bring us forth triumphantly as we commit our way to the Lord and trust also in Him. Now together we can raise our voices in blessed chorus with the Psalmist and joyfully sing, “I will bless the Lord at *all times*: His praise shall continually be in my mouth. I sought the Lord, and He heard me, and **delivered me from all my fears!**” (Ps. 34:1,4). The writer to the Hebrews adds, “He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, the Lord is my helper, and **I will not fear what man shall do unto me**” (Heb. 13:5-6).

Even in the “valley of the shadow of death” He has promised to be with us, and even there we shall “fear no evil” (Ps. 23:4). Those in whom the spirit of sonship is revealed fear no evil! We do not fear the wrath of men! We do not fear sickness or tragedy! We do not fear death! We do not fear judgment! We do not fear hell! We do not fear the antichrist! We do not fear world government! We do not fear tribulation! We do not fear the beast! We have no fear of the “end time”! We have no fear of economic collapse! We have no fear of terrorists! We have no fear of conspiracies! We have sought the Lord, He has heard us, and has delivered us from **all our fears** by the revelation of His mighty power working in us! By this you can know a son of God!

We all learn the spiritual lessons our Father teaches us in different ways, but He has a wonderful teaching strategy for each of us. More than forty-five years ago a young prophet and his wife came to the church I was pastoring in Florida. One night in our home this brother's wife went into a trance and through visions and prophecies began to reveal some awesome things. Some of them concerned murders and other terrible events that had happened far away. Times, locations, and names were given. Others concerned folks right in our church. Secret sins, including homosexuality, and even murder, were revealed in the lives of some of the saints. This continued into the early hours of the morning. It really got scary! We were told that a certain one of these people somehow knew that we had learned about his dark secrets, and that he

would be coming after us. We fled out of the house in terror and spent the rest of the night at another location!

Upon returning home the next day, as soon as I pulled the car into the carport, I noticed that someone had opened the trap door overhead into the attic. My blood ran cold. My hair bristled. Fear seized me more than ever. I just knew someone was up there and they were waiting to murder me! Things got even more bizarre before the Lord intervened. Then powerfully the word of the Lord came to me, thundering within my spirit, **“I HAVE N-O-T GIVEN YOU THE SPIRIT OF FEAR, BUT OF LOVE, AND OF POWER, AND OF A SOUND MIND!”** At once I saw all this for what it truly was. It was a delusion! It was not of God! And through this traumatic experience the Lord taught me one of the fundamental principles of His kingdom and life, laying it as a line, a foundation in my walk. Isn't our Father a wonderful teacher! Every son being brought to maturity will learn some of the most valuable lessons in God's unique laboratory and on His peculiar field trips! The principle the Lord laid in my life that day was just this: **I HAVE NOT GIVEN YOU THE SPIRIT OF FEAR.** Any message that genders fear, is not of God! You can take that to the bank, my brother, my sister, and you can judge all things, experiences, teachings, and ministries by that truth!

There are some preachers in this sonship-kingdom word, sad to say, who specialize in preaching **fear** instead of the victory and glory of Christ! They wildly speculate about world events, conspiracies, world government, the antichrist, the mark of the beast, great tribulation, etc., supposing that every national or world crisis portends the end. With each new election, or change, they suspect a vast conspiracy. They live on the brink of Armageddon. I have known precious brethren who out of **fear** of the world government takeover, or the Y2K delusion, sold their homes and moved to some remote area or some “safe” place. Their lives would have been better, happier, and more productive if they had stayed right where they were. It wasn't the word of the Lord that sent them to their wilderness; it was the **spirit of fear!** It was the false spirit of the Hittites — one of the enemies we are now called to *conquer* as we possess our new land of the fullness of Christ!

For years preachers warned us that the Communists had a plan and time-table for world domination, and we were told that they were *ahead of schedule*. What **fear** this struck into men's hearts! But it was not the word of the Lord, it was the *word of the Communists!* And the word failed as Communism collapsed in Russia and Europe. The preachers didn't take time to hear from God, they just accepted the word of the Communists, inserted it into their erroneous theories about the “end-time,” and proclaimed it as truth. In this new day God is delivering His elect people from all this carnal and soulish sensationalism! There is a beautiful prophecy of king David that is addressed directly to those who have faith and confidence in the wonderful promises and plan of God, and of these he declares, “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. THEREFORE WILL WE NOT FEAR, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof...” (Ps. 46:1-3).

“We will not fear!” declares the prophet. WE WILL NOT FEAR though the earth (social order) be removed! WE WILL NOT FEAR though the mountains (strong kingdoms, empires) be carried into the midst of the sea (brought down by raging, surging masses of humanity)! WE WILL NOT FEAR though the waters (peoples) be troubled! WE WILL NOT FEAR though the mountains (governments) shake! No place to hide, there, no “safe area” unto which to flee — but — WE WILL NOT FEAR because **GOD IS OUR REFUGE!** Aren't you glad! As the Lord said to Israel when they entered their new land of promise, “*Let not your heart faint, fear not,* and do not

tremble, neither be ye **terrified** because of them; for the Lord your God is He that goeth with you, to fight for you against your enemies, TO SAVE YOU” (Deut. 20:3-4).

So much for the Hittites! God is giving us the victory!

Next we meet the Girgashites. The Girgashites were known only as the offspring of Ham which means *dark*. Spiritually it means to be ignorant, without understanding, or having a false understanding. It speaks of the carnal mind of the natural man who “receives not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, for they are *spiritually discerned*.” All of us have battled with our human perceptions and the reasonings of the carnal mind! And nowhere more than in the area of the word of God. Well do I remember back in the days of the great Latter Rain outpouring when a friend said to me, “Preston, I now know what the New Jerusalem is.” “What do you mean?” I asked. He replied, “WE are the New Jerusalem!” And immediately my carnal mind with its dead letter-of-the-word literalistic understanding, sighed, thinking, “Oh, brother, I’ve heard it *all* now!” Very shortly thereafter the mighty winds of divine revelation blew in quickening power into my own life, and in one blessed moment a whole storehouse of my old, carnal-minded, literalistic, religious interpretations put on the scriptures were swept away like chaff before a summer breeze. At last I *understood*!

The carnal mind is exceedingly dark and there is not one micro-milligram of spiritual understanding in it. Only those who have met this kingdom of the carnal mind and have *defeated* it are sons of God empowered to reign with Christ in His kingdom! I have observed through many years that in the vast majority of cases, when one is apprehended and receives the call to sonship, the very first carnal-minded tradition that is swept away is the old-order doctrine of the rapture. It’s as though that one false teaching is somehow the key or the gateway out of carnal understanding of the scriptures into the spiritual life and revelation of the kingdom of God! People who cannot within their minds cross that barrier never progress into the depths and heights of God. It is a deep mystery, but it is a divine truth that once one has slain *that* Girgashite giant, many others then fall in quick succession before him!

In our day when Bibles can be bought at Wal-Mart and almost any department store, and sermons can be heard any hour of the day or night, practically no one, the preachers in particular, is *hearing* the word of God! Multitudes read the words of the Bible but do not *hear* them! Intellect may grasp what is written there...but that is not a *hearing*. Hearing the word of God will work transformation in a man! A true hearing of the word will reveal the Father’s heart and uncover His ways and give understanding of His purposes. Hearing the word by the Spirit will bring obedience to the word — the obedience of faith — and things will begin to happen!

Taken by the Spirit to the valley of dry bones, Ezekiel was asked, “Son of man, can these bones live?” “O Lord God,” was the prophet’s response, “Thou knowest.” He was then told to prophesy to them: “O dry bones, HEAR THE WORD OF THE LORD!” The prophet obeyed, and as he declared to them the word of the Lord, they came together, bone to its bone. Covered first with sinews, then with flesh, those lifeless bodies were also quickened by the breath of divine life which entered into them (Eze. 37:1-10). The quickening of the dry bones was effected by their response to the Lord’s word! As they **kept hearing** what He was saying to them, the Holy Spirit kept working within them until they were made alive by His breath and stood up, an exceeding great army. In like manner, as we *keep hearing* and *keep responding* to the living word the Spirit is speaking today, the army of the Lord shall stand up in the earth and we shall possess all of our inheritance in Christ! Oh, yes! When the giants of the darkened carnal understanding are slain within us, the Girgashites are cast out and we possess more of our spiritual promised land! Oh, ye sons of God — HEAR THE WORD OF THE LORD!

Then we meet up with the Amorites. Amorite means *publicity, prominence, or exalted*. Amorites were mountaineers and lived in the high places. This speaks of spiritual pride and every thought and high thing in our lives that exalts itself against the knowledge of God. It includes all vain imaginations. It is very true that once we have conquered fear, becoming full of faith, confidence, and vision, and have slain the giants of the carnal understanding of the word, being quickened to spiritual truth — the very next formidable enemy we encounter is *spiritual pride!* I have seen many young saints in this walk of the kingdom become all puffed up with spiritual pride over their call to sonship and the abundance of revelation they have received. They walk around with a super-spiritual attitude looking down their noses at all the poor spiritual slobs who don't understand who they are, or know what they know! Just this week I received a letter from a brother, at the end of which he signed his name and then wrote in parenthesis, “*a manifested son.*” How I wish it was true!

God's true people are an humble people, and there is no place in the kingdom of God for an exalted spirit of self-importance because of our calling in God. That is not the spirit of sonship! Believe me, my beloved, it is all by His matchless *grace!* The words of the wise man are true for every son of God, “Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall” (Prov. 16:18). “Be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time” (1 Pet. 5:6). Pride is a kingdom within each of us to be overcome! Away with the Amorites!

The Canaanites are the next kingdom we encounter in the land. Canaanite means a *peddler, trickster, or trafficker*. This bespeaks of the spirit of charlatanism, showmanship, gimmickry, pretense, and religious racketeers! It is the misuse of the anointing and revelation one has received. Ah, what a temptation that is! The Canaanites are the harlot spirits of the fleshly religious methods of Mystery Babylon. These Canaanite preachers are always peddling something, hawking their wares — some little gimmick to get you to follow them and send them your money. This is the “business” side of religion! The church systems are full of Canaanite preachers and programs and most churches today are of the Canaanite spirit. So-called Christian television and radio are the strongest Canaanite spirits of all and if you are a son of God I do not hesitate to tell you that you have cleansed yourself from following after these religious hucksters! We have all met these Canaanite giants through the years and sometimes bought of their wares. But no longer!

Above all, we have met this Canaanite spirit right within ourselves, in our very own land, for every ministry the Lord raises up, on whatever level, faces sooner or later the temptation to *use* the anointing of God, the revelation of God, or the power of God, and to *use* God's precious people for his own profit and ends. Oh, yes! You will never go anywhere in God without meeting up with one of these giants! Thank God, most of us have encountered that nation in our land and by the power, wisdom, and understanding of the mind of Christ we have thrown down their altars, cut down their groves in all their high places, and have burned all their images within ourselves that they might not any longer turn our hearts from wholly and only following Christ into the land of our full inheritance in the Spirit!

The next nation, the Perizzites, are an *open or unwalled* country. They are defenseless, those who have no spiritual immune system, who dwell in a spiritual land of weakness, doubt, indecision, vacillation, limitation, inferiority, and condemnation. These are always upset, worried, offended, confused, discouraged, distressed, beaten down and full of trouble. Everything goes wrong for these folks! Their lives are one disaster after another. Those who are constantly battling within themselves this inner condition of the Perizzites have not yet learned this one simple but sublime truth — you have *within you the self-existent Life of God!* How many weak

and weary saints are constantly running around from meeting to meeting, from revival to revival, from preacher to preacher, from prayer group to prayer group, **seeking Life**. These dear souls always stand in need of some “blessing.” They need you to pray for them, encourage them, counsel them, and help them on an on-going basis.

You can always spot a person controlled by the Perizzite spirits, because his whole world is on the outside. He has no defenses, no strength, no ability in Christ of his own, but is totally dependent upon what others can and must do for him. If he gets fed, someone else must feed him. If he gets clothed, someone else must provide the garment. If he gets bathed, he must borrow someone else’s water. He cannot solve any of his problems for himself, they must all be ministered to from without. He gets no word from God out of his own spirit; others must teach, counsel, prophesy, and guide him. Thus we see that there are three basic characteristics of those in the Perizzite condition. First, they have more problems than most other folks. Second, they are dependent upon others to meet their needs and solve those problems. Third, when they have a need they let it be known until someone comes and meets it!

The Perizzite spirit causes people to have the victory when everything is going good, or when they are struck with some ecstatic experience, some special blessing; but as soon as the blessing wears off they are so weak they can’t make it without another spiritual “fix.” What’s wrong with these folks? I will tell you! Their source of life is **on the outside!** They have not been awakened to that all-sufficient, omnipotent, self-existent life that dwells **within their spirit**. They are unable to appropriate the power of the Christ within for themselves. Their senses have not been exercised to discern that truly “*greater is He that is within you, than he that is in the world!*” They have not developed to that point of spiritual maturity where they know Christ to be the substance of their inward life, their all-in-all, sufficient to answer every question, meet every need, solve every problem, deal with every situation, overcome every obstacle, conquer every enemy, and transcend every problem within and without.

God is raising up a people who know that **THEY HAVE LIFE IN THEMSELVES!** These are they who have battled the spirits of the Perizzites and overcome them, and occupied their land. Oh, yes! Let me present this glorious company of overcomers, even those who have life in themselves. They are strong. They are full of faith and the Holy Ghost. They have discovered the river of life that flows out of their innermost being, life full, abundant, overflowing! They are never discouraged by any situation, nor upset by any circumstance. They are constant — not *up* one day, and *down* the next. They seldom have prayer requests. They are always encouraging others, but never seem to need encouragement themselves. They minister to many, but do not stop to be ministered to. They are not offended by what others say or do. They are not oppressed or burdened. They are not fearful, worried, or confused. They don’t quit when the going gets tough. They don’t talk about the devil, or how he has been after them. They don’t magnify their problems. They are not sad, sorrowful, or downcast, regardless of what happens. They always have the victory. They love all men unconditionally, and manifest toward all the spirit of reconciliation. The word of Christ dwells in them richly. They have been given a new song, even praise unto their God! They walk in wisdom and understanding, in confidence and faith, and rejoice in expectation of the glory of God. Their consuming passion is to see God’s kingdom purposes fulfilled in the earth.

What is the secret to these people’s victory? I will tell you! **THEY HAVE LIFE IN THEMSELVES!** The firstborn Son of God said, “For as the Father *hath life in Himself*; so hath He given to the Son to *have life in Himself*” (Jn. 5:26). **LIFE IN HIMSELF!** That is **self-existent life**, a life not derived from any source, not drawn from without, not dependent upon any substance — **inherent life!** Therefore Jesus could say, “*I am the Life!*” No man before Jesus

could say that. May I reverently add, that just as the Father has life in Himself, and just as the Father has given the Son to have life in Himself, so has the Father given to the *sons* to have life in themselves! That is the power of sonship to God! Once the Spirit of God has quickened our spirit; once we are joined to the Lord as one spirit; once the spirit of Christ dwells within us as the spirit of sonship — we too have life in ourselves!

Jesus did not come to receive life, for He *was life*. Jesus did not come to receive life, but to *give life*. Within that life was contained all the fullness of God! If He needed understanding, the understanding was in the life which was within Him. If He needed wisdom, the wisdom was in the life which was within Him. If He needed power, the power was in the life which was within Him. He possessed a nature and a life that was not dependent upon anything without, nothing could hinder, quench, or destroy that life, nothing could add anything to that life, for it was *self-existent life, all-sufficient life, inexhaustible life, incorruptible life!* This is the life of sonship! Once we discover this life, appropriate this life, and by it swallow up all limitation and death, we have conquered the Perizzite spirits within ourselves and are now living and resting in this wonderful new land of victory!

The next nation with which each of us contends on our march into our spiritual land of promise is that of the Hivites. Hivite means a *village or encampment*. It refers to that which is organized as a society — the systems of this world — *doing things the world's way!* Every little “organized fellowship” which establishes some “order” to which we all must conform apart from the sovereign and spontaneous flow of the life of the Spirit, becomes one of the villages of the Hivite kingdom! This spirit of organization, exclusiveness, control, and sectarianism may be found within the flesh of each one of us and we will surely meet up with this enemy before we have fully possessed our land of the fullness of Christ. Every man-made religious system is a Hivite village or encampment!

The Hivites are sons of Canaan, the peddler and huckster, and also speaks of *external* forms of worship. It is impossible to worship God externally! Oh, yes, one may go through the physical motions of singing, shouting, raising the hands, swaying, dancing, or prostrating the body, but that does not mean he is *worshipping*. One can appear to worship externally, and it be a sham, a façade, for *God is a Spirit*, and they that worship the Father *must* worship Him *in spirit* and *in truth*. The “villages” of the Hivites take many forms, but it is always what man does and builds “for” God rather than the work of God by the Spirit!

The last of the seven nations we are called to conquer within ourselves is the Jebusites. It is interesting to note that the Jebusites occupied Zion, the stronghold of Jerusalem, and they were not dislodged from there until David conquered them long after the days of Joshua. There David established his kingdom and he reigned from mount Zion gloriously. The conquest of the Jebusite kingdom represents the *final battle* for possession of the land, which then qualifies us to rule and reign in the kingdom, and upon mount Zion, with the son of David, the Lord Jesus Christ! And notice, now, the *final promise* to the overcomer, following the *final step* in his overcoming in the messages to the seven churches, “To him that overcometh will I grant to **sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne**” (Rev. 3:21). That is the promise to those who conquer the nation of the Jebusites within themselves!

Jebusite means a *threshing place*. Ah, this is the place where we encounter trials, testings, troubles, tragedies, reversals, problems, strippings, cross-currents, and all those traumatic experiences by which we are made strongest in the Lord! This is the “much tribulation” through which we enter the kingdom of God! A lot of people are reluctant to face the warriors of this

fierce kingdom! These warriors may be temptations, lusts, habits, sickness, accidents, loss, marital problems, troubles with our children, the boss, or other people, financial disaster, or a thousand other seeming tragedies that come our way for our processing. Each of these battles is tremendously important, for this is the final victory that prepares us for the throne!

As I have pointed out many times before, this journey to the throne of the universe begins in that small and undistinguished place where you are. The kingdom of God is *within you*. The inChristed who are to reign with Christ from sea to sea, then from planet to planet, and finally from galaxy to galaxy, are being prepared to *rule*. Think not in your heart, precious friend of mine, that you may pass your life here careless, indifferent to the dealings of God, suddenly to awake one fine morning to find yourself sitting with Christ governing the universe, because such a thing will not be. Begin today to MAKE WAY FOR THE KING! This present time is but a proving ground for those who through grace will reign with their Lord over the endless vastnesses of infinity. He is raising us up to sit with Him in the higher than heavenlies. And the place which He is preparing for each one is not only a world to come, and a kingdom of Life and Light, but a place *in Him*, bone of His bones, flesh of His flesh, spirit of His spirit, mind of His mind, nature of His nature, life of His life!

Years ago an IBM junior executive made a mistake that cost the company several million dollars. IBM's founder, Thomas J. Watson Sr., summoned him into his office. Assuming the worst, the sullied young executive said, "I guess you want my resignation?" Mr. Watson replied, "You can't be serious. We've just spent millions of dollars educating you!" God is the founder of the most important enterprise of all — the kingdom of God. God is now in the process of hiring, educating, and developing His management team. He is training **us** to become powerful rulers in that kingdom in the day when He initiates the *next phase* of the kingdom of heaven on earth. How much has God already expended on your training and education? God has made a supreme investment in us through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Without that price, none of us could even enter into the kingdom of God, much less attain the high-ranking positions God has waiting for those who overcome — who graduate from His School of Dominion. God doesn't stop there. He invests in us daily through His guidance and processings, through His teaching and training, and the continuous deep and vital dealings of His Spirit. By these we *learn to rule!*

God will never give up on us! He is investing in us with every intention of making a profit and expanding His kingdom. Our all-wise Father sees our potential. He knows our capacity to grow and develop. He is keener at discerning it than we are! Often when He initiates a training session in our lives, we think He has forsaken us, or that He hates us, or is punishing us. He is well aware of our weaknesses, and is ever ready to help! The children of God make a lot of mistakes, for children are children. Our ability to *learn* from our mistakes is part of what God uses to build character in us!

It is the *overcomers* — those who don't leave God's school or resign from His purposes when the lessons get hard and the going gets tough, who ultimately are given power in His kingdom. Have you made costly mistakes? Did God send a difficult test your way and you reacted badly, or failed it? Have you been stumbling and seemingly wasting God's time? *Don't resign!* Don't lose hope! Don't drop out of God's school! His investment in you is too great! He will see you through! Graduation day is coming! The positions in His authority and glory are waiting! Learn the lessons that will help you to better serve in the kingdom of God. As you do, great heavenly wealth and power and opportunity lie before you in the age and the ages to come. Through you creation will be lifted, redeemed, restored to life and liberty and glory — and that's where the real profit begins!

If you truly are being prepared to fulfill your sonship, then the Father has brought you out of the nursery of man's comfortable religion and He has drawn you into His School of Dominion. The curriculum of this school is a very difficult one! It just means this, that God is going to thrust us into the most difficult situations. A situation is only difficult if we are unable to cope with it. When we find the thing altogether beyond our measure; beyond our understanding, wisdom, and strength, then we are in difficulty. And that is the sort of thing the Lord does with people who aspire to be sons! He places them in difficult circumstances, His objective being to get their *spiritual senses* exercised so that they may experientially gain HIS understanding, wisdom, and strength! It requires no genius, experience, testing, or stretching to remain as we are. But it takes some processing, growth, and development to be a son!

A son is one who is in the way of having substance within himself. Children must have everything done for them, and they live in the blessing of that to which they have contributed nothing. Spiritual children live on the benefits of what Christ has done *for* them and continues to do *for* them. They also draw upon the abilities, accomplishments, experience, faith, prayers, ministry, knowledge, strength, and wisdom of other saints. Everything comes to the child from the outside, and nothing has been done by the child itself. There is nothing wrong with that! We all love children! But these are the marks of infancy — not maturity. Sons have come out of the realm where everything is done for them! They are no longer living off of other people's prayers, encouragements, prophecies, strength, and revelation, for the ability of God is being raised up within them by the indwelling life of the Spirit. What the son needs is BEING PRODUCED IN HIM and he is more and more walking in his own reality of the Christ within. His spiritual senses have become exercised, and he is possessing his new promised land of inheritance in Christ!

To deal with us and bring us to this state of maturity, the Lord puts us in difficult situations so that we can face the reality of His purpose in us and *grow up!* God says, "I will compass you about, hedge you in, shut you up, strip away every prop, remove all that you have depended upon, trusted in, and drawn your substance from; then I will precipitate you into the fiercest trials, tribulations and testings, I will make the furnace seven times hotter, and I will grow you up into sonship!" All our nice, comfortable line of things fall away at once and we find ourselves in a realm with which we cannot cope, not unlike the boy who cannot swim and is thrown into the river by his buddies.

We have been in the habit of asking questions and getting them answered, but when we enter into the battle with the Jebusite kingdom, suddenly no one can answer our questions; no prophet gives us a word, no word of wisdom is forthcoming to give us direction, no one's prayers avail anything, the rivers all run dry, the food we have eaten becomes stale and unpalatable, the heavens are as brass, and God seems a million miles away! We are separated from all that has sustained us. Do not despair, dear one! For a season it seems that we will perish in the swirling waters — but our wise Father knows that before we go down the third time we **will learn to swim!** God has shut us up to the fact that from this point on everything must become ours EXPERIENTIALLY OUT OF THE CHRIST WITHIN. It is no longer something that is ministered *to us*, but a work that is done *in us*.

To truly come through to God's full and intended place on mount Zion, we must know the Lord for ourselves in an inward way by the Spirit. It is often necessary for the Lord to suspend all external helps and render all others incapable of coming to our rescue, flinging us wholly upon *Himself*, that we may prove Him, know Him. This is not a permanent condition, but one we all pass through as we climb the rocky slopes of Zion and do battle with the stronghold of the Jebusites. It is a *threshing place!* It is there that Christ becomes ALL to us! When we have conquered in this realm, we are then ready to sit upon the throne! We now have power over *all*

the nations and have broken them to shivers as the vessels of a potter. We rule with a rod of iron — the very strength of God in the right hand of our sonship! Aren't you glad!

THE MORNING STAR

“To him that overcometh...I will give *the morning star*” (Rev. 2:28).

We are becoming overcomers by the power of the Christ within! When we have fully overcome all the “nations” that have occupied our land of promise, we shall be given “the morning star.” The morning star is that concentrated spiritual light and glory of Christ in His called and chosen elect which brings forth the dawn of the new kingdom day for all mankind. The sons of God, who have been given that morning star, which Christ within us *is* (Rev. 22:16), are themselves the herald of the new day which brings that glorious arising of the light of God to dispel all the night of darkness of man's disobedience and unbelief, flooding the world with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. It is therefore imperative upon every one who has received the call to sonship to put forth every effort, **spiritually speaking**, to conquer every enemy in our land, grow up in Christ, and rule over all things by the life of Christ within. Then we shall receive the morning star! Then creation shall know that the dawn approaches, that the kingdom of God is coming in power, releasing the creation from its long and painful bondage to sin and death.

The appearance of Christ within His elect as the morning star is a most glorious manifestation of the Lord! It is amazing how one fresh word of revelation from the Lord can change the whole course of our understanding and give us renewed hope and a fresh vision of our Father's purpose in us. I have been inspired and encouraged with this precious truth! It is my deep desire that all who read this message shall be encouraged in their forward walk in Christ. Every person understands what the morning star is. The morning star appears at the darkest part of the night — just before the dawn! It is not the dawn, but it proclaims the approaching dawn. It comes at the hour when the night is disputing with the morn. It is seen and greeted only by a few who are watching for it. The rest of the world is asleep. But they will soon be awakened by the arising of the Sun of Righteousness!

The morning star is promised to all who overcome, especially to those who conquer all the enemies within their land which prevent them from possessing their full inheritance in Christ. Inasmuch as Christ declared Himself to be “the morning star” and He promised to “give” this morning star to all who overcome, it is obvious that something unique and special of Christ is imparted to the Lord's faithful overcomers. This is a “coming” of the Lord you will seldom, if ever, hear anything about from the preachers and teachers of the church systems. The televangelists, who love to flaunt the “rapture” before their undiscerning audiences, know nothing of this coming of our Lord as the morning star. But the giving of the morning star involves an *impartation* of the Christ! On the individual level it is Christ arising out of our spirit to enlighten the darkness of our soul, announcing the dawning of God's glorious day that shall fill the whole earth which *we are*. The morning star is the glory of the Christ within arising out of our darkness which is ending, giving a vision of the dawning of the full day.

Someone once wrote, “At 4:00 A.M. I awakened and looked out my window which was half covered by frost, and half was clear, and there I saw the bright morning star. As I lay there for a while beholding the brilliance and beauty of that star, I slipped away into sleep. When I awoke again the brilliance of the sun flooded my room.” Is it not thus with God's Christ, with God's Day? Now we see Christ, the bright and morning star, the firstfruit, the forerunner, the prototype, the sample and first specimen of what God has purposed and planned for each and every man

and woman of Adam's race. And now Christ is coming in His overcoming elect, *making them corporately* what He is individually — the firstfruits, the forerunners, the prototypes, the sample and first specimen of what God intends for every man. The bright and morning star! That is what Christ *gives* the overcomer! The star of hope that tells us the long night of sin and death is almost over, and the Day is not far hence.

There is a remnant of God's people over the whole earth in whose hearts the morning star is beginning to arise. This remnant have fixed their eyes upon Jesus, they are looking away from all the darkness of this world, from the chaos of sin, sickness, pain, rebellion, crime, drugs, war, terrorism, hatred, injustice, fear, and death stalking the earth; and they are looking away from the seeming hopeless carnality of the church world, away from everything to the everlasting hills of God. There is to be a restoration! The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it! His prophets have beheld it in the Spirit! Praise God, we are living in the times of this restoration!

It is the greatest day in the long history of man! I know it's at hand because I see a people being pressed and processed into the very life of God. Not only you and me, but all creation as well will thrill to what God brings about in this glorious restoration! Everything hinges on that body of sons that is to be manifested in the perfect state of the image and likeness of God. And those who receive of this victory and glory, filled with the mind of Christ, conformed to the image of the Son, with a full and complete triumph over sin, carnality, limitation, and death — these make up that blessed company to whom is **given the morning star**. Flooded with His life and light they become the herald, the harbinger of the near-approaching dawn.

We have passed through a time of great darkness. It has been a long night of travail — yearning, waiting, longing. Darkness has blinded the minds of men, a deep sleep has been upon the Adamic race, the death of the carnal mind has kept earth's inhabitants in the regions of the shadow of death. But let it be shouted from the housetops — THE LIGHT IS COMING! THE MORNING IS APPROACHING! It is time to cast off all works of darkness, now to be clothed with the armor of light. CHILDREN OF LIGHT, STARS AND SUNS, WE ARE TO BECOME. Birthed into the new age, to bring forth the glory and triumph of His kingdom. Thank God, the morning star is piercing the sky darkness! Thank God, a few of His chosen ones have arisen to behold the glories of the dawn and to drink in the intoxicating freshness of the morn!

One of the reasons there is darkness today is because of the false doctrines and dark traditions of the church systems of man. No wonder God's people are full of unbelief, filled with doubts, overwhelmed with fears, and walking in the carnality of the natural mind. No wonder they magnify the works of the devil and declare him more than they declare the power of God. They know not the DAY in which we are living, because of the darkness of their minds. They receive death and they feed on darkness all about them. But God has raised you up, my brother, my sister, as a light this very day, that you might dispel the darkness and remove these heavens that men have been dwelling under and establish something completely new in the earth, a new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness! Bring forth in your life a new likeness, the image of God, that you may declare HIM that is supreme throughout all the earth and that He may reign in every heart. Behold the dawn!

Let us not sleep as do others. We who have received the love of the truth are heirs to a higher calling. We have privileges, and we have duties to perform. We must be about our Father's business. It is time to take the kingdom. It is time to cross over this Jordan and conquer all the nations and every enemy that stands before us. He who conquers shall receive the morning star. Christ in all His glorious and eternal fullness shall be given to this one! He shall then, upon

mount Zion, herald the dawn for all mankind! It is time to look up, time to arise and shine. The day is at hand. The night is far spent. We must go forth and lead the way for all who will follow.

Hallelujah for the morning star!
I awoke, and the night was passing,
And over the hills there shone
A star all alone in its beauty
When the other stars were gone.
For a glory was filling the heavens
That came before the day,
And the gloom and the stars together
Faded and passed way.
Only the star of the morning
Glowed in the crimson sky;
It was like a clear voice singing,
"Rejoice, for the Sun is nigh!"
O beloved! A star is shining,
Arising in God's sons —
It is Christ with a voice of singing,
"Rejoice! for today I come!"

Chapter 51

The Church In Sardis

“And by the angel of the church in *Sardis* write; These things saith *He that hath the seven Spirits of God*, and the seven stars...” (Rev. 3:1).

Throughout the early years of my walk in God I did not know that God has seven spirits! Although I had received the baptism in the Spirit at the age of twelve, read the Bible through at the age of fifteen, and had been in ministry nearly all of my life, I had never seen anything about the seven spirits of God. We all knew that “there is one body, and *one Spirit*, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling” (Eph. 4:4). We all thought that when we received the one Spirit, that was the beginning and the finish of it! We spoke in tongues, prophesied, did a few miracles, danced in the Spirit and rejoiced with joy unspeakable, and that was it! This is all we knew God had for us this side of heaven.

The Lord Jesus proclaims that He is the One who has the seven spirits of God. Before the throne are seven lamps of fire burning, which are the seven spirits of God (Rev. 1:4; 4:5). In the midst of the throne is a Lamb, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God (Rev. 5:6). Since this is so, let me ask you. Are there seven spirits of God? If you say that God has seven spirits, you seem to contradict the truth that there is but one Spirit! If, on the other hand, you say that the Spirit of God is not seven spirits, you are disagreeing with the very words of the Lord Jesus to John! Is the Spirit of God, then, seven or one? If God says there is one Spirit, then there is one Spirit; if God says there are seven spirits, then there are seven spirits. That is the mystery.

Through the Spirit of God in the body of Christ the visible creation is brought into contact with the invisible God. By the living Spirit of God within us God manifests Himself in His perfection of life and love and power. If God *fills all things*, as various scriptures state that He does, then all things are containers of Him. All of creation contains within it the seed of God, the essence of God. But only those who are made in God’s image and likeness can contain and express GOD AS A PERSON. A person cannot manifest as a person through anything else than a person. You may appreciate a cat, a bird, a stone, an ocean, or a rainbow for what they are, but you can’t fellowship with them. I can fellowship with you, and you with me, because we share the same quality of life.

The heavens and the earth declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork. We can view their marvels through the telescope, and stand in awe before their magnificence, but we do not say, “That is God.” The greatest wonder of the ages is when we can look at another personality and say, “There is God!” Creation can declare the glory of God, but only personality can declare the person of God. Did not our brother Paul have this in mind when he wrote, “And because ye are *sons*, God hath sent forth the *Spirit of His Son* into your hearts” (Gal. 4:6). Sonship is the criterion for union with the personality of God by the Spirit. For God to manifest His personality through a star, a mountain, or an unregenerated human, would be like me trying to manifest my personality through a tree, a dog, or a horse. There we have different

natures! There is no compatibility between these natures. Therefore God appeared to be on the horns of a dilemma when man, the image of God, the connecting link between the invisible God and the visible creation, fell into sin, darkness, and death. In this state of man's alienation from God in his mind and by wicked works there ceased to be the compatibility between the nature of God and the nature of man. This is why we must be re-generated by the renewing of the Holy Ghost, our spirit quickened by His Spirit, so that we become containers of Him — of the very PERSONALITY OF GOD BY THE SPIRIT. Can you not see the mystery?

We have been made containers of God and God intends to be our only content. Bottles are made to contain liquids of various kinds, cans contain food, tanks are designed to contain water and fuel, electric wires contain electricity. When we look at these we realize that each of these containers is "peculiarly made" to contain a specific substance. Sons of God are "peculiar" containers, for we have been brought forth by our Father to contain a specific substance — the Spirit of God! If we do not know God as our only content, we become a meaningless contradiction. Matters not how much of the wisdom of the world we imbibe, nor to what heights of human recognition or accomplishment we may attain; we are still void and meaningless, since we have been purposely generated by our heavenly Father to CONTAIN GOD AS OUR SOLE CONTENT; to reveal HIM as the personality of our life! As it is written, "And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: to the intent that **now unto the principalities and powers in the heavenly places** might be **KNOWN BY THE CHURCH** the manifold wisdom of God, according to the purpose of the ages which He purposed in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 3:9-11).

Seven, in the scriptures, is the most sacred number of the Hebrews. This number is used more often than all other numbers, save the number one. It is the number denoting *spiritual perfection* and *completeness*. In this connection it is interesting to note that in the title "Holy Spirit" the word "holy" comes from a root meaning "whole." Hence, the Holy Spirit is the Whole Spirit! The seven spirits of God, seven denoting spiritual perfection and completeness, are likewise a figure of the "Holy" or "Whole" or "Complete" Spirit! When we understand that the number seven conveys the idea of unity and completeness, rather than diversity, then we can with unclouded vision see that the seven spirits of God are the sevenfold, intensified Spirit of the Lord — the absolute FULLNESS OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD!

An object lesson of this truth is referred to in these words, "And there were seven *lamps of fire* burning before the throne, *which are* the seven spirits of God" (Rev. 4:5). In the Old Testament, the structure of the lampstand (candlestick) in the tabernacle of Moses was quite unique: below was one lampstand, above there were seven branches, and in each branch there was a lamp (Ex. 25:31-37). It was one lampstand, yet it had seven lamps; there were seven lamps, yet it was but one lampstand. Therefore it is correct to say that there is one lampstand, neither is it wrong to say there are seven lamps! Without question, the Lord is one Spirit; but He is also called "the seven spirits," that is, the sevenfold, intensified Spirit of the Lord!

The fullness of the personality of God, with all its attributes and powers, is THE SEVEN SPIRITS OF GOD. As we have previously noted, the seven lamps of fire burning before the throne of God are the seven spirits of God. The seven horns and the seven eyes of the Lamb upon the throne are the seven spirits of God. John saw One sitting upon the throne, and He that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne in sight like unto an emerald. A rainbow is *one*, but it has *seven colors*, and the seven colors of that glorious rainbow represent the sevenfold, intensified fullness of the Spirit of God!

When the fullness of these seven spirits of God is realized in the manifest sons of God then shall be fulfilled that which was spoken by the prophet Isaiah, saying, "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles (nations) shall *come to thy light*, and kings to *the brightness of thy rising*" (Isa. 60:1-3). In that day it shall also come to pass that "the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun (the glory of Christ) *shall be sevenfold*, as the light of seven days, in the day that the Lord bindeth up the breach of His people, and healeth the stroke of their wound" (Isa. 30:26). God's promise is the sending forth of the glory of God's Christ, not in the single light of the man Christ Jesus (Mat. 4:13-16), nor yet in the double portion of the Spirit, the former and latter rain in the first month, but AS THE LIGHT OF SEVEN DAYS CONCENTRATED IN ONE. This sevenfold intensified fullness of the Spirit of God shall be revealed upon the Lord's people whose "wound" has been healed, whose "breach" has been bound up — those who have been fully redeemed within themselves, completely restored to the image and likeness of God!

The church of Jesus Christ will one day move out of the darkness of tradition, bondage, carnality, immaturity, and limitation and move into the bright light of the fullness of the glory of God. The history of the church is a history of darkness and sorrow and bitterness. But, thank God, rays of promise are even now beginning to break forth from the heavens, and there is a small company of apprehended ones that is even now rising up into higher realms of the Spirit to drink in the intoxicating freshness of the morn! To them God is witnessing that He shall bring forth a light that is sevenfold in its intensification, so that there will be nothing hidden from it, and its heat and brightness will consume and destroy everything that opposes. Nothing short of this will lift up this sin-cursed world out of the dominion of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son.

Paul certainly had the realization of such an incomprehensible fullness in mind when he wrote to the Ephesians, "May He grant you out of the rich treasury of His glory...that you may be filled through all your being unto all the fullness of God — that is, may have the richest measure of the divine, and become a body wholly filled and flooded with God Himself" (Eph. 3:16,19, Amplified). What a word! We have no problem believing that the firstborn Son of God is the One who has the seven spirits of God, or the fullness of God by the Spirit (Rev. 3:1). In the days of His flesh this firstborn Son of God said that the Father had given the Spirit to Him *without measure* (Jn. 3:34). And now the Lord is teaching His elect that we also have the fullness of God *in our spirit*, for God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, and he that is joined unto the Lord *is one spirit*.

There is a strange situation in the church at Sardis, the church to whom the Lord revealed Himself as the One who *has the seven spirits of God*. Though the church at Sardis had the reputation of being a *LIVE church*...it did not appear that way to the Lord. "Thou hast a *name* that thou livest, and art *dead*," the Lord said, and even the little life they had was close to death. The question follows — Why would the Lord show Himself to this church, as One full of light, and resplendent with glory? **Because that is what every son of God must see if he is going to spring forth in LIFE!** "In Him was life; and the life was the light of men." He shines forth in the darkness, that He might cause the darkness to flee away.

It is not Christ in heaven that we see — it is Christ in the midst of the candlesticks. It is Christ in the midst of each one of us, Christ in our spirit, who shines forth in the glory of God! Until we see the mystery of the Christ within, the One who is closer to us than the air we breathe, the One who is closer to us even than the blood coursing through our veins, the very Christ within our

spirit who *is our life* — until we see that it is **this Christ** who has the seven spirits of God, we cannot arise and shine in the glory of the Father! Oh, yes, the Light has come, the darkness is past, God has lighted our candle, and the true light now shines! Christ is arising, standing up within His called and chosen elect, and He reveals His glory out of our innermost being. From there — from deep within — He addresses all our folly, all our dead works, all our forms of godliness, all our soulish activity, all our carnal perceptions, our natural reasonings, our human understanding, and our fleshly zeal.

Christ in our spirit steps forth from the Holiest of all within each of us to shine into all the darkness of our outer life, our limitation, fears, and self-effort, causing us to realize and know at last that our inner son, the Christ within, **has** the seven spirits of God! We can now live out of that glorious realm and walk with Him in white — walk with Him *as Light!* This reality is the root and fountainhead of our sonship life of victory, wisdom, power, and glory! This is *why* the Lord Jesus appears in the midst of the church at Sardis revealing Himself as the One having the seven spirits and the seven stars! This is the wonderful *purpose* of Christ's message to the church at Sardis! Though outwardly we may have a name that we live, and are dead, we may turn from all the death of the outer realm of soul and body, of the world and religion, turning to Christ in our spirit, that we might truly **see** the One who has the seven spirits of God! Aren't you glad!

A NAME THAT YOU LIVE, BUT ARE DEAD

"I know thy works, that thou hast a *name that livest, and art dead*" (Rev. 3:1).

It is evident in the letter to the church at Sardis that the world was invading the church. The church became very much like the city around it. Society should be influenced by the people of God; God has designed that the body of Christ be filled with His power and holiness, to change and transform the world! But the sad truth is that often the church becomes influenced by the world. Amid all the fiery admonitions found in the epistle of James is the counsel that worldliness is the enemy of God (James 4:4). The blessed Holy Spirit warns every saint who cherishes the beautiful hope of sonship to *flee worldliness*. Some have mistakenly thought that meant to *flee the world*, so they hide themselves away in wilderness retreats, remote areas, jungle farms, or mountain monasteries, in physical separation from the world system.

It is not the world we must flee from, but *worldliness*. Our Lord Himself has taught us that we are *in* the world, but not *of* the world, and in the loving embrace of His final earnest prayer for His own He petitioned the heavenly Father, "I pray *not* that Thou shouldest take them *out of the world*, but that Thou shouldest *keep them from the evil*. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (Jn. 17:15-16). How our glad hearts rejoice in the sacred knowledge that "greater is He that is *in you*, than he that is *in the world*." Oh, let us always remember that the people of God are to influence the world, not the other way around. The saddest event of all is when it is not a saint, or a number of saints, that is influenced by the world, but a whole church is captivated by the world and its light goes out. This is indeed the present condition of all the church systems of man!

In the kingdom of God everything moves out of the energy of the Holy Spirit. We must see beyond the vessel and apprehend the Life within. This reminds me of an incident after the end of World War One. The famous desert fighter, Lawrence of Arabia, brought several Arab leaders to Paris to represent their interests at the Versailles Peace Conference. Those sons of the desert were filled with astonishment at the sights of Paris, but nothing intrigued them quite as much as the running water in their hotel rooms. In the desert water was such a luxury and here

in their rooms it seemed to be free and never ending, at the turning of a tap. When it was time to leave Paris, Lawrence found those Arabs removing the faucets, believing that those magic instruments would give them water at will in their native Arabia. Only with great difficulty did he finally convince them that the faucets were no good if detached from the water supply. “No good if detached!” What a word is that! Oh, let us give earnest heed to this tremendous statement! It reveals to us that any outward activity apart from the flow of HIS LIFE is dead and utterly worthless. A faucet without a water connection!

The Holy Spirit says, “You have a *name* — a reputation and recognition by the people — that you are alive.” You mention the church at Sardis and the response is, “Wow — things are happening down there, that church has everything; you walk through the door and your hair stands up on end. They are *alive*; their pastor is a *live wire* bubbling over with zeal and dripping with charisma. They have interesting guest speakers and beautiful special music. They’ve got every kind of program going; why they’ve got a bus ministry, a youth program, a ball team, a senior citizens outreach, a home for unwed mothers, a coffee house ministry, an outreach to addicts and homosexuals. They’ve got a choir that will send chills down your spine; and, man, you walk in the door and they’ll have you *busy doing something* in no time at all!”

Ah, they have a name that they live because they are filled with all kinds of activity, but God sits back in His high and holy place and sadly fills out that church’s death certificate. “Thou art dead!” Instead of operating in the power of the Holy Spirit who *is the life* of the body of Christ, like computerized robots they go through the form of flesh-generated programmed activity that appears to the undiscerning eye to be evidence of life. The name that is lived is being lived before *people*. “Thou hast a name...” among the people. “Thou hast a name...” among the church systems of man. “Thou hast a name...” at the local Ministerial Association. “Thou hast a name...” on the church page of the newspaper. “Thou hast a name...” before the affluent, the intellectual, and the influential of the community. “Thou hast a name...” at the Kiwanis Club and the Rotary Club. “Thou hast a name...” with the mayor, the city council, the sheriff’s department, and social services. Everyone esteems you highly! “But — THOU ART DEAD!”

The carnal Christians in the church at Sardis had a *name* that they lived, yet in fact they were dead. They were dead, but still they assumed the *appearance* of life! Human nature does not want to face the ugliness of death. We have invented a new vocabulary to discuss death. The people of previous centuries talked quite frankly about death. They spoke of the body as a corpse. Today we call the corpse “the deceased,” or the “loved one.” He is not dead. People do not die, they “pass on” and make their great “transition.” The deceased is not in a coffin, he is in a “slumber room.” He was probably reading a book when he went to sleep! Morticians, with lipstick and rouge, are busily engaged in transforming the dead into perennial members of a horizontal cocktail party. “He looks so natural, doesn’t he?” Every effort is made to “dress up” death so that it *appears as life!* And spiritually, that is what the believers in Sardis were doing. They were dwelling in a realm of death, the death of the carnal mind, but with their religiosity they had painted themselves up and made a name for themselves that they lived!

I am sure that all who read these lines know what a taxidermist is. A taxidermist is a person who stuffs dead animals and makes them look like they did when they were alive. No doubt we have all been to museums where they have displayed stuffed foxes, elephants, or buffalo. We have been in someone’s home and have seen their fishing or hunting trophies — a fish or a deer head mounted on the wall. When you look at these they look exactly as they did when they were alive. You almost expect to see them move at any moment! The scales are all in the right order, the fins and tail look so very powerful, the eyes are open. The deer appears so graceful and majestic with startling innocence in his eyes, standing at attention. There is only one problem —

he is *not* alive! There is no life on the inside. No matter how good he looks, the fact is he is *dead!* Multitudes of the Lord's people are like these animals. I'm not talking about dead people who are stuffed like mummies. And I'm not talking about the people out in the world who are dead in trespasses and sins, alienated from the life of God in their minds, and therefore dead to truth, dead to reality, dead to God. Oh, no! It is to the saints in the church at Sardis that the Lord speaks when He says, "Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead."

You see, my beloved, it relates to **works** — for the Lord prefaces His remark in this way: "I know thy **works**, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead." Works are the expression of life — movement, activity, performance, accomplishment. These saints are *busy, active, involved, working, doing great things* for God! But their works do not originate out of life, they are neither ordained nor energized by the Spirit, but stem rather from a realm of death — the unquickened soul, the Adamic mind, the natural man, carnal understanding and human zeal. By all these wonderful works done in the name of Christ, and accomplished *for God*, these have a *name* that they live, that the very life of God is manifested out of them. Yet they are dead! Their works are dead works!

This is a realm in which every son of God must overcome in order to reign with Christ! Now, do not misunderstand me! Living people have works, too! Their works are born of the living word of God, the living will of God, and accomplished in the power of the Holy Spirit! Some kingdom people will not witness to anyone, some people will not do any good works to bless others, some who call themselves sons of God hibernate in their own little sonship kingdom with no expression of the life of Christ to anyone. Others release their children to go out in the world and live like the devil with the notion that if GOD is calling them He will somehow reach out and touch them by His sovereign power. There is no *reign* of wisdom, responsibility, righteousness, or power through the lives of these folks. But if our sonship is worth a hill of beans there will be an expression, a ministration of the Spirit of wisdom, counsel, grace, salvation, deliverance, glory and power flowing out from us!

To know the difference between these two realms of works is what determines an OVERCOMER! It is right here, in connection with this *spiritual condition* revealed in the church at Sardis, that we are called upon to overcome. As I have mentioned repeatedly in recent writings, in Christ's messages to the seven churches it is not so much "cigarettes and whiskey and wild, wild women" that we are called upon to overcome, although those realms, too, *will* be overcome, but the emphasis in the letters to the seven churches concerns the spiritual conditions within the church realm. Those who are called to sonship have every one, without exception, heard the voice of the Lord calling them to totally forsake and utterly abandon the dead religious works of the old order church systems in order to serve the LIVING GOD! It means to act and serve and minister spontaneously out of the living power of the Christ in our spirit, not out of the carnal programs and promotions of the religious systems of man.

Hear, oh man of God, and give earnest heed, ye sons of God! "For if...the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: *how much more* shall the blood (life) of Christ...PURGE YOUR CONSCIENCE FROM **DEAD WORKS TO SERVE THE LIVING GOD**" (Heb. 9:13-14). He who writes these lines testifies to those who read them that no one can serve "the *living* God" with "*dead* works." Dead works are the fruit of the flesh seeking to serve God and they have no spiritual life in them, no life from the *living God*. Some think that "dead" means "sinful" works. These certainly would be dead weight upon the conscience. Yet here "dead works" are not gross sins or evil of the flesh, but the good of the flesh attempting to serve God through outward, empty, meaningless religious observances, self-invented works whereby men think to please God.

Dead works are produced out of a polluted conscience. The polluted conscience dictates that this or that must be done to appease God, to please God, or to serve God. But they spring not from a spirit that is alive, and able to produce life; they are dead works brought forth out of the death of the carnal mind. They spring not from the fount of all life, and therefore are dead and obnoxious to God. It is the *conscience* that must be cleansed from dead works! The polluted conscience will feel better, it will feel justified and spiritual, after performing dead works; but it is a false reading, for a polluted conscience is as faulty and dangerous spiritually as a malfunctioning altimeter would be for an airplane pilot! It is the blood of Jesus that *purges the conscience from dead works*. Can you not see the mystery?

The blood of Jesus is the *life* of Jesus! “Except ye eat my flesh and drink my blood, ye have no life in you.” It is the power of Christ’s life within that purges the conscience from dead works, so that we may serve the LIVING GOD! A conscience fully cleansed by the blood of Christ is freed from that inner gnawing demand to participate in the activities of the carnal church systems of man. Those who are called to the kingdom in this hour live in the dispensation of the Spirit — the spirit of sonship which has been sent into our hearts. It is the dispensation of the inner life, in which we are brought into the inner sanctuary, the secret place of the Most High; and the inner sanctuary is found within us, in that secret inner place where none but God’s Spirit can search out. In that hidden depth is the house God has prepared for Himself; there, in the mind of Christ in the new man of the spirit, God reveals, in a way that sense and reason cannot apprehend, the works of the living God by which the kingdom of God shall be brought forth in the earth. It is indeed wonderful!

The words of this beautiful passage of scripture cast a ray of eternal hope across the gloomy pages of human tradition and ritualistic religion with its static creeds, outward ordinances, empty ceremonies, and carnal methods and programs that for centuries have blinded men’s minds and made their feet to stumble and lose their way so that they have become lost to the glorious and eternal reality of *the life of God in the spirit*. Oh that men might know that it is the Holy Spirit alone who makes men alive, and it is the Holy Spirit alone who must lead us into all truth and bring to fruition the purposes of God in our lives. Oh that men might know that we are the servants of THE LIVING GOD! Our spirits have been quickened by His Spirit that we might live His life. The works done by God’s called and chosen elect are works that spring out of His life within! That is how we serve the living God. No man can know the fullness of His presence nor the greatness of His power until his conscience has completely and forever been cleansed from dead works.

How vain have been our strivings about externals and our insistence upon little technicalities which we in ignorance deemed so very important! How often my own heart has been saddened as I have listened to brethren wasting their time contending over baptisms, communion, foot washing, sacred names, meats and drinks, holy days, sabbaths, fleshly Israel, dress codes, long hair, short hair, women preachers, so-called New Testament church orders, and petty doctrines of every kind, and when they were through with all their pietistic wrangling, they had accomplished nothing but to prove that they knew everything about the *dead letter* of the word and absolutely nothing about the LIFE-GIVING SPIRIT.

When I consider the vastness of God’s great plan and the awesome majesty of His wonderful purpose of the ages, my soul grows weary with the petty quibblings of earth-bound, tradition-ridden men who are never able to deliver themselves from the externals of religion, and as a result are not able to see the ALL-SUFFICIENCY OF HIS INDWELLING LIFE. Men do not need any external ordinances, ceremonies, or regulations of any kind. THEY NEED THE

INDWELLING CHRIST! They do not need to know doctrine. They need to KNOW HIM as their INDWELLING LIFE AND LAW.

When I know God as **LIFE**, then I will discover the **LAW OF THE SPIRIT OF LIFE**. That is the only law for a son of God! Then, when the SPIRIT OF LIFE WITHIN leads me to eat, I will eat. When the LIFE prompts me to drink, I will drink. When the LIFE anoints me to fast, I will fast. When the LIFE quickens me to sing, I will sing. When the LIFE commands me to speak, I will speak. When the LIFE orders me to be silent, I will be silent. When the LIFE stirs me to go, I will go. When the LIFE tells me to stay, I will stay. When the LIFE directs me to work, I will work. When the LIFE guides me to rest, I will rest. When the LIFE impresses me to wait, I will wait. When the LIFE draws me aside to a season of separation, I will turn aside. When the LIFE speaks that I should go here or there, I will go. When the LIFE urges me to give, I will give. You see, my beloved, with Christ there are no regulations, no rules, nothing to do by rote, only the indwelling commandment of HIS LIFE. In this kingdom of the Spirit today it is not a matter of law, or ordinances, or traditions, or observances, or regulations, but wholly a matter of the indwelling Christ. Each of God's elect is learning the new way of the kingdom, living by the *law of the spirit of life* in Christ Jesus!

As long as the Christ within directs by His law of Life you are safe — for Christ today is the present, instant, up-to-date, indwelling LAWGIVER. Aren't you glad! The words of Moses the prophet are fulfilled in the sons of God today: "The Lord thy God will raise up a prophet *from the midst of thee*, of thy brethren, LIKE UNTO ME; UNTO HIM SHALL YE HEARKEN" (Deut. 18:15). Christ is today's real Moses, and we are His followers. God has raised up Christ! A greater than Moses is here! Christ is today's real Lawgiver, not Christ in the Bible, not Christ in heaven, but Christ *in the midst of us*. "The Lord thy God shall raise up a prophet *from the midst of thee*." This prophet is within us and we are learning to do all things in His presence, at His word, and by His life. There are no regulations today, just the real Moses, Christ in our spirit with His glorious Law of Life. There are no external rules, observances, traditions, ordinances, or ceremonies — just the indwelling life. As long as I am following my Lawgiver today, as long as I am *one spirit with my Christ*, whatever I do as a product of His indwelling life is both the will and the work of the Father. Whether it is building furniture in a shop in Nazareth or feeding a multitude by the sea, it matters not; for a son of God lives only and always by the indwelling life, a state of being. In this kingdom of the Spirit there are not secular things and spiritual things. There is only the will of God by the Spirit!

This is a great and surprising revelation to many. Some will tell you that life is in keeping the commandments, another that life is in using the correct form of the sacred name, another that life is in keeping the sabbath, another that life is in attending meetings, another that life is in taking communion, another that life is in winning souls, or in water baptism, or speaking in tongues. But life is none of these things! It is more than all. Life is not to have an experience, or do this, or that, or the other — life is *the living power of Christ within!* Plus nothing! Can you grasp the power of that, my beloved? The works of a son of God are the works dictated by the law of Christ within whether that be working or waiting, or winning or losing, or suffering or recovering, or living or dying. We feel helpless beside a truth so great and eternal! In union with Christ His will is done as naturally as breathing. If you are struggling to know His will, and laboring to do His works, then sit at His feet like a little child and learn the simple truth that God's will may be done as much by hewing stones, or sweeping floors, as by preaching or prophesying or doing miracles. God's will is THE LIVING OUT OF HIS LIFE! Seek not a dream, or vision, or great revelation of what you should do. Start where you are...LET HIM LIVE THROUGH YOU right there...His will shall begin to be done in you today!

Oh, yes! For Jesus, the firstborn Son, the will of God began in the mundane things of His everyday life in the dusty mountain village of Nazareth, the place of no good thing. It was there, for thirty years, that He *learned* to live by the Law of the Spirit of the Life of the Father within. As that life grew in Him the day came in the fullness of time when the Life led Him to Cana of Galilee. The Life led Him to the Jordan. The Life led Him into the wilderness. The Life brought Him out of the wilderness in the power of the Spirit. The Son of God was manifested! Yet, the truth of the matter is that He was every bit as much the Son of God while He fashioned a plowshare with His rough hands, and spoke mercy and comfort to His sorrowing neighbor, as when He laid His hands of power upon the blind and deaf, held the winds in His fist, and commanded the waves with the voice of omnipotence.

Did you ever stop to think that when Jesus Christ, the firstborn Son of God, came into this world HE WAS THE ONLY LIVING MAN IN A WORLD OF DEAD PEOPLE? The whole world lay in the hands of the wicked one and death reigned over all the earth realm! No wonder the scripture says that flesh is a stench in the nostrils of God, because spiritual death sends forth its reek and stench. How the soul of Jesus must have recoiled at the state of death that was rampant over the earth! We, too, the walking dead, walked according to the course of *this world*, we are told. When Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, came into this world to reveal the Life of God, He came outside the existing religious systems. He spoke the words of God and did the works of God and manifested the nature of God. What an appalling shock to the established religious order to have this strange man, speaking as one with authority, suddenly appear in their midst not as a Pharisee, a Sadducee, or a priest of the order of Aaron, but in the power of the Spirit of God!

Sunday after Sunday thousands of ministers stand in their pulpits to preach dead sermons while untold millions of church members sing the same songs, repeat the same prayers, go through the same motions, observing lifeless forms, meaningless rituals, and empty ceremonies. I tell you frankly that that is the way to spiritual stagnation and perpetual immaturity, but it is not the path to sonship and the fullness of God, or life in the Spirit. Oh! There is no death anywhere more horrible than that to be found in *dead religion*. It is the land of the living dead, a land filled with zombies, having the outward appearance of being alive, and yet dead. There are but two kinds of people: the dead and the alive. If you have not been made alive by His transforming power, you are still dead no matter how rosy your religious cheeks may appear. If you have been made alive may I tell you that, as assuredly as Lazarus knew that he had been raised from the tomb, so also you know that you have been quickened by God, made alive, and you walk in newness of life as a son of God in the land of the living.

You will understand a great mystery when you understand that the *soul is instinctively religious*. The human soul, apart from union with the spirit, loves to appear and act spiritual just as a little girl loves to play house with her dolls and toys and pretend she is mothering her babies and keeping the house. The glorious Christ within, who has the seven spirits of God, is none other than the Word of God Himself. He arises out of our spirit, entering into mind and heart to take away the defilement and death of the outer life. He stands up in our inner sanctuary to remove, not the iniquities which separate between God and the sinner, but some *dead thing* by which the people of God are defiled.

Sadly the great apostle wrote to young Timothy about those “having a *form of godliness*, but *denying the power thereof*” (II Tim. 3:5). Then he added, “From such turn away.” The “form of godliness without power” is an abomination, but the FORM OF GODLINESS WITH POWER is a mighty thing! Not a form of religion, but the FORM OF GODLINESS or God-like-ness. Without a form you have no power. The “image” and “likeness” of God is a form! If you have some

gunpowder, it may be a pound weight, and scatter it in a plate and set fire to it, there is no power to it: but ram it into a cannon, put a bullet there, and you had better stand out of the way of the power, for it is very real! The sons of God are being prepared, pressed, and formed in the processings of the Father, not as power dispersed, but as power concentrated. Through His faithful dealing with us His nature, glory, and power are being built into us, intensified within us, formed in our lives for the hour of unveiling. He cannot dwell “loosely” within us, only casually experienced. Through the unique experiences He brings into our lives His life is being meticulously **pressed** into every facet of our being until **HIS FORM** becomes all that is seen in every circumstance and situation.

Forms without power are forms without Christ. Forms without power are a curse. All forms of prayer and praise and religious activity which have no power in them are abominations. The church that has a form without a power ought to have been buried long ago, and all who are in contact with them are defiled by death. Under the law it was defilement to touch a dead thing! Power goes into form; form does not always contain power. Empty forms are dead carcasses that defile; living forms embody and express all the power of the indwelling life. The only form that does contain power is the FORM OF CHRIST as He is formed as truth and reality in our lives by the power of the Holy Spirit. All forms which are not His living form in us are dead forms and men are defiled thereby.

There is only *one form* in the whole universe to be desired, and it is the one created by God Himself. Millenniums ago the great king Nebuchadnezzar gazed in transfixed wonder upon this form and cried out in astonishment, “Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the **form** of the fourth is like **the Son of God**” (Dan. 3:24-25). Ah, there is the form! Paul, by the wisdom given him, penned these words of truth, “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the **form of God**, thought it not robbery to be equal with God” (Phil. 2:5-6). Think diligently of what the apostle has told us in speaking thus: “My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until CHRIST BE F-O-R-M-E-D in you” (Gal. 4:19).

The church in Sardis has a name that it lives, but is dead. The church of today is like an autumn leaf, dry and dead but retaining its form and structure. Death has come to man on all levels through the eating of the fruit of the tree of the *knowledge of good and evil*. This tree is the tree of death! This tree of death stands in stark contrast to the tree of life! The tree of life is Christ, for “in Him was life, and the life was the light of men.” “When Christ who *is our life* shall appear...” “Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, *hath the life of the ages*.” The life given men by the tree of life is a higher kind of life than the masses of men upon earth know today. It is divine life, incorruptible life, eternal life, God life, the life of the Spirit. The tree of life in Eden was nothing else than the life of God in man’s spirit made available to man simply for the taking.

The tree of the knowledge of good and evil, on the other hand, is not life, but death. The truth of this can be seen in the very ingredients of the fall! When Adam sinned, of which tree did he eat? Why, the tree of the knowledge of *good and evil*. Hear this! The elements of that tree were not only the element of evil; they were the elements producing a knowledge of *both good and evil*! The tree ministered to man a *knowledge of good* as truly as it ministered to him a *knowledge of evil*. Thus, the fall of man introduced him into a realm of duality, of admixture: good and evil. The fallen man is both good and evil! How prone we have been to declare the unregenerated man **only evil**! It is true that the element of evil in some men predominates, but it is also true that the element of good in other men predominates. The good in man has not been corrupted to the point of non-existence. It is for this reason that the philosophers and

psychologists have discovered that within man are some “illustrious virtues” and “innate goodness” and have reached the mistaken conclusion that the nature of man is good. They have merely discovered that within fallen man there is still the principle of good which naturally causes us to want to do good.

The problem is that when man came into the knowledge of good and evil he did not come into a better condition. Man came to know “good and evil” but he didn’t come to KNOW GOD! He now possesses a knowledge of the good and of the evil, but he does not possess the KNOWLEDGE OF GOD! Man passed into the knowing of good and evil but he did not BECOME HOLY! He merely added evil to his good producing a mixture of the two, but in so doing he forfeited THE LIFE AND GLORY AVAILABLE TO HIM IN THE TREE OF LIFE! He chose good and evil — but missed **Life!**

The knowledge of good and evil concerns itself only with *external behavior*, judging all things on the basis of whether they are “good” or “evil.” Man, as long as he walks in this consciousness of the fall, the knowledge of good and evil, can understand and judge only within this framework: is a thing good or is it evil? He then presumes that if a thing is “good” it must be acceptable and godly. Nothing could be farther from the truth! If “good” was acceptable with God then man could surely be justified by “the works of the law.” The law is *good!* But the “good” of man is the good of the creature — not the good of the Creator! It is the good of the *soul*, but not the good of the *Spirit!*

In the garden of Eden we have two revelations from two kinds of trees. First, *life* is the nature of God, whereas *good* is the nature of man. Second, life is good, but not all good is life! The tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil show us that on the highest level *life* and *good* are definitely different; life is neither good nor evil. *Life, good, and evil ARE THREE DIFFERENT AND INDEPENDENT THINGS.* The good of God can only be experienced through participation in the life of God. Evil mingled with good produced death. And even before man fell, all of his good, of itself, could not give him *life*. There was no life in good, just as there was no life in evil. Only the *tree of life* possessed the power of life! If man had been partaking of the tree of life he could not have fallen. Can we not see by this that “good” and “life” are things which pertain to two different worlds!

Just as evil is something other than life, so also is good something other than life. Just as evil is not life, so also good is not life. Evil and good, though different in nature, are really of the same world for they come from the same tree. Neither one contains life or is life! Thus in the scriptures, good and evil are not two trees, but one tree. Life is in another tree, being something of another realm, from another world, pertaining to another kingdom. This is how it is that a man, by his own determination and effort, can improve considerably in his character and actions and yet still be entirely VOID OF THE LIFE OF GOD! He can be upright, honest, truthful, caring, compassionate, influential for good in the world and yet have no more *spiritual understanding or life* than a dog or cat. This is because his goodness is completely apart from life! It is of his own good human effort, and not a product of indwelling life.

All who dwell in THE SARDIS CONDITION are those who suppose that good is life! Oh, how “good” religion is! How “good” are their doctrines, their rules, their morality, their standards, their causes, their programs, their ordinances, their organizations, their charities, their rituals, their forms, their works! How it all soothes the human conscience, giving the illusion that the living Christ is being served! They have a name before men that they live, but they are dead. Only the power of Christ in our spirit is the light of men and the light of the world, and all who follow Him will not walk in darkness, but *have the light of life.*

How I rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory that for the called and chosen elect of the Lord who have been *born of the Spirit*, there is no longer merely the two realities of good and evil; there is now within our being the very LAW OF THE SPIRIT OF LIFE IN CHRIST JESUS! He who is in union with the tree of life has the power to offer that to others of which they can eat and live. Amid all who surround him he becomes a tree of life, of which they can taste and be refreshed. He is in his circle a center of life and of blessing, and that simply because he abides in Christ who is the life.

The sons are of that company which has discovered a realm of life, reality, and glory that transcends all the good of man. This dimension of life is the kingdom realm of God! This is where the difference lies between the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and the tree of life. The tree of knowledge (doctrines, rules, commandments) can only impart to men a knowledge of good and evil. The power of Christ in the manifest sons of God shall reveal to all creation the power of incorruptible life! Creation shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the sons of God!

God has through the years given us a foretaste of how the kingdom of God works in the lives of men by the power of life. In fellowships we have been associated with a number of people who were brought to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Some of these dear ones had deep problems and powerful habits in their lives. Some, for instance, were smokers. Knowing that such habits and bondages are a hindrance in the lives of those who would truly be *overcomers* in the Lord, we could have told these people, "You must stop smoking. You can't be a member of this fellowship as long as you smoke. You can't function in our meetings until you get deliverance. You can neither teach, prophesy, or assume any role of ministry until you become an example to others. Smoking is a sin and will destroy your spiritual life. Forget about the high calling of God until you get delivered!"

We could have counseled these dear ones thus, but we would have only been offering them some fruit off the tree of the knowledge of good and evil! So instead, we offered them fruit from the tree of LIFE! Rather than condemning them for their habit, we *blessed them and encouraged them in the Lord*. We received them. We loved them unconditionally. We got them into the word of God. We ministered the life of the Spirit to them. We shared the truths of sonship and the high calling of God with them. We unveiled the mysteries of the kingdom unto them. We withheld no good thing from them. And guess what happened! To my knowledge, within a very short time every one of them was delivered from their cigarettes!

Their deliverance, therefore, was the **product of life**, a working of the growth of divine life in them. Death became "swallowed up" of life! The Son of God came that men might have life. He did not come to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. The sons of God are arising for the very same purpose, in the very same ministry — LIFE! The world is condemned already. The last thing creation needs is some preacher out on a street corner screaming about sin and death and hell. Cursed fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil! The whole creation is groaning and travailing in pain, waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God. Deliverance is arising! God is purging a people from dead works, and raising up sons of God in this new kingdom Day who serve the **LIVING GOD!** A flood of Life, Light, and Love is about to break forth upon the nations! It is indeed wonderful!

Chapter 52

The Church In Sardis

Rev. 3:1

"And by the angel of the church in Sardis write...I know thy *works*, that thou hast a *name that thou livest*, and art *dead*" (Rev. 3:1).

The Holy Spirit says to the church in Sardis, "You have a *name* — a reputation and recognition by the people — that you are alive. This name that they have relates to their *works*. They have a name that they live because they are filled with all kinds of activity, but the sentence of the great Judge of all is, "Thou art dead!" Instead of operating in the power of the Holy Spirit who *is the life* of the body of Christ, like computerized robots they go through the form of flesh-generated programmed activity that appears to the undiscerning eye to be evidence of life. But their works do not originate out of life, but stem rather from a realm of death — the death of the carnal mind and human zeal.

This is a realm in which every son of God is called to overcome in order to reign with Christ! Those who are truly alive in Christ have works, too! Their works are born of the living energy of God, the living word of God, the living will of God, and accomplished in the power of the Holy Spirit! Those who are called to sonship have everyone, without exception, heard the voice of the Lord calling them to totally forsake and utterly abandon all the dead works of *religion*, in order to serve the LIVING GOD! It means to act and serve and minister spontaneously out of the living power of Christ in our spirit, not out of the carnal programs and promotions of the religious systems of man. The works of the sons of God are the living expression of Christ as life! To know the difference between these two realms of works is what determines an OVERCOMER! It is right here, in connection with this *spiritual condition* revealed in the church at Sardis, that we are called upon to overcome!

We find a beautiful type of what it means to be an overcomer and qualify for priesthood and kingship in the kingdom of God in the order of the Aaronic priesthood in the Old Testament. There were three primary qualifications for priesthood in the order of Aaron. The first was birth. The second was freedom from blemish. The third was maturity. The very first requirement was that one must be a son of the high priest, a descendent of Aaron. A man might be the brightest and most capable Israelite, but if he was not the offspring of Aaron he was prohibited from serving in the office of the priesthood. Spiritually, the new order of priesthood after the order of Melchizedek *begins* with the *new birth*! One must be the son of the High Priest of the Melchizedekian Order, the offspring of the priestly nature of God's Christ!

God made Aaron high priest in such a sense that his life carried priesthood to all his descendants. The life of Aaron carried the blessing! And, oh, the life, the divine life of my High Priest! Do you think that would carry less blessing than the priesthood of Aaron? Verily, no! The order of the priesthood of the sons of God begins with our being born again of the incorruptible seed of the word of God which is Christ the Lord.

But being born again no more makes one a priest than being born into Aaron's house made one a priest. Babies, though of the right lineage, were not priests! Right birth was the first requisite — but merely the first step down a long path of preparation and qualification. The second qualification for priesthood is found in the book of Leviticus. "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto Aaron, saying, Whosoever he be of thy seed in their generations that hath any *blemish*, let him *not approach to offer the bread of his God*. For whatsoever man he be that hath a blemish, he shall not approach: a blind man, or a lame, or he that hath a flat nose, or any thing superfluous. Or a man that is brokenfooted, or brokenhanded, or crookbackt, or a dwarf, or that hath a blemish in his eye, or be scurvy, or scabbed, or hath his stones broken..." (Lev. 21:16-24).

One could be a son of the high priest and still not be qualified for priesthood if there were some blemish in him — any kind of disease, deformity, or physical impairment. These natural conditions of the Old Testament order are always the type and symbol of the spiritual in the New Testament; thus, in this case the *spiritual purity* and *perfection* of him who would draw near unto God as a king-priest after the order of Melchizedek is prefigured by the physical regulations laid upon Aaron's priesthood. Though we all have been born again of the Spirit of God, it is only as we possess the **spiritual qualities** of the wholeness, perfection, and maturity of Christ that we become qualified to minister as a priest in the kingdom of God! As there were dwarfed and blinded sons of Aaron, are there not multitudes of the Lord's people who are spiritually dwarfed and spiritually deformed and spiritually blind and yet these continually take hold of the bread of God and serve up a garbled mess of man-made tradition and confusion! It is being done in thousands of churches across the land, and flooding the air waves day and night. My deep and earnest prayer is that God will open the eyes of all who read these words to see what it takes to have a *pure ministry* and a *pure word* as the priests of God in His kingdom!

It is not my purpose in this message to dwell upon these various qualifications for priesthood, but I would point out one in passing, the twelfth and final blemish which the Holy Spirit has signified as disqualifying one for the priesthood — that of "broken stones." The Hebrew word here for stones is *eshkek*, meaning testicles. It is the reproductive glands in a man's body.

Bill Britton once wrote such a pungent and pointed word on this that I would be remiss if I failed to share it with my readers. He says, "A man with broken stones cannot produce life. He can be a husband, but he cannot be a father. What has this got to do with the ministry of the priesthood? God used it as a type of ministry today who preaches sermons, but does not give life. God help us, there are so many in the ministry like that today! They are educated, they are eloquent, they are convincing, but they do not have the ability to produce the life of God in those who hear them. Their ministry is polished, but dead. Their sermons are interesting and well preached, but lifeless. People listen to them, and continue in their old carnal ways, for there is no life-changing power in their words. Their stones are broken, and they are disqualified to feed the bread of God to His people.

"We have had preachers come by and preach for us, only to discover that they had stirred our imagination, fed our intellect, painted pretty gospel pictures with their eloquent words, but produced no new life in us. Sons of God are being birthed in the image of Jesus Christ. It is because a *word of life* is being planted in the hearts of dedicated and hungry saints! Thank God, there IS a ministry of life in the land, and God is sending them forth with the Holy Ghost anointing! They may shout their message in a loud voice, or they may quietly teach the word in a modulated tone. But they have life to give! And lives are changed, and the image of Christ is appearing in His people.

"Circumstances have nothing to do with this. Jesus could sit on a well in the middle of the day talking to a much married woman, but there was so much life in His words that the entire city was shaken with revival. They could put Paul in prison, his feet fast in the stocks, but before the night was over the jailer and his family had been birthed into the kingdom of God. They could exile John to the isle of Patmos, but the words God gave him are still turning men to God many centuries later. On the other side of the coin, a man can preach to thousands in a million dollar cathedral, with millions watching on television, and produce nothing more than a plastic people following a plastic ministry with broken stones and no life to give. There is nothing plastic or man-made about the real people of God! We have a real Saviour, and He is going to have a real people. He is going to put that people on exhibit in the ages to come, to show all creation what His life has produced in the earth!

"I have met men who wrote books and claimed that their writing had the same inspiration and authority as the writings of the apostles and prophets in the Bible. That is tommyrot! If you read their writings you will find that you receive information, but no real life. I certainly do not claim that my writings are equal in any way to the scripture. But I do believe that I have a right in God to expect to put words in print that have enough of the life of God to change lives, and bring forth more of His life in His people. Someone said to me once, 'I enjoyed your message, but you were preaching over my head.' I answered that I was not shooting for his head, but at his heart! I was not trying to bring information and feed the intellect. I wanted to touch the heart and bring forth life! The man called into the ministry of the High Calling, the Melchizedek order, does not have broken stones. What can we say to these things? With such a high standard for the priesthood in these days, who can qualify? Have no fear, for the Holy Spirit is doing His work. We (and all creation) desperately need that priesthood of life, and we SHALL HAVE IT!" — end quote.

There is a dimension of the revelation of Jesus Christ that transcends the speaking of words, the writing of books, and the preaching of sermons. The revelation of Jesus Christ is the need of the hour! Only a present intervention of the divine mind, only a present revelation of wisdom and grace will be able to meet the need. If God does not give a special ministration and the spirit of power and glory to meet the need of the world and all creation, it will not be met. There are no buttons to press that can solve the complex and frightening problems that exist in the world today! The further we move in God the more helpless and totally empty we become, for our nothingness is magnified in the light of HIS GLORY. But I know beyond any shadow of doubt that God is preparing His overcoming company of sons at this very time to bring forth deliverance to the church, the world, and all creation!

Only God can teach us these things. Only God can accomplish the mighty work within each of us to bring us to the fullness of sonship to God. How awesome are His dealings in this hour! We are truly being stripped, pruned, processed, changed and transformed from glory to glory into the image and life of the Christ! Patiently He is teaching us line upon line, precept upon precept, establishing in us His ways. If we are not in the life of the Spirit, regardless of what way we use, or how we do things, we are still in deadness. That was the problem in Sardis! They had works, and mistook the works for life. "Thou art dead!" the Lord thundered. And it is here that every son of God shall overcome, to walk in the LIFE of the Lord! God has very practical ways to teach each of us these things.

Many years ago when God was drawing us out of the old order forms and traditions of the religious systems, we discovered a new way to have a meeting; that was, to arrange the seats in a circle rather than in one direction. The logic behind this was that in the church systems the pews all face in one direction toward the elevated platform — representing *man's* order — the

"show" directed from the platform and watched by the "spectators" in the audience. That arrangement seemed to embody the division between the so-called "clergy" and the "laity." On the other hand, the chairs in a circle represented to us the closeness and unity of the body of Christ — with liberty for each member to participate in a true "body ministry."

Soon we made a startling discovery! After we had changed our arrangement of chairs we found that we had just as much deadness as before! You see, the problem was not with the chairs — it was with the people! The secret to life does not lie in any **external arrangement** nor in some physical thing you may do outwardly in the natural. How chairs are arranged neither promotes nor hinders the work of God by the Spirit. God is greater than all! I know people who have thrown the chairs out altogether and now sit on the floor — as though there is some intrinsic value, some inherent spirituality in sitting on the floor! It has been my experience that God pays no attention at all to how such matters are arranged. However we do it, it is for *our convenience*, and is neither an inducement nor a hindrance to the Holy Spirit!

The truth is, I have been in some glorious meetings in conventional church buildings, while I have attended some very dry meetings with the chairs in a circle. Conversely, I have witnessed precious and beautiful movings of the Spirit of God when chairs were in a circle, and a great number of horribly dead meetings with the pews facing the platform. Ah, it was the heart condition, the spiritual attitude, the hunger after God and yieldedness to His Spirit, that made the difference — not the seating arrangement! Oh, how we do get the cart before the horse! Some of the brethren in this kingdom world feel that the only gathering together God approves for the sons of God in this hour is in that impromptu meeting where two or three brethren are brought together in a casual way and share with one another in the Lord. Let me tell you something. God really does not care one whit about any of those natural things! Concern about how many gather, when they gather, how they gather, is missing the point altogether. All of the things we do apart from the life of the Spirit are dead. You can refuse to attend a meeting and be just as dead as some who attend meetings. The issue is not a meeting or no meeting — the issue is LIFE! In the meeting or out of the meeting, the man or woman who is of a broken and contrite spirit, God will never refuse, praise His wonderful name!

If we are not walking in the life of the Spirit, the more directions we have, the more deadness we will have. If we arrange the seats in one direction, we will have one direction of death. If we arrange the chairs in four directions, we will have four directions of death. If you attend a meeting apart from the life of the Spirit you will have deadness in a crowd, and if you sit at home in your separation you will have deadness all by yourself. When you are a dead person, no matter what way you arrange yourself, you are still dead. When I am living, regardless of how I am sitting, or how many people are with me, I am still living! It is not a way; it is life! It is not the method; it is the Spirit! There are too many silly teachings among the saints today, and all the ways have been tried in the past. It is not the way, but the life, the Spirit, the priesthood in the Holiest of all. Forget about the way; get into the presence of the Lord and let HIM saturate you! The presence of the Lord is upon mount Zion. Let us ascend in the spirit into the mount, into the high places of God, and there open ourselves, and be filled with Him. A son is one who possesses God and is possessed by God. Anything else than this is not sonship.

In the religious systems the order, the method, the technique, the organization, the liturgy, the creed is all-important. But in the Melchizedekian Order THE ONE WAY IS THE LIFE OF THE LORD. We now live and move and have our being in the life of the Spirit. This is why there are no patterns, no methods, no precedents of any kind in the New Testament for the Melchizedek Priesthood. Jesus never did the same thing in exactly the same way twice. When He healed blind Bartimaeus He merely spoke the word, "Go thy way, thy faith hath made thee whole,"

and he received his sight. But when He healed the two blind men in the house He touched their eyes in addition to speaking a word. And when He healed the man born blind from birth He spat on the ground, made clay of the spittle, and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, then commanded him to go wash in the pool of Siloam.

So, what is the best way to heal a blind man? Should we assume that the power is in the method, someone might go out and form a new "spitting religion"! The only way to heal a blind man would be by spitting on him. But no one can tell you the right way — not even Jesus! What is the best way to preach the gospel? No one can tell you. What is the best way to hold a meeting? Again, no one can tell you. If you were to ask me what the right way is, I would have to say that I do not know. I really do not know what is the right way to do anything! I do not know the right way to meet humanity's needs, or solve the saint's problems, or bring people into the present truth. In the Bible you can never find T-H-E RIGHT WAY to minister to creation or to do the work of the kingdom. This is because the New Testament is the dispensation of the SPIRIT! Whatever you do, whatever way you use, wherever you go, *it must be by the Spirit.*

The Spirit is original, He is never static; His way is always fresh and new and transcendental! He may never repeat what He did yesterday, or the way He did it. In these last years, wherever I have gone, I have never paid any attention to the way. Regardless of the way people meet, or don't meet, or minister or serve the Lord, it does not mean anything. The real question is this: Is there the life of the Spirit? Is there the unveiling of Jesus Christ? What is GOD doing? And how is HE doing it? I look to see what God *is doing*, rather than trying to introduce some "order" for God to move in.

May the Lord have mercy upon all who cherish the beautiful hope of sonship that we may be delivered from anything other than the LIFE of this calling. We are learning this one lesson — the priesthood of Melchizedek is known only by the OUTFLOW OF HIS LIFE. Our Lord Jesus is the High Priest of this order, and you cannot have a High Priest without a priesthood. The sons of God are being apprehended to be kings and priests unto God! Melchizedek was a king-priest, and the Lord Jesus Christ is both king and priest. The only thing we are told about this priesthood is that it is not after the law of a carnal commandment, but **after the power of an endless Life!** (Heb. 7:16). The order of Melchizedek is the order of the ministration of LIFE! The order of Melchizedek is not the same as the so-called New Testament Church order. It is more than that, it is something of life, the order of life, the power of life, the order brought forth by the power of incorruptible life, something living, something divine, something sovereign, something transcendental, and something that operates by the POWER OF GOD WITHIN. It is not an order of gifts, positions, offices, or external structures. It is LIFE FULL AND ABUNDANT! We are conscious that God is bringing something new and glorious into being. He is bringing something into this earth that is far, far beyond anything we know. He is birthing a manchild, a priesthood, a kingship, a new order. It will make right everything that has been wrong! It will make everything as God has ordained it to be! It will bring righteous judgment, it will bring mercy, and deliverance, and power, and glory to creation beyond our fondest hopes or our wildest dreams. It will set creation free! There will be life for all. And God will be ALL IN ALL!

I HAVE NOT FOUND THY WORKS PERFECT

"Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, for *I have not found thy works perfect before God*" (Rev. 3:2).

We find the Lord speaking to the church in Sardis, this church which is still filled with the ways and energy of Adam. The name Sardis means "red ones" and according to Webster's dictionary refers to the *sardius* or *sardine stone* which is a very hard, deep orange-red variety of chalcedony used in jewelry, etc. Some teachers believe that the word actually means "those who have escaped" or "things which remain" but in my study of the etymology of the word I have found no evidence to support this interpretation. The name Adam means "red earth" and therefore carries a similar connotation with Sardis. Sardis speaks of Adam, the Adamic nature, the flesh. Sardis was a church which, except for a "few," the "remnant," who are the "overcomers" in it, still operated out of the carnal mind and nature — the living soul (I Cor. 15:45). They had experienced a measure of the life of the second man, who is the last Adam, who is Christ the *quickening spirit*, but they had not grown up into His fullness. This church, those in THE SARDIS CONDITION, is very prominent in the world today!

"For I have not found your works *perfect* before God." Wuest translates this as, "I have found no works of yours that have been brought to a *state of completeness*." The words "not perfect" mean "unfulfilled, immature, incomplete." They had stopped short, they had not gone on to maturity; after aiming at the goal of the fullness of Christ, they had grown careless and never attained it. Something was started in them but had not come to full fruition and was now about to die. They had become content in this "in-part" realm, and in this state of limitation and immaturity and incompleteness had made them a "name" that they were alive. They were little spiritual children playing church, doing childish things with great flourish and pretense, and were having a wonderful tea party! They were all excited about the little bit of Christ men could see shining through them, and hoped that one day God would build them a bigger and more glorious play house in the sky where they could romp and frolic forever and ever in Father's wonderful love!

Some today are proclaiming that since by faith we have entered in to that which is within the veil, into the Holiest of all, now all that is necessary to bring forth the manifestation of the sons of God is for us to come out from that glory behind the veil and begin to minister and manifest out of that realm. That is a beautiful thought — yet it is my conviction that until we have truly **experienced within ourselves** all the holiness, wisdom, glory, life, incorruption, and power of that realm beyond the veil we can only come out and manifest whatever *measure* we have attained to. I know a lot of precious, wonderful, and highly esteemed (by me) brethren in this word of the kingdom, but the reality is that I have yet to meet one who has appropriated the full glory, life, and power of that Most Holy Place!

Of those who by faith have entered in by the blood of Jesus I know not one who manifests much more than we have already known and experienced in the Outer Court and the Holy Place, or in the feasts of Passover and Pentecost. Most are still meeting in the same kind of church meetings, singing the same songs, speaking in tongues, prophesying, preaching, dancing, laying on hands, moving in gifts, passing offering plates, and making announcements; some prayers are answered, there is an occasional healing, miracle, or deliverance, a few souls saved, and some people blessed and encouraged in the Lord. That is all very wonderful! But may I remind you, my beloved, that we have had *all these things* for many, many years in the Holy Place and in the feast of Pentecost! There is nothing new there. There is nothing different, greater, or higher in any of it! I have yet to meet the man or woman who is ministering out of the higher realm of *fullness* and *immortality* — manifest sonship!

I do not for one moment despise or reject any of the aforementioned things, for they are truly Father's provision for His people in the in-part realm — the realm where our works are not perfect, complete, and mature in the stature of fully manifest sonship. We still know in part, and

prophesy in part, until that which is perfect is come — the measure of the stature of the *fullness* of the Christ! I tell you this in all sincerity and truth. We have had all these wonderful blessings for two thousand years and they have *not* set creation free! They have *not* brought all nations into the kingdom of God! They have *not* restored all things and all men to God! The whole world still lies in the darkness of sin, sorrow, hatred, war, greed, fear, sickness, pain, poverty, and death, and the saints of God are not yet fully released from carnality and death.

Should we step out from behind the veil and presume to call ourselves manifest sons *now unveiled* to deliver creation from the bondage of corruption, we still will not manifest anything more than we have personally appropriated and **experienced within ourselves**. Some will despise me for saying it, but of those I have seen who assert that they are now manifesting and ministering out of the realm of the Most Holy Place, I have yet to witness one who, apart from having some deeper truth and higher revelation, is moving in any realm beyond the feast of Pentecost! That is the plain, unvarnished truth, my brethren. These words are not intended to belittle, disparage, or ridicule any precious brother or sister in Christ, but my deepest prayer is that all who read these lines will be given the spirit of wisdom and revelation to understand that the salvation of the nations and the deliverance of creation **DEMANDS** a glory greater than any glory we have yet known or experienced!

If there is no greater glory to come, if there is no greater revelation of Christ in His elect, if manifest sonship is just "more of the same," then sonship is a farce and the world is without hope now and in the ages to come. Oh, yes! There is a glory *yet* to be revealed in us, my beloved, and we would not look back, but set our faces as a flint and press forward to lay hold upon the REAL THING God will do in this day. I cannot, dare not, settle for any "watered down" version of manifest sonship, for the stakes are too high; nor shall I engage in the zealous presumption that I am already something I have not yet fully appropriated in spirit, soul, *and* body!

I have observed in the ministry of the firstborn Son of God that there was never a problem He faced that He could not solve, never a need that He could not meet, no victory He could not win, no sickness He could not heal, no devil He could not cast out, and no realm of revelation, relationship, or being in God that He could not possess. The supreme evidence of this is when He rose from the dead! Some of us speak of the exploits we have done in Jesus' name, but we seldom mention all the times we have failed! Some of us fast and pray and wrest an answer from the Lord, and then run squarely into another problem we can't deal with at all. If Jesus Christ, the firstborn Son of God, needed the fullness of the power of God, which is the seven spirits of God, the Spirit without measure, then we His younger brethren must have it too!

In the realm of that which is in part, in limitation, one cannot meet every need that arises. "Are *all* apostles? Are *all* prophets? Are *all* teachers? Are *all* workers of miracles? Have *all* the gifts of healing? Do *all* speak with tongues? Do *all* interpret? But covet earnestly the best gifts" (I Cor. 12:29-31). Does it say in I Corinthians 12:8, "To the **whole church** is given the word of wisdom?" or, "To the **whole church** is given the gift of healing?" No, it says, "To **one** is given," to one member of the body of Christ. Then, "to **another** is given the gift of faith, prophecy," etc. In other words, there is a distribution so that everyone does not have all the gifts. How can you meet every need if you don't possess all the power and wisdom and ability of the Holy Spirit? And how can you meet every need, even in the area of the gift you do possess, if the gift itself is *by measure*? You can't! And that is why we feel so helpless sometimes. You can try, you can fast and pray, you can think positively, you can confess and claim and step out in faith and boast of your inheritance in Christ, but you still can't meet every need, solve every problem, speak to every situation, bless every life — in the gift realm! In that realm it is always a word

here, a miracle there, a healing someplace else, a failure here and a success over there. Who can stand and deny that this is the truth!

The ministry of Jesus was not in the gift realm, it was not in part, it was not by measure, but His ministry was the ministry of a **MANIFEST SON OF GOD** in all the power and wisdom and glory of the Father! The great secret to the ministry of Jesus was that it was not in limitation but in fullness. It was not a gift in the church realm, but the incarnation, the embodiment, the personification of **THE FULLNESS OF THE FATHER**. This is the realm of **sonship**. Sonship is not the church restored to the glory of the early days when the apostles walked the earth; sonship is the **manchild**, a people birthed out of the church in the full stature of Jesus Christ the Son of the living God. Each one of these sons of God is *exactly like* the firstborn Son! And that is just why creation is not groaning for another gift of healing, or another gift of miracles, or another gift of faith, or another apostle, or another prophet, or another evangelist, or another *revival*.

Creation is in pain and travail waiting for the *manifestation of the sons of God!* Only the sons of God will possess within themselves the full measure of the **power of the kingdom of God** as did Jesus! Only the sons of God can deliver the creation from the bondage of corruption. Jesus is not the *firstborn* among many Christians, or among many believers, or among many saints, among many church members, or among many ministries — He is the firstborn among **many brethren!** The brethren are **like Him**. Each and every one is like Him! God is not bringing many gifted saints to glory, He is not bringing many apostles to glory, He is not bringing many prophets to glory, He is not bringing many teachers to glory, He is not bringing many musicians to glory, He is not bringing many preachers to glory, but He *is* bringing many **SONS** to glory! Aren't you glad!

Sonship is glorious beyond anything our eyes have seen or ears have heard. Jesus Christ is the firstborn Son of God. And now all His brothers are empowered to follow Him to maturity. All will follow His steps, becoming what He is. The spiritual life of every son of God has the same origin as the firstborn, for all are born of God. We are being perfected by the same process, and will ultimately achieve the same result. Jesus Christ was the personification of the Father within Himself, and so shall we be. The holy nature of Jesus is ours to be raised up within us. The works that He did, we shall do as well. The authority of Jesus Christ, even the dominion of the ages and all things, He will share with those who come to the measure of the stature of His fullness. Jesus possesses the totality of God's substance, and this is the heritage of every manifest son of God. The present resurrection, ascension, and enthronement of Jesus is a portrait of our destiny! This will be a company of whom it is **not** said, "I have not found thy works *perfect, complete, and mature* before God."

The sons of God are destined to inherit all things. "He that overcometh shall *inherit all things*; and I will be his God, and he shall be *my son*" (Rev. 21:7). The sons of God are selected by the Father to become the dispensers of life and blessing to all created realms. Thus creation groans in sympathetic birth pangs, longing for their arrival! From powerful angels in heaven, to worlds in the farthest galaxy, the universe resonates with anticipation of the glorious unveiling of the sons of God. The sons will share the fullness of the glory of their Father. They will grow up into the attributes of God as a permanent state of being. The sons of God will partake of Godlikeness, and a spiritual inheritance that is incomprehensible to natural men, even religious men, saved men, and Spirit-baptized men. This celestial race of beings shall be endowed with all the authority and capacity of God. Immortal omnipotence will flow from them as the light rays from the sun.

In the days before us, those who have attained to sonship will be displayed in the blazing glory of immortality. This climatic finale is a fast approaching certainty. From the difficulties, struggles, testings, and processings of this present time the son company will burst forth into everlasting splendor, streaming glory, wisdom and power as a shower of stars. With Jesus as the Captain, this reigning government of God shall invade the bastions of darkness and by war, yea, by spiritual warfare they shall take the rule from the kings, presidents, and prime ministers of the earth. These are celestial kings and priests, trained and tested in conquest! They are invincible in the nature and power of the Father. Nothing shall confound them; all will succumb to their sway. This company of sons is the final world government — it will never be overthrown! They will subdue every enemy, and be the fountainhead of every blessing! They are the solution that God has ordained for the travail of earth's teeming billions. God's sons will enter into His state of being — they will become what He is in an unchangeable personal possession. This is the destiny of God's Christ, Head *and* body!

For many years now there has been a great moving of the Spirit of God across the land and around the world. It has manifested itself through many movements on various levels. We have witnessed great healing meetings, evangelistic crusades, baptism in the Holy Spirit, prophetic ministries, sign-gift ministries, apostolic ministries, five-fold ministry, gifts of the Spirit, impartation through prophecy with the laying on of hands, revelatory ministries, and much more. And I have rejoiced with joy unspeakable to be a partaker in this glorious visitation of God! But I testify to you today that not one of these ministries, **nor all of them put together**, has come within the range of the ministry of Jesus Christ, the **Son** of God! No matter which of the healing evangelists, or which of the miracle workers, or which of the prophets you watched; and no matter which church or movement with all its ministries and gifts and outreaches you observed; it did not measure up to the ministry of THE SON OF GOD.

We kept saying, "We have the same anointing, the same Holy Ghost, the same power, and we can do all the works Jesus did, and greater!" And as confidently as we asserted, as hard as we tried, as much as we wanted to believe it, and as faithful as we were, it just wasn't true! We had the same anointing alright, and the same Holy Spirit, and the same faith, and the same power, but — we had it **by measure** — not WITHOUT MEASURE, as Jesus did! "For to *one* is given by the Spirit...to *another* is given by the Spirit..." And that is just the difference between the *church realm* and *manifest sonship*! Don't get me wrong, I'm not knocking the church and I'm not belittling anything we have had or done. But my heart is desperately crying out for something more, for a greater, grander, more complete and glorious unveiling of Christ in the earth, and I certainly know that this sin-cursed world is crying out for something more! Oh, yes!

It is true, we are the body of Christ, and members in particular, and every joint supplies in a different way and measure. But let me tell you something. Within the DNA of each cell of your body is contained the complete blueprint of everything you are, of the totality of your being. That is why scientists today are able to clone animals and eventually human beings. You see, they take the DNA from *one cell* of the parent animal and from that one cell they raise up another animal exactly like the one from which it is taken. The bone, skin, flesh, internal organs, senses, everything is constructed from the blueprint in that one cell. Now, every human life begins when the sperm of the father unites with the egg of the mother. That union produces *one cell*. Within that one cell is contained the blueprint for all that that new person will ever be! That cell then divides into two, the two divide into four, the four into eight, and so forth, until by the time you become an adult you contain within your body some sixty trillion cells!

The mystery is this. There are cells that through this process have become hair, some have become eyes, others have become blood, etc. The different cells make up all the various parts

of the body. Yet — the original blueprint of everything you are is contained **within each of these sixty trillion cells just as it was within the original one cell at the time of your conception!** That is how cloning works. The DNA from one cell is used to construct another organism which is a precise copy of the original. That means, that within my body is the potential to raise up sixty trillion Preston Eby's just like me! Herein lies the secret to manifest sonship. Although we are currently "members in particular" of the body of Christ, mere "parts" of the whole, functioning "by measure" within each of our gifts and callings, yet within each one of us is contained the blueprint of *the totality of Christ* and there is the potential to raise up out of our spiritual DNA the reproduction of ALL THAT CHRIST IS! Can you not see the mystery?

The manifest sons of God are those who out of the Christ life within them grow up into the fullness of Christ, not in measure, but in the fullness of Himself. These become *perfect reproductions within themselves* of Jesus Christ, the firstborn Son of God! These sons are *individually exactly like Him* in the totality of His mind, wisdom, understanding, nature, glory, and power! With these sons it does not take a whole body of people, as in the church, to equal Christ — *each one* equals Christ. That, my friend, is the difference between the church realm and MANIFEST SONSHIP. When you have 144,000 of these sons you have 144,000 actual reproductions of Jesus — not 144,000 "parts" that "corporately" reproduce Him. Oh, the wonder of it!

With what joy and holy wonder do I tell you today that this is the power that will again be manifested on earth through the ministry of Christ's *many brethren*, the sons of God! What a calling rests upon the firstfruits! How humbly we should seek God, how fervently we should cry out to the Lord, that His work be completed in us to bring this sonship ministry to pass in the earth! How we praise God for the in-part ministry of the church realm — it has been glorious beyond words. But none can deny that the ministry of Jesus has not been fully duplicated even through the millions of believers and thousands of ministries in all the power and glory of the kingdom of God! Who among us can raise his hand to tell me that in him, or in his prayer group, or in his church, or in his movement, the miraculous sonship ministry of Jesus has been reproduced in all its fullness and power? Were we to make such a claim we would all be found liars. After two thousand years of the meticulous formation of the body of Christ, creation *still* groans and travails, *waiting* for the *manifestation of the sons of God* who shall *deliver creation itself from the bondage of corruption*.

The greater ministry of the sons of God will allay every disturbing element; break the power of sin and death; put down every wrong; silence every clamoring tongue; calm every raging sea; touch every inflamed sore of society; unite into harmony every quarrelsome crowd; heal every excruciating pain and suffering; pilot every soul into the harbor of rest; banish all fear, malice, bigotry, and hatred in the melting fire of divine love; bind every demonic power; heal every sickness, disease, and torment; fill to the full every lack and void; impart life more abundant to all men everywhere; and give joy unspeakable and full of glory until the whole earth is full of the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea, and all creation pulsates with the scintillating life and light and love of God!

The spirit of sonship is the power of God manifest first in the personal lives of His elect, then in the world around us, unto all time and the ages of this world, then in the whole universe. The life of sonship is the power of God that changes everything in its reality, function, and influence, as determined by the Lord in His great and glorious program of creation, redemption, and the restitution of all things. The power of the spirit of the Son within us shall eventually change us not only in spirit, but in soul and body, from human to divine, from earthly to heavenly, and from mortal to immortal; then it shall in like manner change the world around

us, including all the nations of men, and nature itself, and then it shall change the vast universe unto the endlessness of infinity. The elect of the Lord today are experiencing the power of the spirit of sonship within; it is the power of Christ that is consuming everything within us that is foreign to His nature and life. Christ is taking His throne and is now reigning in our lives! And He must continue to reign in us until He has put every enemy under His feet!

Jesus rose from the dead and appeared on earth in the sight of men in the body of His resurrection, which is the spiritual body of incorruption and immortality. With this clear and obvious demonstration of the power of sonship life, all doubts and fears were removed from the minds of His disciples. Now they knew that He was the very Son of the living God and the King of kings and Lord of lords! Now they knew the reality of His message of life and glory. In Him they saw the fullness of sonship to God! Again, in the end of this age, and in the beginning of the age now dawning, Christ's *many brethren* shall come to the full measure of the stature of the firstborn Son. In them Christ shall come with power, even the *power of His resurrection*. Then shall creation see the *manifestation of the sons of God*, just as Jesus' disciples saw Him manifested in all the glory and power of His resurrection. Christ was revealed to His disciples, and He is still revealed only to His disciples, His very own brethren. But the manifest sons of God shall be revealed *unto creation*. Christ in us is now *our* hope of glory, but Christ revealed in His many brethren is the hope of the groaning creation! Christ is now *our* life, but His life in His sons shall become the life of creation, delivering all men from the bondage of corruption, raising them up into a place in the liberty of the children of God (Rom. 8:19-21).

Chapter 53

The Church In Sardis

continued

"Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, *I will come on thee as a thief*, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee" (Rev. 3:3).

Sardis had become a famous city. It was a very ancient city, and the old world was full of tales about its wealth, and it had once been the proud capital of Lydia. It was located thirty-five miles southeast of Thyatira. The spacious valley of Hermus was bounded on the south by mount Molus. Projecting from this range there was a narrow ridge of land terminating in a lofty peak that dominated the plain below. On the plateau of that peak was built the splendid city of Sardis. It was over 1,500 feet above the valley. It had towering cliffs leading up to it, and directly behind it. Sardis was also reputed to have an impregnable fortress. Unless one came up by the narrow road over the narrow ridge of land, which was easily defended by a handful of soldiers, it seemed an impossibility for enemy troops to get into the city. It would seem as if nature itself had made the place unattackable.

Its people were proud, arrogant, and over-confident. They felt safe there in their mountain fortress! They were sure that no one could scale this hill with its perpendicular sides. But one day the enemy came, and Cyrus of Persia began a siege of Sardis. For fourteen days Cyrus waited. Then he offered a special reward to anyone who could figure out a method of military entrance into the city. A young soldier was watching the cliffs intently one day when he saw a soldier in Sardis drop his helmet over the battlements. It went clanging down the mountainside. Now, although Sardis stood atop a precipitous hill, the hill had developed faults and cracks. The soldier's helmet fell into one of these fissures. The soldier began to climb down the precipice into the fault to recover his helmet, and then climbed back up again.

The soldier below, watching this activity, noticed this and reasoned there must be a crack in the rock...perhaps an easy entrance into the city above. That night a carefully selected group of Persian soldiers searched out the fissure and made their way to the top of Sardis and found it completely unguarded. As a result Sardis was easily taken. Sardis fell to Cyrus because her defenders had become complacent; they thought themselves too impregnable to need a guard. The enemy slipped in and came upon them "as a thief" and they knew not the hour that he came! Surely it was upon this background that the Lord warned the complacent believers in Sardis, who gloried in their great works and programs for God, while neglecting their inner spiritual condition, "Remember therefore how thou hast received...and repent. If therefore thou shalt not *watch*, *I will come on thee as a thief*, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee!" Later in the book of Revelation the Lord stated again, "Behold, *I come as a thief*. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garment, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame" (Rev. 16:15).

There is a coming of the Lord as a thief! This is not a coming or an appearing that is before the public. It is not an unveiling before the multitudes. A thief does not go down to the public square with a trumpet and say, "I'd like to make an announcement. At three o'clock in the morning I'm going to visit the wealthiest man in this town and I'm going to steal everything I can get my hands on." He doesn't do that! He comes at the darkest part of the night. He comes with softest tread, without noise, without light, without warning. He comes as silently and stealthily as possible, unobserved by the sleepers. He comes to rob. He comes to take away everything that he can. He is after gold and pearls and jewels of great price. Men are unaware of the event until he has come and gone and the items of value to the owner have disappeared with him. The Lord Jesus Himself says that HE WILL COME AS A THIEF!

Almighty Lord! in whom dwellest the wisdom and knowledge of the universe, flood our souls with understanding from above. Remove the dark veil from our minds, and flood our hearts with light divine, that we may clearly behold the sacred secrets of truth long concealed in Thee. Our understanding of this beautiful truth will be greatly enhanced once we understand that in that long ago in the land of Israel Jesus came as a thief. The carnal mind conceives Him as coming in royal splendor and magnificence, with a band of trumpets sounding, a host of angels announcing His arrival, as He makes His triumphal entry into the world riding on a chariot overlaid with gold, His royal garments glistening with jewels of the rarest kind, and a crown of gold on His head and the omnipotent scepter of His kingdom in His hand.

Perhaps one of the greatest mysteries of all is that Christ came, not to dazzle the world with a spectacular political coup or military overthrow of the kingdoms of the world, but to reveal the kingdom of God **within men**, to unveil the internal rule of the spirit by which men and families and communities and cities and nations are transformed from domains of sin, ignorance, fear, evil, greed, lust, sorrow, darkness, disease, and death into shining citadels of righteousness, wisdom, love, joy, peace, health, light, and life. He came the first time to an out-of-the-way place, in the womb of a woman, and lying in a manger. He came riding on a little donkey. "Behold, thy King cometh unto thee: He is just and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass" (Zech. 9:9). He came in weakness, in meekness, in obscurity. His coming was shrouded in secret. Very few knew when He arrived in the midst! When Jerusalem and the great city of Rome closed their shops that star-lit night they knew not that the King of glory had come to earth. Even Bethlehem did not know.

When our Lord rode into Jerusalem He came not with the flamboyant and dazzling style of an earthly king. There were not legions of angels, no blasting of trumpets, no marching of armies, no royal chariot pulled by lively, prancing, expertly groomed and trained white horses. There was no palace where royal attendants waited to escort Him to His throne, and to await His every command. Our glorious King — yours and mine, beloved — came to the common, ordinary multitude in the most lowly, humble, and unpretentious way — riding on a common beast of burden — yet He came in the quiet and hushed movings of His omnipotent Spirit! The kingdoms of the world knew nothing of His coming until it was too late — the feet of iron and clay were smitten by the power of His word as like a thief He came upon them and spoiled their houses, setting up a kingdom of life and light and love in their midst which shall never be destroyed and of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, and all the kingdoms of men shall be driven away like the chaff of the summer threshingfloor before the wind.

As our Lord came into the world two thousand years ago silently, with softest tread, without fanfare or warning, so does He come to every man! Every well-marked crisis in the life of a child of God is a "coming" or "appearing" of the Christ, whether we know it at the time or not.

Many times we encounter Him in the most unthinkable places, and under the most unpropitious circumstances. In places and ways where we least expect to find the Lord, He will meet us face to face. There are times when we are faced with a mountain of circumstances, which appears unsurmountable and immovable. This is often the very place where we find Him waiting for us! All the mountains in our lives are raised up through our lack or unbelief, but there are no mountains of difficulty with God!

There are occasions when such appearances of the Lord seem the very opposite of what they are, times when our fate seems to be at the mercy of haphazard influences and accidental events. The really great crises in the experience of any of us are in most cases unexpected, take us unaware. If you read the Lord's symbolical and figurative descriptions of His coming in this light you cannot fail to see how true they are in each of our lives. He says no warning will be given! People will be going about their ordinary avocations in the ordinary way, taking for granted that nothing different will occur from what they have been accustomed to from day to day; outwardly there will be nothing portentous, no sign that the old order of things is at an end; and then, like a clap of thunder, the cataclysm will be upon them! "For as the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark; and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; SO SHALL ALSO THE COMING OF THE SON OF MAN BE."

We are bidden to look for the Lord's appearing in all the changes and happenings of our lives. The Lord directs and mandates every experience in the lives of His called and chosen elect, there are no accidents for any of us, and every event is the vehicle of His appearing to us. In the crises, changes, processings, strippings, purgings, prunings, blessings, and quickenings HE COMES to succor and relieve, to claim us for Himself, to teach us His ways, to inwork of His nature, and transform into His image and likeness. Nothing happens without Him; nothing can reach us that is not directly the token of His presence — or, as I prefer to put it, it is His very own special advent, the coming, the appearing of Christ to us in a fresh experiencing of Himself! "Be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh!"

As a thief! Can the natural mind even fathom the depths of a truth so eternal and sublime? This statement plainly indicates the manner of the Lord's coming. It shows that He is always present unseen, doing a work of which men are for a time entirely unaware. His working is therefore in a quiet manner, unobserved and entirely unknown until the discovery is made in consciousness of the handiwork He has wrought in secret. His arising steals its way upon us as the dawning of the day. The sun comes up at an early hour in the morning and if you are awake and up at that time you will see it rise, but if you sleep until noon, a great number of important things can transpire ere you are aware. The morning can be over before you know what is going on!

Traditional teaching has led us to think in terms of the first coming of Christ and His second coming, whereas the scriptures speak in terms of the progressive revelation of Jesus Christ. The Bible nowhere talks about the "first coming" and the "second coming". People use those terms as though they are found everywhere in the word of God! Yet the truth is, they are found nowhere! If I were to request a preacher to preach a sermon on the "second coming" of Christ using only the scriptures that mention His "second coming" it would be a short sermon indeed! In fact, it would be no sermon at all. We could just turn out the lights and all go home. The term is not in the Book. Neither is the term "first coming" in the Bible. These are unscriptural and extra-biblical terms. Those who use them have invented a theology all their own which is foreign to the word of God.

What the Bible does talk about is the progressive revelation of Jesus Christ, the unveiling of the Son of God, and many different "comings" of the Lord. The Holy Spirit records, "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto me who is to be Ruler in Israel, whose *goings forth* have been of old, from everlasting" (Mic. 5:2). Notice His "goings forth." The plural is used. The goings forth of the Lord speak about the Lord Jesus Christ! Now, the idea of "goings" has to do with the onward marching of God — the unfolding of the purpose of God, step by step. This is what is indicated here. This is what history is all about, the progressive revelation of the Christ, the marching forward of God, the ever-increasing of the unveiling of Himself to man!

Like the sound of many waters, the testimony of the word of God records with abundant and stunning and inescapable evidence that the coming of Christ is not a single event, or two great events, but includes many different manifestations. His coming to us is a many-sided experience. To multitudes He appears as Saviour. They find Him at the crossroads of their lives. They invite Him to "Come into my heart, come into my heart, Lord Jesus!" And this coming is just as real and meaningful and powerful as was His coming long centuries ago! To many He becomes their salvation, but they never venture any deeper to know Him intimately. They have only a superficial knowledge of Him. To others He appears as Bridegroom. "Behold, the Bridegroom *cometh!*" is the cry that meets the ears of the virgins waiting for His appearing. And for those who were unprepared, whose lamps had gone out and they had no oil, He came "as a thief" and they missed their hour of visitation. But for those who are prepared, they hear His voice and are moved by His love, and follow on to know Him in deeper measures of intimacy and union. To others He appears as a Refiner's Fire. "The Lord, whom ye seek, shall *suddenly come* to His temple...like a refiner's fire...He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver...and He shall purge the sons of Levi (priesthood), that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness" (Mal. 3:1-3). This is a coming of the Lord that the "second coming" preachers miss altogether! The Lord comes to His priesthood company consuming their hay, wood, and stubble, eliminating by the spirit of burning all that is of self and not of God. These are only a few of the many "comings" and "appearings" of the Lord mentioned in the scriptures. The coming of the Lord is as many-faceted as the most dazzling crystal of earth! And in many of these comings the Lord comes upon men either in blessing or in judgment "as a thief."

THEY SHALL WALK WITH ME IN WHITE

"He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in *white raiment*...thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and *they shall walk with me in white*: for they are worthy" (Rev. 3:4-5).

White garments (or robes) are mentioned seven times in the book of Revelation. The Laodiceans are counseled to buy white raiment to hide the shame of their nakedness (3:18). Those who have been slain, who have laid down *their lives* to take up *His*, and are awaiting vindication, are given white robes (6:11). In the celestial throne room the twenty-four elders are clad in white garments (4:4). Before the throne stands a great multitude that no man can number, who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb (7:9,13). The armies of heaven who follow the conquering Christ upon white horses are arrayed in fine linen, white and pure (19:14). We may conclude, therefore, that the white garments promised to the overcomer are the white raiment in which all of these are clothed, representing a *spiritual attire*, indeed, a **state of being!**

There is another thought here that we must not overlook. All down through the ages, from the time Adam was expelled from the Garden on, God has never left Himself without a remnant.

Somewhere in the world, no matter how dark the age, or overwhelming the apostasy and wickedness, God has had a people who walked with Him in the Spirit. To Sardis the Lord said, "Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall *walk with me in white*: for they are worthy." This glorious promise is made to the "few" or God's remnant out of the church of Sardis. This remnant is composed of people who have not soiled their garments with the spirit and ways of the world or the seductiveness of man-made religion. That this remnant is God's called and chosen elect, the company of the overcomers, is clear, for the Lord continues, "*He that overcometh*, the same shall be clothed in white raiment."

This white raiment is not the *imputed righteousness* that is given to us when we receive Christ as Saviour. You will note that the Lord, in the book of Revelation, is sending these letters to the seven churches. Therefore, He is speaking to people who have already received the imputed righteousness to their account! Though righteousness has been imputed to them through faith in Jesus, there is yet another white raiment that comes only through *overcoming*. This is not the imputed righteousness of Jesus as Saviour, but the **actual righteousness** which God is bringing us to as our state of being, that perfect walk in Christ, His nature and glory raised up in us as our very own life, that perfection that He is bringing us to fulfilling the words of Jesus, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Mat. 5:48). And fulfilling the exhortation of Paul, "But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ" (Eph. 4:15). This is the fifth stage of our journey into the fullness of Christ — to be led to that perfection, that perfect righteousness, nature, and glory of the Son of the living God!

The miracle of what God has done through Jesus Christ ravishes my heart. I am enthralled beyond measure that He has translated me out of the kingdom of darkness, and is clothing me with the fullness of the Son of God. Daily I am putting on the Lord Jesus Christ who is my robe of righteousness and my house from heaven, the new man, the spiritual body, and the new building of God, eternal in the heavens. Just as the life within a lamb produces its covering of wool, so does the life of Christ within each son of God create the garments of our full salvation. We put on the robe of Christ's righteousness, not by putting it on from outside of ourselves, by our own self-effort and good works, but by the working and power of His life within.

Some time ago Jody Dragoo shared with us a beautiful experience the Lord gave him in vision in which he saw the glory of the robe of righteousness as the spiritual body of the new man. The following is his account of this manifestation. We have shared this once before, a number of years ago, but it is so precious and powerful I cannot but share it again in connection with our present subject.

"The events that I now share are none other than the sons and daughters of God coming into their own, having overcome through the blood of the Lamb and having put on the incorruptible, immortal, and resurrected body of the Lord Jesus Christ. It was about seven o'clock one morning when I awoke to get ready for work. I didn't stay awake long as the next thing I knew I found myself in a foreign land. The name of the land was not revealed, but it may have been in Africa. The area was hot and dry without any wind on this day. The sky above was blue and clear for miles around. The sand beneath my feet was bright due to the sun beating down upon it. There were areas of sparse plant life, but not sufficient to sustain life. The area had apparently been in a long drought as there were very few cattle around. There were a few people who still resided in this village, one of which was a woman who was carrying a pail of water upon her head. She was off to my left and under the porches or walkways of the village.

"Another individual was a young black man who wore a light shirt and dark pants, who took me through the village. He spoke of the conditions that the people faced daily and how hard the drought had been on the livestock and all concerned. As we walked, he said the greatest need of his people was for rain. While he talked, I did not answer a word. It seemed I was completely aware of the situation at hand and the conditions they were in (Amos 8:11-14). Next we came to an open area within the village where we stopped and this individual stepped a few feet away from where I stood. After he spoke of the greatest need of the village being rain, immediately my hands and arms raised upwards toward the Father. It was at this point that I began to notice my *garment*. I was wearing a white robe with a small belt around the waist. There were no wrinkles or spot within the robe, and no sand on it. The robe kept out the effects of the climate and I felt no heat at all. As for my feet, I don't recall them touching the ground at any time.

"One aspect of this robe which has deeply impressed me is the fact that it felt different from the clothes or 'robes' we normally wear. With the clothes we usually wear we can feel the separation from our body. Furthermore, the fact that we have to change them daily, testifies to us that they are not really a part of our being. They are only temporary coverings until the permanent garment is put on. This robe, however, *was part of my being*. It was inseparable from my body. There was no sense of division or separateness. Is this not the picture of the corruptible putting on the incorruptible, the mortal putting on the immortal — the putting on of the Lord Jesus Christ who is formed within us! Is this not but the fulfillment of Romans 8:23 in regard to the complete redemption of the body? The sons and daughters of God clothed with the incorruptible, immortal, resurrected body of Christ, covered with the glory of God! And these go forth ministering from that incorruptible realm of *pure spirit*, delivering creation from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the sons of God.

"From this we should understand that putting on the robe — the incorruptible, immortal glory of God — is actually *our union with the robe*, making us complete, perfect, and lacking nothing! It is interesting to note that the robe comes forth from the inner working of the Father Himself. It is He who weaves each and every strand into a whole, complete unit. It is brought forth from within as the Lord Jesus Christ is formed within us, revealed in fuller detail day by day. This is the Father's work, and it is beautiful to behold! The robe is out of our innermost being and part of our entire being.

"The next thing I noticed was my thought processes and how they worked. The mind seemed to operate on a completely different realm from what we are accustomed to. This reveals that the mind of Christ was in full operation. This is the new mind and heart promised by the Father. The mind that was in Christ Jesus was the mind of the Father. And it was this mind which was in operation within me. This is the renewed mind of which Paul spoke. It is this mind that the Father is perfecting within His sons and daughters. And it is this mind that sought the Father for rain for a dry village!

"As I raised my hands upward an intercession for the people began, the Father was seen in a large white cloud which began producing rain clouds. Almost immediately these clouds began pouring rain down upon the village. It was rain in abundance that watered the ground and filled their wells. I can't say what the words I spoke were, but they had such power and authority in them that the elements themselves were brought to obedience. As the rains came, the man who guided me through the village had an astonished look upon His face. He asked, 'How did you do this?' It was at this point that I awoke.

"As I have continued to meditate on this it has begun to transform my attitude, my understanding, my life, and all that is within me. It has become strong meat in times of testing. The scripture which states that 'it does not yet appear what we shall be,' comes to mind in reference to this dream and witnesses to my spirit about the things shortly to come to pass. How beautiful it is when Father pulls back some of the veil and shows us these things! To see the ministry of the sons and daughters of God coming into their own, being clothed with the glory of God, and delivering creation from the bondage of sin and death is wonderful to behold. I will never forget the robe which He revealed, and how it was part of my being, and covered and protected all of my being. Ah, the sons and daughters with the mind of Christ shall lack nothing!" — end quote. And may I add — *nothing* shall be impossible unto them! They shall ask for rain for all creation, even the presence, life, and power of God to restore all things, and suddenly shall it come upon the world! Isn't it wonderful!

I thank God today that there is a righteousness, a divine righteousness that God can raise up within men, and which can exalt a man to the image and likeness of God. In no other way can men ever be exalted or lifted up out of the power of sin, self, sorrow, and death. Thank God for the *imputed righteousness* of Christ — it is sufficient to remove your sin-consciousness and bring you into fellowship with God. But it is not enough to make you an overcomer, perfect, mature, in the full stature of Christ. Men get all hung up on the imputed righteousness of Christ and never get on to the business of *transformation into the image of God*. They major in milk, but have no meat. They get men started, but never grow them up!

So I gladly and thankfully this day record this truth that the righteousness of which I speak is the righteousness of God, which by faith we may possess; not only a righteousness imputed, in which we can trust for the beginning of our salvation, but a righteousness **IMPARTED, INWORKED INTO THE NATURE, RAISED UP AS ACTUAL RIGHTEOUSNESS AS A STATE OF BEING**. All very good is this talk about imputed righteousness, but I cannot — will not — settle for a righteousness that is only imputed. If it is not the very **nature of our being** then we are not really changed at all. The robe of imputed righteousness is the robe that can become soiled! "Thou has a few names even in Sardis which have not *defiled their garments*." "And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment *spotted by the flesh*" (Jude 23). But there is a robe that *cannot be soiled!* This is the robe of the *overcomer!* This is the perfection and glory of Christ which transforms us into the likeness of God!

It is clear that the garments which can be *defiled* (Rev. 3:4) are not to be identified with the white raiment of the overcomer nor with the white raiment in which those who have not defiled their garments walk with Christ. The white raiment that is not and cannot be defiled, soiled, or stained, is the garment of *glory* — being a part of that inheritance which is *incorruptible* and fadeth not away. This is the garment of the overcomer of which the Lord speaks, "and they shall walk with me in *white*, for they are worthy." The Greek word here translated "white" actually speaks more of the brilliant radiance of *light* than it does of a color. It is the same word which is used of the appearance of Christ at the time of His transfiguration as "white and glistening."

Actually what is being said here is that those who overcome will be clothed upon with the radiant glory of the risen and ascended Lord! Just as He is robed in celestial light (Ps. 104:2), so we are progressively being clothed from glory to glory with light as with a garment. The words used carry the sense of shining in intense whiteness, in a dazzling heavenly glory. A vesture of light would enclothe the overcomer and the glory of the celestial realms would be his garb. In that great day when we shall perfectly image and out-ray the exact likeness of God in the fullness of our sonship, we, too, shall be clothed in glistening garments of white light. We

who "walk in the light as He is in the light" shall show forth the glory of God through our incorruptible bodies of glory!

George Hawtin has written in this connection, "So it was on that never-to-be-forgotten day our Lord led His three disciples to the top of a very high mountain and was transfigured before them (Matt. 17:1-2). The record states that "His face did shine as the *sun*, and His raiment was white as the *light*." Only light is truly white. His garments were not white like a snowflake; they were as white as the light! Jesus was transfigured before them. He was transformed. He was changed. The Greek word *metamorphoo* is the word the evangelist Matthew used to describe the change that took place in Him on that wonderful day. As a groveling worm is transformed to become a butterfly, so our Lord was transformed from corruptible to incorruptible, from natural man to manifested Son of God. The celestial light of the glory of God shown from His face brighter than the glory of the sun. This was the shining forth of the incorruptible! Our Lord was revealing the unspeakable, excellent glory of the incorruptible realm. He was showing them, first, what He Himself would be, and secondly, He intended that these astonished onlookers should understand what the incorruptible sons of God will be when they reign with Him in that heavenly realm. This was the overpowering sight John beheld in the Revelation — one like the Son of man whose voice was as "many waters" standing in that same brilliant glory of heavenly incorruption. This is the fullness of the body of Christ!" — end quote.

Those who are following on to know the Lord in this new kingdom day shall fully receive that new garment of white, which is the garment of the incorruptible Life, Light, and Glory of Christ! The message of Christ to His elect of the present time is, "He that overcometh shall be clothed in white raiment...and they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy." FOR THEY ARE WORTHY! Not because they have believed in Jesus and been forgiven and cleansed from their past sins. Oh, no! It is because they have been changed, transformed, metamorphosed into the nature and glory of Christ Himself. This white raiment is nothing less than the new body of the Christ Life, for how else could these "walk with Him in white"?

The Lord Himself also said to His elect, "I counsel thee to buy of me...*white raiment* that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy *nakedness* do not appear" (Rev. 3:18). This white raiment is certainly not the imputed righteousness of Christ, for that you do not need to "buy!" Paul also expressed something of the groaning and travailing we all experience as we endure the bondages and frustrations of this body of death. He said that we long to be *clothed upon* with our house which is from heaven, so that when this earthly house of this body is dissolved, we might *not be found naked*. As long as we are in this body, we are burdened, yea, we groan, not that we would be unclothed (as in the death of the grave), but clothed upon with the new body of the Christ Life, so that this mortality might be swallowed up by HIS LIFE.

"Now He that has wrought us for the selfsame thing **is God**, who also hath given unto us **the earnest of the Spirit**" (II Cor. 5:5). The "earnest of the Spirit" is the indwelling life which assures us that we shall attain to our appointed goal, for the fulfillment of His promise must be **by the Spirit**, and not by any ability we think we have. I must confess I do not know **how** the Lord will transform these bodies, nor do I wish to presume upon the timing of the Lord. I do know that any self-effort is vain, health foods contribute absolutely nothing, and confessions by which we try to "name it and claim it" have not worked for any I have known who tried it. I am only aware of the strange inner working of the Spirit of the Lord that has awakened me to the truth that the sons of God shall step into the immortality of the Christ in spirit, soul, *and* body, for any reality less than this cannot set creation free from the **bondage of corruption!**

The Lord has spoken this beautiful truth to many thousands of His called and elect saints in these recent years, but we would not be so foolish as to claim anything before the time. God does have a *time!* And it is in *His appointment.* God does have a *way!* And it is *by His Spirit.* Father will do the work in His "fullness of time" just as Jesus came "in the fullness of time" and "when the day of Pentecost was fully come" He returned in mighty Spirit power! I am only able to declare what I hear of Him. The timing is up to Him. So we press forward into His life while patiently waiting for the moving of His Spirit. Should my body go to the grave before Father's appointed hour arrives for the manifestation of the sons of God I will not miss that unveiling, for just as surely as Christ Jesus rose from the tomb in resurrection power and glory, as the Son of God with power, so shall He raise me up in that day in the power of His resurrection, for the manifestation of sonship is the manifestation of HIS RESURRECTION LIFE!

Doesn't it stir up your pure mind and incite your spirit to heights of wonder when you read of the "young man" who sat at the sepulcher after the resurrection of Jesus who was "clothed in a long white garment" (Mk. 16:5). He had just descended from that high and lofty spiritual realm to give counsel and comfort to the bereaved disciples, that realm where there is no sickness, darkness, or death, but where all is LIGHT AND LIFE. And it is that same realm of LIGHT AND LIFE to which Christ Himself has invited us, when He said, "and they shall **walk with me in white.**"

At the appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ in human flesh as the first begotten Son of God, the brightest light the world had ever seen shone upon mankind. "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the *light of life*" (Jn. 8:12). Christ was literally clothed in light that shone as the noonday sun, scintillating with all the colors of the spectrum as He walked and talked in unbroken fellowship with Him who is the Father of Light. Saul of Tarsus was blinded by the dazzling light of this Son of God, when he met Him on the road to Damascus, and John the beloved beheld this glory again as the actual out-ricing of the Light which God is. Think of it! As Jesus is in His glory of resurrection, brilliant in scintillating splendor, so shall we be when we have come to know Him fully in the power of His resurrection, helping to illuminate the entire universe with the out-ricing of Christ from within us.

As surely as the Daystar is arising in your heart, my brother, my sister, just so certain is it that the glory of the Lord shall be seen upon His people! "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee. And the nations shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising" (Isa. 60:1-3). This glory is not religious zeal or soulish emotionalism and excitement — it is real **spiritual power.** It is the divine effulgence that radiates His majesty and affects all things. The glory is arising upon the Lord's elect, is being activated within us, and shall dwell upon us until we all become radiant with the substance of His celestial being, the emanating train of His power. This is the celestial garment of His white-light!

Can one hold back the dawn or forbid the sun to rise? The night is for them that sleep; but for those who walk in the light of the Lord even the darkness shall be light before them. The dawn belongs to all who have lifted their eyes from the shadows unto the realm of Light and Life and Truth...for they walk in the glorious freedom of the sons of God. The sons of God shall arise above the mountains of the earth as the living radiance of His kingdom, yea, even as the embodiment of the Father of Light. Each son a living member of His Christ. God is clothing them with the garments of His glory, and the brilliance of God's eternal sunrise shall shine from

their eyes and speak from their mouths. All realms shall be flooded with the light of God as all creation partakes of the liberty of the sons of God. Aren't you glad!

I WILL NOT BLOT OUT HIS NAME

"To him that overcometh...I will *not blot out his name out of the book of life*, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before His angels" (Rev. 3:5).

Here is one who by no means will have his name erased from the list of those having attained to THE LIFE. We cannot escape the conclusion that it is possible to have one's name erased from this wonderful book, else the promise would be meaningless. So, what does that mean? Since the qualification for having one's name or nature inscribed eternally in this book is *overcoming*, this being something done subsequent to becoming a child of God, what is being presented is not the salvation and life which are the free gift of God's grace, received by simple faith in Jesus. The subject here is MATURITY OF LIFE — the very life of the Son of God reproduced in a people that is **like Him** in the fullness of Himself. This one *can* be disqualified from!

"And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope *unto the end*: that ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience *inherit the promises*" (Heb. 6:11-12). "For we are made partakers of Christ, *if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end*" (Heb. 3:14). "Wherefore the rather, brethren, *make your calling and election sure*: for if ye do these things, ye shall *never fall*: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (II Pet. 1:10-11). "Be ye faithful *unto death* (of self), and I will give thee a *crown of life*. Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that *no man take thy crown*" (Rev. 2:10; 3:11). "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, *I myself should be a castaway (unapproved)*" (I Cor. 9:27).

It is interesting to note that in the genealogies of the Bible there are only two books which are identified: (1) "the book of the generations of Adam" (Gen. 5:1) — all mankind is in that book, but it is a book of death — and (2) "the book of the generation of Jesus Christ (Mat. 1:1). The phrase, "the book of the generation," is an unusual expression. It occurs only in connection with Adam and then in connection with Christ. The book of the generation of Jesus Christ is THE BOOK OF LIFE! It speaks of the life of Christ being generated, raised up and reproduced in us until we are fully like Him!

The book of life is called in the Revelation, "the book of the life of the Lamb" (Rev. 13:8). If I were to give you a book entitled THE BOOK OF THE LIFE OF GEORGE WASHINGTON, you would understand at once that it is the biography or autobiography of the life of the first president of the United States of America. That book should contain everything you always wanted to know about George Washington! Every detail of his life would be there: where he was born, who his parents were, where he was raised, the schools he attended, who he married, how he became general of the army, and finally president of our great nation.

In the same way, THE BOOK OF THE LIFE OF THE LAMB is the biography of God's Lamb, the expose of who He is, what He is like, and what He does. Everything you ever wanted to know about the Son of God is contained in this wonderful book of the life of the Lamb! It is not a literal book, of course, for we are dealing with symbols; the sons and daughters of the Most High are themselves the LIVING RECORD AND REVELATION of the life of the indwelling

Lamb! It was to the apostle Paul that the revelation was given that the book of life, the book of the Lamb, the book of the Son of God IS A PEOPLE. "Foreasmuch as Y-E are manifestly declared to be THE EPISTLE OF CHRIST ministered by us, written *not with ink*, but with the *Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone*, but in *fleshy tables of the heart*. Who also has made us able ministers of the New Testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life" (II Cor. 3:3-6).

How pitiful that the people of earth for the most part have never read this beautiful EPISTLE OF CHRIST, this glorious BOOK OF THE LIFE OF THE LAMB. They have poured over the books of religion, the books of hypocrisy, the books of fleshly wisdom, forms of godliness, dead doctrines, static creeds, empty rituals, lifeless ceremonies, and man-made rules and regulations. But precious few have ever seen the BOOK OF THE LIFE OF THE LAMB! Oh! What a wonderful gospel shall fill the earth beneath and the celestial worlds above when God opens His holy book of life! The book of life is that blessed company of the sons of God, elect, chosen, and transformed into the image of Christ throughout the ages. This book is being carefully written word by word, sentence by sentence, paragraph by paragraph, page by page, and chapter by chapter in the nitty-gritty of our daily experience with God until the full revelation of the Christ shall be written therein. Time's clock is striking the hour and the time is drawing wonderfully nigh for the manifestation of the sons of God, the opening of God's book of life people, and what a revelation it shall be! There the whole world shall see and read in the simplest of language everything there is to know about Jesus Christ, the Son of God! All creation from time immemorial has groaned and travailed for the manifestation of the sons of God, to see and read and understand and know in them the many-faceted beauty and glory of God's Christ, that they also might be delivered from the bondage of corruption.

God has a **message** for the world — the revelation of Jesus Christ! This message is being written in flaming words of glory upon the pages of the lives and hearts and minds of men and women who are dying to that impudent and death-dealing devil of self, in order to walk and live by the spirit of HIS LIFE. I am terribly at a loss of words to express the glory of God's BOOK OF LIFE COMPANY, but I can assure you that once it is fully ready, prepared and finished, it shall become the world's "best seller" throughout the ages to come! As the pen is mightier than the sword, so this book, above any that has ever been written by the finger of man, shall alter the course of history, and the dark covering that has been cast over the minds and the hearts of the people for generations and ages will be completely destroyed by the flood of transforming light and wisdom and knowledge and glory and power shining forth from the living pages of God's eternal and incorruptible BOOK OF LIFE!

The promise that our name will not be *blotted out* of the book of life reveals the great truth of that condition or state of being where one's walk in divine nature can no more be tainted, mixed, mingled, contaminated, stagnated, reduced, or lost in any way through the lower realms of the flesh — soul and body. No more can we stumble, make mistakes, offend, fall short, fail, miss the mark, or descend to walk out of a lower realm. OUR WALK WILL BE ALWAYS AND UNDER ALL CIRCUMSTANCES IN THE POWER OF THE DIVINE NATURE OF CHRIST IN OUR SPIRIT! In this reality we will live continually and unfailingly in the victorious life of the spirit, soul and body united in the life of the spirit to express only that life which we are.

Preachers debate over the issues of "backsliding" or "losing one's salvation" versus the teaching of "eternal security." I do not hesitate to tell you, however, that this promise of Christ not to blot your name out of the book of life proclaims the **very highest realm of the truth of eternal security** — a walk in the perfection of Christ beyond sin, sickness, sorrow, fear, temptation, struggle, and death. Isn't it wonderful!

Ray Prinzing has written an encouraging word in respect to this beautiful hope. "When we have this deep delight, respect, desire unto the REVEALED WILL OF GOD TO US, then we read, *'and nothing shall offend them.'* No existing condition or circumstance, situation, or even a person, can offend us. NOTHING shall offend them! What a beautiful dimension of His grace is set before us in this word. Yet it is not to be some lofty vision to be fulfilled 'in the sweet bye and bye' of mythical religion, but that which He would work into us in these days. The word 'offend' from the Hebrew *mikshal* and the Greek *skandalizo* means 'to cause to stumble' or 'a stumbling block.'

"We read that He is 'able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy' (Jude 24). This is not a barely making it in, as by the skin of our teeth, as the expression goes. It is being wrought in us triumphantly, gloriously, to His praise. Kept from 'FALLING.' Here the Greek word is *aptaistos* and means: to stumble, to fall. He is able to keep us from stumbling — being thrown off balance, and teetering on the edge of sin. There are so many things which can disrupt our sense of tranquillity, and when these things crowd in on us, we begin to stagger and flip-flop around until, spiritually speaking, we would look like a man trying to regain his balance after he had stumbled over a rock in his path. God is able to KEEP US CALM, COOL, AND COLLECTED — keep us from stumbling! And He is able to present us FAULTLESS unto Himself. If we are 'offended,' stumbling over something, it is a clear indication that there is something of self in us that has not yet been dealt with. We are not faultless as long as we continue to be offended, to stumble, be thrown off balance. But there is a place in God where 'NOTHING shall offend them,' and it is into this realm that we would be led" — end quote.

We can never know the power of Christ's resurrection until we know union with Him. It is in union with Christ in God that brings the constancy of His life as our very own reality. There are a couple verses of scripture I would like to consider with you in closing this message. If you will let these gracious inspired words speak for themselves, you will be given to understand a mystery comprehended by very few men and women who have walked the face of this planet. The following words of the apostle Paul are freighted with meaning and spiritual significance. "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence we also look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself" (Phil. 3:20-21).

The opening statement of this beautiful passage declares that "Our conversation *is in heaven.*" The word "conversation" is from the Greek *politeuma* meaning "citizenship." It is not our words that we speak that are in heaven, but our citizenship — our habitation and residence with full civil rights. We are citizens of heaven! Our residence is in heaven! We have been raised up and made to sit together in the heavens in Christ Jesus! Heaven is the place of our birth, our nativity, our homeland, our sphere of living. We already dwell in heaven — **NOW!** God is SPIRIT, and heaven is the REALM OF THE SPIRIT, the SPHERE OF EXISTENCE in which God dwells. To be born of the Spirit, to be born of God, is to be *born in heaven!* To live in the Spirit is to live in heaven! To walk in the Spirit is to walk in heaven! His presence,

It will be worth our time to examine prayerfully just what is actually stated in the passage of scripture now under consideration. "For our citizenship is in heaven, *from whence we look...*" "We **look...**" I ask you to notice this particularly. "From whence **we look.**" "**From whence** we look." It does not say, "from whence we *shall* look." Nor does it say, "From whence *the Lord shall come.*" What it does say is, "From whence *we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body...*" It does not say at all that the Lord Jesus Christ shall come

from heaven, although that is how our superficial reading and carnal-mindedness has taken it! Nothing is said here about where Christ dwells, or where He is coming from. The subject is not where Christ is, but where WE ARE and WHAT WE ARE DOING THERE!

Where are we? "Our citizenship (residence, homeland) *is in heaven!*" This beautiful passage shows the believer to be an heavenly man, positioned in the heavenlies — living out of the realm of SPIRIT. And what are we doing there? Why, bless your heart, from that lofty vantage point and exalted state of consciousness we are LOOKING FOR THE SAVIOUR to change our vile body! Just as a man may sit in a fire-tower steadily looking for the tell-tale signs of smoke that alert him to a forest fire, so WE SIT IN HEAVEN LOOKING FOR THE SAVIOUR TO CHANGE OUR BODY! The message is clear — we are not on earth looking for our Saviour to come crashing down from heaven. Rather, from our exalted seating in the height of heaven, in the high place of the Spirit, we look for this change, for we know the Christ there, we belong to Him there, we are joined in one with Him there, we are heavenly because He is. He will extend the work of salvation and exaltation to our members which are upon earth, to the body realm that still dwells in an earthly state, so as to present our whole being in the power of divine, incorruptible, and immortal life in the true sphere and home of that life above — a spiritual body!

Oh, yes! We are to possess a fully developed body which belongs to the celestial world! This change from mortality to immortality takes place as Christ arises from the inner, heavenly sanctuary of our spirit, coming out of heaven (spirit) within us to manifest in the visible world. We know our true spiritual and divine state in our heavenly life, and now soul and body are to be raised up into union in that heavenly life. As we find *Christ in us* as the source of our life, tremendous changes take place! Oh, the mystery of it! It is not from earth that we look for heaven to swoop down and change us; it is in heaven that we look for our outer man to catch up to our inner man. "**From heaven** we look for our Saviour to change our vile body!" Hallelujah!

This, my beloved, is that full salvation that includes the plentiousness of His incorruptible life, nature and power. It is the *full salvation* of the whole man, spirit, soul, *and* body, a victory so complete, so powerful, so divine and eternal, that there is NO POSSIBILITY OF EVER SINNING OR DYING AGAIN! These overcomers possess the very fullness of the divine nature! They are not merely "saved by grace," but have totally laid down their own lives and completely taken up HIS. They are incorruptible in nature and immortal in substance. This, dear ones, is the TRUE ETERNAL SECURITY! These are they to whom the promise is given, "and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life." When the process of redemption and salvation is completed in us and we are like Him fully, there will be NO MORE CHANGE, for we will dwell in the totality of being in that state of being as unchangeable as He is unchangeable, as eternal as He is eternal!

Chapter 54

The Church In Philadelphia

"And by the angel of the church in *Philadelphia* write..." (Rev. 3:7).

The church in Philadelphia is the sixth of the seven churches in Asia addressed by the Lord in the vision of John. The Greek word for Philadelphia is *Philadelphos* and its meaning is "one who loves his brother." Philadelphia was a young city founded and colonized by people from Pergamos. This was done during the reign of Attalus the Second, who ruled in Pergamos from 159 — 138 BC. Attalus had great love for his brother Eumenes, and it was because of this love that he was called Philadelphos. It was after him that Philadelphia was named.

In the letter to the church at Philadelphia we find many of the same phrases that were penned to the other six churches, so we must look a little closer to see what the Lord is really saying. Philadelphia is a great church to study for so many wonderful things are said about this church! In fact, not one negative thing is said about the church in Philadelphia! We can benefit from the positive things said about a church, and we can also benefit from the negative things said about a church. The fact is, the word of God is filled with great commendations, and also with great corrections, and we can profit by both. The scriptures are replete with people's mistakes and people's successes. God has never made it a practice to hide His servant's mistakes as the leaders of this world are wont to do.

Most men who write their autobiography maximize their successes and minimize their failures. Some of us have surely noticed in scripture how the Holy Spirit often takes just a verse or two to record a man's successes and chapter after chapter to talk about his failures. Let us then be men and women of understanding, that, instead of seeking only the praise and blessing of God, we may also receive the rebuke, correction, and chastening dispensed from the Father's hand of divine wisdom and purpose upon all who receive the call to sonship. These are the great lessons in the letters to the seven churches freely offered to all who seek after glory, honor, and immortality in the kingdom of God!

Of the seven churches, two of them received no indictment from the Lord, nor were they told to repent. The church in Smyrna was known as the "suffering church" because of their severe persecutions, and they were not told to repent. The Lord saw their trouble and tribulation, their poverty and imprisonment, their unswerving steadfastness and great faithfulness, and they did not need to be told to repent. It was in their hearts to repent when the need arose, for the work of God ran deep in their lives. Considering their great trials and intense tribulations and the mighty dealings of God in their lives, the Lord said to them, "*Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life*" (Rev. 2:10). It was not to the death of the body that the Lord referred, but to the death of the carnal mind of the Adamic life!

The second church, of course, against which the Lord laid no charge, nor did He tell them to repent, was the church in Philadelphia. Because they kept the word of His patience, by which the kingdom of God is inherited, He gave them wonderful promises. To the church in Philadelphia the Lord said, "*Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.*"

These last words mean "that no man step into that place which was designed for thee." For example, after the manner that Jacob stepped into Esau's place; Judah stepped into Reuben's place; David stepped into Saul's place; Matthias stepped into Judas Iscariot's place; the church stepped into Israel's place. The message is clear — God *will* have a victorious body, a company of overcoming sons of God, who shall within themselves overcome all things and be crowned with life, glory, authority, and power! Should we fail to move in and possess our inheritance in God, as the generation of Israelites who came out of Egypt did, the Lord will reach out and raise up others to take our place, and they will thus *take our crown!*

The "crown" is mentioned in connection with only *two* churches out of the seven: Smyrna and Philadelphia — God's overcoming remnant! The word picture is that of a royal crown of triumph — total victory over *every enemy*, including the last enemy, death. The Greek word for crown in these passages is *stephanos*. The popular name "Stephen" is derived from this word, and this crown was usually a laurel wreath woven of fragrant branches, or the like. It was granted to winners in the Panhellenic games and also as a token of public honor for distinguished service, especially of military leaders who had been victorious over their enemies on the battlefield. It was also given at marriage feasts, especially in royal families, to celebrate the joy of the bridegroom in having "won" the maiden as his bride. This crown always denotes A VICTOR'S CROWN — the crown of an OVERCOMER!

It is my conviction that these two churches, the church in Smyrna and the church in Philadelphia, represent the Lord's elect and chosen remnant in the earth throughout the church age. They also correspond to the two witnesses in chapter eleven of the Revelation. We know that a *candlestick* represents a *church*. There are *two churches* out of the seven that received no condemnation or reproof from the Lord, and were given only great and precious promises. Of the two witnesses it is testified, "And I will give power unto my *two witnesses*, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth (humility, brokenness). These are the *two olive trees* (anointed ones), and the *two candlesticks* standing before the God of the earth" (Rev. 11:3-4). **Two candlesticks! Two churches!** Two given a special anointing and standing before God! Ah, Smyrna and Philadelphia, what a calling you have!

THE KEY OF DAVID

"These things saith He that is holy, He that is true, He that *hath the key of David*, He that *openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth*" (Rev. 3:7).

The key of David speaks of he who has the "key" or the "authority" and "dominion" of the king of Israel. The king of Israel is the king of God's called and chosen people! The people of Israel in the Old Testament experienced great and mighty things. God called them, chose them, and made them a great nation in the earth. The hand of God was upon them in favor and blessing so long as they loved, honored, obeyed, and served Him; but when they departed from the Lord and did wickedness, in faithfulness He judged and corrected them.

One such occasion was in the days of Isaiah when both the house of Judah and the house of Israel were filled with corruption, sin, idolatry, and rebellion. Their response to God's correction at that time is described in these words: "In that day the Lord God of hosts called you to weeping and mourning (in sorrow and brokenness), to shaving off all your hair (in humiliation) and to the girding with sackcloth (of repentance). But instead you gave yourselves to pleasure and mirth, slaying oxen and killing sheep, eating flesh and drinking wine, with the idea Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die! And the Lord of hosts revealed Himself in my (Isaiah's)

ears as He said, Surely this unatoned sin shall not be purged from you until you are punished — and the punishment will be death, says the Lord God of hosts" (Isa. 22:12-14).

The Assyrians came and laid siege against the city of Jerusalem and the city was about to be taken. The defenses of Judah were inadequate to protect the city. There were "breaches" in the walls of the city of David and the people were tearing down their houses to fortify the wall. Their water supply was endangered. It was a desperate time for the inhabitants of Jerusalem! God was calling for weeping and mourning, but they chose instead joy and gladness, eating flesh and drinking wine. They were partying in the face of catastrophe!

The government was exceedingly corrupt. A man by the name of Shebna was the steward of Hezekiah, king of Judah. As steward he had authority over all the king's house and affairs of state. Today we might call him the chief of staff. His authority was the very authority of the king himself to administer the affairs of the kingdom on behalf of, and in the name of, the king. Shebna, however, was a vain, proud, glory-seeking man! Shebna was living in ease and splendor while all the trouble was going on, heedless to the problems that were piling up. He misused his authority and spent the king's money on frivolous things. In those days when men spent lavishly, it was not the races, casinos, yachts, or huge estates, but expenditures were made on sepulchers. Shebna was presumptuous enough to be building himself a tomb among the great men of Israel, a massive, ornate, and expensive tomb worthy of a king, far exceeding his known income. The inevitable inference, of course, was that in order to accomplish this he was appropriating the state funds for his own use.

Through the prophet Isaiah the Lord declared that He would violently take away this corrupt government, and roll it like a ball into a large country. "Behold, the Lord will hurl you away violently, O you strong man; yes, He will take tight hold of you and He will surely cover you with shame. He will surely roll you up in a bundle and toss you like a ball into a large country (as a captive): there you will die and there will be your splendid chariots, your disgrace to your master's house! And I will thrust you from your office, and from your station will you be pulled down" (Isa. 22:17-19, Amplified).

This prophecy had a literal fulfillment in the days of king Hezekiah, but it has deep **spiritual significance** to the elect of the Lord in these days! All the things which happened to the fleshly Israel are written for *our admonition*, upon whom have come the transition of the ages. They teach us great and valuable lessons in the spirit! The Lord told Shebna that He would take away his authority and position and that He was going to install a new government. The record continues, "In that day I will call my servant, Eliakim son of Hilkiyah. And I will clothe *him* with *your robe* (position) and bind your *girdle* (will, administration) on him and will commit *your authority to his hand*; he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the house of Judah. And *the key of the house of David* I will lay upon his shoulder; he shall *open and no one shall shut, he shall shut and no one shall open*. And I will fasten him like a peg or nail in a firm place; and *he will become a throne of honor and glory* to his father's house. And they will hang on him the honor and the whole weight of his father's (David's) house" (Isa. 22:20-24, Amplified).

God said He was going to install a new government, raise up a new administrator, even one named Eliakim, and lay the *key of David* on his shoulder. This is the first mention in scripture of *the key of David*, and the Lord quoted this prophecy in His message to the church in Philadelphia — confirming that HE was the One to whom Isaiah had prophetically pointed! Shebna's position was given to Eliakim, the son of Hilkiyah, whom the Lord calls "my servant." Eliakim was a bondsman of the Lord, one who had an ear to hear what the Lord said, and a

heart to obey His word and do all His will. He was a bonds slave of God! Eliakim was of the same spirit as God's called and chosen elect, to whom the book of Revelation is addressed, the *bondslaves* of Jesus Christ! (Rev. 1:1).

When God called Eliakim to rule Judah, the Lord said of him, "*And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open*" (Isa. 22:22). The key of the house of David represented the God-given power and authority given to Eliakim to rule and reign over Judah. With that key, Eliakim was fully authorized of God to open doors of authority and opportunity that no one else could shut, and to shut doors that no one else could open. For us, the key of the house of David represents God-given power and authority, first of all to rule in the circumstances of our own lives, to rule and bless in the midst of the Lord's people, and to govern all the nations in the kingdom of God. And when that kingdom key is given to us as the body of Christ, the body of the One who has the key of David, we shall govern wisely, for we shall do so with the mind of Christ and with the authority of our Father.

Shebna is a type of the sinfulness and arrogance of the people of Israel, and therefore of the natural man, of the religious man! The beautiful parable here reveals the great truth that the authority over the house of the Lord is to be taken from the carnal, religious man of flesh, and given to another. Eliakim is a type of the *new man*, the *new humanity*, the *new order*, and the *new dominion* that supersedes the authority of the old man, the carnal mind, and all the old religious systems of man. The government and authority of the house of Judah, which had corrupted its ways before the Lord, forsaken His covenant, broken His commandments, polluted His name, prostituted His truth, and paganized His worship, would be given to another, a true one, a faithful one, who would reign in righteousness and be a father to the Lord's people and a deliverer of all creation. This is the Christ! This is the Christ, both Head and body, the true one, the faithful one who shall reign in righteousness over all things in the kingdom of God!

This new Christ-man, the spirit, the spiritual man, the inner man, the elect of God in the full stature of Jesus Christ will never be replaced by the man of flesh or any other order unto the ends of the ages. "And I will fasten him like a peg or nail in a firm place; and he will become a throne of honor and glory" (Isa. 22:23). These words were spoken of Eliakim, to whom the Lord gave the key of David and the authority of the kingdom. Prophetically, in type, it points to God's Christ! And in the message to the church in Philadelphia the Spirit says to the overcomer, "Him that overcometh will I make *a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out*" (Rev. 3:12). A pillar is that which is set, established, permanent, immovable. The Lord also told the church in Philadelphia, "These things saith He that is holy, He that is true, HE THAT HATH THE KEY OF DAVID, He that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth; I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name...to him that overcometh *will I make a pillar in the temple of my God*" (Rev. 3:7-8,12). The intent of the Spirit in this passage is to show the awesome power and authority invested in Christ, and then to show God's intention to share that authority and power with us!

The true application of this "key of David" is to the government of Christ. In Christ God is bringing forth a new man, a new ministry, a new order, a new authority, a new rule and government that has concern, respect, and honor for the kingdom of God. A key is being cut and formed and prepared to administer the kingdom of God in all the earth! Our Lord has that key on His shoulder, for the government is *upon His shoulder* (Isa. 9:6), and the shoulder is the point where the weight of the kingdom rests upon the **body of Christ**. Notice that God told

Eliakim that He would lay the key of the house of David *"upon his shoulder."* The Hebrew word translated shoulder in this verse indicates the area where burdens are placed. When a man such as Eliakim is called of God to reign over an earthly government or kingdom, it is truly a burden. To rule and reign in the earthly governments and kingdoms under man's corrupt order is indeed a burdensome experience. I have noticed through many years that most men elected to the presidency of the United States of America appear to *age ten years* during one short four-year term. There is a dramatic increase of wrinkles in their face, bags under their eyes, and gray in their hair. What an awesome weight they are under! But in the kingdom of God, there are no burdens. It is not a burden to rule and reign with Christ in our Father's kingdom! The kingdom of God is a kingdom of righteousness, blessing, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost! It is joy and peace and rest to reign with Christ in our Father's kingdom, for we are then doing our Father's will on earth in righteousness, blessing, peace, harmony, and perfection. Those who make up the mature and perfected body of Christ, upon the shoulder of which the kingdom rests, rule with great delight, gladness, and joyfulness!

HE THAT OPENS, AND NO MAN SHUTS

"These things saith He that *openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth*" (Rev. 3:7).

The Lord knows when to open doors, and when to close doors — and no man is able to close the door that He opens, or to open the door that He closes. Only by the Spirit of God are the realms of God opened up to us! Man will have nothing to do with "electing" or "appointing" God's kings and priests who shall reign with Christ over the nations and over all things! The man-made religious systems elect and appoint their elders, deacons, pastors, superintendents, presidents, overseers, bishops, and archbishops, and they can dismiss them and move them from one assembly or area to another at will. The kingdom of God is not a democratic organization — it is a **spiritual administration** — and its kings and priests are not subject to the will of the people, nor the whims of ecclesiastical leaders. The name *Eliakim* means "God raises up." Oh, yes! Only God can raise up the government of His kingdom in the hearts of His called and chosen elect, and this He does sovereignly by His Spirit. All who occupy positions in the religious systems of man by the vote of the people, the vote of a board, or the will of man, are the servants of men and not the ministers of Christ by the Spirit. No man can close the door the Spirit opens, and no man can open the door the Spirit closes. Christ alone possesses the key of David! He opens doors that no one else can shut, and shuts doors that no one else can open. It is His delight, joy, and utmost desire and holy will to share all that He is with us. We are receiving the keys of the kingdom as we continue to grow in Christ! As we receive these keys we are learning the ways of Christ, the mind of Christ, and the will of Christ in all things. We are now doing only that which we see our Father do! Therein lies the authority of Christ.

There are many churches and individuals who are constantly trying to open doors that God has not opened for them. That is truly an effort in futility, for the Lord assures us that when *He* opens a door *no man can shut it*, and when *He* shuts a door, *no man can open it*. When one "confesses" and "names and claims" and "speaks" to a situation and nothing happens, that one is truly trying to open a door that the Lord has shut! Only by the mind of Christ are we able to speak to the situations that GOD purposes to change and deal with, and refrain from endeavoring to move mountains that God is not moving. Oftentimes brethren try to fit into someone else's vision when what they should be doing is seeking the Lord to know what door He has opened for them. There are doors God has opened in our life, and there are doors God

has closed, so why do we expend precious time and unnecessary effort trying to open a door that it is impossible to open?

Have you ever felt yourself to be in the lovely presence of Christ? I am sure you must have at times. If you have never waited for His presence, I strongly advise you to wait with Him until all earthly voices are stilled, until the sounds of business, family, pleasure, and your own rampaging thoughts and clamoring desires are silent, until you hear Him whisper His message to your heart. Find out by the spirit of wisdom and revelation in that holy moment which doors are open in your life, discover through prayer and holy waiting upon God what your calling in God is; determine within yourself by that inward voice of the Son of God what is the *will of God* in your present walk; seek after that and give yourself to it instead of trying to kick open a door that God has closed. He has opened it up for someone else, perhaps, but not for you, at this time, therefore be content, my precious brother, my dear sister, in God's purpose within you. If your life seems small, confined, and uneventful, do not fret; abide in *Father's provision*, for none of us can go beyond the door He has opened or shut before us. God will teach you the greatest things and do the most marvelous work within you right there in that undistinguished place where you are! Leave the door opening and shutting to the Lord!

Every member of the body of Christ has a function, a vision, a direction to go in the Spirit. Many of us in this hour God has called to stand in the word of His kingdom, to ascend in the Spirit into the high places of God, and there to worship and minister in His holy temple. Everything about us is being affected as we fulfill this priestly ministry! You have callings and abilities of God *in the Spirit* and therefore are admonished to faithfully go through those doors God has opened for you. John was "in the Spirit" when he saw a "door opened *in heaven*." Ah, the doors opened for God's elect are **in heaven!** They are in heavenly places where we sit with Christ and rule and reign with Him in the Spirit. These are doors that God has *sovereignly* opened in your life, which others cannot enter; they are not doors of your choosing, but doors of divine ordination. Our calling to sonship and the kingdom of God is the door that God has opened before us, which we are now entering by the grace and power of Christ.

Many do not understand this truth, but it is an utter impossibility for any man or woman, at any point of time in his or her life, to go *beyond the will of God*. It is as impossible for you to open a door that God has shut, or shut a door that God has opened, as it is for a whale to fly with eagles. Learn this, oh man, and you will know a great truth: there is a *time* for every thing and every man! Truly did the wise man write, "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted; a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; a time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away; a time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; a time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace" (Eccl. 3:1-8).

There is a time to be born into God's family! There is a time to wait upon God! There is a time to grow and learn and discover! There is a time to mature and be manifest as a SON OF GOD! It is a great mystery, but the truth is that not one of these realities can be obtained or attained apart from God's *appointed time*. I know brethren who think that by their own intense desire and faith they can by-pass the grave, lay hold upon immortality, and step right in to manifest sonship. Some will consider me an unbeliever, but I do declare to you that *it won't happen!* God has a *time!* The firstborn Son of God came "in the fullness of time." At age twelve He could have gone to Cana of Galilee and tried to turn water into wine, but nothing would have happened! "My hour has not yet come," He said. There was a time to be born in Bethlehem's

stable. There was a time to go to Nazareth and be subject, growing in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and men. There was a time for His "showing forth unto Israel." When the day of Pentecost was "fully come" the Spirit was poured out from on high. Peter and the rest could have gotten tired of *waiting*, left the upper room, determined to bring in the new dispensation sheerly by faith, but their efforts would have proven futile! God has a time for everything. God has a time for the manifestation of the sons of God! Don't think you can hasten it, my friend. Abide in Father's dealings and wait patiently upon the Lord. All who are walking in the light of the Lord, in expectation of the glory of God, and doing the will of the Father *will stand in their place in the hour of manifestation!* GOD will do this thing, my beloved, not the will of the flesh nor the zeal of man.

I am reminded of an incident in the early 1960's when Lorain and I were laboring as missionaries in Mexico. Two new doors of ministry had opened to us and we were not certain which we should enter. We asked a dear sister, a prophetess of the Lord, to pray with us about the matter. Shortly she sent a note with a prophetic word which said, "Do not enter either door — stay where you are. *One year from this date*, as man reckons time, a door will open and you will know it is the door the Lord has opened." We honored this word and continued to minister in the area where we were.

The following summer I was attending a convention in the state of Pennsylvania. As I sat in the meetings a strange thing happened. The voice of the Spirit came to me powerfully, telling me to return to Sarasota, Florida to minister with the church where I had been an associate minister prior to going to Mexico. For two hours I reasoned with the Lord, for, as far as I knew, the church in Florida was not in need of my services, and they certainly had not contacted me or invited me to come! Furthermore, we were involved in the ministry in Mexico with plans for an expanded ministry there in coming months. At last I said, "O.K. Lord, but it's up to you!"

A few days later I was in a brother's house in another place in Pennsylvania, where I was ministering for the weekend. His phone rang. It was a long distance call for me from Florida. One of the elders in the church in Sarasota was on the line. The senior minister there had resigned. The brethren had prayed and discerned in the Spirit that I was to come and fill that place. Of course, I accepted at once! Shortly thereafter we returned to Mexico to settle our affairs there. While sorting through the papers in my desk I ran across the prophecy from our prophetess friend. I opened it and began to read, "*One year from this date, as man reckons time, a door will open and you will know it is the door the Lord has opened.*" I glanced at the date on the top of the page — it was exactly, to the day, one year before the brother's phone rang in Pennsylvania with the invitation for us to return to Florida! You see, my beloved, God is the great door-opener! When the Lord opens a door, no man can shut it; when the Lord closes a door, no man can open it. It is the law of the kingdom! And there is a *time* for everything! It is not by trying to force the issue, but by *faith and patience* we inherit the promises! It is by abiding in His will, paying the price, rejoicing in hope, and preparing our hearts for GOD'S TIME!

"I know thy works: behold, I have *set before thee an open door*, and no man can shut it..." (Rev. 3:8). While there are many doors God opens and shuts in our lives as we walk with Him and grow in Him, this open door is the same door John saw "opened in heaven" at the end of the messages to the seven churches. Because the church in Philadelphia is God's faithful overcoming remnant, a door is opened by which they are ushered into the heavenlies — into the high places of the Spirit in Christ! To enter this door is to have a transformation from the earthly consciousness and state of being into the heavenly. If any of us seem to fall short, be encouraged, for He will deal with us until we are able to enter in. No man can shut this door!

No one can keep you out of God's purpose for you! The door is open before us! We have heard the voice as of a trumpet saying, "Come up hither, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter." The Spirit is bidding us to arise and enter in to our full inheritance in Christ! This call goes out only to the called and chosen elect of the Lord! If you have heard the voice, the door is open before you!

I WILL KEEP YOU FROM THE HOUR OF TEMPTATION

"Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will *keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth*" (Rev. 3:10).

Another way of saying this is, "I will guard you from the hour of afflictions sent by God to test one's character." Each of us must have specific tests that are custom made for us. God in His infinite wisdom has chosen the ones that you need to bring you to maturity in Christ. The tests I have are not the same ones you have. Yet, thank God, there is a place where the testing *ends!* That place is where we move out of our fleshly consciousness to live and walk in the Spirit and by the Spirit.

This process of testing, or the "hour of temptation," comes upon all the world, saith the Lord! The word "world" here is not the Greek word *kosmos*, but *oikoumene*, meaning the entire globe and all its inhabitants. But the Lord goes on to say, "to try or test or discipline them that dwell upon the *earth*." I find myself too limited to set forth this truth as I should do, but let us request of God's Spirit the ability to see that the "earth" speaks to the natural realm of the carnal mind, and there are vast multitudes of believers who dwell all their lifetime on a natural plane of man-made religious experience, unquickened to the supernal glories of the heavenly realm where spiritual men and women sit together in the blessedness of the divine life and celestial glory of the ascended Christ.

Those who dwell in the heavenlies in Christ live and walk in the Spirit far above the earth realm where the testings of those "upon the earth" cannot reach. In this high and holy realm we are kept from the hour of testing, trial, and discipline that is designed for men dwelling in the lowlands of the flesh and the carnal mind. Oh, yes, our bodies are still upon the earth, but our spirits have soared to celestial worlds where what happens in the flesh does not affect how we live our lives. All are tried — but those who live the life of ascension are unaffected by the pressures of this dark age. What happens in the outer world has no power to take us off our course that God has set for those who are called to obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore we are not judged with the world, we are not tempted or tested or tried as are those who are still struggling and have not overcome the world, nor are we moved by any of the allurements, pressures, or powers of the earth realm of flesh and carnality. The words of the beautiful song by Bob and Charlotte Torango express it so aptly:

Come up hither, in the Son realm,
No dragon here abides;
For the sure word now has conquered
And in Him we have our life.
Though the kingdoms of men crumble
Have no fear, just stand and see
That the kingdom of our Father
Is brought forth in you and me!

It will greatly aid our understanding of the book of Revelation when we see that almost all the events in the book take place in one of three dimensions: HEAVEN, EARTH, and SEA. These are, of course, symbolical and prophetic terms! They represent states of being, life-styles, levels of consciousness, and dimensions of life within each of us. The *lowest* of these three realms is the sea. Throughout the book of Revelation a number of things transpire in the sea. "And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood." "I stood upon the sand of the sea, and I saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns." "And the sea gave up the dead that were in it." "Woe to the inhabitants of the sea, for the devil is come down unto you."

Throughout the scriptures the sea is a type of the inner storms and turbulent nature of the Adamic man. The prophet Isaiah penned these inspired words: "The *wicked* are **like the troubled sea**, which cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked" (Isa. 57:20-21). Jude also described wicked men when he said, "These are **raging waves of the sea**, foaming out their own shame" (Jude 13). The beloved John, on the isle of Patmos, had a vision of a great whore sitting on *many waters*. The angel revealed the meaning of the many waters, saying, "the waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are **peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues**" (Rev. 17:15).

The natural sea is a great deep, an abyss (Gen. 1:2; 7:11; 8:2; Deut. 8:7; 33:13). The Psalmist wrote of this abyss of the wickedness of man, "They *search out* iniquities; they accomplish a diligent *search*: both the *inward thought* of every one of them, and the *heart* is D-E-E-P (an abyss)" (Ps. 64:6). To the enlightened mind of David the depth of iniquity of which the human heart is capable is so great that it is beyond the ability of man to comprehend. The heart of man is an **unfathomable depth**, or, as Jeremiah observed, "The heart is deceitful *above all things*, and desperately wicked: *who can know it?*" (Jer. 17:9). While John the Revelator saw a **beast** (nature) rising out of the sea (abyss, depth) of humanity, Jesus expressed the same truth thus: "For from **within, out of the heart of men**, proceed **all these evil things!**"

No one can dispute the fact that it is this restless, turbulent, raging, evil heart of the fleshly man that inspires every evil and devilish perversion, and has filled the world with ever increasing confusion, faithlessness, immorality, falsehood, fraud, hatred, violence, greed, cruelty, strife, wars, bloodshed, and oppression. Ah, the *sea* is the *lowest realm* on earth, and this vast sea of fleshly, Adamic humanity represents mankind at his lowest point — as bad off as man can be! Individually, however, it speaks of the lowest aspect of our human nature and life — the **body** with its passions and lusts. The sea represents the physical desires and impulses that are restless, driving, compelling, and raging out of control!

The second realm is that of the *earth*. In contrast with the sea and with heaven, the *earth* is the symbol of the second dimension of life, a realm higher than the sea, but lower than heaven, an intermediary realm which at its highest peak kisses heaven, and at its lowest level embraces the sea; yet, in the true sense it is, of itself, neither heavenly nor degenerate. The sea, as we have seen, comprises the masses of restless, surging, sinning, warring men who live only and always after the unrestrained desires of the flesh (body realm). Heaven, on the other hand, speaks of those who have been quickened, raised up, made alive in Christ, seated in Him in the heavenly places, who walk only and always *in the Spirit*. Those who "dwell upon the earth," however, are a moral class, religious folk, with many up-right citizens of the community and church-going Christian people in their ranks; but these, while not overtly wicked, are not spiritual either, but in most aspects of their daily lives "mind earthly things."

On the individual level the earth speaks of the *soul* — mind, will, and emotion. It is an intellectual realm, but also the realm of the carnal or natural mind. Out of this realm comes our organized society, law and order, charities, good works, even good religious works which are deemed spiritual, but which do not originate out of the spirit. The man who walks in this realm of "earth" is that good neighbor of yours, a nice fellow, a good person, who wouldn't cheat you or lie to you or misuse you in any way. In fact, he may be helpful, caring, and compassionate. He may attend First Methodist or St. Mary's Church; he may be a Sunday School teacher, a deacon, or board member; he is socially and religiously active, a God-honoring, flag-waving man, but has never ascended into the heavenlies and does not live out of a heavenly dimension. You can't accuse him of any gross sin, or any wicked or ungodly act, but if you start talking to him in a spiritual realm he will look at you like you came from Mars. He has absolutely no idea, not the foggiest notion, of what you are talking about! He doesn't live in the sea, he doesn't wallow in the lusts of the flesh, in pornography, crime, drugs, adultery, dishonesty, or any lustful thing. BUT NEITHER HAS HE BEEN TO HEAVEN!

In the earth realm one can **touch** the sea, and one can **touch** heaven, but one doesn't dwell there! The hour of temptation is to "try them that *dwell* upon the earth," the Spirit says. The Greek word for "dwell" is not the ordinary *oikeo*, but the strengthened form of the word, *katoikeo*, meaning those who have settled down upon the earth, who have identified themselves with it. They are content to remain in a carnal, soulish, natural-minded state of being! The man of earth lives out of the dimension of the first man Adam — the *living soul*! It is a soulful realm of life.

The third and *highest* of the three realms is *heaven*. This is the highest dimension of life, the dimension of *spirit*. Those who live out of the spirit are spiritual and heavenly. The Greek word for heaven is *ouranous* meaning **elevation, height, exaltation, eminence**. It has both physical and spiritual applications. In its spiritual sense it bespeaks of the eternal, invisible, and omnipresent **realm of the spirit** in which God and all celestial beings dwell — *far above* the realm of the physical, material, earthly, and mortal. It is not a geographical or astral location. It is not a planet or a place. It is a DIMENSION OF LIFE, REALITY, AND BEING. It is a SPHERE OF EXISTENCE. It is a PLANE OF CONSCIOUSNESS. Every spirit life-form lives on a plane of spiritual awareness. Each of these planes constitutes a "heaven," a spiritual realm *above the physical*.

Heaven is naught but the biblical name of the REALM OF GOD'S SPIRIT, the invisible and omnipresent dimension of Spiritual Reality. And it is all around us! It is as near to us as the air we breathe, closer to us even than the blood coursing through our veins. We are one with it by virtue of our spiritual life. "He that is joined to the Lord is *one spirit*." We touch heaven as we touch God in our spirit. We behold heavenly things as with our spiritual mind we behold spiritual realities. We walk in heaven as we walk *in the spirit*. We think like celestial beings when we think with the *mind of Christ*. We act heavenly when we live by *divine nature*. Heaven is, furthermore, the realm of God's government — His infinite power and almighty authority. This kingdom is rooted *in our spirit*, the heavenly dimension of our life.

Our Lord Jesus Christ had left His heavenly glory. He had humbled Himself, had taken upon Himself the form of sinful flesh; and becoming a man, was despised and rejected. He made Himself of no reputation. And yet, while in humanity and reproach, a Man among men, He made this statement: "No man hath ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of man **which IS IN heaven**" (Jn. 3:13). The Son of God left His glory, and descended to the depths of shame and reproach. He came and took our place of disgrace in order that we might be raised and exalted and honored and, with Him, be given a name

(nature) above every name! He, the Christ, who was made in all things like unto His brethren, yet, while a man on earth, in humility, Himself said, "The Son of man which ***IS in heaven!***"

Jesus the Christ, when a man on earth, was at the same time, in heaven! Our Lord was in heaven; He came down from heaven, and still was in heaven. It is something a person can be in, can descend from, and still possess. Our Lord was the Mighty God — God manifest in the flesh, Emmanuel, God with us! Yes, even while in the flesh, by the eternal Spirit within, He was ONE with the invisible, infinite REALM OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD. His outer man was conscious of the earthly realm and one with it, but His inner man was conscious of the eternal realm and one with it. Oh, the mystery of it! The heavens were open to Him, He dwelt and lived and thought and walked and manifested out of the divine sphere of life. He was a heavenly man on earth!

No word written or spoken could hold more truth in this regard than the words of the apostle Paul wherein he speaks of "the power which God exerted in Christ when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand *in the heavens, far above* all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but in that which is to come" (Eph. 1:20-21). These wonderful terms used by Paul are figures of speech. God is *omnipresent spirit* — He doesn't physically *sit* on anything! Nor does He physically have a right hand! It means that Christ is raised up permanently into that ***highest spiritual realm*** where He has all power and authority! The "throne" spoken of in other scriptures refers to His ***omnipotent power***. So now we know where Christ ascended! HE ASCENDED INTO THE SPIRITUAL DIMENSION OF SUPREME AUTHORITY AND ALMIGHTY POWER!

Then Paul says, "And He ***raised us up together with Him*** and ***made us sit down together with Him in the heavenly sphere***" (Eph. 2:6, Amplified). It will be a blessed day for us when God makes it clear to our hearts that we have already been raised up and given joint seating with Christ *in the very same heavens* where He is enthroned with His Father. YOU ARE WHERE HE IS! That is the true heaven — not visionary mansions, golden streets, or a flowing river out of the throne. Most Christians have no idea where heaven is, what heaven is, or where they are! Therefore they live in the consciousness of a lower realm out of which they think, walk, act, and live.

The vast majority of believers think of heaven in futuristic and sentimental terms, somewhat as when a mother in some little country town sends her boy to the great city, and at once feels familiar with the great city because somewhere, lost in among its hurrying thousands, her boy is there. His familiar life, transported to it, seems to make it familiar. She feels as if she knew all about it. She talks of it with a kind of affection. As if it were almost her home, because it is the home of one she loves. She catches every mention of it as if it were a message meant for her. To go there is the constant dream of her life, and she feels as if when she came there she would know immediately the streets in which her heart has had its home so long. But though she dreams about it, and feels familiar in a strange way about it, the fact is she has ***never been there!*** That is how people think of heaven. But that is not how ***spiritual people*** think of heaven!

Those who are God's elect in this hour have been taught of God, they have been given an understanding for they have been quickened, made alive, raised up into the higher than all heavens, and in consciousness, in spirit, in reality are seated even now in the heavens in Christ Jesus! People think they are where their natural mind tells them they are. They have missed the spirit reality altogether and understand not that they are born from above and their

citizenship is in heaven! That high and holy realm is not a place away off beyond the galaxies, but a place in our spirit where we rise up above our earthiness and learn to compare *spiritual things* with *spiritual things*. It is there that we discover **reality!**

Dear ones, how can we live in the heavens? Just by being *in Christ*. Christ has ascended. Christ is now the highest heaven in this universe! Most of those who read these lines understand what it means to experience the ascended Christ, to daily live out our lives in the victory and triumph of the Son of God who dwells in our spirit, and in whom we dwell in blessed union, far above the sorrows, strife, sin, problems, perplexities, limitation, struggles, fears, disappointments, and death of the carnal realm. THIS is sonship! In spirit I hear the wonderful words falling upon the ears of the prophet of Patmos, "Rejoice, ye heavens, and ye *that dwell in them!*" (Rev. 12:12). This should help us see how it is that the promise of the Lord is fulfilled in us, "I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all *the world*, to try them that ***dwell upon the earth.***" The sons of God do not "dwell upon the earth!"

Those who dwell in heaven, who walk in the spirit, who think with the mind of Christ, who live out of divine nature, have no need to be "tried" as men who dwell in an earthly state. There is no processing in heaven! There is no condemnation, no judgment, proving, purging, refining, correction, discipline, or testing of those who live and dwell and sit in the ascended Christ! Those who truly walk after the spirit are not depressed, perplexed, worried, or victimized by any kind of "earthly" situation. When our affections are set upon *things above*, where Christ sits at the right hand of God, and where we sit with Him and in Him, we are resurrected and ascended, for the Christ with whom we are joined in spirit is the Christ who has ascended into the heavens! When you stand in union with Him you are high above the mountains, not in the valleys. You are in the heavenly places, far above the earth. The things of earth grow strangely dim to those who truly are *in Christ*.

In the book of Revelation everything that comes out of heaven is good and wonderful! Angels, great and mighty, come out of heaven (Rev. 10:1; 18:1; 20:1). Voices of wisdom, revelation, and power come out of heaven (Rev. 10:4,8; 11:12,15; 14:2; 18:4-5; 21:3). The all-conquering army of God, Christ the firstborn with all the holy sons of God, come out of heaven (Rev. 19:11-14). And a city, a glorious city, the New Jerusalem, comes down from God out of heaven (Rev. 21:2,10). The throne of God is in that city, the Lamb is on the throne, and every overcomer is on the throne! So heaven is a wonderful realm, and I live there. All who live and walk in the spirit live there. Individually, I live there *in my spirit*. Collectively, we all live there in our walk with God in the spirit.

Within me, and within you, my beloved, there is a sea realm, the outer man of the body. In our intellect, in our soul life there is an earth realm. And in our spirit there is a heaven realm! There are things that are true in each of these realms, in each of these dimensions of our life. Every man on earth fits into one of those three categories — *every man!* There's not a man on this planet who isn't living out his life from one of those three realms. Millions of people live in the consciousness and power of one of those three categories of being. All processing takes place only in the realms of earth and the sea. Everything that comes out of heaven affects and deals with the earth and the sea. Fire comes down from heaven and brings purifying judgments upon those who dwell upon the earth and in the sea. Mighty messengers come down out of heaven and the sea rages and the earth shakes. Oh, yes! When heaven comes down and touches earth there are voices, and lightnings, and thunderings, and earthquakes, and judgments, and fires, and blood, and hail, and mighty transformations. I can't think of anything greater that could happen to my body and soul realms! I can't think of anything better that could descend in

power upon the self-consciousness and self-righteousness of my soul realm, and the lusts and passions of my body realm. In the book of Revelation all that happens in the earth and in the sea originates out of heaven! I'll tell you why that's important. If you're trying to deal with your carnal mind and your flesh and your religious hang-ups or any other thing *apart from the life of God out of your spirit*, then you indeed are making a great effort of futility.

There is only one way to deal with the soul realm and the body realm, the earth and the sea, and that is to deal with them out of heaven, in the spirit and by the spirit. We should earnestly meditate upon the words of the apostle Paul wherein he writes, "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye **through the spirit** do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live" (Rom. 8:13). It is impossible to conquer the activities of the soul and the body by any effort that originates out of those realms. They have no power to reform themselves! But if you **through the spirit** put these realms into neutral, out of gear, you shall then live by the spirit and in the spirit. Paul continues, "For as many as are led by the spirit of God, they are the sons of God." Aren't you glad!

For those who live in heaven everything is *in the spirit*. We walk in the spirit, live in the spirit, pray in the spirit, worship in the spirit, speak by the spirit, and do all things in and by the spirit. *This* is sonship! We find that as we walk and live after the spirit, judgment is brought into our lower realms of soul and body, and we have not to do anything about it. It is all accomplished out of a heavenly realm, by the spirit! There is no other way. If we go around preaching death to self, how to crucify the flesh, how to kill the old man, how to reform and change the old Adamic nature, then we've missed the whole book. None of that is of any value at all. My brother, my sister, nothing will even happen in your earth or in your sea until there is an administration of life out of your heaven. Read the book! It's all there. THIS IS THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST!

Chapter 55

The Church In Philadelphia

continued

"Him that overcometh will I make a *pillar in the temple of my God*, and he shall go no more out" (Rev. 3:12).

Lorain and I visited the city of Philadelphia a number of years ago, and it is today a rather prosperous Turkish town. The city was built on four or five hills in a very beautiful valley and picturesque setting. Today it is spread out a great deal, and it is a typical Turkish town. But it is interesting to note that the only thing that remains of the *ancient city* is *two pillars!* It's as though God has sovereignly preserved these two pillars, even in the natural, as an abiding testimony to His promise to the overcomer, "I will make you a pillar in the temple of my God, and you will go no more out."

Before we consider this wonderful promise of being a "pillar" let us look at the "temple of God" in which the pillars stand. All types and shadows are forever done away when Christ, the reality, comes. The Lord dwells not in temples made with hands! They are but shadowy figures of the true. "What temple will ye build me?" saith the Lord. So wherever we see a reference to a temple of the present or the future, it *must* refer to "the true sanctuary, and the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man" (Heb. 8:2). Furthermore, there is only *one* such tabernacle, or temple. The Word nowhere tells of two, or three, or one hundred; one away off somewhere in space where Jesus is ministering, another in Jerusalem built by the Jews, and another spiritual one composed of living stones. There is but ONE temple, ONE great High Priest, and ONE royal priesthood. So when the priests of old served "unto the example and shadow of heavenly (spiritual) things," those heavenly things were the same that Moses saw in the mount, and the same heavenly and spiritual things to which we, God's spiritual and heavenly people, have now come, for, we "**are come** unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the **heavenly Jerusalem**" (Heb. 12:22). None of these are a future reality to be entered into after we die, or after Jesus returns. We ARE COME! Let us never forget that fact.

More than three thousand years ago Solomon built a magnificent temple of stone and precious materials. He overlaid it with gold and adorned it with silver. There was no sound of hammer or chisel or saw, for all of the stones and every part had been carefully made and cut far away, down in Solomon's quarry. The pillars reflected the light of the Judean hills; the great Corinthian brass door shown in the sunlight. So wonderful was it that the Queen of Sheba stood transfixed at the sight. But the temple built by Solomon was only a fleeting shadow of the living temple which Christ would build by the Spirit — a temple *not made with hands!*

The tabernacle of Moses in the wilderness and the temple of Solomon upon mount Moriah were merely *shadows* of **better things** to come; merely the natural type of the spiritual reality which Moses saw in the mount. These **never did constitute** the **TRUE TEMPLE** of God! How

absolutely clear are the inspired words of the apostle, "Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: we have such an High Priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; a minister of the sanctuary and of the **TRUE TABERNACLE**, which **the Lord pitched**, and not man." Jesus is now a minister in the true tabernacle or temple! Concerning the old tabernacle and temple with its priestly ministry the writer to the Hebrews continues, "Who serve unto the *example* and *shadow* of **heavenly things**, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith He, that thou make all things according to the *pattern* showed to thee in the mount." The tabernacle of old was made as a physical, material *copy* or *representation* of the **true heavenly tabernacle** which Moses beheld in the spiritual realm of the heavens. What Moses saw in the mount was heavenly and spiritual! And that which is heavenly and spiritual is the **true tabernacle** which the Lord pitched, and not man!

We are now come to the true! The true temple is the body of Christ. The temple of the Lord is that vast family of God's sons who are coming to maturity in the image of Christ. It distresses me to hear preachers constantly proclaiming as fact the old wives' fable that the temple of God must be rebuilt by the Jews in Israel! Listen to the words of Peter as he presses this golden truth home to the understanding hearts of the saints. "If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious. To whom coming, as unto a *living stone*, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, *ye also*, as *living stones*, are built up a *spiritual house*, an holy priesthood, to offer up *spiritual sacrifices*, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a *chief cornerstone*, elect, precious: and he that believeth in Him shall not be confounded" (I Pet. 2:3-6).

Our Lord Jesus Christ is remarkable as the cornerstone of this human heavenly temple because not only is Christ the sure foundation in the midst of a world where the pillars are trembling and the foundations are shaken, but He remains ever sure and ever stable and gives His stability to the entire structure. More than that, He is the living stone that communicates that stability to all the other stones that are joined to Him. Praise God that in the midst of all the pressures and testings there is that INNER STABILITY of the Christ! So, we see painted before our eyes a magnificent structure, the living cathedral of Christ rising into the sky, made of living stones. This is the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man! Not a temple of dead stones, but of living stones, each stone a spiritually living person indwelt by the glory of God, whose temple we are. Not covered with glittering gold, but overshadowed by God. Not adorned with silver, but founded on redemption. Not fashioned with glittering, precious stones, but with the eternal jewels of His own nature, glory, and power!

God will **never vacate** this heavenly, spiritual temple to return to a temple made with hands. No temple of God, formed from stones and ornamented with cedar and silver and gold, will ever be rebuilt in Jerusalem! The notion of a rebuilt temple is a lie that would be humorous, were it not so ridiculous and absurd. The very thought is a horrible blasphemy! God doesn't go *backward* in His purposes, nor does He reinstate the *type* once the *reality* has come. The temple that God builds is the temple of which Jesus spoke to the poor, sinful woman at the well of Sychar. She was quibbling about the *place* to worship God, and He said, "Neither in this mountain, NOR IN JERUSALEM, shall ye worship the Father...the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit (in their own spirits) and in truth (spiritual reality)" (Jn. 4:21-24). And our brother Paul adds this testimony, "Now therefore...ye are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the *chief cornerstone*; in whom *all the building* fitly framed together groweth unto an HOLY TEMPLE in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an HABITATION OF GOD through the spirit" (Eph. 2:19-22).

Almost two thousand years ago the Lord Jesus spoke to the house of Judah, saying, "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate" (Mat. 23:38). This was a pronouncement of doom upon a city and a nation that had not received its King. He is saying that the *presence* and the *glory* and the *purpose* of God had departed from Judah. God took His presence even from the Holy of holies in the temple, leaving their house desolate unto them. Finally, in A.D. 70, He came and destroyed that vacant shell of a building so that not one stone of it was left upon another. He scattered the people of Judah throughout all the earth, abolished their law and their priesthood, which to this day has never been restored, nor can it be. It seems to me that when Jesus Christ was anointed with the fullness of the Holy Spirit the presence and glory of God left the dwelling place in the Holy of holies and came into the firstborn Son of God, taking up His abiding place in human flesh. All of those years the priests had been offering sacrifices to God who was not in His accustomed dwelling place, though they did not know it. He had left His centuries-old habitation and had moved into a body of flesh, the body of His Son, the true temple of God. All of the world was ignorant of this for we read, "He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not" (Jn. 1:10). And again, standing before Herod's temple, beholding the stones and the glory thereof, He said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews were furious, demanding, "Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days?" But, the record states, "They wist not that He spake of *the temple of His body*" (Jn. 2:19-21).

At the crucifying of Jesus, God drew a curtain of darkness over the earth and blotted out everything from sight. Beneath the cover of that dense darkness God tore the temple veil from top to bottom so *any* carnal, earthly priest of Aaron's passing order could peer into the Holy of holies, the former abode of God, and plainly see and know that **God was not there!** This Holy of holies was empty. Ah, what must have been the thoughts of the priesthood as they returned to the temple! What must have been the feelings of the priests who had remained in the temple! When the darkness was lifted and the desolation seen and they discovered that they could enter into the Holy of Holies and not suffer death! Then they must have known that something catastrophic had taken place. Surely a deep, inward fear seized them. They would not dare breathe a hint of this to the people! They must hide the facts and continue on with the form of the sacrifices as though nothing had happened.

God was establishing something entirely new and different. Beneath the cover of darkness God ripped open that veil and let the whole world see that He had departed, leaving that room empty. It was desolate, and now this was the beginning of the end for Jerusalem, the temple, and its priesthood. And I want to say again, in spite of what many tell us, WE WILL NEVER SEE ANOTHER TEMPLE IN JERUSALEM! Are we so foolish to even entertain the impious thought that God would allow the unbelieving Jews to build in Jerusalem another desolate temple? To again institute a priesthood offering the blood of goats and calves **after Christ has been offered once for all?** The very idea is ludicrous!

Now I would draw your attention to some significant truths in relation to the temple of God. We will begin with a few passages of scripture from Hebrews, chapters eight and nine.

*"Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: we have such an High Priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the majesty in the heavens; a **minister of the sanctuary**, and of the **true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man**" (Heb. 8:1-2).*

*"But Christ being come an High Priest of good things to come, by a **greater and more perfect tabernacle**, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building (material creation); neither*

by the blood of goats and calves, but by His **own blood** He entered in once to the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us" (Heb. 9:11-12).

"It was therefore necessary that the pattern of things in the heavens should be **purified with these** (the blood of goats and calves); but the **heavenly things themselves** (purified) with **better sacrifices** than these. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself..." (Heb. 9:23-24).

We should earnestly consider the following points. (1) Christ our High Priest is now a minister **in** the heavenly sanctuary, the true tabernacle. (1) This tabernacle is greater and more perfect than the former one which was merely a type. (3) This tabernacle is not made with hands; i.e. not something man has built. (4) Christ has entered into this heavenly tabernacle to **purify it** with the **better sacrifice of His blood**.

Armed with this understanding that *we are the temple of the living God*, and that Christ is now ministering *in* the true tabernacle, which we are, the question follows — WHERE is Christ ministering as High Priest? Into WHAT Holy Place has He entered with His blood? And WHICH HEAVENLY THINGS has He *purified* with His own blood? Is Jesus officiating in some literal, material temple in some far-off heaven somewhere? Are there *two* temples of God, one in heaven, and another on earth; one literal, and the other spiritual? I do not hesitate to tell you that the answer to this last question is a resounding NO! The true understanding of Christ's High Priestly ministry and the outworking of the efficacy of His blood is contingent upon our absolute and total acceptance of the great, irrevocable, and eternal truth that God has only **one** temple, the **true one**, the **heavenly one**, and WE ARE THAT TEMPLE! That is the mystery. Truly "*we are come* unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the *heavenly Jerusalem*...and to Jesus the mediator of the *new covenant*, and to the blood of sprinkling, that *speaketh better things*..." (Heb. 12:22,24).

The book of Hebrews tells us plainly that the blood of Christ has purified **heavenly things** (Heb. 9:23-24). To accomplish this Christ has entered into the Holy Place in heaven itself to present His blood for this purification (Heb. 9:6-12). But do heavenly things *require purifying*? Is there something in some far-off heaven somewhere that Jesus shed His blood for? Did our Lord come all the way down to earth and become a man in order to take His human blood to cleanse some sanctuary up in the heavens from whence He had come? Did He take His blood up beyond the Milky Way in order to purify those heavenly things?

Let us UNDERSTAND! Christ is in heaven ministering as a Priest in the temple, the Holy Place in heaven! The truth is — **we** have been raised up and made to sit together with Christ in the heavens! We are in Christ! Christ is in us! We are builded together, an habitation of God through the Spirit! We are raised up a building of God, a spiritual tabernacle! **WE ARE THE TRUE TABERNACLE WHICH THE LORD HAS PITCHED, AND NOT MAN!** Nothing can be plainer than this. **WE ARE THE TEMPLE OF GOD IN HEAVEN!**

Can we not understand by this how it is that the heavenly tabernacle had to be **purified** by the offering of the blood of Christ. There is not some material holy place away off beyond the blue which had to be cleansed by the blood of Jesus. It is **WE** who needed to be purified! The work of the blood of Christ is not on behalf of something up in the sky; rather, the blood of Christ has cleansed *our hearts* from sin and purged *our consciences* from dead works, that we might serve the living God! "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost who is in you, whom ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price; *therefore*, glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's" (I Cor. 6:19-20).

Our Lord Jesus Christ gave perhaps the greatest parable of His ministry when He cleansed the temple and then spoke to the people about the temple of His body. He said what He meant: His body was a pure body, and He stood there to let them know that the fore-court of the temple was a symbol of the body of the believer. There were three courts in the temple: the outer court, the inner court, and the most holy place. The Lord meant them to understand by that purification that the outer court of man's temple, the body, had to be cleansed! There are three courts in this temple of man's being, just as there were three courts in the temple made with hands. Your body, as the apostle Paul eloquently proclaims, is the temple of God. He also said, "The temple of God is holy." And again, "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy." When we defile our body we defile the temple of God just as surely as did Antiochus when he offered a pig upon the altar of the typical temple in Jerusalem.

Redemption demands that a man be restored SPIRIT, SOUL, AND BODY to that sphere of life and purity and incorruptibleness and glory which was his in that first blessed moment when he came forth from the bosom of the Father. There are three courts in the temple which constitutes a man. The first is the outer court of the body; the next is the inner court of the soul; the next is the innermost court of all, the spirit, which God Himself has given. God demands that every part of the temple shall be cleansed and restored and embued with the incorruptible nature of God! There is the true temple!

The purification of the temple begins in the spirit, the most holy place of Being. It is there the blood of Jesus is presented before God! It is there that the blood of Jesus, the *incorruptible life of God*, is sprinkled, quickening *our spirit* by *His Spirit*, making us alive to God again. All purification begins in the Holiest of all! Nothing can be cleansed in soul or body until by the washing of regeneration our spirits are quickened unto God, effecting the release of His life within. Would you worship God? If you are to worship God in a holy temple, let Him quicken your spirit by the sprinkling of the blood-life of God in Christ; then let Him cleanse your soul, let Him cleanse your body, and worship God in the temple of your own Being. God wants that. Oh, the mystery of it! Therefore it is that God sent His Son, not merely to cleanse the outer court, but through His death, through His resurrection, through His life, and in the power of His Spirit, to cleanse man FROM THE CENTER TO THE CIRCUMFERENCE. Hence it is that the purification of the temple of humanity must begin in your spirit and mine.

You will see then that the Lord Jesus Christ, when He purified the fore-court of the typical temple in Jerusalem, determined to show His people that even this temple of the body which God has given man should no longer be the prey of foul disease, and of filthy, sensual passion, and of putrefying death. He showed them that the body should be purified, that the soul should be purified, by the quickening of the spirit, and that He had come to pour out His Spirit (the life-blood of Christ), not only upon the spirits and souls of men, but upon all **flesh**, and that all **flesh** should rejoice in the advent of One who was not only the Saviour, but the Healer of mankind, the Cleanser of the outer court of the temple, the body, the giver of immortality so that even this corruptible shall put on incorruption and this mortal shall put on immortality, and even this vile body shall be changed, to be fashioned like unto His body of glory. Isn't it wonderful!

The deep mystery is that ***we are the heavenly tabernacle where Christ the High Priest is ministering!*** His ministry is in and through us! It is in His body that He now walks and manifests His priestly ministry. The only true contact that the world has with the gracious person of Jesus is the contact they have with us, the members of His body. Christ loves the world, but He loves it through us! He reveals His mercy, but He shows that mercy through you and me! He saves men, but we are the instrument through which He reveals His salvation!

God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, yet it is unto *us* that He has committed both the word and the ministry of reconciliation! He has forgiven all men, yet it is given unto us to remit men's sins! Oh, yes! Christ is the great High Priest in the heavens, He ministers in the holy place (spirit) of His heavenly temple, which temple we are!

I know no definition of God more sublime, outside of scripture, than this definition of a philosopher of France, who said, "I conceive God to be Him whose CENTER IS EVERYWHERE, and whose CIRCUMFERENCE IS NOWHERE." The spirit, soul, and body of a purified being is a center of omnipotent God. That God in whom we live, and move, and have our being, has His center in us. If God has no circumference then His center is certainly where I am, where you are. There can be no other center! Every man who has been quickened to God and made alive in Christ, is the center of the infinity of God! I want you to know, my brother, my sister, matters not how carnal, how weak, how limited you may have been, God desires to make your spirit a CENTER WHICH SHALL HAVE NO CIRCUMFERENCE. He wants to make your spirit alive, your soul pure, your body redeemed and incorruptible, and cause the River of all Life to flow out to the whole creation, unto the vast multitudes of hopeless men and women who came before you, and into unborn generations before you, so that you shall be a CENTER for an omnipotent and omnipresent and holy God; that is the object of the purification of the temple. This is sonship! THIS IS THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST!

Would God that all the saints of God might understand these sublime and divine mysteries and see that God's purpose from the foundation of the world has been the building of a spiritual house, a holy temple, an eternal abiding place in His creation in which He can be at home, and in which place He and His creation can meet. Praise God, we are living in the days when this glorious building of God is being completed, the full realization of which causes us to bow our heads in awe and wonderment. It is not temporal or transient as were the temples in Jerusalem which were all destroyed in turn. The temple which is Christ's body is eternal in the heavens! It is not earthly nor does it belong to the earthly realm, but to a heavenly. It is not of corruption, but of incorruption.

God is preparing us to minister to all creation, equipping our spirit, soul, and body to live forever in harmony with the mind and will of God. All the God-like qualities of your life are due to the fact that God by His Spirit indwells you. You are the temple of God! That is the wonder of the indwelling Spirit. It is not a work of grace; it is God possessing you. The knowledge of this sublime truth will make you holy. No one can ever thus see his place in God and remain in carnality. Christ has come to purify His heavenly temple with His blood! Should one claim to see these truths and yet remain as he was before, then he has not seen by the Spirit, but by the natural mind only. Away with the *man of sin* who usurps the place of Christ in His temple!

A PILLAR IN THE TEMPLE

"Him that overcometh will I make a *pillar* in the temple of my God, and he shall *go no more out*: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is New Jerusalem...and I will write upon him my new name" (Rev. 3:12).

An understanding of the Old Testament background is essential to understanding this figure. Pillars played a prominent role in both Israel's tabernacle and temple. There were two pillars at the door of Solomon's temple (1 Kings 7:13-22). Each was solid bronze covered with gold, and when the sunlight struck them they would send forth shafts of light so brilliant it would blind one's eyes. Each was thirty-five feet tall and five feet thick. They could be seen for miles

around the countryside for the temple was situated high upon mount Moriah and the pillars stood taller than the temple. These two pillars supported the full weight of the temple's roof and were key to the structure. They were given names: Jachin (*established*) and Boaz (*strength*). They spoke clearly of *firmness* and *security*. The gold speaks of divinity or the divine nature. Two is the number of witness in scripture, revealing the importance of the pillars as the outward witness of the strength and government of the God of the temple.

The builder of a temple, who spares no expense, will sometimes bring his pillars from the very ends of the earth. Whenever he hears of a rock with rich enough veins of color in it, and which is, at the same time, capable of taking on the finest finish, which is able to bear all his carving tools, and receive all his intended polish and resplendence — at any cost, he will bring home such stones, and will with them rear a long vista of such pillars, till his temple is a perfect edifice of praise and beauty before all people. And so, the Lord declares, will it be with the heavenly temple! It is not by any means any and every stone that will qualify and take on all that is in the master-builder's mind. It is not every pillar that will carry all His Father's name, and all the name of the holy city, and all His new name. And thus it is that wherever the heavenly builder finds such a possible "pillar," even if it is in the utmost end of the earth, at any price He will choose it for His great design, and will not leave off working on it, till He has set it, in its proper place,

in His heavenly temple. And then, when that heavenly temple is at last finished — what a vision of strength, power, beauty, and glory it will be — supported and adorned with a column of dear-bought, far-borne, and magnificently-wrought pillars! And every one of these pillars inscribed with His Father's name, and His own new name!

I repeat, the temple of the living God is not a natural building constructed by hands. None of the church buildings on earth, be they called temples, cathedrals, or some other high sounding name, are in reality a temple of the living God. People talk about the presence of God filling a building, but the presence of God does not fill any man-made building in that manner. God indwells only His living temple of living stones and if the life-presence and glory of God is in any building it is only because God's living stones are gathered there! The man-made building has nothing to do with it, and you cannot go back to the building once God's living stones have departed and find any lingering glory of God. The glory rests upon His people, the saints of the most High!

During my lifetime there have been many buildings that have been called temples. Some are called Calvary Temple, Grace Temple, Faith Temple, and various others. But you will not find God there! Years ago Aimee Semple McPherson, one of the early Pentecostal leaders, had a temple in Los Angeles; it was named Angelus Temple. Later a man named A. Earl Lee opened Emmanuel Temple in Los Angeles. Back in the days of the great Latter Rain outpouring a brother and sister received a word from the Lord to build Him a temple, and that when it was finished God would move in mighty power and thousands of people would flow unto them to be blessed in the kingdom of God. Immediately they began to construct a huge building called Faith Temple, seating several thousands of people. Their congregation was small, and the people were constantly bled for finances to complete the vision. It became a wearisome burden, but on and on they plodded, to build the Lord's temple. When it was nearing completion I remember them remarking about what "butterflies" they had in their stomachs at the prospect of the great move of God that was at hand. But the move of God never came, and they passed from the scene. You see, my beloved, they had mis-interpreted the words of the Lord! God wasn't talking about building a natural building out of concrete and steel! He was talking about them raising up the true temple of the Lord in that place, matured and perfected

in Christ, with the Father's name and Christ's new name inscribed in every living stone, filled with His glory, that the ministry of manifest sonship might be revealed in them. Sadly, they neglected the true temple, draining the people's lives, strength, and pocketbooks to build the wrong temple! Many others have opened temples. Perhaps thousands have called their buildings temples, but not a one of them is the temple of God, for "YE are the temple of the living God, as God hath said, I will dwell in them and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (II Cor. 6:16).

Here we have tremendous depth of God's plan for us. First, to him that comes to the *sixth stage* of overcoming will "I make a pillar in the temple of my God." Here the Lord Jesus says that He is going to place us in the temple of God. We will not be sitting in some building worshipping God or doing great things, but we will be part of the building. We will be a pillar in the building! God is not building a temple for us to sit in or minister in. He is raising up a temple *out of us*. In the day of His manifestation out of this temple in all the glory and fullness of Himself there will be no need for the sons of God to put up large tents, rent great auditoriums, or erect huge buildings to accommodate the crowds. Oh, no! God isn't going to move that way again. The Spirit of God will flow spontaneously out of the sons of God wherever they are — in the streets, in the business places, in the fields, on buses, trains, and airplanes, in the restaurants, in the movie theaters, in the schools, in the churches, in the homes — wherever these sons appear in the purpose of God and at the word of the Father, there shall the mighty works, deliverances, revelations, and transformations be wrought. Up and down the land, in every place, to rich and poor, to educated and uneducated, to affluent and the down-trodden, needy, and hopeless, in the halls of government and to the common people, unto all without respect of persons, without announcements or advertising, without organized meetings or gatherings, without radio programs or television networks, without organizations or promotions, shall the glory flow into men's lives. God will visit men wherever they are, reveal the secrets of their hearts, confound their intellects, break their wills and their bondages, cleanse them from their sins, heal their sick, raise their dead, transform their minds and hearts, and raise up the revelation of Christ in their lives.

Let us consider the temple that man builds. Its gates are open for people to come in and pray. Its courts are also open and children come in and play, while its roof offers hospitality to the birds which have built their nests there. All this, however, is temporary and transient. When winter comes, the birds forsake their nests and fly away in search of warmer lands. The children, too, leave only the echo of their laughter in the deserted courts of the temple as they run away to seek the shelter of their homes. And the passerby who came to pray in its sacred atmosphere leave only the warmth of their petitions while they themselves are called by the demands of life. They were led there by the consciousness of some particular need, and then they resumed their way and left the temple behind. By night the temple's doors are closed and locked, all is dark and cold, and men have no access.

NOT SO THE PILLAR WHICH IS WITHIN THE TEMPLE! It is not a bird to stretch its wings and fly away. It is not an outsider who comes in for a few moments seeking a suitable environment for his prayer and then goes. The pillar is part of the very "being" of the temple! It belongs to the essence of the temple and constitutes an integral part of it. It cannot go away from the temple. Only when the temple itself would be demolished could the pillar be severed from it. So the Lord Jesus says to him that overcometh He will make a pillar in the temple of God, and he shall **go no more out**. No more will we be "in and out" of the presence of God! No longer will we be in and out of the leadership of the Spirit! We will be in **perfect union** with the spirit, mind, purpose, life, victory, and glory of God and shall go no more out!

Philadelphia was situated on the edge of a great volcano. Since it was located at the edge of a volcano the ground around it was very fertile making Philadelphia a rich agricultural area, especially for the growing of grapes. The city became one of the choice areas of the ancient world for the production of wine. But since it was next to a volcano they had a problem with earthquakes. Many, many earthquakes had hit this city and in A.D. 17 it was totally destroyed. The emperor Tiberius came in and completely rebuilt the place because he loved the wine. There were frequent tremors and the inhabitants lived in constant fear. The people were used to leaving the city during times of tremors and volcanic activity, and coming back in when it appeared the danger had passed. They were conditioned to living on the edge, fleeing in panic at a moment's notice, then returning again and again. Their flight was always into the valley, away from the city, in case the buildings collapsed, as often was the case. Their lives seemed to consist of a never ending saga of going in and out, in and out.

In the loving embrace of one verse the Holy Spirit presented to the saints in Philadelphia a most astonishing and beautiful promise, "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall **go no more out!**" Saint of God, how is it possible to read such thrilling words of promise, declared and proffered to all who seek and believe? Behold with wonder and holy reverence the majesty of what is promised in this blessed passage — "*and he shall go no more out.*" That doesn't make much sense to the modern mind, but it made a world of sense to those believers in Philadelphia! The very idea of a city, of a temple, of a position and an abiding place of security and permanence was reassuring and wonderful beyond words. Just imagine, if you can, living in Los Angeles, California and one day learning the glad news that you will never be shaken again! It is indeed wonderful!

A pillar is a load-bearing support. In the great temples of ancient times there were pillars made of marble that were polished smooth and when the pillar was set in the temple it was strong — it had been tested, they knew it would handle the load. Today great buildings and bridges are erected with giant steel girders that have been load-tested, and the architects are certain that they can bear the weight. The overcomer is one who has been tried and proven! He has overcome all the obstacles God has placed in his path to test his character. He is tested and proven and is qualified to bear the responsibility given to those who are the temple of the living God. God does not choose and shape and polish us just so we can be beautiful and take pride and rejoice in our own state of being — He makes us pillars so we can bear someone else's burden.

No overcomer will be transformed into a pillar to be placed in a literal temple in heaven. This is a symbol of the sure and fixed position to be attained by those who overcome all things. At the present time every one of God's called and chosen elect is being processed, shaped, tried, and tested, and is subject to "falls" along the way. We catch a vision of high and holy realms in God and, in moments of exceptional anointing, enter for a little while into those blessed experiences, only to have the anointing lift and the vision fade, once more to face the mundane activities and the struggles of daily life. Ah, there is a promise, bright and blessed, that in due time the processing will be completed, the testing will be finished, the secret inworkings of God consummated, and those who have overcome, who have *passed the tests* will be as pillars, fixed and secure, in that glorious spiritual temple which will be the meeting place between God and men in the ages yet to come.

We do not belittle the circumstances; they are often cruel. We are not blind to the burdens; they are crushing. We are conscious of the fierceness of the storms; they are doing their utmost to overwhelm us. We do not minimize the temptations; they are doing their worst to break down our strongest defenses. Yet our eyes are turned away from these to Him who is

mighty within. Of ourselves, our outer man and human consciousness, we are like the reed shaken with the wind; but in the Christ within our spirit, we read, "Behold! I have made thee an iron pillar and brazen walls, and they shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail" (Jer. 1:18). So we see the reed stiffened and rooted by HIM who is never moved! The Christ within is neither changed nor affected by any outward thing! From everlasting to everlasting He is the same.

The Lord is raising up a people in this hour who are not tossed about by every wind of doctrine; who are not gullible; who are not being controlled by man; who are not being made merchandise of; who have discernment and are not being deceived; who need no special teacher with some new revelation; who do not need a human shepherd to guide their every step; who do not have to depend on someone else for their happiness and spiritual strength — but who have been tested and tried and have proven the very life of God is *within them*, being raised up as wisdom, righteousness, power, provision, and glory in their lives. Christ has been revealed not only *to* them, but is revealed *in* them! They are drawing on the strength of their inner man, the spirit, Christ in them, according to the riches of HIS GLORY!

Dearly beloved — I beseech you in the name of the Lord, to open your eyes to the mighty power of God at work in you, and to appropriate the fullness and completeness of the Lord Jesus Christ. No matter what fiery furnace we may be cast into, there is One who walks in the midst of us, and He is the Lord of glory! It is overcoming — it is standing and walking and living in the victory of Him who is holy and Him who is true — that ***makes us a pillar in the temple of God!*** "I will ***make you*** a pillar," saith the Lord! Do you hear that? Christ within makes us a pillar! That is the secret. It is not that someday, somewhere, Christ will confer this "position" or "office" or "degree" upon us. He makes us a pillar, we become the pillar, as His stability, steadfastness, immovability, strength, victory, incorruptibility, and immutability are raised up within us as the reality of our lives.

In looking at a piece of petrified wood we can see this. Several times we have visited the petrified forest in Arizona and seen the huge trees that are now stone, and it is a wonder. Once they were wood, NOW THEY ARE ROCK. For something has happened to them! Certain minerals entered into every cell of each piece of wood and wrought a complete change in it. This process continued until that piece of wood became rock. Same shape, same size, and it has exactly the same cell structure. But what a great change has taken place! All those trees would have decayed by now, disintegrating in weakness and corruption. But now they are strong enough to be set up as pillars in a temple! THAT IS WHAT GOD IS DOING IN US! Something is happening to us. We do not understand all about it, but we know that there is a change going on in our innermost beings. It is God permeating us with Himself! God has impregnated us with His life, and now He is taking over, filling even our very cells with all He is and will be. This change is flowing out of our innermost selves, unto our souls and even in our bodies. This process shall continue until we arrive at the condition of being saturated with God! God shall so fill us, shall so overwhelm us that we take on the very characteristics of God. Aren't you glad!

When we have become a pillar in the temple of God, we shall remain there in blessed union with Christ and the Father, for the Lord's word to us is that "WE SHALL GO NO MORE OUT." Once we have truly overcome all things of this carnal, worldly order of man, we shall be established in the pure, unchangeable, eternal nature of God and stand as pillars in the temple of God. Once we have realized the fullness of God and His kingdom within, we shall never again leave that state of His complete, perfect, and glorious presence. We shall remain in His temple, in blessed and holy union with Christ in our spirit, never again to leave that realm of

His life, wisdom, power, and glory. We will be "pillars" in His temple, this is God's unalterable and unchanging promise to us, His overcomers! Only as we bring His holy temple and the glorious fullness of His presence with us, shall we come "down" to the needy multitudes of earth and of the whole creation to deliver them, set them free, and restore them all.

In closing this message I would mention again that a "pillar" in the temple is a part of the structure. Just think of that! I doubt not that thousands of saints who read these lines rejoice in the knowledge that they are *living stones* in the wall of God's building, but here is a promise, given to overcomers, that is greater than all — they shall be *pillars* in the temple of God. It is a high and wonderful promise! Only God can reveal such things to us. The pillars bear the weight of the superstructure. One day when Paul was writing to his son in the faith, he wrote of the house of God "which is the church of the living God, the *pillar* and ground of the *truth*" (I Tim. 3:15). This house of God, in which God dwells, lives, and works out His life, is also the P-I-L-L-A-R OF THE TRUTH.

What is truth? Be not deceived into thinking, my beloved, that truth is a doctrine, a creed, or correct understanding about God. The most simple definition of truth is — REALITY. Nothing is real in the whole material universe, nothing is truth; everything is but a shadow, all is temporal, illusion, and is passing away. Everything that can be seen, touched, tasted, possessed, and analyzed is not real, but at best a shadow. Whatever exists as a "form" of matter in this universe of appearances is but a figure, not the real thing.

What is the real thing — REALITY? "The things which are seen are temporal," the inspired apostle says, "but the things which are *not seen are eternal* (abiding)" (II Cor. 4:18). The things which cannot be seen by the natural eye are the things of the *spirit*. CHRIST, the SPIRIT, is the reality of everything! You may think that the human (Adamic) life you have is real, but it is not; it too is only a shadow. "For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away" (James 1:24). Every cemetery bears witness to this! Real life is Christ. If you have the Son of God, you have life; if you do not have the Son of God, you do not have life (I Jn. 5:12). If your spirit has not been quickened by His Spirit you have not discovered life and abide in death, and this death has passed upon all men.

If someone sends you a photograph of himself, you will say, "That is uncle Joe, or cousin Mary." But in truth that is not any person at all! It is merely a picture, an image, a false likeness. From time to time dear ones on our mailing list send us pictures of themselves or their families. We have a bulletin board in our office filled with pictures of folks from all over the world. Some of them we know, many of them we have never met. Sometimes someone stops by and I will point out some of these: "This is Paul and Emily Mueller, this is Ray and Doris Prinzing, this is..." and on and on we go pointing out our friends from here and there. But what they see is not these folks at all! REAL things are not found in pictures!

The whole universe is but a picture, an image, a likeness. All the types, shadows, and figures in the Bible were but symbols and images of *reality* to come, and that reality IS CHRIST. Christ is the truth, the reality of all! In the physical realm we have food for sustenance; but Christ is the living bread that came down from heaven, that if a man eat thereof he shall never die. On earth we have great rocks, and the wise man, Jesus said, builds his house upon the rock; but Christ is the true rock of ages, the foundation and stability that cannot be moved or shaken by anything. We dress our bodies in clothing for protection, warmth, appearance, and identification; but Christ is the eternal robe of righteousness covering the nakedness of our

flesh nature, and the royal robe of the king of glory and a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek, giving us our identification as king-priests in the kingdom of our Father.

Christ Himself is the truth, and His Spirit is the Spirit of truth (Jn. 14:17; 15:26; 16:13; I Jn. 5:7). Christ is the reality, and His Spirit is the SPIRIT OF REALITY. Only Christ, the Spirit, is **real!** The people in whom the living God dwells, lives, and moves, is the PILLAR OF THE TRUTH, the support upon which reality stands, the buttress that bears the reality. Upon this people can be seen the glory of the Lord, the **reality of the universe!** Upon this people can be seen what is real and true — the truth! Upon the sons of God can be seen the reality of life and incorruption, the reality of love, the reality of righteousness, the reality of mercy and goodness, the reality of wisdom and knowledge and power. The sons of God are the **pillars** of God's great temple, the support of the superstructure, the resting place of all truth, the foundation of all REALITY! God is raising up a many-membered temple, all indwelt by Christ, all in perfect union with Christ, to be filled with all the glory of God throughout the ages to come. This body is God's house, His habitation, His temple. The overcomers are the **strong and tall pillars** upon which this reality rests! Oh, the wonder of it!

Chapter 56

The Church In Philadelphia

continued

"Him that overcometh...I will *write upon him the name of my God*" (Rev. 3:12).

God is doing a wonderful work in His elect in this hour! It is a complete work. He is thoroughly changing us from flesh to spirit, from earthly to heavenly, making us the overcomers He has apprehended us to be. It is His plan and purpose to thoroughly cleanse and transform us! As He does this, we are losing our own identity and taking on the identity of our Father, the characteristics of His holy city, New Jerusalem, and the new, creative identity represented in His new name. When this work is completely accomplished in us, we shall be fully identified with God and the realm of His Spirit.

Perhaps you have heard the question, "What's in a name?" A name is more than a moniker, more than a simple badge or means of identification, something by which we address people specifically and individually. In biblical usage there is *much* in a name! True, the names we give our children in this modern day usually have little or no significance. It has become the custom to give foolish names which do not mean anything, except a jingle of sounds. We often name our children after some favorite aunt, uncle, or grandparent, or choose a name because we like its sound or association. But in Bible times names were chosen with great care and were frequently given by prophetic utterance or under divine inspiration so that the names actually revealed the *nature, character, attributes, and destiny* of the person, and thus carried a message to all who spoke or used that name.

In a very real sense the "name" of a being is regarded as being a real part of the person. In a certain sense there can be no separation whatsoever between a man's name and what he is as a person. In the scriptures the innermost being of a man is expressed in his name. That is why Esau declares of his conniving brother, "Is he not rightly named Jacob (supplanter)? For he has supplanted me these two times" (Gen. 27:36). After wrestling with the angel of the Lord, however, Jacob underwent a change of attitude and alteration of character which was accompanied by a change of name. Having seen the "face" or presence of God he was no longer the same man that he had been before his encounter with the Lord. Since *name* and *character* are absolutely identified there had to be a change in Jacob's appellation! The angel of the Lord, therefore, said, "Thy name shall no more be called Jacob, but Israel (Prince): for as a prince thou hast power with God and with men, and hast prevailed" (Gen. 32:28).

Abram, which means "father," had his name changed by God to Abraham, meaning "father of many nations," for such he was to become in very fact. His wife also was given a change of name from Sarai, which means "contentious," to Sarah, meaning "Princess," for, said the Lord, "I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples shall be of her." There was a man, who later became a very excellent minister in the early church, possibly that rich young ruler whom Jesus loved, and told to sell all, give all to the poor, and then to follow Him.

He went away very sorrowful, for he was exceedingly rich. But a very ancient tradition says that after the Lord Jesus died, rose, and ascended, he became a true disciple. He was known among the disciples as Joses, and then he was called Barnabas, meaning "son of consolation," because he became such a good man in comforting and helping others.

The inspired prophet summed up in one bold statement what it means to be a priest of God in His kingdom. "Ye shall be *named* the priests of the Lord: for men shall call you the ministers of our God" (Isa. 61:6). There is marvelous significance in that one word "named." *Named!* You shall be N-A-M-E-D the priests of the Lord. This passage forcefully reveals the great truth that all who would be priests of God MUST UNDERGO A CHANGE OF NATURE, to become priests by name, by nature, so that priesthood is not merely a title given to them but a nature lived out through them. If our spiritual minds can grasp the fact, to be *named* the priests of the Lord means to be *natured* the priests of the Lord, to so be imbued with the priestly nature until we ***become a priest in our very state of being.***

Jesus, after teaching His disciples to love their enemies, bless them that curse them, do good to them that hate them, and pray for them that despitefully use them and persecute them, continued, "***That ye may be the sons of your Father which is in heaven;*** for He makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust" (Mat. 5:38-48). You see, God makes no difference; He is not a respecter of persons. He loves His creation and wills only blessing and life for all men, the evil as well as the good! He has one great plan to draw all men and restore them to the glory of God. That is OUR FATHER! And we are His sons, those who share His nature, who think as He thinks and act as He acts. This is what it means to be named — *natured* — the priests of the Lord! Let us note in passing, the King James Bible says, "that ye may be the *children* of your Father in heaven." The Greek word here, however, is *huios* meaning "sons," *mature sons*, not little children. Mature sons are NATURED priests!

There are many names and descriptive titles of God in the scriptures. He is called Counselor, King, Shepherd, Rock, Shield, High Tower, Strong Arm, Saviour, Redeemer, Father, Yahweh, Elohim, El Shaddai, El Elyon, Jesus (Yahshua), and many, many others. Someone has said that there are about two hundred names for God in the Bible! The moment one begins to splinter the absolute wholeness that God is, to examine all His multi-faceted aspects and attributes, the number of splinters are as infinite as God is infinite. Each name of God, as He progressively revealed Himself, was a fresh and fuller revelation of the nature of God. One was a revelation of His Self-existence, another of His might, another was the unveiling of His grace. One revealed something more of His wisdom, another of His holiness, another of His tenderness, another of His exaltation and honor, another of His judgment, and so on.

As already stated, a name with God is indicative of the one who bears that name. Those who will be worthy to bear the name of God are the ones who have been changed, transformed, and recreated in the image and likeness of God! If we are not completely in His image and likeness there is no way that the Christ can write that name upon us. The name describes God, and it will only be given unto us when it can describe ***us!*** We must, of necessity, be like Him in every respect, if we are to be the possessors of that name. It is "him that overcometh" that receives the name, and it is *by overcoming* that we obtain the name! Christ obtained a name more excellent than angels and higher than all other names. He obtained the name of the Father by overcoming all things! And that is how the name of the Father is being written upon His elect in this hour, in our overcoming we are putting on the nature and character of our God.

The "name of my God" means the nature of my God. This is Jesus Christ speaking! Of the firstborn Son of God it is written, "He is the sole expression of the glory of God, the Light-being, the out-raying or radiance of the divine, and He is the perfect imprint and very image of God's nature" (Heb. 1:3, Amplified). Again in Colossians 1:15 we find that Christ is the image of the invisible God. He bore the image of His Father, as many an earthly son does of his father. I have known boys, that as soon as one sees them it is not hard to tell whose son they are; they are so much like their father. They can look so much like dad in build and physical features; they will walk, talk, and act so much like their dad that there is no mistaking whose son they are. I look much like my dad, so much so, in fact, that once in the 1960's in Belize, Central America I was walking across the porch of a hotel when a voice called out, "Luke Eby! Are you Luke Eby?" I was stunned to hear that call, for we were only briefly visiting Belize on a missionary journey and knew no one there. We had only arrived the day before! I replied, "No, I am not Luke Eby — Luke is my father." By an exceedingly strange coincidence this man had known my father in Pennsylvania many years before and was now living in Belize. He recognized me because I looked so much like my father at that age. But sons on earth are never the *express image* of their father, because they inherit some characteristics from mother's side as well. So though they may look much like dad there is always some little difference. It was not so with Jesus! He was the express image of God! In every respect He was exactly like His Father, so much so that He was able to say, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." He bore His image, His likeness, and in this He manifested to the world what God is like!

"I will set him on high because he has *known my name*" (Ps. 91:14). To *know* His name is to *become*, in union with Him, the name-nature of God in every hour and in every way. To know His name is to enter in to the pure inner life of God, and exude His nature, His life, His character and all else that He is. To *know* means more than mere intellectual understanding or carnal knowledge. It means "intimate union" as when "Adam *knew* his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain" (Gen. 4:1). Some people think because they use or pronounce the names Yahweh, El Elyon, Yahshua, and all the other Hebrew names they have dug out of the concordance, that this truly honors the Lord, makes the use of these names magical, procures favor with God, or is a mark of spirituality. People without a revelation from the Lord, or participation in His life, are disposed to go back and use the "letter" of that given to past generations of men of God. Some even become so radical that they re-write the Bible, inserting the Hebrew names in the New Testament text, although they do not appear in the ancient manuscripts!

The Psalmist says, "And they that *know Thy name* shall put their trust in Thee" (Ps. 9:10). The message is clear: "They that have experienced the inworking, the development and formation of *Thy nature* will confidently trust in Thee." If this has not been your experience yet — that is, the inworking and formation of His nature within — then you do not yet know the name of the Lord though you may be zealous to consistently use the Hebrew words Yahweh, Yahshua, and all the other name forms in the Old Testament.

Again the scripture declares that "the name of Yahwey is a strong tower." There are many precious revelations coming forth these days concerning the names of God, and the depth of meaning therein. Some immediately get caught up in the externals, with an emphasis on the mechanics — the spelling, syllables, and pronunciation of the names — dealing with the outward or "letter" of the Word. But it is the "letter" that *killeth* — that is, there is no *life* in those things! They strike no chord deep in my spirit. In fact, they leave me somewhat cold and uninspired. The "spirit" of the Word gives *life!* The spirit is the substance, the essence and reality of His nature that the outward name reveals. As Ray Prinzing has so aptly written, "Of
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this we are certain, there is a walk that is 'not of the letter, but of the Spirit: for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life' (II Cor. 3:6). When certain truths are set down as a doctrine, and one receives only the letter thereof, it does not serve to gender life within, it only becomes one more burden to bear, adding to the load of traditions and commandments. But when the Spirit of God illumines the inner man, quickens the heart to receive that Word of Life within, it is not some doctrine to contend for, but it is a LIFE TO BE LIVED."

So the Lord gives this promise to the overcomer: "I will write upon him *the name of my God*." Is God going to literally write upon the overcomer the Hebrew letters of the name Y-A-H-W-E-H? Is this some form of tattoo we are to have burned into our flesh? Certainly not! Realizing the awesome glory and power that was given to Moses by the Lord when He proclaimed His name to him, we can well understand the significance of "the name of my God" which is to be written upon all who overcome. It is certainly not the Hebrew name of the Father, nor is it a new spiritual name that some are now using for themselves. Rather, it is the impartation of HIS CHARACTER AND AUTHORITY! Let us clearly understand the deep truth of God's Word! When He proclaims or writes His name upon His called and chosen elect, He is in fact imparting to them His honor, His authority, His nature, and His power. It has nothing to do with letters of the alphabet or phonics!

THE NAME OF THE CITY OF MY GOD

"Him that overcometh...I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of *the city of my God*, which is New Jerusalem" (Rev. 3:12).

One of the keys to understanding the book of Revelation is to understand why it was written. Like most of the scriptures, the book of Revelation is one of those writings that has been the subject of deep superstitious speculation which is of no benefit to those who approach it in that way. Tradition makes the word of God of no effect, saith the Lord! Nowhere in all of the scriptures are fairy tales, myths, and superstitions fabricated more than out of the book of Revelation! I grew up hearing that there was a city in space, a bright *square star*, discovered by some unnamed and unknown astronomer, moving toward the earth from a distant part of the universe. I grew up hearing this as the *word of God!*

I was taught that the word of God says that there is a city coming down from heaven, and immediately the carnal mind assumes that it is a huge monstrosity floating down from space which someday will land on the earth like a bump on a little boy's head. Having minds that are darkened by ignorance of divine mysteries, these have not spiritual understanding. Their comprehension of spiritual realities is not unlike that of the Pharisees who were offended, disturbed, and angered when Jesus said, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you" (Jn. 6:53). Understanding only with carnal minds and human logic they interpreted His words as a suggestion of *cannibalism!* They were unable to see beyond the letter of the word to grasp the deep spiritual truth of which He spake. Just as Jesus spoke of His *spirit* and His *word* under the symbols of His *blood* and His *flesh*, so the apostle John described the heavenly origin and character of the *bride of Christ* under the figure of a *city* coming down from God out of heaven.

The bride of Christ is not a physical city of gold and stones and streets and gates. The bride of Christ is a *people*, a spiritual people in union with Christ. John says that this city is prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. He introduces this glorious city as a bride brought to relationship with her bridegroom. A bride is one who is deeply in love with her bridegroom, submitted and joined in the intimate union of that love. That is why in the Revelation we see

the *woman* giving birth to the *manchild*. No one can become a *son* until first he has experienced what it means to be a *bride*! It is brideship that gives birth to sonship! It is as we truly fall fiercely and intensely in love with Christ, submitting to His Lordship, learning His ways, and knowing Him in intimacy of fellowship and vital union, that we receive the seed of God by which we can be birthed out of this relationship into the further and higher reality of *sonship to God*. The New Jerusalem city is prepared as a bride adorned for her *husband*, and it is from this union of life that the manchild is birthed. Yet we cannot truly separate between the city bride and the manchild who sits upon the throne, for the throne of God is *in the city* and it is from that throne that the river of life pours forth for all creation! These are great and eternal realities within each one of us as we follow on to know the Lord and fulfill His purpose in restoring creation to God. Oh, the wonder of it!

In speaking of that city which is the New Jerusalem the apostle says, "Behold! The tabernacle of God is with men." This is not the first time the tabernacle of God has been with men! The tabernacle of God was with men from the time of Moses, when he built the tabernacle of God in the wilderness. You see, precious friend of mine, John was seeing in vision the *fulfillment* of all that the tabernacle in the wilderness and the temple in Jerusalem represented — *in the elect*. IN the body of Christ THE TABERNACLE OF GOD IS WITH MEN! The tabernacle of God is with us now, for Christ is in us, and the glory of God is seen upon it! Ah, how there needs to be a great voice proclaiming this tabernacle of God in the midst of men (Rev. 21:3), because the whole world is looking up in the skies to see it coming down through the galaxies while all the time it is coming down from the high realm of the Spirit of God into the minds, hearts, lives, and bodies of men!

The name of the city of my God is New Jerusalem. Jerusalem is a compound Hebrew word meaning "founded peaceful." I will write upon you the name of the city — I will write upon you the *establishment* or *kingdom of peace*, the rule of peace that comes through the government of God. For God to write upon us the *name* of the city of God, the New Jerusalem, means that He inscribes in our very nature the peaceful and governmental characteristics represented by this glorious city of God!

The New Jerusalem coming down from the heavens of God's Spirit is revealed to be a city *four-square*, that is, a *universal city* that reigns over and blesses all men unto the four corners of the earth! The best way to come to an understanding of the true meaning of the New Jerusalem, is to go back and consider its shadow, the Old Jerusalem. Jerusalem of old was the capital city of the national Israel; and as that old order was but a type and shadow of the new, therefore the New Jerusalem must be the capital city, or the ruling element, in Israel today, which is Christ's kingdom and of which our Lord said, it "is not of this world." In other words, the New Jerusalem is the ruling class, the kings and priests unto God: those who have followed the Lamb whithersoever He goeth and have attained to the highest position of honor and might and true greatness in the Spirit. It comprises those who will reign with Christ upon His throne. God's called and chosen elect, therefore, who supremely love Christ, who are submitted completely to His Lordship, who are accounted worthy to suffer with Christ and through our trials, testings, and provings grow up into Him in all things, ARE the New Jerusalem which shall rule over God's infinite realm forevermore, and all nations and peoples shall eventually walk in the light of this city!

Thus we see that the New Jerusalem, contrary to the driveling childishness that is taught in the church systems, is not a fanciful monstrosity some fifteen hundred miles high which some day will come crashing down out of the clouds to rest upon the earth, throwing it out of balance and off its course. God made this earth complete and as it should be long, long ago. He created it a

perfectly functioning reality, and "nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken from it" (Eccl. 3:14). Truly, unspiritual men can invent many fairy tales, and alas, all seem intent upon calculating the expanse of the city in cubic miles or cubic feet as though it were nothing more than a huge metropolis slightly more wonderful than those at present on earth! One speaker waxed eloquent about the size of the mansion each inhabitant would possess, replete with a golden bathtub and fountains and other such nonsense. Until our spiritual minds are able to grasp the great truth that the body of Christ *is* the temple of God and that every room or mansion in that temple is a *living son of God*, a literal habitation of God through the Spirit, we have understood nothing at all. Only the Spirit of God can make this a living truth in the hearts of His people!

When the glorious city of living stones is unveiled in all of its unspeakable majesty and glory, then will the Spirit and the Bride say, "Come," and the nations of earth will enter through its spiritual gates that they may partake of the leaves of its spiritual tree (the Word of God) that are for the *healing of the nations*. From His exalted throne of *sons of God* (Rev. 3:21; 21:7) in its midst the water of Life will flow and the ever green tree of Life, bearing its twelve manner of fruits, will flourish on either side of the river for the healing of all nations who hitherto walked in darkness and the shadow of death. Then shall its twelve gates be open, and never shall they be closed by day, and there shall be no more night.

In the book of Hebrews the writer's spirit is enraptured with glory, his heart exulting in praise, as he beholds in spirit the transcendent glory of the spiritual mount Zion in contrast with the indescribable dreadfulness of the earthly mount Sinai. From his mouth pours forth the prophetic pronouncement: *"For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more: for they could not endure that which was commanded, and if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart: and so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake: but ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of messengers, and to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel"* (Heb. 12:18-24).

There are beautiful pictures here of God's dealings with His people on all levels of spiritual growth, development, and understanding. Some people get the idea that we think we are the only true people of God on earth, and that we have no love, appreciation, or concern for the Lord's people in the church systems. Such is not the case! We seek to fellowship with all the Lord's precious people, regardless of what level they are on. They are all HIS, and if we can bless them in any way, that is our joy. However — we cannot, *dare not*, fellowship the false religious systems of Mystery Babylon! We *do* need to draw a distinction between the Lord's *people* and the *system* so many are involved in. We can and will fellowship anyone — but we will not fellowship their carnal, man-made systems. This means that much of our fellowship with the believers about us is limited to a "one-on-one" basis, after we get past those who *won't fellowship us* at all because they perceive us to be heretics!

Let us go back to the Old Testament and consider the types and shadows of God's economy among His people. Israel of old was God's chosen nation, His peculiar treasure above all the people of the earth. Israel was the visible expression of God's kingdom upon earth. Israel was the whole nation composed of all who were born there, irrespective of their stature, position,

station, attainments, wealth, poverty, intelligence, sickness, health — all who were born there, from the blind beggar by the road to the king upon the throne, were citizens of God's nation and came under the care, order, and provision of Yahweh. All who were born of the flesh in Israel were citizens of the kingdom simply by virtue of *birth*. In this more glorious dispensation of the Spirit, each and every son of Adam's race, who has been born again by the Spirit through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, are alike citizens of that kingdom which is no longer a dusty little country thronging with peasants and cattle who inhabit houses of clay and stone and wood, but an eternal land, a heavenly country of a spiritual order, the inhabitants of which have been born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth forever. In type the fleshly Israel represents all who, under the new covenant, are born into the family of God by spiritual birth!

Let us UNDERSTAND! Israel was the whole nation, but Jerusalem was the capital city. All who lived in Jerusalem were citizens of the kingdom, but not all who were citizens of the kingdom lived in Jerusalem! And as that old order of the flesh was but a type and shadow of the new order of the Spirit, therefore the New Jerusalem is the capital city, transcendent in glory, upon the mountain of His holiness, beautiful for situation, upon the sides of the north, the city of the great King! The New Jerusalem is the capital city of Israel today, which is Christ's kingdom of blood-bought, quickened men and women of all stages of development in Life. The New Jerusalem is a city of redeemed persons, but persons who have not only been born as citizens of a heavenly country, but have ***moved onward*** to dwell in the capital city of that country, a realm of surpassing beauty and glory, the inhabitants of which are the embodiment of the glory of God, holding in their hands the priesthood, temple, kingship, and government of the kingdom, and are the light thereof.

The apostle Paul makes it abundantly clear that there are two Jerusalems. *"For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise. Which things are an allegory: for these are the **two covenants**; the one from **mount Sinai**, which gendereth to bondage, which is Hagar. For this Hagar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage (to the law) with her children. But **Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all**" (Gal. 4:22-26).*

Paul has here been drawing a comparison or contrast between Hagar and Sarah, the children of the bondwoman and the children of the freewoman, which allegorically represent two covenants and the two Jerusalems. He states that there is a Jerusalem from below, which is here on this planet, the Jerusalem which now is and is in bondage with her children; which answers to Hagar and is fleshly, natural Israel under the law. There is, moreover, a Jerusalem which is above, which exists in a higher realm, in the Spirit; and the Jerusalem which is above, being free, answers to Sarah and is the children of God through the new covenant, born from above by the Spirit. This Jerusalem is the mother of the heavenly Israel after which the earthly Israel is patterned, and this is shown in the book of Revelation in the twelve gates bearing the names of the twelve tribes of Israel.

We become citizens of the New Jerusalem by being born of the Spirit and brought into a responsible place in the family of God, by the workings of His Spirit within us. The spiritual New Jerusalem is a glorious realm in God, far more glorious and spectacular than anything of this earth has ever been. It is the *free city*, free from all of religion's traditions, regulations, creeds, methods, systems, and bondages of men. And when the New Jerusalem realm has come from God out of heaven to be manifested in all its fullness, with all her glorious kingdom

parts fully established and spiritually fulfilled, she shall indeed be, in truth and in fact, **"the joy of the whole earth."**

All of Jerusalem's children are born of the Spirit, and led by the Spirit! And now in this heavenly light, power, and spirit they come to be the heavenly Jerusalem's children, that is, born from above, without the law and the bondages of religion, and in the Spirit. And is not this the city that Abraham sought for, which hath foundations, whose *builder and maker is God*? Is not this the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God, that he sought for? Is it not from among this people, born of the Spirit, filled with the Spirit, led by the Spirit, and grown up in the Spirit, that the Melchizedek Priesthood is revealed? Ah, little wonder that the apostle declared that in relation to this Melchizedekian Order there are "many things to say and hard to be understood" by those unspiritual ears that remain unquickened and uncircumcised by the Spirit of Truth. Jerusalem is not itself kingship and priesthood — but God's king-priests occupy the high places of Jerusalem! Oh, the mystery of it!

One of the chief errors made by believers of almost all persuasions is the common notion that all saved people belong to the same company, order, or rank in the kingdom of God. Men like to imagine that *all* are going to the same place in God, that *all* are the bride of Christ, *all* have the mind of Christ, *all* are sons of God, *all* will rule and reign with Christ, and so on. To assume this is to frustrate the purpose of God in the lives of His people! Do not be deceived by the senseless prattle of carnal minded teachers and preachers, nor by the childish understanding of baby Christians. There are many *justified* believers who have not been filled with the Spirit of God. There are many *Spirit-baptized* believers who have not grown up into the maturity of the knowledge, wisdom, nature, power, and stature of Christ. And nearly all believers fit somewhere *in between* those who are merely "saved by grace" and those who have been completely CONFORMED TO THE IMAGE OF THE SON OF GOD.

It should be clear to all that have eyes to see that the **Jerusalem people** dwell in a brighter glory than do the **Israel people**, even as the **Spirit-filled people** dwell in a brighter glory than do the **justified people**. The New Jerusalem is the bride of Christ. A bride is one who is no longer a babe, but has reached a degree of maturity, and has fallen so intensely in love that her only wish is to yield herself to the high desires of her husband, giving herself completely and unreservedly to him as her lover, submitting her whole life to him as her head and lord. Oh! So many of the Lord's people know so little of what it means to *be the bride of Christ!* But I tell you that most people who are pressing on into sonship to God started out earlier in their experience in a "brideship" relationship to Christ, intensely in love with Christ, submitted to His Lordship, and seeking only to fulfill His high desires.

There is more! Not only have we come by our walk in the Spirit to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, not only have we come to the heavenly Jerusalem, but we have also come unto **mount Zion**. Again we go back to consider the shadow. Israel was the whole nation; Jerusalem, the capital city. All Israelites were alike citizens of the kingdom, but not all Israelites dwelt in Jerusalem, the city of the great King, where stood the magnificent temple of God, the priesthood, the kingship, and the glory. And while Jerusalem comprised a people of surpassing honor and glory and relationship with God, yet in all Jerusalem there was only one who, with his household, **dwelt on mount Zion**. He was the king! Zion is the name of the ancient citadel of Jerusalem. It was captured from the Jebusites by David after he became king. From that hill David and the kings of Israel reigned gloriously, and the ark of God rested there all through the reign of David which was forty years. Mount Zion was the highest pinnacle of glory and power attainable in Israel!

That Zion, however, was only a faint shadow of **THE ZION TO WHICH WE ARE COME!** David was king over natural Israel. Christ is King over the Israel of the new covenant! David dwelt on the natural mount Zion. Therefore Christ dwells upon the spiritual mount Zion! And this spiritual mount Zion is composed of those who reach the very highest pinnacle attainable in Jerusalem: those who, like king David of old, are "a *man* (manchild) after mine own heart, which shall fulfill *all my will.*" This mount Zion company is the ruling class, the overcomers who sit with Christ in His throne. They are the *throne* in the New Jerusalem! These are the kings and priests unto God, after the order of Melchizedek, those who have attained to the highest position of honor and might and true greatness in the kingdom of God. It comprises those who are such as have gone all the way with their Lord and shall now rule with Christ upon His throne over God's infinite realm for evermore. Isn't it wonderful!

MY NEW NAME

"Him that overcometh...I will write upon him *my new name*" (Rev. 3:12).

The name of the Son of God who came in human flesh is Jesus. That is His complete name. That is His correct name. That is His full name. The name of the eternal Word of God who stepped across the stars to planet earth to be born in the little village of Bethlehem, is Jesus. That is His complete, proper, full name. His name is Jesus! The angelic messenger appeared to Mary and announced, "Thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins" (Mat. 1:21). Someone may object with the contention that His name was Yahshua, not Jesus. But we cannot be certain that the angel spoke to Mary in Hebrew! You see, Aramaic was the common language of the people in Nazareth when Jesus came. Therefore, it is just as possible, in fact, more probable that the angel spoke to Mary in Aramaic! In any event, Jesus is the English form of the name and is exactly the same as the Old Testament name Joshua. Joshua or Jesus — it's the same name. And Joshua or Jesus or Yahshua means "salvation of Yahweh." So when the mighty angel Gabriel appeared, he said, "Call the child that which will be descriptive or characteristic of what He is going to be and do." The messenger said, "Thou shalt call His name Jesus, or, thou shalt call His name SAVIOUR, FOR He *shall save His people* from their sins!" Call Him Saviour because He is going to save!

Why is so much promised through the name of Jesus the Christ? The name is the *value* of the person it represents. When I hear or mention a name it calls up before me the whole man or woman, what I know of him or her, and the impression the person has made on me. For example, if someone says, "Althea," I do not react, or if they call out the name "Fiona" still there is nothing. I have no close friends or acquaintances with those names. But when they say, "Lorain," immediately there is a response — for there is the image, the love, and all the personality of my wife. That is the name of the one I love! The name "Lorain" is not any prettier or any more meaningful than Angelica or Nicole, but what the name implies to me is different. When someone says, "Billy the Kid," I see an image of a wild and murderous youth who once rode the old West and was sentenced to be hung sixty miles from our home. When someone says, "Billy Sunday," an altogether different image is presented — I think of a great evangelist of yesteryear.

There is progression in the name of our Lord. We all know His name Jesus! But now the Lord announces, "And I will write upon him *my new name.*" So few people know that Jesus now has a new name! Now we do not mean that He is no longer called Jesus, for His Saviourhood extends unto the ages of the ages. At the conclusion of all the ages the promise shall be fulfilled that "at the name of *Jesus* every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess, to the glory of God the Father." "Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name

under heaven, given among men, whereby we *must be saved!*" Oh, yes! His name is still Jesus. But — He also has a NEW NAME! When He speaks to us here of His new name, He is not speaking of the handle or the word by which He is called. He is speaking of the nature and character — a new and higher nature and character than He had on earth as a man, higher even than His Saviourhood by which we are reconciled unto God.

The new name of the Son of God is a name that is descriptive of what He is now within Himself. It is a name that is high above every name! A new identity, the greatness and glory thereof is still to be revealed unto the sons of God, and with that revelation shall come a glory in us that shall deliver creation from the bondage of corruption. Therefore, the closer we come to spiritual maturity, with the unveiling of the sons of God in manifestation, there is a new name to be disclosed. HE WILL DECLARE IT UNTO HIS BRETHREN. In bringing many sons to glory, it was an act worthy of God, *"To make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I WILL DECLARE THY NAME unto my brethren"* (Heb. 2:10-12).

We can go back and remember all the names whereby He has revealed Himself to this date, and rejoice in all the revelation this brings, but it is not any of those names, but HIS NEW NAME that He will write on the overcomers! What an honor, and what a reward! Think of the implication involved in this! This new name is not any name we have heard Him called, for it was after He had submitted to the death of the cross that the Father raised Him up and highly exalted Him to the right hand of His throne, and gave Him a new name that is above every name. We can only learn that name and attain to that name by *becoming all that He is!* And thus it is said of Christ, "His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns; and He had a name written, *that no man knew, but He Himself*" (Rev. 19:12). This mysterious, uncommunicated name or nature shall be imparted to every overcomer! An entirely new revelation of Christ will then be made in them.

When Jesus was upon earth He had one nature and character. For three and a half years the disciples walked with Jesus. They saw Him feed the multitudes, calm the violent sea with a word, heal the sick and oppressed, and raise the dead even from the tomb of foul corruption. Three of them had been with Jesus on the holy mount and had seen the transcendent glory of His transfiguration. They fell down afraid, dumbfounded by the glory that was manifest, as they beheld the face of Christ shining with a brightness exceeding the noonday sun, and heard the voice of God out of the glory saying, "This is my beloved Son!" Yet — in all this He was clothed in human flesh; he ate, drank, grew weary, used the bathroom, took a bath, slept, wept, was angered, and expressed all the other physical, emotional, and psychological limitations of a human nature.

Few people understand that Jesus was not yet perfect or perfected when he was here upon earth. Now I am not saying He was not perfectly sinless. Of course He was! I am saying He was not yet perfect or perfected. If you want the letter of the Word for that, then read Luke 13:32 where some people came to Jesus and said to Him, "Herod is seeking to kill thee." Jesus replied, "Go ye, and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures today and tomorrow, and the third day *I shall be perfected.*" If you need further proof, you can read in the book of Hebrews where the scripture says that "it became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation *perfect through sufferings*" (Heb. 2:10). And again, "And being *made perfect*, He *became* the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him" (Heb. 5:9). Someone asks in what sense was He not yet perfect while He was here on earth? The Bible says, in that "He was

tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15). While He was here in the flesh, He still had the imperfect nature in that *sin could still be a temptation to Him*.

Through His death, burial, and resurrection Jesus attained to a ***new nature and character!***

Through His death, burial, and resurrection He came to His perfect state, His new nature whereby nothing could ever be a temptation to Him, He knew no limitation, and death was forever swallowed up in victory. This was His new name, ***the resurrected nature of Christ!*** When Jesus says, "To him that overcometh...I will write upon him my new name," He is saying, "I will give him the resurrected nature of Christ, I will raise him up in the power of my resurrection in spirit, soul, and body!" "For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, ***we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection.***" Someone says, "All believers have already been quickened, made alive in Christ, and received His resurrection life." That is true, my friend, in our inner man, the spirit; but there is a promise of *fullness*, of *all that His new name entails*, reserved for "him that overcometh." If all believers had already experienced this there would be no such promise to the overcomer!

On that morning of the first day of the week, when there was but the slightest shimmering of dawn on the horizon, unseen by human eyes, there descended the omnipotent and supernatural hand of God, right through that stone, and touched the body of the beloved Son. Life poured into that body and it was quickened by the immeasurable and illimitable power of God. In the silent darkness of that tomb a mighty metamorphosis took place — the body that rose was no longer a natural body — it was a *spiritual body!* It was a body pulsating with incorruptible power and immortal vitality! It shimmered with a splendiferous glow and vibrated at a frequency thousands of times higher than the body that was laid there three days before. Suddenly out of the blackness of the tomb, the first human body in the history of the world that *could not be tempted* and that *could not die*, nor be affected by any earthly power, stood and quietly passed through the rock walls like sunshine through a window pane, disappearing into the morning mist. Christ came out, not to the roar of hundreds of thousands, not to great parades or waiting hands, but He came out alone, having conquered death itself within Himself. He arose with a nature beyond temptation, beyond weakness, beyond sickness, beyond discouragement, beyond limitation, beyond any carnal influence or power — beyond the whole dreadful realm of sin, sorrow, and death! *This*, my beloved, is HIS NEW NAME — His new nature, character, and being. And *this* is what is promised to the overcomer!

As a man groping in the black and fearful darkness of a deep cave beholds in the distance the glimmer of glorious sunlight, and takes courage to continue his way in the one direction of that light spot, assured that there lies his deliverance, so the sons of God groping in the darkness of the shadow of this mortal realm, beholding in the Spirit the glory of the risen firstborn Son, know that there is a way out of death into the glorious liberty of the sons of God! For, mark you well, He is not merely risen: He is the *firstborn from the dead!* And the firstborn is He that "openeth the womb" and prepares the way for all His brethren, who are His body. Thus Christ was in the womb of death, was born from death, opening the womb of death for all those whom the Father hath given Him. And it is He, standing in that spot of glorious light, whom you see from your present darkness, who calls to you, "Because I live, *ye shall live also!*" "To Him that overcometh will I give the *crown of life.*" "Him that overcometh...I will write upon him *my new name (resurrection life and nature).*" It is true, wondrously and gloriously true — "We shall *not* all sleep, but we *shall* all be changed!"

Christ's new name is not a series of letters of the alphabet phonetically pronounced. It is a nature! There is a great difference between the Lord naming or "naturing" us, and the naming

after natural-minded fashion. A sister told me that one time she was visiting in a place where they were talking about "getting their new names." One man said that he had received his new name, and it was Myrtle. Lord, help us!

The key to receiving His new name is *overcoming*. The starting point in overcoming is with the little things, the little foxes that spoil the vine. You will be defeated if you start with the giants! You must first kill your bear and slay your lion before you take on Goliath. Start overcoming the little things, those little quirks and idiosyncrasies in your personality — those things you think, those words you speak, those attitudes you manifest from time to time, facial expressions, body movements, gestures, slothfulness, worry, sins of omission — these little things that fall short and miss the mark of the nature of Christ. God wants us to be changed! We will never be changed just by hearing the message and giving assent to it. We must take on — appropriate — a whole new nature that is absolutely contrary to the human nature. I'm not talking about warring with the "old man" or wrestling with the "devil." I'm talking about so putting on a new nature until all that is contrary to that nature is put to death. I'm talking about so putting on a new nature until it becomes *natural* to be *supernatural!*

HE must increase, WE must decrease — and it must be in that order! We do not die in order to live, we live in order to die! By accentuating the positive we eliminate the negative. By turning on the light we dispel the darkness. By the infusion of life we abolish death. Truth destroys error. Reality negates fantasy. That is the law of conformation into the image of Christ! To fill our mind with the truth of Christ, we flood our life with the word of God, and "at the name (nature) of Jesus every knee shall bow and every tongue confess." As we partake of the nature of Christ out of our spirit, every knee within us must bow before that nature and every tongue, every voice within us, must confess that Jesus Christ is LORD to the glory of God the Father!

Chapter 57

The Church In Laodicea

"And by the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write..." (Rev. 3:14).

The seventh and final church is the church in Laodicea. It is the most deplorable of the seven, representing the very worst spiritual condition a church can come to. Therefore, it also presents the greatest challenges to the overcoming elect, for the spiritual conditions within the churches are the very things we are called upon to overcome! The promise to the overcomer in this church is the *greatest of all the promises!* Therefore Laodicea represents both the lowest and the highest realms of experience in the Lord's people. Both of these are in manifestation in the earth today! While the church world in general exudes the very spirit of the Laodiceans, the called and chosen elect of God is overcoming all these things and ascending to the throne of Christ to rule and reign in the Kingdom of God.

It is interesting to note that the name Laodicea is composed of *lao* and *dika*, meaning "the people's judgment" or "consensus of opinion as to what is right!" Other variations of rendering are: "power of the laity," "the voice of the people," "the people's rights," or "justice of the peoples." Its name designates it as the *democratic church*, in which everything is swayed and decided by popular opinion, clamor, and voting, either within the church, or by adapting to the opinions, standards, and pressures of society without. Hence, Laodicea is a carnal, compromising, pusillanimous, self-righteous, and self-sufficient church!

The typical church in Laodicea was filled with carnal believers, just as the church systems today in the LAODICEAN CONDITION are also filled with carnal believers. Some people have trouble putting these two terms together — *carnal* and *believer*. How can a believer in Christ be carnal? Well, you've probably already met a great number of them, for I tell you the truth when I say that the vast majority of churches in this day is overflowing with them! You can have two extremes — sinners on one side, Christians on the other, and Christians can often be worse than sinners. You haven't been truly "ripped off" until you have been ripped off by a Christian. Someone who says, "Praise God, Hallelujah!" and then socks it to you and takes you for a ride, lying, cheating, and confiscating your money is worse than an infidel. Don't trust every business with a fish on the front door! That doesn't necessarily mean this is a great company. It may be run by carnal Christians, and carnal Christians are often more deceptive, devious, and unreliable than sinners who are good business people. I do not hesitate to say that I do not seek to do business with the Christians in the church systems. I try to stay away from them! I have learned by years of experience that it is usually easier to deal with men of the world who are good business men. Listen to me — the most miserable people on earth are carnal Christians! Carnal Christians may be the worst people on earth, but God's *new creation people* who have been processed and transformed into the image of Christ are the finest people on the face of the earth!

We have seen that the Laodicean church is a democratic church, controlled by the will of the people. We Americans have been told that "government of the people, by the people, and for the people" is a divine form of government, given by the mind of the Lord to our founding

Fathers. Where do you find that in the Word of God? Nowhere! The issue is one of authority: is it from God, or from man? If God is the sovereign authority over all things, and Christ is head over all things to the church, which is His body, then His Spirit, mind, and will alone can govern all things. If the ultimate authority is man, then all things must serve man and bow down to man. When the will of the people rules man assumes the posture of sovereign — and that is humanism, pure and simple. It is the rule of the flesh! There is even a church organization called the "Congregationalist Church" which glories in the fact that it is ruled by the people! It is a branch of the church in Laodicea.

I believe in the rule of God, by God, and for God! He is the almighty Creator of all things, for out of Him, and for Him, and unto Him are all things. His omniscient mind arranged the spheres and ordained the ages, and His infinite wisdom and immutable purpose established the end from the beginning. Nothing else has any potential beyond the dismal realm of sin, death, and the grave. If it had not been that God ruled me I would have gone to the devil long ago. I know just a little of my own heart, though it is abundantly true that the Adamic heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, and the wise man wisely asked, "Who can know it?" Yet I know just a little of my own heart and I have seen enough of the little I know to realize that I would have shipwrecked on some benighted shoals of sin, shame, delusion, or death were it not for the rule of God in my life by the Spirit. Thank God, He has taken His great power and has reigned! This is precisely why the kingdom of God has to be *within*.

It is true — you may have good government under democracy *if you have all good people*. You may have saintly government under democracy if you have *all saintly people*. If the people were all ruled by God and for God, and the Voice was the voice of an awakened, renewed, and transformed spirit within, then God would rule. But it is not so. It was not so in Laodicea, for the people were carnal, and the vast majority of Christians today are no less carnal! With carnal people you get carnal government, and all democracies in the end are government of carnality, by carnality, and for carnality.

I tell you today that I do not believe in democracy — I believe in *Theocracy*. Theocracy is the rule of *God*. It is the DIVINE GOVERNMENT OF THE SPIRIT. It is not the rule by votes or by any contribution of the carnal mind. It is not even the rule of believers over other believers — the rule of apostles, bishops, prophets, evangelists, pastors, or teachers. God does not rule His sons through other people! This is not an *independent spirit* — it is the *rule of the SPIRIT!* God must rule you, my beloved, *out of His throne in your spirit*, or you can never know the power of sonship to God. We praise God for all the precious ministries in the body of Christ, and esteem them highly for their ministry to the Lord's elect, yet all ministries in the body of Christ, including ourselves, are *servants*, not *lords*. I seek not to gather men around me or under me, but to point all men to the omnipotent power of the Christ within! Democracy cannot be the kingdom of God or even a simile of the kingdom of God, because those in the kingdom of God are born of God, led by God, and controlled by God. "For as many as are *led by the Spirit of God*, they are the *sons of God*" (Rom. 8:14). I no longer fit in the church in Laodicea, I have nothing in common with it, I cannot function there, it is an abhorrence to me. Furthermore, every one of God's apprehended sons has been brought *out* of the church in Laodicea, for the conditions there have been part of the things we have been called to overcome! Oh, yes! We were there once upon a time, for had we not been there, we could not have overcome it.

"And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ" (Rev. 12:10). Read those words carefully and you will see that the kingdom of God is the *authority of His Christ*. The God who sits upon

the throne is Christ! Christ is in our spirit! The Theocracy has become a *Christocracy*. Christ Himself is reigning! I may have a Christocracy today right here within my soul. I may acknowledge the Lordship of the Christ within that He may reign in my life, in my heart, in my will, in my mind, in my nature, and then as He reigns *through me*, a member of the Christ-body, I become a part of that Christocracy. This is sonship! This is such a beautiful form of government: God reigning in and through His chosen. His love, power, wisdom, righteousness, peace, and judgments all flow through the priesthood that He has called and ordained. As we experience this within ourselves in a greater way in this hour we are forming the very government of God for the new age now dawning, and for the ages to come! What makes this order so different from a democracy is that the heads are not voted in, therefore they cannot be manipulated by the voters. The government of God is raised up within every son by the POWER OF GOD WITHIN!

The business of the sons of God is to establish the Theocracy — the rule of God in the midst of men. Only with the mind of the Spirit can we discern the rule of God. Paul speaks of it in Philippians 3:20 wherein he says, "For our *conversation* is in heaven." The Greek word here translated "conversation" is *politeuma* — POLITICS! Plainly he says, "Our **politics** are in heaven." Our politics are not out of the Democratic party, or the Republican party, or out of church organization or the church board, or any other fleshly system. Our politics are right out of the realm of the Spirit, out of the mind of Christ, out of the power of God! Our politics are the RULE OF GOD BY THE SPIRIT. In all our life and relationships the sons of God have no other agenda, no other authority, no other source of blessing to humanity.

Since the church is a part of the kingdom of God it also was intended to function in the Theocratic Order. We see this so powerfully in the beginning, before man's hand was put to it, in the book of Acts. Notice how things were done by the Holy Ghost, by Theocratic principles. "As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the *Holy Ghost said*, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them...they...being sent forth *by the Holy Ghost*, departed" (Acts 13:2-4). "And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him *said the Lord* in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord. And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth, and hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand upon him, that he might receive his sight. Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel. And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him, said, Brother Saul, *the Lord, even Jesus*, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, *hath sent me*, that thou mayest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God" (Acts 9:10-20).

All ministry in the house of God is by divine appointment, on whatever level it may be. Only the Holy Ghost can do these things! The ministers of the Church in Laodicea who are called and appointed by the votes of the people are not the ministers of Christ! There is no such thing in the kingdom of God as appointment to ministry by human authority or hierarchy. Neither is there such a thing as a self-constituted ministry of a man's choosing. None but God can make or appoint a ministry of any sort or description. Even in Old Testament times Yahweh called Moses and appointed Aaron and his sons to the priesthood; and if a stranger presumed to meddle with the functions of those so appointed, he was put to death. Such was the solemn result — the awful consequence of moving outside of God's theocratic order. Spiritually it means that all who move in ministry apart from the appointment of the Spirit are *spiritually*

dead, for God does not anoint such ministry with His life! "Every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God...*and no man taketh this honor unto himself*, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron" (Heb. 5:1-4). "But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body *as it hath pleased Him*." "There are diversities of gifts, but the *same Spirit*. And there are diversities of administrations, but the *same Lord*. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the *same God which worketh all in all*" (I Cor. 12:4-6).

The "church voting" is all nonsense. I should just as soon ask a flock of sheep to vote where the shepherd should lead them! I should just as soon expect an army to vote as to what general should lead them, or whether they should go into battle or not. I should have no fear of an army that was controlled by the vote of the soldiers! The devil does not give a snap for the man-made and man-run church systems of this world where the ministers have to preach to please the people, or else have the people butt them out of the pasture. Nice kind of thing, that, is it not? Treating ministers as if they were cooks! If they do not happen to season the doctrinal soup to the people's satisfaction, they say, "Go!" And they have to go. Nonsense!

In that harlot system which *calls itself the church*, they have been applying democratic principles to what is *supposed* to be a theocratic institution! Every honest man must admit that the so-called church cannot be the church of God if it is the church of the people. That would be the people's church, not God's. And that is exactly what it is! It cannot be the church of God, because those in the church of God are *born of God, called of God, led by God, positioned by God, nurtured by God, empowered by God, and controlled by God*. That is why God has called His elect out of the church systems of man! He has called us out that we may truly come to know Him, that we may hear His voice, be taught of Him, learn His ways, be processed by Him and brought to maturity by the power of Christ in us. Only those who truly *know the Lord for themselves* and have learned to be *led by His Spirit alone* are equipped to reign with Christ in His kingdom!

I have been there — I have lived and walked and ministered in the church in Laodicea. Not the one in Asia, but the one in America! I know, and you know, that self-pleasing, pride, fleshly zeal, political manipulations, financial interests, clout of those who have money and control the purse-strings of the church, and a great number of other carnal considerations are always involved where the people call the preachers and the carnal-minded control the ministry. The ministers of Babylon are *hirelings*, one and all, and the people and hierarchies the usurpers of the Holy Ghost. I have found that the rule of man in church affairs is a curse unutterable; that the minister loses his ability to walk in the Spirit, loses his sense of being the messenger of God, loses his capacity to function in the government of God, and becomes the mere mouthpiece of some wretched committee or faction representing some miserable party that has attained supremacy in the church. Democracy and man-made hierarchies will always produce, sooner or later, "man's man" and "man's plan" rather than "God's man" and "God's plan."

All who have received the call to sonship and the kingdom have been taught of God by the Spirit and have now exchanged the rule of themselves, by themselves, and for themselves, with the rule of themselves by God and for God. This is the route of sonship pure and simple! All who shall rule and reign with Christ as kings and priests sooner or later become thoroughly *undeceived* by the carnal church system and flee from it as a plague, for it has the *horns of a lamb*, appearing harmless and good, but it has the *voice of a dragon* (Rev. 13:1). It is the mind of Christ that will govern the world in the kingdom of God! Every son is being imbued with the mind of Christ and from those holy omniscient minds the life and light and love and authority and glory of the Lord will flow forth with a power that will encompass the earth with

transforming grace and fill it to overflowing with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord. Thus it is that the Lord says to the overcomer out of the church in Laodicea, "To him that overcometh (the Laodicean condition) will I grant to *sit with me in my throne*, even as I also overcame (the religion of the scribes and Pharisees), and am set down with my Father in His throne." With great earnestness I pray that God will open the understanding of all who read these lines, for it is of perfect truth that I tell you that *no man* can ever hope to reign *in the kingdom of Christ* until his will has become one with the will of the Father. Were it possible for *one man* to reign in the kingdom while still possessing his own will in opposition to the will of the Father, it would mean the destruction of the kingdom with confusion, strife, and rebellion.

The mark of the sons of God is that they are *led by the Spirit* (Rom. 8:14). Those who overcome the LAODICEAN CONDITION by the power and leadership of the Holy Spirit shall reign with Christ in His kingdom! One night a group of men were sitting around the fireside of a Swiss hotel, discussing the difficulties of climbing a nearby Alpine mountain. After listening for a while, one man said, "I am not afraid of that mountain. Tomorrow morning I am going to climb it alone." The other men said, "No, it's too dangerous. You must employ a guide." But the man said, "No, I am going to climb it without a guide." The next morning, when the other men arose, they learned that this man had gone out alone. All day they watched for him and he didn't return. The night came on and still he didn't return. The next morning a party started out to look for him. Halfway up the mountainside they came to a post to which every successful climber attached his card. They found this man's card there with the notation on it, "Without a guide." He had come that far in safety, but where was he now? The men climbed a little farther and came to a deep crevice. There they found the body of the stranger. He had decided to climb without a guide and had lost his life. You and I, beloved, are climbing the heights of mount Zion! We are scaling the heights in God! This can only be accomplished — we can only reach the top where is situated the *throne zone* — as we are led by the one and only great and glorious guide, the *Spirit of Truth*. He knows the way! He led the firstborn Son of God to the pinnacle of power and glory, to the heavenly throne of the universe! And now He is leading all the holy sons of God to sit with Christ in His throne. It is indeed wonderful!

LUKEWARM

"I know thy works, that thou art *neither cold nor hot*: I would that thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art *lukewarm*, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth" (Rev. 3:15-16).

What does it mean to be lukewarm? The word described the water supply of Laodicea. Because the city lacked an adequate supply of good water, it had to be piped through a system of aqueducts from the cool springs of Colosse and the hot springs of Hierapolis. By the time the water reached Laodicea it was lukewarm, tepid to the taste, and unfit to drink.

What does that mean? We know that John received this revelation in figurative or symbolic language, so this imagery represents something spiritual! To understand this, we go back to the Old Testament, to the time of Moses and Israel in the wilderness. Aaron was anointed high priest and upon the breastplate of his priestly vestments was the Urim and the Thummim. When the high priest sought an answer from the Lord, he would consult the Urim and the Thummim. The scripture record is not explicit about what they were, what they looked like, or how they were used. It is believed that they were special stones, and that when Aaron went into the presence of the Lord to ascertain the will of God in a matter one of the stones would light up, typifying that the will of God is revealed to His holy kingdom of priests by the Holy Spirit through *inner illumination*.

Urim and Thummim mean "lights and perfections." These signified the light and perfection of understanding and judgment. When Aaron appeared before the Lord with a question there were only two possible answers, namely, "Yes" or "No." There wasn't anything between; there was no maybe. In the counsels of God there is only truth and error, life or death! Humanity wants gray areas, a compromise, something that is not clearly defined. This enables them to stand on the fence, accommodate, mix and mingle, prostitute, vacillating in their judgment according to what is convenient in a particular situation. Today this is called "situation ethics." There is no right or wrong, no good or bad, no truth or error — it just depends on the situation! However there are no half-truths! Anything that has a lie concealed in a garment of truth is still a lie! Some people are afraid to declare what God has given them, afraid to commit to the word of the kingdom, afraid to proclaim the truth of the reconciliation of all men to God, afraid to leave the church system to follow Christ in His sonship, because it may not agree with popular belief or friends or family members. If we have heard the testimony of Christ it is imperative that we embrace it fully and unreservedly! More will be given to him who has; and he who has not, that which he thinks he has will be taken away. We must be either *cold* or *hot*!

The Lord offered no praise for the church in Laodicea. His evaluation resulted in total rebuke. Christ's language indicates that being lukewarm is worse than being totally cold! On the surface, this contrast seems strange. Certainly being lukewarm in relationship to Christ is worse than being totally hot, but wouldn't a mixture of at least some hot and cold be better than being totally cold? That is how the natural mind judges! But spiritual insight into what our Lord meant by hot, cold, and lukewarm indicates that this is not the case.

Three spiritual conditions are brought to view in this message — the cold, the lukewarm, and the hot. It is important to discern by the spirit what condition they each denote, in order not to reach a wrong conclusion. Three spiritual conditions which pertain to the people of God, not to the world, are indicated. This is important! What the term "hot" means is not difficult to conceive. The mind at once calls up a state of intense fervor, when all the affections, raised to the highest pitch, are drawn out for God and His purposes, and manifest themselves in corresponding works. The word "lukewarm" has traditionally meant a Christian that held one foot in the world and one foot in Christ. To be lukewarm, however, is to lack this fervor, to be in a state in which love, commitment, and obedience are lacking, in which there is no self-denial that costs anything, no valiant pursuit of Christ, His will, and His kingdom. Worst of all, it implies entire *satisfaction* with that condition!

But to be "cold" — what is that? Does it denote a state of corruption, wickedness, sin, such as characterizes the world of unbelievers? We cannot so regard it! It would be absurd and repulsive to represent the Lord as wishing under any circumstances that persons should be in such a condition, preferable to at least *some* knowledge and experience of Christ. Yet He says, "I *would* thou wert *cold* or hot." No state can be more offensive to the Spirit of holiness than that of the sinner in open rebellion, unbelief, and a heart filled with every evil. David said of the Lord, "For thou art not a God that hath *pleasure* in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee." What David was declaring is that sinners will never be "tasty" to the Lord! Nor will they ever be in His mouth to be cold, lukewarm, or hot, for evil will not dwell with Him in any way. What about believers who have had experiences with the Lord but left Him for the pleasures of sin? Can this be the cold that could be a tasty drink to the Lord? The writer to the Hebrews stated that "the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have *no pleasure* in him." It is therefore incorrect to represent the Lord as preferring that condition to any position which His people can occupy while they are still counted as His. Furthermore, the threat of rejection is *because* they are *neither* cold nor hot! It is as much as to say that if they were *either* cold or hot, they would be accepted of Him in a place of blessing and honor. But if

by *cold* is meant a state of open worldly unbelief or wickedness, they certainly would not be welcomed into the highest purposes of the kingdom! Hence such cannot be its meaning.

It is my deep conviction that by this language our Lord has no reference whatever to those outside His body, but that He refers to three *spiritual planes* or *conditions*, two of which are more acceptable to Him than the third. Heat *and* cold are preferable to lukewarmness! But what kind of spiritual state is denoted by the term "cold"? The Lord points out that cold and hot drinks have a tastiness to them. Cold and hot drinks are something we prefer much more than something lukewarm! Cold and hot, to be true to the Spirit's analogy, must both be something "tasty" to the Lord and something to be desired. Obviously a saint cannot be both at the same time! But, as a drink of tea may be cold in summer time and hot in winter, so can a child of God be cold or hot at different points in their walk in Christ! A person can be hungry or full, but not at the same time; yet, he can be both, and both are commended by the Lord! A tree may be covered with leaves and loaded with fruit in the summer season, and then be barren, stark, and cold in the winter; but in either season the tree has life in it and is faithfully fulfilling its necessary role in the cycles of its purpose. The owner of the orchard is just as pleased with the barren tree in winter as he is with the fruitful tree in summer!

Let us meditate further on the tree at winter time. The cold tree does not have much value or outward fruitfulness in this season. It cannot serve even as a break against the cold north winds! It offers no shade from the sun, nor any fruit to the hungry. It is the very picture of bleakness, leanness, and desolation as it faces the tribulations of winter. Its life has sunk very deep within as it is buffeted by the cold winds, rain, ice, and snow. And yet, this state is necessary to the survival of the tree! It is like sleep for a human, a time of rest, recuperation, strengthening, and preparation for the season of fruit bearing when it shall become bread to the hungry, shade to the distressed, moisture to the atmosphere, and the joy of the whole earth!

Thus, the cold relates to those seasons of testing, trial, tribulation, stripping, purging, pruning, and chastening under the hand of our Father. Just as the tree stands enduring the winter, so we stand enduring our winter times. In these cold or winter experiences we feel sometimes as though God has forsaken us, the heavens become brass, and joy and blessing flee the soul. This is what the mystics have referred to as "**the dark night of the soul.**" It is a time of dryness, leanness, testing, and darkness in which we learn what it means to walk by faith and not by sight. Eventually we discover that there is great *purpose* in these distressing seasons, and great and wonderful lessons are learned there that can be learned in no other way! The very hand of God leads us through this valley of the shadow of death until there is raised up in us the understanding, wisdom, faith, power, and nature of the Lord. Then we are able to appreciate all the more the greatness of our God and His faithfulness, power, and purpose in all things! THIS, MY BELOVED, IS THE **COLD** IN WHICH OUR FATHER REJOICES! Either cold or hot, stripped and tested or blessed and fruitful, He delights in our way. It is only the *tepid lukewarm* that He loathes!

God led Israel through a great and terrible wilderness on their journey to the land flowing with milk and honey. He brought them into the wilderness to test them and prove them in preparation for their entrance into the fruitful land. The drier and more barren the wilderness, the hotter the testings and harder the path over which one goes, the deeper the work of God to bring forth His glory! Thus did the Spirit "drive" the firstborn Son forth into the wilderness to be tested by the devil. For forty days He ate not and drank not, amidst the desolation, the howling winds and blowing dust; the vipers and scorpions were His only companions as He endured the inner struggles and wrestlings with the adversary sent to try Him, to prove the life of

sonship within Him. When the temptations were finished, Jesus returned *in the power of the Spirit* into Galilee; and a fame went out concerning Him throughout all the region around.

Every son will be so tried! God brings us to a desert place where everybody and everything fails us; where we must stand upon the air, as it were, with nothing under our feet. We can look nowhere but up to God, and He leaves us hanging there upon the thread of faith, clinging and looking to Him, believing Him. He moves upon the clouds of the carnal mind, He moves upon all that hides the truth from our vision, He moves upon the fog of man's theories and self-righteousness, He comes with conviction and purging power, showing us our shortage and the vanity of all things of the flesh; He blasts all our self-esteem and self-confidence, and sweeps away every carnal ambition, all our own plans and desires, our religious activities and multiplied works, our religious pride and fleshly motives, and every secret sin. As all of this falls off, we are left apparently stripped and bare, like the cold, bleak tree of winter; but, in reality, we are in a better condition to bring forth blossoms and fruit to His glory than ever before! He brings us low in the dust of humiliation and brokenness, that He may then clear the spiritual atmosphere about us, shining the splendor of the light of God into our lives, wooing us onward and revealing our destiny in Christ, raising up His life within us and bringing us out of the wilderness in the power of the Spirit as manifest sons of God that we may bear much fruit of His kingdom.

Just as the Lord Jesus endured the cross, despising the shame, for the joy that was set before Him, we endure the individual cross set before each of us. The tree endures the winter and flourishes in summer. We endure the cold times, for they are appointed of the Lord, that we may flourish in the hot seasons that God sets to give fruit. The tree, Jesus, and all the trees — His many brethren, the manifest sons of God — who are, or have been, in the cold times stand in faith trusting and waiting. Each of us must trust that summer will come, and wait for it! We must trust that the Lord will take us through the winter and also wait for it. How precious and dear to the heart of God is the *cold* of our lives as well as the *hot*! He wishes us to be either cold or hot. Those are the two conditions that are acceptable to Him!

A. W. Tozer penned an article titled THE MINISTRY OF THE NIGHT. How skillfully he describes the condition of the COLD of our experience in Christ! He says, "If God has singled **you** out to be a 'special object' of His grace, you may expect Him to honor you with stricter discipline and greater suffering than less favored ones are called upon to endure...and right here, let me anticipate the objection someone is sure to raise, viz, that God has no 'specials' among His children. The holy scriptures and church history agree to show that He has! Star differs from star in glory among the saints on earth as well as the glorified in heaven. If God sets out to make **you** an unusual saint, He is not likely to be so gentle as He is usually pictured to be by the popular teachers. A sculptor does not use a manicure set to reduce the rude, unshapely marble to a thing of beauty. The saw, the hammer, and the chisel are crude tools, but without them the rough stone must remain forever formless and un-beautified.

"To do His supreme work of grace within you He will take from your heart everything you love most. Everything you trust in will go from you. Piles of ashes will lie where your most precious treasures used to be. This is not to teach the sanctifying power of poverty. If to be poor made men holy, every tramp on a park bench would be a saint! But God **knows the secret** of removing 'things' from our hearts while they still remain to us. What He does is to restrain us from enjoying them. He may let us have them, but makes us psychologically unable to let our hearts go out to them. Thus they are useful without being harmful. All this God will accomplish at the expense of the common pleasures that have, up to that time, supported your life and

made it zestful. Now, under the careful treatment of the Holy Spirit, your life may become dry, tasteless, and to some degree a burden to you.

"While in this state, you will exist by a kind of blind will to live; you will find none of the inward sweetness you enjoyed before. The smile of God will for the time be withdrawn, or at least hidden from your eyes. Then you will learn what faith is; you will find out the hard way, but the only way open to you, that true faith lies in the will, that the joy unspeakable of which the apostle spoke is not itself faith, but a slow-ripening fruit of faith; and you will learn that present spiritual joys may come and go as they will without altering your spiritual status or in any way affecting your position as a true son of the heavenly Father. And you will learn also, probably to your astonishment, that it is possible to live in all good conscience before God and men and still feel nothing of the *'peace and joy'* you hear talked about so much by immature Christians.

"How long you may continue in this **night of the soul** will depend upon a number of factors, some of which you may be later able to identify, while others will remain with God, completely hidden from you. The words *'the day is Thine, the night also is Thine'* will now be interpreted for you by the best of all teachers, the Holy Spirit; and you will know by personal experience what a blessed thing is **the ministry of the night!** But there is a limit to a man's ability to live without joy. Even Christ could endure the cross only because of the *joy* set before Him! The strongest steel breaks if kept too long under unrelieved tension. God knows exactly how much pressure a life can stand! He knows how long we can endure the night, so He gives the soul relief, first by welcome glimpses of the morning star and then by the fuller light that harbingers the morning.

"**Slowly** you will discover God's love in your suffering! Your heart will begin to approve the whole thing! You will learn for yourself what all the schools in the world cannot teach you — the healing action of faith without supporting pleasure. You will feel and understand the ministry of the night; its power to purify, to detach, to humble, to destroy the fear of death and, what is more important to you at the moment, the fear of life! And you will learn that sometimes **rain** can do what even joy cannot, such as exposing the vanity of earth's trifles and filling your heart with the peace of heaven" — end quote.

There is yet another application of the three spiritual conditions of cold, hot, and lukewarm. It could be read this way: "Because thou art neither cold (Outer Court, feast of Passover) nor hot (Most Holy Place, feast of Tabernacles) you are stuck in the middle (Holy Place, feast of Pentecost), you've got enough of both realms to make you comfortable — *lukewarm!*" Listen — there's nothing wrong with being in the Holy Place and the feast of Pentecost, but when you've been there for twenty, thirty, forty, or fifty years and never move on, the Lord says, "I'm about ready to spit you out!" Pentecost is the feast of **transition**. The candlestick realm (Holy Place) is the compartment of **transition**. Each is a temporary stopping point on the way *from* one realm *to* another realm. Neither is designed to be a permanent arrangement or an ultimate experience!

There is a great *lukewarmness* in that Pentecostal realm today. Oh, how rich people *think* they are as, like little children, they "play" with the "gifts" of the Spirit and imagine that they have the *full gospel* and that they are full grown and accomplishing mighty things in the kingdom of God! At present among the crowd in the *candlestick realm* there is much information coming forth in the way of books, tapes, and seminars concerning the gifts of the Spirit, healing, miracles, prophecy, casting out devils, deliverance, dancing in the Spirit, and many other things. By reading these books, listening to the tapes, or attending a training school one can pick up the "HOW TO'S" and quickly learn the techniques employed by those who are experienced in such

sensational ministries. From such sources one can supposedly learn in a relatively short period of time *how* to move in a dynamic *prophetic ministry* with signs, wonders, and miracles!

Though some may disbelieve it, I would be remiss if I failed to exhort you that if, by reading a series of lessons, or sitting through a seminar, a man can "learn" to prophesy, "learn" to perform miracles, "learn" to dance in the Spirit, or be "taught" how to perform any other spiritual feat, then he is indeed THE DECEIVED who will be among the astonished of whom Jesus spoke when He said, "*Many* will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? and in Thy name have cast out devils? and in Thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I *never knew you (intimately, as a husband knows his wife)*: depart from me, ye that work iniquity (lawlessness, that which was not at my word)" (Mat. 7:22-23). Who can dispute that the land is filled today with *lying signs and wonders* that are done in the name of Christ!

The mighty acts and manifestations of the Spirit of God are not *learned* in seven easy lessons — they are supernaturally bestowed by the lovely and wonderful Christ as a result of intimacy of fellowship, personal association, and vital union with HIM. How to do the works of God is not contained in a formula or in any set of methods or techniques understood by the carnal mind. The understanding of such high and holy things comes by revelation born of an inner work, in earnest seeking and holy brokenness and a deep relationship with the Lord Himself. The wonderful works of God are the result, not of repeating certain phrases, or stepping out in faith on mental impressions or imaginations, or the employment of certain techniques, but of the SOVEREIGN POWER OF ALMIGHTY GOD.

After years of a ministry of transcending greatness our beloved brother Paul wrote of the true source of all spiritual ministry, saying, "For I neither *received it of man*, neither was I *taught it*, but by the **revelation of Jesus Christ**. But when it pleased God...to reveal His Son in me...immediately I *conferred not* with flesh and blood: neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia (a desert place), and returned again to Damascus. Then, *after three years* I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter..." (Gal. 1:12-24). Three years in Arabia *waiting on God!* Three years alone in the desert receiving the *revelation of Jesus Christ!* Ah, that was Paul's **cold** experience! He came out from Arabia in the power of the Spirit, just as Jesus came out of the wilderness in the power of the Spirit. That was Paul's **hot** experience! Let me tell you something. Paul read no books on "Soul winning made easy" or "How to prophesy" or "How to heal the sick and cast out devils." Oh, no! If, like Paul, we will take the time to bow low in humility and holy waiting upon the presence of God, and listen intently for *His voice*, we will become strangely acquainted with the secret of His will, not only for the ages to come, but for the present age and the high purposes of God for those called to sonship in this new Day of the Lord! When we live in the Spirit we will walk in the Spirit. When we walk in the Spirit we will be led by the Spirit. And when we are led by the Spirit we are THE SONS OF GOD.

I WILL SPEW YOU OUT OF MY MOUTH

"So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will *spew you out of my mouth*" (Rev. 3:16).

When the Lord warns those in the lukewarm state that He is going to spew them out of His mouth it doesn't mean they are lost and He is going to send them to hell. It is not a word to unbelievers or unconverted, but to the people of God! God says that this is His attitude toward a carnal church! Just like lukewarm water, tea, or coffee, a carnal Christian is not good for

anything. God cannot stand the taste. Lukewarm is a sickening combination of hot and cold water. He just wants to get it out of His mouth! Oft times I feel the same way myself. The Greek brings out the idea of *ad nauseam* more realistically, for it says, "I will vomit you out of my mouth." This sense of loathsomeness on the part of the Lord of the church is undoubtedly the saddest and most lamentable appraisal of God's professed people in all of the scriptures.

David Wilkerson wrote the following words a number of years ago, which have stood the test of time, and with which I heartily concur. "Jesus said of the Laodicean church, 'It will say...I am rich, increasing with goods (wealthy), and am in need of nothing...' (Rev. 3:17). How sad that this particular church, arrogant and boastful, is being heralded by so many undiscerning Christians as the glorious last days church of power and dominion which will subdue the world and bring King Jesus back. It is the Laodicean lie! One dear soul wrote the following: 'Don't you realize, sir, that our next president will be a tongues-speaking, Spirit-filled man? Don't you know that all these great building projects by evangelists are ordained of God? The Lord is training leaders, raising up huge projects so they can move into government positions — having learned all about high finances and building. The church is going to take over the government — Spirit-filled leaders are going to make the laws, doing away with abortion, pornography, and crime. God has raised up a powerful church to take dominion now.'

"God is not at all impressed with this church's bloated estimate of itself! The Laodicean lukewarm church is not destined to dominion, power, and authority of any kind. It is destined to judgment! It is the worst kind of spiritual blindness to line up with those who boast that the modern American church, Charismatic or otherwise, faces its finest hour. What an incredible lack of spiritual discernment! Jesus rips off the façade and exposes the truth about the Laodicean church. It is not what it thinks it is — it is not what it says it is. It is not rich — it is poor! It is not on the increase — it is wretched and is about to be cut off! It is not strong and in need of nothing — but rather, it is naked, shameful! It is not a church with new revelation and deep spiritual insights — Jesus said IT IS BLIND! It is not going to be the vehicle of Christ's dominion on earth, but rather the object of His wrath and abhorrence.

"You can be sure God has a people for Himself in these days, but they are a despised, holy, and separated remnant. This holy remnant people will walk in the light and enjoy great discernment. They see the modern Laodicean church through the eyes of Jesus and they will not be deceived by the pomp, bigness, and outward grandeur of popular religion. The true church is invisible; it is repentant; it yearns for Christ, the beloved One" — end quote.

There is still a deeper meaning to the words, "I will spew you out of my mouth." What is the Lord's "mouth"? It is the vehicle *speaking the word of God!* "If any *man* speak, let him speak as the *oracles of God*" (I Pet. 4:11). "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy *men of God spake* as they were *moved* by the Holy Ghost" (II Pet. 1:21). "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began; but hath in due times *manifested His word through preaching*" (Tit. 1:2-3). The man who speaks the very words of God *is the Lord's mouth* upon earth! God also speaks *mind to mind* or *spirit to spirit* and that is how we hear the voice of God within ourselves. But when the Lord wishes to speak to men through men He chooses a vessel as His mouth, His medium of conveying His word.

So — what happens to these saints in the LAODICEAN CONDITION? The Lord says, "You will no longer be my mouthpiece, you will no longer speak my word! I am going to speak, all right. Yes, I am speaking to those who have ears to hear! But the living word I speak to men will not proceed from out of you!" Such was, and is, the condition of Laodicea as discerned by Christ; these are speaking words that the Lord *has spoken*, but they are not speaking the living words

He is **now speaking!** That is the condition of all who refuse to move forward in God! They continue to live in yesterday's revelation, in yesterday's move of the Spirit, little realizing that God has moved on and is doing a new thing in the earth. Sometimes they are not even speaking the old, stale words of God, but just their own word out of the imaginations of their hearts; and it is nauseous to Him; He abhors it, and therefore declares irrevocably that He will spew them out of His mouth!

The meaning is, that He will totally reject these people as His *prophetic voice*, His responsible light-bearer in the world. I do not hesitate to say that the old order church systems today are no longer the mouthpiece of God! They are their own mouthpiece, speaking their own carnal message. God has already spewed them out of His mouth! That doesn't mean they are no longer the Lord's people, or that they cannot fulfill some function in His purposes on earth. It means, my beloved, that they are no longer SPEAKING FOR GOD! The true message of the hour is not coming out of their mouths! Whatever you hear from them is something other than the **living word of God for this new kingdom Day!**

The Lord goes on to say, "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing..." *Because thou sayest...*" See, they are speaking! They are talking as the mouthpiece of God. This confirms what we just pointed out. But though they say it, that does not make it the words of God! *They say* one thing, but *the Spirit* says another!

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what *the Spirit sayeth* unto the churches!" God is speaking to His elect in this hour, my beloved, and those who hear His voice are living in His sight. Great and mighty things lie before us. The sons of God are now arising to possess the kingdom. It will be MORE than revival this time — IT WILL BE THE KINGDOM OF GOD WITH POWER! There is a fresh move of the Spirit, a new feast of His fullness, a new ministry from the Holiest of all, a new work of God in the earth that transcends by far anything that has ever been seen or known. We are nearing the hour of the full manifestation of the sons of God. The long awaited liberation of planet earth is near at hand. The *greater works* that Jesus told us of are ready to begin. We have not passed this way before. But God is speaking, and all that He speaks shall come to pass. Isn't it wonderful!

Chapter 58

The Church In Laodicea

continued

"And by the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; these things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, *the beginning of the creation of God*" (Rev. 3:14).

John the beloved had learned from Jesus, his Master, the truth of the priority of God — the truth that *before everything is God*. And now in holy vision this great truth is driven home to him again, from the lips of the glorified Lord. Some truths, when we have learned them, are to us like precious jewels which we keep in a jewel-box, hidden most of the time from sight, our great satisfaction regarding them being simply their possession — simply that they are ours. Other truths, when we have learned them, are like new countries into which our lives have entered, and in which they thenceforth constantly live. There is a new heaven over our head and a new earth under our feet. They fold themselves about us and touch every thought and action. Everything which we think, or do, or are, is different because of them.

As we reverently, with head bowed and shoes removed from off our feet, consider this great truth of Him who is "*the beginning of the creation of God,*" I would draw your pure mind to consider the processes of the creative word of God by which all things visible and invisible in all dimensions of time and space, and beyond time and space, are brought forth and exist. Before all things and behind all things and beyond all things standeth God, eternal, omniscient, and omnipotent. God is *spirit!* The reality of God exists in the eternal dimension of spirit, the dimension that is unique, special, and particular to His identity. All that God is exists in that eternal realm of spirit. And the testimony of scripture is that He is "before all things."

Let us not conceive of God existing "before all things" in a linear way. The notion that God for many ages and incomprehensible measures of time — countless trillions of earth years — remained inactive and then at a comparatively recent date created the universe and our world is both illogical and fallacious. This view presumes that eternity *preceded time*, that time began from several thousand to several billion years ago, and God was within the eternity before that *uncreative* and *unproductive*. Here, in the picture people have of God first contemplating the idea of a creation and then resolving to bring it into existence, we have God suddenly *becoming* something (Creator) in recent history that He had *never been before!*

There are two sublime statements in the written word of God concerning "the beginning." The Bible opens with the assertion, "In the beginning *God created...*" (Gen. 1:1). Then in the New Testament the fourth Gospel begins with the declaration, "In the beginning *was the Word...*" (Jn. 1:1). There is a deep mystery here! You see, in that long ago beginning where we meet time and where we meet creation, we also meet "the Word." In the beginning God created, and in that same beginning there was the Word. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made" (Jn. 1:1-3).

Here we have two items, but we are not talking about two *persons!* We have God and we have the Word. The Word was *in the beginning*. And all things were *made by the Word!* Yet it was *God* who did the *creating*. And the Word was *God!* That is the mystery.

The Greek word *Logos*, or *Word* in English, was common in New Testament days. This Word is presented as One "in the beginning." Note the contrast between "in the beginning" and the expression "**from** the beginning," which is common in John's writings. Satan was a murderer "**from** the beginning," but the Logos was "in the beginning." This beginning antedates the very first words in the Bible, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," for of this One it is stated, "The same was (already) in the beginning with God" (Jn. 1:2).

That beginning — when God created the heavens and the earth — can be dated, although I doubt that anyone has yet dated it accurately. It stretches back into the mists of antiquity, beyond recorded history. Whether it was thousands or millions or billions of years matters little, but when you go back to that creation the Logos, the Word, was already there, and that is exactly the way this is used — "In the beginning **was** the Word." Notice it is not that He is **from** the beginning, but in the beginning He **was**. It was not in the beginning that the Word started out or was begotten. WAS is known as a durative imperfect, meaning continued action. It means that the Word was in the beginning. What beginning? Just as far back as you want to go! The Bible says, "IN the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Does that begin God? No! Just keep going back billions and trillions and "squillions" of years as man reckons time — before creation. God already was, and the Logos already was; He comes out of eternity to meet us. He did not begin. "In the beginning God." "In the beginning **was** the Word" — He was already there when the beginning was!

"Well," someone says, "there has to be a beginning somewhere." All right, wherever you begin, He is there. "In the beginning was the Word" — five words in the original language, and there is not a man on the topside of this earth who can put a date on it or understand it or fathom it. This first tremendous statement starts us off in eternity, you see! Far away in the depths of my spirit I see that from all eternity God has been creating. That never-begun existence of the Word has eternally been the out-raying of the Father's nature. To deny the eternal existence of the Word is to deny the eternal ability of God *to speak!* How could God speak apart from His Word? The reason the Word was already there in the beginning, before creation, is because He is the CREATIVE WORD! And to say that God never created anything before this present material creation in Genesis is to deny God His own being, nature, and expression from eternity.

If God never until recent times created anything, then God eternally never *spoke*, for His Word is *creative*. When God speaks things happen! If God ever spoke before Genesis 1:1, then He created! These truths are self-evident. There has never been a time when there was nothingness and only God in existence. The scripture says that He is "*before* all things," but that doesn't mean that He eternally existed alone and inactive, only that He is the *origin*, the *source*, the *cause* of all things, as it is written, "For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things — for all things originate with Him and come from Him..." (Rom. 11:36). When you see something existing, whether now, or in some creation previous to this present one, or in another creation after this present one, you can be assured that behind that thing, yea, *before* that thing, there was God for He is the source and origin of it all! That is what Paul meant when he penned those remarkable words declaring of God, and of His Word, "He is before all things!"

Like all other names, THE LOGOS has its own meaning — a meaning which does not appear in the English translation, "the Word." *Logos* carries with it the idea of a **word spoken**, speech, eloquence, reason, thought, intent, and concept. It refers not only to the word that is spoken, expressed, and manifested, but also to the purpose, thought, intent, and will of God behind that which is expressed. "For the word of God is quick, and powerful" (Heb. 4:12). The word of God is quick. That doesn't mean fast; rather the word is LIVING! That's how it is in the Greek. You see, a word is the expression of a thought, a purpose, an intent, a will. In order to have a word, you need a Thinker. The Father is a great Thinker! The Father thought, and then the Father spoke. And from the bosom of the Father, the Word came forth and that Word was LIVING and POWERFUL! That Word was, in fact, the LIVING CREATIVE ENERGY OF GOD. A word is spoken by **forcing air or breath out through the mouth**. Shhiiish! The Hebrew word for *spirit* is *ruwach* meaning "breath" or "wind." God speaks by His Spirit! His Word is formed by His Spirit or Breath, just as our words are formed by our breath. Can you not see the mystery? The Spirit is *Life!* Jesus said, "The *words* that I speak unto you, they are *spirit* and they are *life*." He meant that His words originated out of the action of God's Spirit, just as our words originate out of the action of our breath. And therefore they are a *Living Word* for they are formed and proceed out of His Living Spirit! It was by God's Word that all things were created, for the Word flowed forth from the eternal wisdom by which God declared the purposes of His infinite mind, and it came forth in the power of His Spirit. The Word flowed forth from divine omnipotence by which He brought all the starry heavens and all the hosts of them into existence. Consider the divisions of matter: energy, motion, phenomena. ENERGY: "In the beginning *was* the Word, and the Word was *with* God, and the Word was God" — that's energy! And how was that energy released? God SPOKE! "And God **said**, Let there be...and there was!"

Every rational person has to confront this problem of how the universe began. That is the reason evolution has been popular — it offers to the natural man an explanation for the origin of the universe. Of course, it does not offer him an explanation for the *origin of energy or matter!* You must have an explanation for it, if you do any thinking at all. Where did it come from? Well, here is the answer, "In the beginning was the Word." God spoke. That is the first thing that happened. When God speaks, when the Word goes forth, energy is translated into matter. That is all matter is — it is energy slowed down in its vibration until it changes form, becoming tangible and visible. What is atomic fission? It is matter translated back into energy — poof! it disappears. Creation began with energy. In the beginning was the Word. The Word was with God, the Word was God. The Word came out of God by the power of His Spirit. The plans and purposes of God for the ages were conceived in His mind and spoken forth in an omnipotent decree through THE WORD, the SPEAKING, LIVING, POWERFUL, CREATIVE WORD that was with God in the beginning.

Creation having been brought forth, the Word then stood in unique relationship between God and His creation. *Logos* means not only the inward thought and purpose of God, but the utterance, expression, or manifestation of that thought. The eminent Greek scholar, Dr. M. R. Vincent, comments on this word, "Logos therefore signifies both the **outward form** by which the inward thought is expressed, and the **inward thought** itself. The idea is of God, who is in His own nature hidden, revealing Himself in creation."

Every person is revealed by his word! The word is the expression of the one speaking the word, as it is written, "Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh." One may speak beautiful words of compassion and love, or stinging words of malice and hate. When these words spill out of one's mouth we know what manner of person He is! He has indeed *birthed* a part of himself and nothing around him is ever the same again, for his words are powerful and

creative, reproducing in others out of himself. Christ is indeed the Word, for He was birthed right from the heart-center of God. That which was expressed by Him in thought, word, and deed, was the very essence and character of His Father. When this Word became flesh and dwelt among us, the glory of the Father could for the first time be seen in the world as a *personality*. He is the manifest declaration of the Father. "He that has seen me, has seen the Father; for I and the Father are one." "He is the sole expression of the glory of God, the Light-being, the out-raying or the radiance of the divine, and He is the perfect imprint and very image of God's nature, upholding and maintaining and guiding the universe by His mighty word of power" (Heb. 1:3, Amplified).

We sometimes try to comprehend the God that is not of this natural realm, this material dimension, by looking at ourselves and thinking God looks like us. The truth is, God doesn't look like us! As beautiful and noble as mankind is, God doesn't in any way resemble man. There is no "old man" with a long flowing white beard sitting on a throne up in the heavens! The Word was made flesh in the person of Jesus Christ, but the *man* Christ Jesus was not sitting there with God upon a throne from eternity. The nature, the function of the Word, was there with God in the beginning, and this nature, this expression of God as Word was God. All the faculties and attributes of God were eternally with God and were God. All that God is in spirit, character, and substance are eternal realities in God, unchangeable and invariable. The Word, the Logos, was in God from eternity.

God always possessed the ability of *speech!* That's what "the Word" is — God's expression in speech, the emanation of His thought. God purposed to make His Word visible, just as we do when we write our thoughts in a book or present them in a stage play or a movie. What was God's original language? Was it English? Was it Aramaic? Was it Chinese? Someone says, "Hebrew was the original pure and divine language." Was it? It really doesn't matter, because when God decided to speak clearly and definitively to man He spoke in the person of His Son, Jesus the Christ. Jesus Himself is the *language* of God! Jesus spoke Aramaic — that was the common language in Galilee in the days of Christ. God did not speak to humanity in Aramaic, however. God spoke in His Son! It was not what Jesus *said* or the *language* He spoke that made Him the Logos, the Word — it was who and what He was! Jesus didn't just speak the words of God, He **was** and **is** the Word of God! In order to come down into a world of darkness and reveal Himself unto men God made His Word flesh. The Word was not made Hebrew. The Word was not made a book. The Word was made *flesh!* The Word did not become a language, the Word became a man and dwelt among us and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the uniquely begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

We have already shown that God is before all things. This shows that He exists in the realm of nothingness, that is, no-thing-ness, a dimension far removed from our conception of "things" or "matter." So what was the first thing God did out of His nothingness — His no-thing-ness? He made words. He spoke! The inception of all creation is just this: "And God *said*, Let there be." Isn't it interesting that that is the first activity of God recorded? Why did He not create first, and then speak? Why did He not first play a harp, and at the sound of the music stars were born? The mystery is just this — when God spoke HE EMANATED OUT OF NOTHING INTO SOMETHING! His first emanation was in the form of words. The Word is God. The Word is not something God created, the Word is **God Himself in emanation, expression, revelation.**

God didn't speak in English or Hebrew when He said, "Let there be light!" Had you been there you wouldn't have heard anything! We are not to suppose that a voice was heard in the chaos, for His speech was the very creative energy of His thought and flowed forth as spirit and life. His speech was the putting forth of His power, which was the emanation of Himself. Here we

are dealing not with a power as such, but with a personality. That which God put forth is Himself. God is not a reservoir of power. He IS power! The putting forth of His power is the putting forth out of Himself of Himself. The Word is not another person, a second God, a second person of the Godhead, but GOD HIMSELF IN EMANATION.

Yet — when the Word of God is communicated to man it takes a form that man can understand. Language is a miracle and a gift of God. Jesus Himself is called the Word, so it's no surprise that words are what join us to God and to our neighbors. Words are so bound up with what we call "thought" that it's sometimes hard to distinguish the two. The French philosopher Rene Descartes said, "I think, therefore I am." That is true, but he needed more than just thought to prove he existed; he also needed the words! I don't know that he lived, or what manner of man he was, because of his thoughts — I know because of his words. Understand this and you will understand a great mystery: God's Word is the connecting link between God and His creation!

So we conclude that the "Word" as it has been revealed to man has been the visible expression of the invisible God. In other words, the invisible God embodied Himself in a visible form that could be seen, heard, touched, handled, understood, and comprehended on the earth plane. The Bible declares that "God is a spirit" and since God is spirit He is invisible and unknowable unless He chooses to manifest Himself in some form visible to man. God told Moses, "Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live." "No man hath seen God at any time." Not only has no man ever seen God, but no man can see God (I Tim. 6:16). Several times the Bible describes God as invisible (Col. 1:15; I Tim. 1:17; Heb. 11:27). Although man can see God when He appears in various *forms*, no man can see directly the invisible Spirit of God. The physical eyes of man have never beheld a spirit; all he sees is the form that spirit manifests itself in.

Since God is an invisible spirit and is also omnipresent, He does not have a body as we know it. Every time God wanted to talk personally to someone or manifest Himself, He had to borrow, as it were, a body to manifest Himself in. All through the Old Testament God revealed Himself and dealt with man on man's level through the use of what theology calls *theophanies*. A *theophany* is a visible manifestation of God, and we usually think of it as temporary in nature. To make Himself visible, to communicate Himself on the material plane, He manifested Himself in a physical form. Even though no one can see the Spirit of God, he can see a symbol or a representation of God. The Logos, or the Christ, is God revealed! It is God in His Self-revealings. The Logos is God expressed, God uttering Himself, God's means of Self-disclosure.

God often appeared to men through the manifestation of "the angel (messenger; word) of the Lord" (Jud. 6:20; II Sam. 24:16; I Kings 19:5-7). This "angel" of the Lord appeared to Hagar, spoke as though he were God, and was called God by her (Gen. 16:7-13). The Bible says that the angel of the Lord appeared to Moses in a burning bush, but then says God Himself talked to Moses out of the bush (Ex. 3; Acts 7:30-38). The angel of the Lord appeared to Israel in Judges 2:1-5 and spoke as God. Judges 6:11-24 describes the appearance of the angel of the Lord to Gideon and then says the Lord looked on Gideon. Again the angel of the Lord appeared to Manoah and his wife, and they believed they had seen God (Jud. 13:2-23). The *deity* of this unique "angel" is proved by the fact that he is (1) identified as God (Gen. 16:7-13; 18:2-13; 22:1-18; Ex. 3:2-28; Jud. 2:1-5; 6:11-16). (2) is recognized as God (Gen. 16:9-13; 18:2-13; 22:1-18; Ex. 3:2-18; Jud. 2:1-5; 6:11-16). (3) is also described in terms befitting the Deity alone (Ex. 3:5-14; Josh. 5:15). (4) calls Himself God (Gen. 31:11-13; Ex. 3:2-14). (5) receives worship (Josh. 5:14; Jud. 2:4). (6) and finally speaks with divine authority (Jud. 2:1-5).

God appeared to Abraham as a smoking furnace and burning lamp, and as a man (Gen. 15:1,17; 18:1-33). In this last instance, God and two angels appeared in the form of three men (Gen. 18:2) and ate food provided by Abraham. Two of the angels left to go to Sodom while God remained to talk to Abraham (Gen. 18:22; 19:1). God appeared to Jacob in a dream and as a man (Gen. 28:12-16; 32:24-32). On the latter occasion Jacob wrestled with the man and proclaimed, "I have seen God face to face." The Bible also describes this appearance as "the angel" (Hos. 12:4). God appeared to Moses and to all Israel as a cloud of glory and a pillar of fire and spoke to Moses "face to face" in the tabernacle out of the cloud (Ex. 13:21; 33:9-10).

When God brought Israel out of Egypt and into the wilderness, they had one very distinctive sign. They had the cloudy pillar by day and the pillar of fire by night over the encampment. These told all of the surrounding nations that Israel belonged to Yahweh, that their God was in their midst in power and glory, and they were under God's protection day and night. The cloud and the fire were visible both day and night and no enemy could come into the camp even by night, for the fire made it as light as day. I do not believe that Christians today have any real conception of the marvelous and great work which God did in delivering the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt! We have seen pictures painted by some of the great artists supposedly to illustrate this, and we have seen Moses striking the rock with some half-dozen people around him drinking from a stream little larger than a finger, with a cow or two and a few sheep standing near. What a crude conception of the majesty and glory by which the mighty Yahweh delivered His people!

It is estimated, on the basis of the biblical record, that there were at least two to three million Israelites that came up out of Egypt. God did a wonderful and mighty work in that Exodus! It was not a little handful of people that left Egypt, but it was millions that God brought out. Little wonder that some of the people asked if God could set a table in the wilderness! For this was a great multitude and God was taking them into a desert place where there was little food for man or beast. There was no water, and God had the Israelites take no supplies or provisions with them. GOD WAS THEIR SUPPLY and OUT OF HIMSELF He would feed them!

God further manifested Himself in the sight of all Israel through thunder, lightnings, a voice of a trumpet, smoke, fire, and earthquakes (Ex. 19:11-19; Deut. 5:4-5,22-27). He also showed His glory and sent fire from His presence in the sight of all Israel (Lev. 9:23-24; 10:1-2). Job saw God in a whirlwind (Job 38:1; 42:5). Various prophets saw visions of God. To Ezekiel He appeared in the form of a man, enveloped in fire. To Daniel He appeared as the Ancient of Days. Many other verses of scripture tell us that God appeared to someone but do not describe in what manner He did so. For example, God appeared to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Samuel (Gen. 12:7; 17:1; 26:2,24; 35:9-15; I Sam. 3:21). Similarly, God descended on mount Sinai and stood with Moses, revealed Himself to seventy-four elders of Israel, and came at night to Balaam, and met Balaam on two other occasions.

All of these were the Logos, the Word! The Word was not a separate person from Yahwey or a separate God any more than a man's word is a separate person from him. Thus, the Logos, the expression, manifestation, and revelation of God appeared in many forms. The burning lamp, the smoking furnace, the burning bush, the tempest, the angel, the cloud, the pillar of fire, the form of a man — each had its ministry, all in turn served the one grand purpose, like the ray that is broken into many prismatic hues, each revealed something of the nature, power, wisdom, purpose, will, and glory of God. We find that in the phrase "and the word was *with* God" that this word "with" is the Greek *pros* meaning TOWARD. All that the manifestation of the Word of God was, all that He said, all that He showed, all that He did, was pointing TOWARD THE FATHER. Hence He is rightly called THE WORD OF GOD. The Word revealed

God, led Him forth into view and caused men to turn toward Him, to understand Him, to know Him.

THE WORD MADE FLESH

The apostle Paul frequently spoke of the vast mysteries of God and, in speaking of them, he left no shadow of doubt that naught but the revelation of the Lord could unfold those eternal mysteries. One of the grandest of those mysteries is set forth by the apostle John in these wonderful words: "And the Word was *made flesh*, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (Jn. 1:14). Concerning Jesus Christ, whom the scripture discloses as "the Word *made flesh*," it is written, "who is the *image* of the invisible God" (Col. 1:15; II Cor. 4:4); "the *express image* of His person" or "the *very image* of His person" (Heb. 1:3). And we note that this word "person" is actually from the Greek word *hupostasis* meaning THE SUBSTANCE, or the substratum, what lies under. All the character and inner nature of the Divine was expressed through our Lord Jesus Christ! All the motive, the purpose, the heart and intent of God toward His creation was revealed to us through Jesus, "to wit, that **God was in** Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself" (II Cor. 5:19). The **seed** of our new creation life is this same **Logos**, the Word is again being made flesh *in us*, and through our union with Christ Jesus in and by the Spirit we are to be "as He is."

God no longer needs to "borrow" or materialize Himself into a "body" in which to express and reveal Himself, no more does He send the burning bush, or the fire, or the cloud, or the angel, or the *form* of a man. For the first time Yahweh has a permanent, eternal body in which to walk and talk and show forth Himself to mankind — THE CHRIST, Head and body, His house of sons! In the Old Testament manifestations the revelation of Himself was in fragments. No one manifestation could speak all truth, each was but one or two syllables in the mighty sentences of God's speech. At the best the view caught of God was partial and limited. But in Jesus there is nothing of the piece-meal revelation! "In Him dwelleth *all the fullness* of the Godhead bodily" (Col. 2:9). He has *fully* revealed the Father! Whosoever hath seen Him hath seen God; and to hear His words and behold His glory is to get the full-orbed revelation of the infinite.

The question follows: How could the Word become flesh? How could God become a man? The Greek text has it, not that the Word "was made" flesh, but that the Word "became" flesh. There is a vast difference between these two propositions! If I say, "The wood *was made* into a chair," it denotes an action upon, an action from without; some person or force beyond the wood acted upon the wood and the wood, by no involvement on its own part, *was made* into a chair. If, on the other hand, I say, "The young man *became* a doctor," it denotes an action on the part of the subject. Nobody outside of the young man forced him and somehow "made" him a doctor, but he himself went to medical school, studied, burned the midnight oil, passed the exams, fulfilled his internship, and thus he *became* a doctor." "Was made" bespeaks of an action upon an object from without; "became" bespeaks of a personal accomplishment from within!

"Let his mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but *made Himself* of no reputation, and *took upon Him(self)* the form of a servant, and (thus) was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, He *humbled Himself* and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:5-8). In all this He **did it Himself!** God Himself, through the power of His Word, brought forth Himself as a man. Oh, the mystery of it! When we think of Christ's humiliation we think of Him being born in a stable in Bethlehem and dying upon a cross. But

that is nothing at all compared to the humiliation of God *becoming a man*, as man is in corruptible flesh — *that's* humiliation! And this Word of God, the very creative energy of God spoke Himself into flesh! It was no more difficult to transmute Himself into flesh than to create any other thing. He became what He had created back in the beginning. He created man — now He Himself *became* a man. He became flesh. When you say "flesh" the word in the Greek doesn't mean meat — a body and blood. It means the total personality. He became a real man — not something different!

THE **WORD** B-E-C-A-M-E F-L-E-S-H! The language of God is His Word. God and His Word are inseparable. The same eternal Word that spoke the worlds into existence became flesh and dwelt among us! The Father spoke and from the bosom of the Father the Word came forth and was made flesh and tabernacled among men. GOD was manifest in the FLESH (I Tim. 3:16). The Speech of God became the Son of God in human form. Here comes God out of eternity, He comes to Bethlehem, a little baby that made a woman cry. And notice now, "And we beheld His glory, the glory as of the ONLY BEGOTTEN OF THE FATHER, full of grace and truth" (Jn. 1:14). Now He is saying something else! This Word made flesh is the SON OF GOD — full of grace and truth. The word "full" means that you just could not have any more! He brought all the Deity with Him, and He was full of grace and full of truth when He came down here as the SON OF GOD.

Surely these are simple truths that even a child can understand! The Word was made flesh. The Word made flesh was the only begotten of the Father. The Word made flesh was the Son of God. But note well, my brother, my sister, it does not say that the eternal Word was the Son, nor does it say that the Son was made flesh. Oh, no! The Word *made flesh was the Son!* Can you not see the mystery? The Word has now become the Son and the Son is now the Word. There is no truth in all the scriptures set forth, and greater emphasized, than that Jesus was the *Son* of the Father. God Himself dispatched the mighty angel Gabriel from heaven to first declare it! As the hour approached for Jesus to be conceived in the womb of the virgin Mary, Gabriel announced to the astonished Galilean maiden, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the *Son of God*" (Lk. 1:35).

When Jesus had been baptized by John in the river Jordan, God spoke from heaven and said, "This is my beloved *Son*, in whom I am well pleased" (Lk. 3:22). Again, when Jesus had taken Peter, James, and John up into the mount, and was transfigured before them, a voice came from heaven and said the same thing, "This is my beloved *Son*, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him" (Mat. 17:5). There is neither time nor space to even begin to quote the vast multitude of scriptures that declare Jesus to be the Son of God. Even the devils that possessed some people, recognized Him as God's Son. The Roman Centurion, when he had witnessed the things that happened when Jesus was crucified, with astonished wonder cried out, "Truly *this was the Son of God!*"

It seems, from the writings of the apostles, that it is very important that we believe that Jesus is the Son of God. Not that He was GOD THE SON, as popular religion tells us, but that He was GOD'S SON. "God the Son" is not a scriptural term. You will not find it anywhere in the Bible! "The blessed second person of the Godhead" is not a scriptural term. It is not in the Bible! "Jesus is in the Godhead" is not a scriptural term. The Bible, in fact, says just the opposite! Here is what the scripture *really* says: "For *in Him* dwelleth ***all the fullness of the Godhead bodily***" (Col. 2:9.) If the reader will earnestly consider these words he will surely see that the scripture does not say that JESUS IS IN THE GODHEAD; rather, it says that THE GODHEAD IS **IN JESUS!** Is there not a world of difference between Jesus being in the Godhead and the

Godhead being in Jesus? THE MAN CHRIST JESUS CONTAINED WITHIN HIMSELF ALL THE FULLNESS OF GOD! And He still does! "In Him *dwelleth* all the fullness of the Godhead bodily," but it doesn't stop there, for it goes on to say, "And *ye are complete in Him.*" Can we not see by these words that the *body* of Christ is the completion of God's Christ, the fullness of God is revealed in God's called and chosen elect, and only in that blessed and awe-inspiring fact is fulfilled the words, "For in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead ***bodily.***" YOU ARE THE **BODY** IN WHICH THE FULLNESS OF THE GODHEAD DWELLS! You are the *body* of Christ! The fullness of God dwells in the Christ *bodily!* ***That is the mystery!*** It is God dwelling in us that makes us *sons* of God, just as it was God dwelling in Jesus that made Him the *son of God.*

The Son of God did not become the Word; it was the Word who was made flesh and *became the Son.* Jesus knew that the Word in Him was God. He was actually living and acting and speaking the Word which was God — not the word that God had spoken! It wasn't teaching the scriptures that made Him the Word of God, but the revealing of the mind, heart, and will of the Father. That is why He was able to still the sea, raise the dead, change the elements, discern the thoughts and hearts of all men, and do all the other tremendous things He did! "The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself; but the Father that dwelleth in me, He doeth the works" (Jn. 14:10). The Deity in Jesus was not God the Son; the Deity in Jesus was THE FATHER! Jesus was the Father *speaking!* He constantly acknowledged that of Himself He could do nothing, it was the Father dwelling in Him that did the works. Would that not be a strange thing for the "second person of the Godhead" to say — "I can do nothing of myself, the Father in me doeth the works?" One God is impotent, while the other God is mighty! The work of Jesus, the Son, however, was the extension of the Father's work. This extension did not only occur through Jesus, but it also occurs through us! That is what sonship is! We are not "God the sons," but we are "the sons of God" and it is the Father dwelling in us that makes us sons and who does the works.

This brings us back to the Logos, the Word. The clear and unmistakable testimony of scripture is that "In the beginning *was the Word.*" In the beginning the Word already was. He comes out of eternity to meet us. He was already there when the beginning was. But nowhere do we find the scripture that says, "In the beginning was the SON, and the SON was with God, and the SON was God." Oh, how men misquote the scripture! You see, my beloved, the eternal WORD was MADE FLESH and so BECAME THE SON, the Son of God, full of grace and truth. Jesus was and is the Word, and the Word existed as long as God existed, but the Son was that eternal Word made flesh, and we in Him are the Word made flesh, for God is finding expression in us as we are born of His Spirit, conformed to His image, matured in His nature, filled with His mind, the revelation of the Father in the Son here in the earth realm. The Son was that eternal Word *made a man*, yea, a God-man, dwelling among us, resurrected, glorified, ascended, coming again in His many-membered body of God-men, the very sons of God, who are *as He is* in this world, Emmanuel, God with us forevermore!

The Christ is the Word of God and the words that He speaks are spirit and they are life! As the Word, Jesus could say, "Before Abraham was, I AM" (Jn. 8:58). But as the Son He receives the witness of the Father, "Thou art my Son, THIS DAY HAVE I BEGOTTEN THEE" (Heb. 1:5). The mystery is that God in the spirit of every man is the Word of God! Deep within every man is the testimony of God, even that Word which from the beginning was the *life of men*, and which now *enlightens every man coming into the world* (Jn. 1:4,9). That is why all men are "religious" by nature and are seeking after God in one way or another. For a man to believe in God, and the spiritual world, and to desire God is just as natural as it is for a dog to bark. The dog barks because it is inherent in his nature to bark. In the same way there is a "word" in

each of us from the moment we enter this world, the voice of God in our spirit! That voice, however, is muffled and distorted by the outer flesh, the carnal mind, and the manipulation of the spirit of the world. That is why we must be regenerated, our spirit quickened by God's Spirit, bringing the *release* of the Voice of God within us! Then as that Word within us is *made flesh*, made substance within us, raised up by the quickening power of the Spirit of God (our salvation) to find expression in the totality in of our being — **WE BECOME THE SONS OF GOD!**

THE INTERFACE OF GOD AND CREATION

We stated earlier that in that long ago beginning where we meet *time*, where we meet *creation*, we also meet *the Word*. In this fact lies the great and eternal truth of God's *creative processes*. Creation will become very meaningful to us once we understand that it is at the borderline of *eternity* and *time* that we meet the Word. Where time and eternity junction is where we find the Word! Where *spirit* and *matter* meet is where we encounter the Word! Where *God* and *creation* interface is where we confront the Word! Now, why is that? It's because in creation God, the eternal Spirit, is **PROJECTING HIMSELF OUT OF HIMSELF TO BRING FORTH HIMSELF IN ANOTHER DIMENSION**. And He does this by His Word!

Creation begins with this simple action, "And God *said*." The projection of God out of Himself is His Word! "And God said, *let there be*." In that blessed moment the thought of God, the intent of God, the will of God, the energy of God, the creative force of God, the authority and power of God issued out of Himself and produced on another plane the *form* of that which He spoke. And that's why the scripture says, "We are aware that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is *no other God except One*. For even if so be that there are those being termed gods, whether in heaven or on earth, even as there are many gods and many lords, nevertheless to us *there is but one God, the Father (not the "Holy Trinity"!), O-U-T OF WHOM ALL IS, and we for Him*" (I Cor. 8:4-7). Again, "O, the depth of the riches and of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God! How inscrutable are His judgments, and untraceable His ways! For who knew the mind of the Lord? or who became His adviser? or who gives to Him first, and will be repaid by Him? seeing that ALL is OUT of Him and through Him and for Him: to Him be glory for the ages! Amen!" (Rom. 11:33-36).

Our God and Father has been pleased to leave us in no doubt or uncertainty as to how or where all things began, but in clear, unequivocal language stated the source and goal of all things for our assurance and joy. All originated IN HIM, came forth OUT OF HIM, created from the substance of His own divine energy and being! Agnostics, atheists, and evolutionists are the most careless and unscientific of all thinkers and reasoners. The fact is that for every *effect* there must be a *cause*. The order, harmony, laws, complexity, power and beauty of creation demand a *cause*, indeed a great *mind* and a vast *source*. To have an effect without a cause is the most ludicrous concept imaginable! All "things" came out of God *in and by His Word!*

Let me put it this way. Suppose *you* are the creator and you are *spirit*. Beside you there are no things. You are all there is! But your desire, your intent, is to make some things. You can't reach outside of yourself because there is nothing there — no material of any kind out of which to construct any thing. You can't latch on to something that exists apart from or beyond yourself. So you must make it out of yourself! That is what it means, "For **of** Him, and **out of** Him, and **through** Him are all things!"

The agency of this change from the invisible to the visible, from spirit to matter, from God to creation is THE WORD! God projects Himself out of Himself to bring forth Himself in another

dimension. This process is accomplished by THE CREATIVE WORD OF GOD! The word is the seed that comes out of God's mouth, and it has the energy to perform everything that it is sent to produce. When God's Word is heard and received by us it produces God's purpose in us by the energy of that word. When the Word of God goes forth it goes forth in the power of God's life and spirit and is able to make the conversion from pure spirit to things visible and tangible. It happens through the Word which is the *seed*. The seed of a man is called sperm and comes forth through the sex organ to produce another life. The seed of God comes forth out of His mouth and is called His Word, and just as a seed planted in the dark soil of a garden springs forth into the world of light and is raised up into another form, the form of wonderful plants, so the seed of God brings forth God on another dimension. There is contained here another revelation of the Creator of the universe. *Universe* is a compound word, *uni* meaning "one," and *verse* meaning "spoken word." One spoken word! God's Word! He didn't need anything more than that. It was a very short uni-verse, simply "*let there be*" and there was! That is the greatest moment of history. It is the story of creation. What we call the "universe" is the manifestation out of one spoken word of God! Oh, the mystery of it!

When God projects Himself out of Himself to bring forth Himself on another dimension there is an *intersecting or interfacing of dimensions!* That junction is the Word! That is where time and eternity, spirit and matter, God and creation, and the Father and His sons all meet — at the Word. The Word is the crossroads, the *star-gate*, if you please, where two dimensions connect. To pass from one dimension to the other you must go through the interface or stargate. The Word is the passageway from eternity to time, from spirit to matter, from invisible God to visible creation!

Today God is bringing forth a NEW CREATION! He is not producing this new creation by any method different than all other creations. Only His *intent* and *purpose* is different — therefore *what He speaks* is different! The new human-spiritual or God-man creation is being formed by the seed — the Word of God! "Being born again, not of corruptible *seed*, but of incorruptible, by the *word of God* which liveth and abideth forever" (I Pet. 1:23). I think the following beautiful chorus was written by Charlotte Torango:

I'm created by the Word
Resurrected I stand;
Brought forth in the likeness
Of the great I AM;
Unveiling the mystery
Of God's great plan —
I in thee, Thee in me, and we in Him!

Oh, yes! The Word of God is a seed. When the Lord Jesus taught the multitudes the awesome principles of the kingdom of God, He told them and us that the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that goes out and sows seed in a field. He spoke several parables which embody different aspects of this great truth, the parable of the seed that fell into different kinds of soil; the tiny mustard seed that became a great tree; the seed that produced different percentages of harvest, and so on. The seed is the *word of the kingdom*, Jesus said. The life, the power, and the substance is in the seed! The Word is God! The invisible power of God in His Word results in a visible manifestation on another plane! When the Word of God, the Word of the kingdom, or the Word of any purpose of God in your life comes to you, my brother, my sister, eternity comes to you. That which is formed in your life is transmitted out of God, through the Word, and into you. The Word is the connection, the crossroads, the intersection, the junction, the stargate, the interface between God and your destiny as a manifest son of God!

The power to change you, transform you, and make you everything that God has apprehended you to be is in that Word, for the Word is a creative seed with power. God is even now changing His called and chosen elect into the image and likeness of Himself, and He shall change even our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto Christ's body of resurrection and glory. Yea, our Father shall change all things in this world and bring about a new order. How shall He do this? By speaking forth His Word! By the simplicity of His Word God created the sun, moon, stars, and all the hosts of the universe in the beginning! By His Word He created the heavens and the earth and everything in them! By His Word our omniscient and omnipotent Father put the animals, the birds, the fish, and all creeping things on this earth. By His Word God formed man and placed him in the paradise of Eden. Also by His Word our sovereign Father birthed the church age and all the accomplishment of it.

Now, also by His Word, our creative Father has ushered in a new age, a new feast, a new day, a new manifestation and glory, a higher order of the kingdom of God on earth! Those who are walking in the Spirit know of a certainty that this new age and order has begun. It has been birthed and has now begun in the hearts and lives of God's sons! And it has come to us by His Word! When we catch a vision of that realm where eternity and time converge, where spirit and matter meet, where God and creation intersect, where the Father and His sons connect, we will understand how it is that all the purposes of God are fulfilled by the simplicity of the Word! We know that as we proclaim the Word of the kingdom the Father has sent forth into our hearts, that it shall bring forth a creative harvest in all the earth until all peoples and tongues and nations are brought under the righteous dominion of the sons of God. It has already brought forth a mighty harvest of *sons* throughout the whole world who are maturing into the stature of God's Christ!

Faith is not rooted in the word of a man, but in an *eternal utterance*. God's Word cannot be divorced from Himself! If you hear the Word, you hear God. The Word of God is just as fresh and vigorous as when He stood on creation morn commanding chaos to loose its hold and let order come forth. The Word falling upon our inner spiritual ear is as powerful and life-giving as when Jesus was here speaking to the tumultuous sea, commanding, "Peace! Be still!" or "Ought not this woman, whom Satan hath bound, be loosed from her infirmity?" or to the impotent man by the pool of Bethesda, "Arise, take up thy bed and walk!" or to Lazarus in the dankness of his tomb, "Lazarus, come forth!" or when he spoke to the demons but two words of authority, "Come out!" There is no long cajoling, hoping, straining, but His Word is final and divinely effective. All must bow. He is Master. He rules sovereign. Elements, disease, sin, demons, and death all give sway to His Word. **FOR HE IS THE WORD!** That is the secret for every son of God. We are *becoming* the Word, the Word made flesh in us, so that the Word is more than something we speak — it is *what we are!*

In the dawning of the ages,
Stands the Logos all supreme;
The beginning of creation,
Time begins and ends in Him.
Of creation, He's the Alpha,
Time and timelessness doth span;
Of salvation, He's Omega,
Mediates 'tween God and man.
In beginning is the Logos,
The projection of God's Word;
Heads, both old and new creation,
Beginning both to one accord;

At first in time the Logos stands,
Radiation of God's grace;
As the vital, living Word,
Integrates the human race.
Towards the Father is the Logos,
The expression of His mind;
Generation of God's essence,
Breath of Life to all mankind.
First He stands in God's own image,
Representing God in man;
For the Father is the Logos,
A trajectory of His plan.
The Logos spans both first and last;
Alpha and Omega — He,
Proceeding from the Father's heart,
Permeates humanity.
Reflecting God's effulgent love,
The glory of the Father, we —
Stand completed in the Logos,
Actually His Word to be.
For the Logos stands in Christed,
Bridging time and eternity;
And the e'er expanding Word,
Brings to man Christ's liberty.
Man united in the Logos,
Speaking all things into one;
Bringing forth the consummation —
Rise and shine — Ye Blessed Son!
Dora Van

Chapter 59

The Church In Laodicea

continued

"Because thou sayest, *I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing*; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked..." (Rev. 3:17).

Laodicea was a notably wealthy city. It was the center of the banking interests of Asia Minor. Twice Laodicea had suffered severely from the ravages of earthquakes. In AD 17 it had been devastated by the same earthquake which laid waste Sardis and Philadelphia. At that time it received the same kindness and aid from Tiberius, the Roman Emperor, as these other cities had received. But in AD 60 it was again laid waste, and this time, although all aid and assistance was offered, Laodicea completely refused them, and preferred to rebuild its shattered city out of its own resources. Laodicea was *too rich* to accept help from anyone! Tacitus, the Roman historian, tells us, "Laodicea rose from the ruins by the strength of her own resources, and with no help from us." The Laodiceans were people who were so well off that they needed help neither from man nor from God! They were people who believed that money could buy anything; and they had so much of it they could very well manage without God — so they thought. But the omniscient Lord of the church said to them in effect, "You are rich and prosperous, and are proud of your riches, and trust in them; but in the things that matter, the truly *spiritual things*, you are poverty-stricken — and you do not know it!

It seemed everything this city did resulted in wealth and the church itself was taken in by the spirit of materialism. There is no doubt about it — they preached the "prosperity doctrine"! A lot of very wealthy and influential people belonged to the church. Apparently these wealthy people gave liberally to the church and the church had everything. You talk about a beautiful building — they had it! They had the most beautiful stained-glass windows, the plushiest pews, the most exquisite draperies and carpet, the finest musical instruments, the most polished speakers, and a choir that attracted people from miles around. In this super-wealthy city everything was the greatest! When the church members came to the Sunday morning meeting they drove up in a Rolls Royce chariot, or a Mercedes chariot, or some other expensive chariot.

The pastors of these people could come to church and not even trust God! All they had to do was pull a little harder and all the rich people would give more. They were able to finance all kinds of pageants and programs and so-called ministries. They weren't really trusting God at all, they were smug in their own ability and using the deceptive methods of the world. I have been in meetings where the offerings were a circus! Preachers have made offering taking into an art, they pride themselves in what kind of an offering they can take, how they can push the right button, say the right thing, and the finances will come rolling in. The easiest way to do this is to convince people that the primary evidence of God's blessing is in financial prosperity,

having all their carnal and material needs and wants met, and the secret to this blessing is, of course, in their giving to *them*! God, they are told, will then restore their "seed" to them a hundred-fold! There is some truth in that, but I do not hesitate to tell you that material prosperity is *not* the primary evidence of God's blessing and favor! The true riches are the *spiritual, heavenly* things of the Spirit of God!

What is *spiritual*? What are *spiritual things*? What are *treasures in heaven*? What are the *true riches*? Let me simplify this for you. If sinners can have it or do it without God — it's not *spiritual*! Someone says, "I'm spiritual because I fast." Witches fast! Another says, "I'm spiritual because I prosper and give vast sums of money to this ministry and that." Indeed! Mafia kingpins also prosper and give large amounts of money to all kinds of worthy causes that help and bless people, and the good they do is often more than the churches do with their money. You see, precious friend of mine, human nature is wont to equate spirituality with what we do, or with what we possess. No! A thousand times no!

Even the term "spiritual" indicates that it requires the power and ability of the SPIRIT, or that it is an expression of the SPIRIT. Therefore, when we walk in the Spirit and are led by the Spirit, what flows out of us is a dispensation of the life and glory and power and wisdom and nature and will of God Himself — *that* is spiritual! Sinners can't do that! The carnal mind can't produce that! The fleshly nature can't generate that! Self-effort is eternally and completely unable to perform that! Answered prayer — that's spiritual. Deliverance and transformation — that's spiritual. Speaking the words of God — that's spiritual. Loving your enemies — that's spiritual. Blessing them that curse you — that's spiritual. The peace that passeth understanding — that's spiritual. Laying down your life for creation — that's spiritual. Putting on the mind of Christ — that's spiritual. Being led by the Spirit of God — that's spiritual. Money can't buy these things. The natural man can't mimic these things. These are the *true riches*!

George Hawtin described the LAODICEAN CONDITION in these words: "It is hard to tell a rich man that he is poverty stricken. It is almost impossible to disturb the composure of one who thinks he has need of nothing, who never surmises for a moment that he is miserable and wretched, poor and blind and naked. Yet such is the condition throughout the world and the entire realm of professing Christendom. I well remember a precious old lady who, having grown hard of hearing, imagined that her family intentionally spoke in subdued tones so that she would not hear their conversation, but, when after much difficulty she was persuaded to go to the doctor to have her ears washed out, then she wondered why everyone in the house was shouting so. That is just the way God's people are in this the hour of Laodicea! They are blind but think they can see perfectly. They have grown deaf to the true voice of God, yet they are positive there is nothing wrong with their hearing. They are full of religion and talk loudly of signs and wonders, but do not know that they are lukewarm in their love and relationship to God. Their works abound on every hand, but they are unaware that God has neither sent them nor required these labors of them. It is time, oh child of God, to seek the quiet of the wilderness where every voice of man is hushed and no one has opportunity to speak but God" — end quote.

A great deception has circulated among the Lord's people for many years now, and that is the deception of abundant prosperity. Evangelists, television and radio hucksters, as well as other pulpiteers have encouraged the Lord's people to believe God for wealth and prosperity and to seek for it earnestly. With great enthusiasm these preachers of "another gospel" have encouraged the Lord's people to indulge themselves in the lust and greed for temporal things and for money and great wealth. The apostle Paul wrote of a similar condition which prevailed in his day, and warned the people of God with these words, "He is proud, knowing nothing, but

doting about...perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, *supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself*. But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment *let us therewith be content*. *But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows*. But thou, O man of God, *flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness*" (I Tim. 6:4-11).

The modern "faith" message of health, wealth, and prosperity is the cardinal doctrine of the church of the Laodiceans! I do not mean by this that the Lord has not promised to heal, bless, and meet all of our needs. Of course He has! It is a matter of focus. The "faith" message, as preached today, would have us believe that salvation's greatest benefits are *physical, earthly, material, and temporal*. Untold thousands of commitments to Christ have been motivated by the expectation of the "good life" to be had by all who follow Jesus! We hear exclusively of the wonderful, exciting, and miraculous "abundant life" that God is just waiting to bestow upon those who *only believe* — *and send in their "seed faith" offering!* It will be a great blessing to your spiritual life to realize, however, that the substance of true commitment to Christ is that "He died for all, that those who live *should no longer live for themselves*, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf" (II Cor. 5:15). Jesus did not instruct His disciples to count their blessings, but to *count the cost* of their commitment to follow Him, for the route to mount Zion where we reign with Him first passes over mount Calvary where we lay down our life with Him. When one is delivered from the flesh appeal of the things of *this world* and finds Christ Himself as the substance and reality of life, it then matters not whether we drive a shiny new Lexus or a rusted old Ford Escort. The mark of our spirituality will not be whether we clear \$100,000 after taxes or subsist on \$600 a month Social Security, for when CHRIST HIMSELF IS OUR LIFE AND ALL WE NEED, WE HAVE NEED OF NOTHING! When Christ becomes our only measure, value, and goal we are then an *overcomer* out of the church of the Laodiceans! Then we are truly *rich!*

The church of the Laodiceans loves our national hymn, but they prefer to sing it thus:

Oh beautiful for dividends
Of twenty-five percent
On oil and technology
On money freely lent
Oh blessed land of bumper crops
May riches be our fate!
Increase our wealth and save our health
American, the Great!

A brother wrote me, saying, "Someone sent me a videotape of a convention sponsored by a well-known prosperity preacher. I was so appalled by what was being taught I could hardly contain myself. It was blasphemy! One preacher boasted, 'I spent \$15,000 for a dog. This ring on my finger cost \$32,000. I live in an 8,000 square-foot house, but I'm going to build a bigger one — one Solomon would be proud of! When the people of my town see my big house and my Rolls Royce in the driveway, they know there is a God in heaven!' I wanted to weep because the entire time he spoke, people were running on stage and stuffing money in his pockets. They all claimed to be rich men. The tragedy was, the people loved it! They were

being exploited by a perverted gospel." Beloved, do not listen to this false gospel. It is satanic. It comes from the heart of men who are earthly minded, carnal, sensual, frivolous, jokesters, greedy for more. Isaiah the prophet has their number: "Yea, they are *greedy dogs* which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand: they all look their own way, *every one for his gain*, from his quarter" (Isa. 56:11).

If God has blessed you with the riches of this world, dear reader, humbly give Him thanks and use it wisely and for His glory. Oh, yes! God will meet your needs! He will bring you into true life and immortality! But do not make money and things the indicator of divine approval or the barometer of *spirituality!* To do so will cause your spiritual goals to be redirected into the senseless futility of human avarice. The pursuit of temporal treasures is a counterfeit gospel, cunningly designed to make you miss the truth and life of sonship. The daily pursuit of earthly riches is a pill of spiritual poison! Material prosperity is certainly enjoyable to the outer man, and I will not refuse any blessing God sends, but it is *not godliness* nor is it the sign of *any spiritual attribute, grace, or power.* The greatest blessing God can give you is the mind of Christ and the nature of the Father! The sons of God are not measured by what they have, but by *what they are!*

It is a sad fact that the vast majority of busy, Laodicean Christians today have positively *no understanding of what the Father is doing.* While they sing and clap hands, dance and play with their gifts, and earnestly talk about the rapture and the far-away heaven of golden streets and mansions, where they will strum harps and shout throughout endless ages, they know nothing of God's will, nor of His word, nor of His ways, nor of His wonderful plan of the ages, nor of His great purpose in His sons and the restitution of the world and all creation. While they delight in propagating the grievous deception that the Lord wants nothing but prosperity for His saints, that they should seek and have the best of everything *this world* has to offer, together with the complete absence of problems, trouble, or tribulation of any kind, bringing God's people into bondage to the world and its transient and empty glory, thus hindering the development of many a saint — they know nothing of humility, brokenness, suffering, stripping, chastisement, purging, cleansing, refining, processing, and the resultant transformation and conformation into the image of the Son of God.

They know nothing of sonship! They know nothing of the groaning creation, and its hope of deliverance from the bondage of corruption! They know nothing of the Father's great and wonderful plan in bringing many sons to glory! They know nothing of reigning with Christ upon His throne in the heavens of God's Spirit! They know nothing of the heavenly mount Zion to which we are come, and where we now commune with our Father! They know nothing of the *spiritual blessings in the heavenlies* in Christ Jesus! They know nothing of God's merciful purpose for the government of the world by saints who *have His mind, know His ways,* and are acquainted with those purposes which were ordained in Christ our Lord before the world began and before the spirit of life was breathed into the clay we call Adam. They are having a hallelujah big time with their spiritual toys, completely oblivious to the great and important issues that really matter in this new and greater day of the kingdom of God upon earth. One of the sure marks of maturity is the ability to UNDERSTAND WHAT'S GOING ON!

Those who pursue the riches of this world and all earthly things as the sign of God's blessing and favor will awaken in the day of the manifestation of the sons of God with the same sense of emptiness and loss as the young man in a story I read. There was this girl who was very ugly — her face was her misfortune — and since she wanted to marry, she found that she must fascinate. She gave out that her father was very wealthy. A young fish bit at the bait. He took her out for a Sunday afternoon lunch and drive. As they drove across town she pointed to

a large office building and said, "That belongs to my father." "Indeed," said the fish, swallowing. "And that," again she waved her fair hand toward a large department store, "that too belongs to my father." Again the fish gulped. "And this," she indicated, as they passed a huge factory, "this is also the property of my father." This was almost too good to be true. The carp shut his eyes and popped the question. He was quickly landed; they were married; and then, as often happens, he woke up! Her face was not only her misfortune, it was her sole fortune! Those whose god is the riches of this world will likewise awaken in the day of the *manifestation of the sons of God* to discover that the ashes of all temporal things are the sum of their investment and the substance of their inheritance — their sole fortune! That's all they get! What unutterable loss! All the wealth of this earth is for those who belong to this earth, but if your treasures are in the heavens of God's Spirit then set not your affections on things on the earth, but seek those things which are above, where Christ sits at the right hand of God!

THE RICH WOMAN

The conditions within the seven churches of Asia are the "seed-plot" for the rest of the book of Revelation. All that follows the messages to the churches embodies the growth and development of those conditions, both positive and negative, and the Lord's dealings with them throughout the age. These conditions existed in those literal churches to whom John wrote, but they have also existed in the whole church throughout the entire church age — only they have grown and developed into established doctrines, time-honored traditions, methods, movements, and great organizations with vast numbers and powerful influence in the earth.

Here in Laodicea we find the "seed" of a deplorable spiritual condition in which believers adopt the attitude, "We are rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing!" That represents the condition of self-sufficiency, self-satisfaction, self-righteousness, self-deception, and spiritual complacency and stagnation. "We have it all! We have everything we need! We now possess all God has promised! We have the purest doctrine! We have the *most ancient traditions!* We have the *full gospel!* We have the apostolic New Testament order! We have the nine gifts of the Spirit, the five-fold ministry, and spiritual worship! We have the *complete revelation!* We have the *deepest truth!* We are the one hundred and forty-four thousand! Our little group are the sons of God! We don't need anything more! We have all the answers, all the truth; no one can add anything to us — we have need of nothing!" This, my beloved, is a *spirit*. It is the spirit of Babylon! You will find this spirit in the Roman Catholic Church, you will find this spirit in the Protestant denominations, you will find this spirit in the cults, and *you will find this spirit in the sonship message!* In whatever realm or on whatever level you find it, my beloved, it is *still Babylon!*

The full development of this tiny seed in the church at Laodicea finally grows into a great whore who is also a great city called Mystery Babylon "*with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication. And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet color, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication...for all nations have drunk of the wine and the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies. How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her: for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow*" (Rev. 17:2,4; 18:3,7).

Our Lord said the church would say, "We're rich! We're rich! We're rich!" In due time the whole church system began to build cathedrals with pillars, domes, and altars overlaid with gold; it

gathered the greatest collection of the arts, with paintings and statues lining the corridors which are the envy of the world's greatest museums; it amassed fortunes of billions of dollars in real estate and businesses of all kinds, and owns its own banks, possessing vast storehouses of money; it is rich in political power, and is able to lobby in all quarters of the political arena, and the politicians, because of its votes, will acquiesce; furthermore, it has its adherents entrenched in the highest positions of the greatest governments of the world! "We are rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing!" But when the Lord hears it, He says, "You are poor, you are poor, you are very poor, so poor that you are poverty stricken! Your gold and silver is but dust of the earth, and you know not; you have no idea what the *true riches* are!"

There is a truth beyond all this. Mystery Babylon is like Israel of old who was *rich* in covenants and promises, rich in the word that was brought to her, rich in scriptures and revelations, rich in prophets and teachers who were raised up in her midst to speak the truth under the anointings of God, rich in revivals and movings and manifestations of the Holy Spirit. Oh, yes! Babylon is, indeed, a very RICH WOMAN. As a friend has pointed out (and I am indebted to this friend for many of the thoughts in the next couple pages), she is rich by the hand of God, and is not merely pretending to be rich, as is seen in Hosea 2:8 where the Lord Himself affirms that He is the source of her wealth. Babylon is not, however, aware that He is her supply, and therein lies her ultimate undoing, for the Lord said, "*She did not know that I (the Lord) gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold...therefore will I return and take away my corn in the time thereof and my vine in the season thereof and will take away my wool and my flax given to cover her nakedness, and now will I discover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers and none shall deliver her out of my hand.*"

Babylon is a rich woman — but it is with these very riches from the hand of God that she has prepared her own idols, having held the truth in unrighteousness and changed those riches and truths of God into a lie. This is what the Lord says in this passage, "*She did not know that I gave her corn (spiritual truth) and wine (joy and rejoicing) and oil (anointing and power)...which THEY PREPARED FOR BAAL.*" Another translation renders it, "*Wherewith they prepared Baal.*" The living truth God gave has been perverted and turned into a static creed and dead doctrine, an empty ceremony, a lifeless ritual; the joy has been orchestrated by man into pageantry, feasting, sports, programs, and pleasures; and the anointing by which God raised up life-giving ministries in the body of Christ has been institutionalized into a system of man-made organization and hierarchy. All has become a lifeless *idol*, an *image* of man's making, bowed down to and worshipped in place of the living God! Ah, they have taken what God gave and have *prepared Baal!*

Deceived by the very riches that were given to bring her to God, Babylon exalts herself because of that which she possesses, saying within herself, "I sit as a queen." Now, I am well aware that the highest meaning of Babylon does not mean the organized church system but is, rather, a condition in the mind and heart of man, which means that we have all, at one time or another, and perhaps even until now, been partakers of her. But on the visible plane, in its outworking by actions, it does refer to the organized church systems of man. All that the church system possesses was given her out of the anointing of God, imparted to her through anointed men, through those who walked the paths of the Spirit — and these men of bygone generations she admires! Nothing has changed, however, since the days of Jesus when He said to the religious leaders, "You garnish the sepulchers of the dead prophets — but kill the living ones!"

The anointed Word has been set in concrete in the church system, and like the *rephaim* — the physicians of no value who *embalmed* Israel (Gen. 50:2) — so has the church system EMBALMED THE CHRIST — fixed Him in a *static position* so that He can move no further. Holding the very *form of truth*, the church system denies the essence and life of that truth...and yet *boasts of her wealth!* But the Lord says, "Because thou sayest, *I am rich* and increased with goods (doctrines and forms and ritual and eschatology charts) and have need of nothing (not even the anointing) and *knowest not* that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked..." Because of all this, "I will spew you out of my mouth!"

Let me reiterate again, it is important to realize that her confession is not made of a lie: it is based on truth. She is not pretending to be rich — she *is* rich — rich in covenants and promises, rich in oil and wine, rich in doctrines about Christ and salvation, rich in word, rich in a history of holy men, rich in revivals and movings of God. But even in her wealth she is poor and wretched and naked and blind because she holds the *husks* which have long ago been emptied of the corn! She treasures the alabaster box, little realizing that the essence has dissipated into the air long before this time.

As prophesied in Hosea, however, because "she did not know" that there was the need for the constant renewal of her riches, God stripped her naked as the day she was born and has set her in a wilderness. "So he carried me away in the spirit into the *wilderness*: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet colored beast...and upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH" (Rev. 17:3-5). Babylon dwells, spiritually, in an arid, parched, desert land! There is little life there! But God did not send her into the wilderness without first *saving the living water* by pouring it into His called and chosen remnant!

Paul had this to say about God's people of old, and the same principle is applicable to the Lord's people of today: "Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for: BUT THE ELECTION (REMNANT) HATH OBTAINED IT, and the rest WERE BLINDED. According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear until this day. And David saith, Let their *table* (the table God spread for them) BE MADE A SNARE and a trap and a stumblingblock and a recompense to them..." (Rom. 11:7-9). The message is clear — the *very riches* which the Lord's people in Babylon received from the hand of God becomes her downfall, for her own perverted *form of truth* blinds her vision so that she cannot recognize THE ANOINTED when He comes! Isn't that what happened when the firstborn Son, Christ the Head, came into the world? Reasoning, always reasoning, from their intellectual grasp of scripture, as to what manner of Messiah should appear, as to what God expected from men — so that when the fulfillment of all that God required appeared in human form, when the Son of God appeared before them in the flesh, their eyes were blinded to Him *by the very scriptures that had promised His coming!* Because they held that truth in the unrighteousness of a carnal-minded interpretation. How dreadful is the thought! And yet, the Babylon of this great day will likewise not recognize the COMING OF CHRIST AND THE REVELATION OF GOD IN HIS SONS!

A careful examination of the Greek that surrounds the passage in Romans concerning "holding the truth in unrighteousness" reveals that it means "to fail to come into union with that truth." They held the truth, all right, but they held it *independently of the Spirit!* They exercised it apart from the presence of God — and walked in their own limited carnal understanding. Jesus said, "Everyone that hath learned from my Father will come unto me." Ah, that is the key! They had learned the truth, that is, the scriptures — but they had not learned it *from the Father*, else they would have recognized and come to Jesus. They had learned it from *their fathers*, but not from

THE FATHER! When a man is taught by the Father, side by side with the teaching of doctrine, God cripples him so that he may learn not to hold the doctrine independent from God Himself. In fact, truth is not really truth at all when separated from the anointing, for it is the *Spirit*, John says, that beareth witness, and the *Spirit is truth* — not the form of doctrine. Doctrine spoken apart from the anointing and life of God, and spoken apart from the inworking of that into the man, is not truth at all, though its facts may be quite accurate. The Spirit is truth! But the Pharisees had no such knowledge. They walked in the spirit of Babylon, the great whore who arose from the tiny little seed in Laodicea, which says, "I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing." Oh, how I thank God that He has delivered all who truly walk with Christ in His sonship from that spirit! Thank God, a remnant is being saved!

I mentioned earlier that this spirit of "I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing" is found not only in the Babylon of the church system, but can also be found in those who profess to walk in the truths of reconciliation, sonship, and the kingdom. Paul Mueller hit the nail right on the head when he wrote, "God has an elect remnant in the earth at this time who have grown spiritually beyond the Lord's assessment of the Laodicean church. They are truly and sincerely living and doing only and always the pure and perfect will of their Father in heaven. But it appears that many others, who claim to be sons of God, continue to live and walk in the old order of the past. They are all the Lord said they were in this passage. They are lukewarm, spiritually speaking, regarding the will and purpose of their Father. They will also speak in glowing terms, telling us of all the spiritual gifts they have within themselves. Their testimony really is, '*I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing.*'"

"Some claim to have great spiritual riches and treasures within them. Their boastings are abundant and constant; it is as if some of them are trying to outdo the others in making their empty claims. Truly the name-it-and-claim-it crowd is alive and active today! I have heard some of them say, 'I am walking and living in Tabernacles!' But their lives reveal the truth that they are really walking and living in the old order of Pentecost, for they continue to do all the old things of the past that pertain to the obsolete church order. Others might tell us that they are living and walking in the kingdom; yet they still manifest and show forth the impure traits of their bodies and minds. Some may say that they have all the fullness of God within them, or that God's work within them is finished, and they have need of nothing more. But are they not all saying, '*I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing,*' just as our Lord said they would?" — end quote

GOLD TRIED IN THE FIRE

"Because thou sayest, I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to *buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich*" (Rev. 3:17-18).

"Buy of me gold" means to *pay the price* for the divine nature of our Father to be brought forth in our lives! "Tried in the fire" means that His nature has become an experiential reality within us. It speaks of an intimate, direct encounter with God that causes all that is contrary to His nature to be consumed by the all-consuming fire of His Spirit, resulting in our spiritual growth and maturity in Christ. Our Lord has called upon His elect to buy of Him this gold tried in the fire, that *we may be rich!* Now we know what the *true riches are!* The riches of which He speaks are not the riches of the world, either of money, material things, or of stature, position, fame, or self-glory. The riches of this world corrupt the spiritual man and prevent a manifestation of the true Life of God. The gold that we are to buy of Him represents a life that

has been tried and tested, even as gold is refined, to bring forth the qualities of the Christ life within all who are His called and chosen ones.

The gold of which our Lord speaks is symbolic of the divine nature and the divine life of those who put on the Lord Jesus Christ. The gold of the realm of the Spirit represents the spiritual riches of the saints, for Christ said that we should buy this gold tried in the fire, "that thou mayest be *rich*." Therefore gold represents our true wealth! Jesus pointed out to the multitude gathered at His teaching, "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things that he possesseth" (Lk. 12:15). The gold of the realm of the Spirit is the true riches! The man who lives and walks in the attributes of God is a rich man indeed!

Bill and Elaine Cook published a dream that the Lord had given to Martin Paulet. He wrote, "I looked and I saw something coming down from heaven. The Lord said he was giving this to me. It appeared to be *a large block of gold* coming down to me. The size was seven by five feet by three feet high. As it came down, I discovered it shone like it had light in it. It reminded me of the transparent gold, '...and the street of the city was *pure gold*, as it were *transparent glass*' (Rev. 21:21). It was impressed upon me that this was *very valuable*, so I chipped off a piece about one inch by one inch by $\frac{1}{4}$ inch, and called some jewelers together for an evaluation. The jewelers offered me a million dollars for this small chip of gold. I replied, 'Oh, that's not enough,' for I knew the value was greater than that. They then offered me *ten million* for it and I went home without selling it and knowing the true worth. As I pondered this before the Lord, He made me to know *the gold block He was giving me was none other than His nature*. This is such a valuable thing He is giving us. It is *more precious* than gold! His nature in us is more valuable than all the gifts and miracles He has given us. It is greater than *any gift* He has ever given us!" — end quote.

Speaking of the day when He would bring His kingdom and show forth His glory in the earth the Lord said through the prophet Isaiah, "*I will make a man more precious than fine gold; even a MAN than the golden wedge of Ophir*" (Isa. 13:12). The MAN the prophet speaks of is God's Christ, Head and body, the *new creation man* in the image and likeness of God! A man is growing to maturity in this day; it is the manchild company, the sons of God, or the body of Christ. This corporate man will be made more precious than fine gold by the Lord Himself, for He dwells within them in all the fullness of His divine life and glory. The reference to the "golden wedge of Ophir" is to the source of the finest gold available in that day, which was the gold of Ophir. From the mines of the land of Ophir in Arabia the Israelites obtained the most precious and highly refined gold in the days of Solomon. This gold was for the temple of God! The temple of God today is a living temple of *living stones*, raised up a *spiritual house*, the dwelling place of God from which He rules in kingdom authority and ministers to creation through His king-priests after the order of Melchizedek. The temple of God is the same as the body of Christ, the sons of God, the MAN who is *made more precious than fine gold!* When the Lord completely delivers us from the old fleshly nature of sin and mortality we shall then *fully become* that MAN that is more precious than the finest gold of Ophir. That MAN, totally delivered from the bondage of corruption, shall then be the deliverer of creation! He shall show forth the spirit and power of reconciliation, restoration, and transformation to all mankind, bringing deliverance to the whole, groaning creation.

Even as gold is purified by fire, so are we purified by the fiery trials the Lord sends into our lives. Like the intense heat that causes the impurities to rise to the top of the molten gold, so the many tribulations we face in life, and the blazing fire of God's dealings that accompany them, draw from us those things that pollute the pure nature of God within our spirit. One pass through the furnace is never sufficient to remove all the impurities in gold, neither can we

become pure in one season of testing. God allows us to be tested and tried by the Holy Ghost and fire for however long it takes because He wants us to be pure vessels to manifest His glory. Those who hunger and thirst for Him will not be devastated by this fire, but purified. They are those who heed the apostle Paul's warning to examine the materials with which we are building as the temple of God is raised up within us, for "every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be *revealed by fire*; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is" (I Cor. 3:13).

Gold fully tried in the fire is *pure gold*. The gold of the tabernacle in the wilderness was required by the Lord to be *pure gold*. The gold in Solomon's temple was also *pure gold*. The gold of the New Jerusalem is likewise described as *pure gold* (Rev. 21:18,21). That is what God is after! To be "pure" means to be "unmixed, single, free of anything that adulterates or taints; containing nothing but its own reality." *Pure* water is water without any contaminants; *pure* air is air free from any pollutants; *pure* gold is refined until it contains no tinge of alloy, no trace of impurities, no residue of dross. Under the law of Moses people were not permitted to wear garments of wool mingled with linen. Not that there is wrong in either one, but *the type* is meaningful, for wool is derived from animals while linen comes from a plant. They were not to plow with an ox and an ass in the same yoke, for an ox is a *clean animal*, but an ass is *unclean*. God was showing that there are things that are not to be mixed! Flesh must not be mixed with spirit. Truth must not be mixed with error. Righteousness must not be mixed with unrighteousness. The will of our Father must not be mixed with the will of man. The activities of the people of God must not be mixed with the methods and ways of the world and of Mystery Babylon. The ministry of the Outer Court and the Holy Place must not be mixed with the ministry of the Holiest of all! Purity of heart means that the old Adamic heart is put off; the old religious heart is put off as well! There is singleness of vision, purpose, hope, and motive; the mind of Christ which is the nature of the Father is its only reality. This is what sonship is all about!

The Lord has promised to purge, refine, and remove *all mixture* from the lives of those who become His kingdom of priests, called and chosen to restore creation unto God. The word is sure, "The Lord...shall suddenly come to His temple...and He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and He shall purify the sons of Levi (His priesthood), and purge them as gold and silver..." (Mal. 3:1-3).

In this wonderful process of refining the miner first mines the ore out of the darkest depth. The miner has it in his mind that he will go after the ore. Now, it's not easy to obtain the ore. The ore is in inaccessible places, and it requires great effort and endeavor for the miner to obtain the precious ore. The refiner then goes after the ore. The ore doesn't go after the refiner! I have never heard of an ore searching for a refiner! You never will. It's the refiner who goes after the ore. Someone says, "I sought the Lord." Well, that's how it appeared to you, my friend, but the truth of the matter is the Lord sought you! He sought you in the darkest depths of the flesh and the bestial system of this world, and He brought you forth and made you His. It was HE who did it!

The ore is now the property of the miner who mined it, but the mixture is there. Both gold and silver are found in nature, but not in their pure form. They come mixed with, or imbedded in, various kinds of rock, minerals, and metals. No jeweler would want to work with natural gold with bits of rock or sand in it. Nor could such impure stuff be beaten into thin sheets. And no one likes a ring that turns their finger green! No, silver and gold as they are found in nature do not have, in themselves, much usefulness. They must first be separated from all the impurities that naturally accompany them. And the process for doing that is called *refining*. Our lives,

dear ones, are like that! We are spirit, soul, and body — and within our spirit, which is the offspring of God, there is so much that is worthwhile in us, but in our outer life of the flesh and the carnal mind there is so much that is worthless. There is so much that is of God, and so much that is of self. There is part of us that is out of heaven, and part of us is of the earth, earthy.

So what does the great and eternal Miner have on His hands? He has a mixture! And that is why there has to be a furnace of fire. The ore which we are, in that mixed, raw, unrefined state, brings no pleasure at all to the Refiner, nor does it fulfill any useful purpose in His plans. Of these He says, "With them I am not well pleased." Our Father in His sovereign purpose sees us, but He cannot use all that He sees. The ore is wonderful relative to its pure precious metal content, but it is disgusting relative to the impurities that are mingled therein. He is unable to use us in that condition of mixture, so He comes to us as a refiner's fire. And immediately we wonder what is happening! What is happening is that HE is appearing, and I might add, He is showing up in a form that we did not expect. Yes, 'tis the same Jesus, the lovely Saviour who so graciously saved us by His grace, dug us out of the darkness and depth of the earth, but He comes now, not to forgive and bless and coddle and wink at our carnality, but He comes as a refining fire, to purify the sons of Levi. He comes now because He has a *great purpose for us!*

The Lord, when He comes to His temple of living stones and purges the sons of Levi, or His kingly priesthood, He first of all purges out *one man* — old Adam! He comes to cleanse us from the carnal, Adamic mind, nature, and ways. He comes as a consuming fire to burn out of us all that is contrary to the righteousness and wisdom and purposes of the Lord. He is coming to each one of us in this new day of the kingdom of God and is purging the old fleshly nature and worldly ways out of us. On a corporate level He is also coming to those who have received the call to sonship and is separating out all who *talk* the kingdom but do not *walk* the kingdom. Only the ones who have completely surrendered to His will, and have walked in His ways, and have obeyed each sound of His voice, who have clean hands and pure hearts, will remain to reign with Him.

How can anyone be placed in a position of authority and power in the kingdom who has not come to the place of exhibiting only His nature? He will purge the sons of Levi, the kings and priests of His kingdom, disqualifying those He cannot trust to do His will and cooperate completely in the administration of His kingdom. The ways of Babylon and all the soul-possessing demands of the insipid church systems must be purged, the attributes of the carnal mind must be cleansed, all self-hood must be burned out, and all desire to make a name for ourselves and to gather men around ourselves rather than to Christ must be consumed. Thank God, HE IS DOING IT!

Ray Prinzing has written, "Kenneth Wuest, in his translation, calls the fiery trial 'the smelting process.' A fiery ordeal, a smelting process — why? Because it will both purify us, as well as reveal what degree of quality has been attained therein. We become so involved with the exterior happenings of the trial, how our flesh hurts, etc., that we forget the actual purpose is for the *inner processing*, until we are of a *pure spirit* before Him. When suddenly we become aware of 'what spirit we are of' in some of these happenings, it sends us back to our knees in repentance and beseeching God to purge out these unholy traits. HE already knows what is in us, but the fires certainly expose us to ourselves! Sometimes we bow low in praise because we see what He has wrought, and are amazed at our own reaction to a situation — of the calm, the peace, the rest we have in it all. Then we also have those other times when the agitation of our spirit reveals that there are vast areas within that still need to be dealt with, purified and cleansed, until 'ALL that is within me (can) bless His holy name' (Ps. 103:1). Yet in

all this working, praise God, we find in Him NO CONDEMNATION — just that continual drawing upward and onward, being assured that HE who hath begun in us this good work, will also bring it to a successful conclusion in His own time" — end quote. What a word!

"He shall *sit* as a refiner and purifier of silver..." He *sits* — this is a process that requires time, this is something that is important to Him, something He must patiently sit and preoccupy Himself with, not a work to be rushed or accomplished in one grand sweep of His hand. To us it becomes very monotonous, for it seems the process will never end. He SITS! From the moment you were sovereignly apprehended by the Spirit of God to be a part of His specific workings in this new kingdom day, the Lord Jesus Christ has been obsessively preoccupied with purifying and refining what you are as His kingdom instrument in the earth. He examines the ore, ugly, shapeless, not representative at all of that beautiful vessel He has in mind; but there it is, just a hunk of jagged, dirty ore, with too much alloy. He moves to change that, and under the crucible you go!

How long will this continue? I would like to promise you some respite, but I dare not. The inspired Psalmist declared, "The words of the Lord are *pure words*: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, PURIFIED SEVEN TIMES" (Ps. 12:6). Seven is the number of spiritual completion and perfection. It reveals the great truth that God's own nature will be produced in the fire. He will heat up the furnace until you have been perfectly cleansed and purified, nothing remaining but HIMSELF. That which the Lord is receiving unto Himself cannot be of an inferior quality to Himself. The gold — ah, it is HIM! That is the value of your *spirit*, my beloved! How marvelous is the grace by which He has birthed us out of His own Spirit — making us "partakers of the divine nature" (II Pet. 1:4). It is like the grades in school, the farther along you go the harder the lessons become.

In olden times, the refiner of gold and silver would sit over the burning crucible until the dross and impurities in these metals were completely consumed. Not until he could see his face mirrored in the molten metals did he declare them to be pure. So too with the Lord's called and chosen elect! The Holy Spirit brings to light and deals with every aspect of our lives, consuming all that is alien and opposed to God's nature and character, until the image of His Son Jesus is formed and mirrored in us. Only then will we be able to offer Him those offerings and render Him that service which is pleasing and acceptable in His sight. The Lord never removes or destroys something without replacing it with something better. The better, in this case, is THE PRICELESS VALUE OF THE GOLD ONCE IT IS TRIED IN THE FIRE!

FIRES FOR GLORY

In the fires of our affliction,
All predestined for our good,
We can see the fourth man walking,
Forming now a son of God.
Lest our souls fall in that furnace,
Be consumed by sorrow sore,
He has sent the Holy Spirit,
Our deliverance to insure.
He knows what will purify us,
Knows the way, has gone before,
And He planned this fiery furnace,
Not an end — but as the DOOR.
For our body, soul, and spirit,
As a substance to refine,

From these fiery trials and sorrows,
Shall emerge, with glory shine.
Not a golden, evil image,
As some heathen king did mold,
But a precious Holy Image,
A reflected son of God.
So wait my soul, wait on His workings,
Wait my spirit, patiently,
Wait my body, for the changing,
Rising up triumphantly.
In the ages yet unrolling,
We shall still His glories share,
For the plan of God is ceaseless,
His salvation making bare.
Mortal minds cannot receive it,
This supernal plan so great,
One that covers all the ages,
Ending sin, and fear, and hate.
So we give Him all the glory,
Knowing fiery trials now,
Will present us in His likeness,
All is well, that He allows.

Irene Lindsay

Chapter 60

The Church In Laodicea

continued

"I counsel thee to buy of me...*white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed*, and that the shame of thy *nakedness* do not appear" (Rev. 3:18).

The great truth of being spiritually "clothed upon" appears early in the revelation of God to mankind. As soon as man sinned, *God made them garments*, the Bible declares. Some say that the "skins" with which God clothed Adam and Eve were the outer covering of a mortal body, the "skin" of the flesh. It is my conviction, however, that the sinning couple *needed a covering* just because they *were flesh* — for suddenly they "*saw that they were naked*" and commenced to sew together aprons of fig leaves. It is obvious that in their sense of guilt they perceived that ***their flesh was exposed!*** The slain lamb is the figure all through scripture for God's gracious provision of "atonement," and the word atonement in Hebrew simply means "to cover." Was it not, therefore, the "skins" of the slain Lamb with which the Lord, in a figure, clothed father Adam and mother Eve? These are beautiful word pictures with which the Holy Spirit conveys to our understanding eternal and heavenly truths!

Let us then stand assured of this marvelous fact: the skins with which God clothed Adam and Eve in Eden were the product of the life of God's precious Lamb. When they received these blessed garments upon them, they received something borne out of HIS LIFE, a very part of HIMSELF, the form and appearance of Himself generated by His life. Sweeter than the dews of Hermon descending upon the mountains of Zion is the wonderful revelation with which He now fills our hearts, showing that He now clothes us with THE LAMB'S SKIN, the Lamb's own image, likeness, and identity. Our Lord Jesus Christ is truly the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world, and all the holy sons of God have now "put on Christ." Is this not why, on the spiritual and heavenly mount Zion, we see standing *with the Lamb* 144,000 *lambs!* (Rev. 14:1-5). It does not say that standing with the Lamb is 144,000 *men*. Oh, no! They all are lambs! They all bear the mind and the nature of the Father and in their mouth (word) is found no guile, and they are without fault before the throne of God. Oh, the mystery of it!

"And they were both *naked*, the man and his wife...and the eyes of them both were opened, and they *knew* that they were naked" (Gen. 2:25; 3:7). It seems to the unenlightened mind that this little statement could have been omitted. Of what importance is it whether Adam and Eve moved about in Paradise naked or clothed? Yet it is an important and necessary little statement; it uses a rather insignificant fact, as it appears to the natural mind, to show forth something wondrous in the whole economy of God. Ah, beloved, the story of Adam and Eve in Eden is far too intricate and wonderful for my little mind to fully grasp, but I am able to see that the Holy Spirit has been very faithful and remarkably specific in recording the exact state of being of man in the beginning...and of us ***in our beginning!***

Adam and Eve were both...NAKED! Among all the creatures which God made, man stands out unique...stark naked...which means devoid of true wisdom and knowledge, with his inner nature revealed, opened up, exhibited, and made bare. Oh, that God may give us understanding to see that to be naked means to have THE FLESH UNCOVERED AND EXPOSED! In the typology of scripture "the flesh" is the name by which the Holy Spirit designates our outer life of soul and body, our earthly and carnal *human nature*, literally speaking of that nature which is earthly minded, with its lusts and self-centeredness, its ego and I-will which are in rebellion to the spirit. Thus, the flesh is not the outward, visible man of meat, muscle, and bones, but the *nature* of the soulical and bodily man. This nature was in man from the beginning, else Eve (who was *of* the man) could not have been tempted, nor could they have sinned! This nature could be seen to be in them from the time God lowered them out of their pure spirit existence, in the image and likeness of God, investing them with a body of earth so that man *became* a living soul. But as long as man was caught up in God he was not *aware* of it — for he was *naked* and was *not ashamed* (Gen. 2:25). Have we not all experienced the same thing? In seasons when we are caught up in the Spirit of God, flooded with His presence, *sin* is far from our minds. It is easy to be holy standing in the ecstasy of God's glory! The flesh nature is still there, but in that blessed moment we are not ashamed, for we are unaware.

Then suddenly "they *knew* that they were naked" — they became conscious that their flesh lay bare and exposed — sad fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil! No sooner does a man discover his nakedness than this knowledge gives birth to the impulse to make an effort to *cover* the nakedness. Thus, in the case of Adam and Eve, the discovery of their nakedness was immediately followed by an effort of their own to cover it — "they sewed fig-leaves together and made themselves aprons" (Gen. 3:7). This is the first record we have of man's attempt to remedy, by his own device, his condition, but this was not the single act of Adam of old, it is truly the act of each of us, yes, OUR VERY OWN! The Spirit would make very real to our hearts, dear reader, that Adam's effort to cover his nakedness was not a mere physical or moral act, it was a RELIGIOUS ACT. The nakedness in Eden bespeaks a spiritual state of being, and the attempt to cover that nakedness was indeed an expression of religiousness!

In an effort to appear other than he is man sews together very wide leaves of the fig tree; that is, he tries every device he can, including multiplied religious works and observances, to gloss over his true condition. But all the garments which men devise to hide their nakedness become mere "spider's webs" when the dazzling light of God's revelation shines upon them. There is nothing more obvious than the fact that leaves quickly wither, turn brown and brittle, and fall off and, indeed, clothed in all the dead works of religion ***man's flesh soon shows through*** and it becomes manifest that his covering is pitifully insufficient.

The first thing God does is strip away all the artificial, man-made coverings, and presents His own glorious covering, the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world! "For Adam also and for his wife the Lord God made long coats (tunics) of skins, and clothed them" (Gen. 3:21, Amplified). In the symbolism of the garden of Eden story Adam and Eve silently watched as the Lord God selected a lamb and slew it there, fastening it to a tree before their wondering eyes, the victim then being made naked, stripped of its skin, that a covering might be provided for the naked ones. Thus, with this one wondrous act does the God of heaven introduce *the cross, the atonement, and the Christ as man's covering!* When God clothed Adam and Eve in the skins of the slain Lamb, yet dripping with the precious blood, He showed that they were COVERED WITH THE LIFE OF THE LAMB! When God covers a man with the covering of His own Lamb the covering is so complete that ***no flesh will be seen — only Christ!*** This is not merely a reference to our initial salvation, but speaks further of the finality of our perfection as

the sons of God! It was a prophecy of the Lord's ultimate purpose for the man in the image and likeness of God. Fully clothed in the life of the Lamb, we bear the Lamb's own image, likeness, and identity. Now we see how 144,000 *lamb*s appear on mount Zion! And this corporate Lamb appears throughout the book of Revelation!

God is calling a people in this hour beyond *profession* to *possession*. It is easy to embrace the message of sonship and the kingdom of God, and presume that by the very revelation of it we have somehow attained, but to be a son of God one must truly and fully *put on the Lord Jesus Christ*. It should be clear to all who have eyes to see that when the scripture makes such statements as, "put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ," "put on the whole armor of God," "put on the armor of light," "put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem," "be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven," these cannot be put on the outer physical body, they must be put on in a spiritual way over the nature of the natural man. Those who have put on Christ bear the image, likeness, and identity of Christ! They are truly and sincerely living and doing always the pure and perfect will of their Father in heaven, just as the firstborn Son of God did. Any who *claim* to be sons of God but continue to walk after the flesh, exhibiting the impure traits of the outer man of flesh, and continue to walk and live in the old carnal religious orders of the past, reveal that they are clothed in a false covering which in no way conceals their flesh.

Let me tell you about those who profess, but do not possess. It reminds me of one of my favorite childhood stories. An emperor was prepared to ascend the throne in a far distant country. He announced a search for the finest fabric and the finest tailor to weave an inaugural gown unlike any other. The gown would demonstrate that his regime was different than any other. The plea for help went out throughout the land. Finally, a tailor convinced the emperor that he had obtained the finest fabric ever woven. So fine that it could not even be seen by the human eye! He persuaded the emperor to hire him. For weeks he worked on this garment day and night until it was finished.

Again, word spread throughout the kingdom announcing that on the day of the inauguration the emperor would appear robed in the finest robe ever worn in human history. When the day came, throngs of people gathered at the palace. The emperor stepped out on his balcony. There was loud sustained laughter throughout the crowd. But it took a little child in the far distant crowd to point out the truth. Once the applause waned, the child stood up and pointed. "Look," he said, "the emperor has no clothes!" He was right. The emperor stood stark naked. All the claims were empty. They were not true. And so it is today! I do not hesitate to tell you that in this day of kingdom manifestation, when the sons of God step forth upon the balcony of kingdom authority and dominion, any who have clothed themselves in wishful thinking, presumptuousness, self-assurance, self-righteousness, overconfidence, or the withering fig-leaves of past moves of God and the obsolete and dying church orders, will stand there stark naked before all men and the day shall declare who are truly manifest sons of God.

There is a condition worse even than this! "Thou sayest, I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and **blind**, and **naked**." Blind *and* naked! Now it naturally follows that, if you're blind, it really doesn't matter that you're also naked. What difference could it make to a group of blind people if they were naked? They would be unable to see whether anyone had clothes on or not. If we were all sitting around blind we couldn't see anything anyway! It would make no difference. And that, precious friend of mine, is where vast multitudes of the Lord's people are today — those who have not *put on Christ* — they're all blind and naked! They have no covering, but they haven't a clue that they have no covering. They are busily running hither and thither, engaged with multiplied religious activities — all in their nakedness! And they are unaware that

the called and chosen elect of God who have a vision given by the Lord can clearly see that! Because they are blind they suppose that no one else can see. But God has a people who walk with Him in the Spirit in this hour who *can see!* They behold transcendent realities in the Spirit and they can also see the nakedness of the carnal man.

ANOINT THINE EYES WITH EYESALVE

"I counsel thee to...*anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see*" (Rev. 3:18).

Laodicea had a famous medical school; and in particular it was famous for two kinds of medicine. It was famous for a certain ointment made of nard which was used to cure ear-aches. But above all it was famous for a certain eye-powder. The *tephra phrygia*, the eye-powder of Laodicea, was world-famous. It was exported in tablet form; and the tablets were ground down and applied to the eyes. This powder was held to be a sure cure for weak and ailing eyes.

One of the last counsels the Lord gave to His people in His messages to the seven churches is that we should ask Him to anoint our eyes with eye-salve that we may see. This eye-salve is the same thing Paul prayed for us to receive: "*(May) the **eyes** of your **understanding** be enlightened; that ye may know what is the **hope of His calling**, and what are the **riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints***" (Eph. 1:18). Every true son of God has come to the realization that we cannot comprehend the things of God with our carnal mind or our own understanding. We are commanded to *anoint* our eyes with eye-salve that we may see or *understand* the high and holy things of the Spirit! That denotes an action on our part, and means that we must *seek* God's knowledge and wisdom, asking Him to reveal to us *His* understanding. This was the purpose for the scales that fell from the eyes of the apostle Paul when Ananias came to pray for him (Acts 9:17-18). Paul had to get rid of his old religious laws of righteousness and carnal understanding of the word of God before he could see the true righteousness of God and the things of the Spirit of God. Paul himself by his experience told us that the carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the (spiritual) law of God, neither indeed can be (Rom. 8:7). We cannot *figure out* what the Lord meant when He inspired the writers of the scriptures. God Himself, through the presence of His indwelling Spirit, must reveal to us the meaning of His Word. This is why the church has seen such a proliferation of denominations. Man has intertwined his own natural and carnal thinking with God's Word and created doctrines. Therefore all those who truly walk in the Spirit have now heeded the Lord's counsel and have anointed their eyes with eye-salve by asking *Him* for the understanding that comes only from above. The Lord has given us the seven spirits of God, which are the seven eyes of perfect perception, and the seven lamps of fire which burn before the throne, which enlighten us to the heavenly authority and dominion of the governmental realm of God. By these we are able to see and understand all that He reveals to us, even Himself!

The following words by Ray Prinzing are spiritually instructive. "The word *eye-salve* literally means a poultice, a plaster, bespeaking that which is placed upon the eyes to draw out all the infection or impurities that cause blurred vision, etc. How we need the eyes of our understanding anointed with that which would draw out all foreign material which affects our vision, so that we might see clearly. Christendom has had such a distorted vision, not only by reason of the motes and beams, but also because of the many carnal creeds and traditions of men, self-opinionated ideas, viewing through pre-conceived concepts. How grateful we are for the '**removal**' of all the things which cloud our vision! Blurred, distorted, confused — until the Holy Spirit cleanses and removes the debris. The process of this purging is not always easy, often it is painful, but as one songwriter so beautifully expressed it, 'He washed my eyes with

tears that I might see...' Our attitudes are changed, our priorities brought into balance, and we focus more clearly on the goal that is set before us" — end quote.

Bill Britton also aptly wrote on this point: "You would not want a blind cook in a restaurant preparing the food for your body. He might accidentally dump rat poison into the pot instead of baking soda. He certainly would not be able to balance the ingredients properly. So much more should we avoid having a blind man feed us spiritual food! It is tragic how many blind cooks we have feeding the bread of God today! They can remember the size, shape, and feel of the products (moves of God) of yesteryear when they had their vision. But when a new product (move and revelation of God) comes along, they are in immediate confusion. Their only action is to throw out the new truth, because they are not familiar with it. The problem is that some poisons come in the same size and shape packages as old familiar truths! Saints whose sight is being restored are escaping from such ministries. If you cannot see the present truth God is unveiling today, then you are disqualified to feed the people of God. Go to the Healer and have your eyesight restored! 'Awake, thou that sleepest...and Christ shall give thee light'" — end quote.

To be *blind* means simply to have *no vision* of what the Father desires. The natural mind is very dark and without understanding. Only the Holy Spirit can awaken it! Human efforts to enlighten men to the deep spiritual things of God will always fail. There is a time to speak, when the Father bids us speak as the oracle of God, but **ONLY TO CHRIST IS POWER GIVEN TO OPEN THE EYES OF THE BLIND!** This explains why the Bible remains to a great degree a closed book to the most educated but unconverted or unanointed man, while it is an open book to many of the most ignorant of believers. This explains why a man may be educated and trained to hold all the theological degrees that all the theological seminaries in the world can bestow upon him, and yet be utterly blind to the great spiritual revelations of the Word of God, while a poor, simple, uneducated saint will see truths and revelations of infinite depth and eternal glory which are absolutely unintelligible to others. This explains why carnally minded men who have read the Bible and studied it through and through, and know the Hebrew and Greek, will yet fail to find the living Christ or the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, or the glories of the kingdom of God, or the wonderful hope of sonship to God, or the blessed truth of the restoration of the whole creation to life and freedom from the curse. Spiritual truths are for spiritual people and must be spiritually discerned. Therefore, without the enlightening of the spiritual eyes of understanding men are spiritually as blind as bats and it is impossible for the unquickened man to behold the wonders of the heavenly world. At the same time, the most humble and unlearned saint who has been sovereignly apprehended of God has no difficulty in seeing all these glorious truths, and a thousand more, as plain as the noonday sun! I would rather spend my whole day with an illiterate grandmother who has spiritual eyes to see the mysteries of God than ten minutes with a blind churchman.

I once read a story about a missionary who saw this fellow sitting on a porch. He spoke to this man, and said, "Are you lost?" The man replied, "Why, no, I have lived here for forty years." The missionary said, "I mean, have you found Jesus?" "I did not know He was lost," the man responded. "I am here to find out if you are a Christian man," the exasperated missionary tried again. The man answered again, "There is a Bill Christian who lives three or four miles over the ridge." The missionary, being flustered, said again, "I mean, are you ready for the judgment day?" "When is it?" asked the man. The missionary replied, "Well, it may be today, or tomorrow, or next week, or next month, we do not know those things." "Well," the man answered, "When you know about them things, let me know."

True, a bit of humor in that story, but the plain truth is that the understanding of the holy truths and the deep mysteries of the Spirit of God are just as misunderstood and darkened by the natural mind of the unspiritual man, as were the simple questions of the missionary by the poor ignorant and unchurched man rocking away on his porch. The vast majority of the teachings of the churches with their time-honored traditions, static creeds, and empty ceremonies have no more to do with the kingdom of God and the life of the spirit than do the incoherent babblings of a mad man with the scientific formulas of an Einstein. I pity the Christian who walks through life having no understanding of **what the spirit is saying**. The fresh air of revelation never breaths upon his soul, but he stumbles along through life attending his church, listening to insipid sermons from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, singing of a beautiful land on a far away strand, mistaking the myriad traditions of the elders for the sublime truths of God, but never being able to grasp the truth the Spirit is unfolding right now for those who follow on to know the Lord in deeper measures. And yet, the truth remains — ONLY CHRIST CAN OPEN THE EYES OF THE BLIND!

Whenever Christ comes, whenever God bestows mercy, the light of His countenance is our light, His appearing is our vision, and His presence is our heaven. If we just touch Him, we see light! In the midst of great adversity Job cried out, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand *at the latter day* upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet *in my flesh shall I SEE GOD: whom I shall SEE FOR MYSELF, AND MINE EYES SHALL BEHOLD*, and not another" (Job 19:25-27). Job believed deeply within his heart that in some future distant day he would **see God**, but what he failed to understand was that *at that very moment* God was working mightily within him to bring that very reality to pass in his experience. It was only a short time until this same Job cried out in ecstatic wonder, "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but **NOW mine eye seeth Thee!**" (Job 42:5). God was unveiled to Job in the crucible of his testing and proving. First he had declared that he would see God *in the latter day*, but his confession became changed to NOW!

Could it not be that the Spirit is revealing to us that the "latter day" is not a date on the calendar, but a dimension of our own experiencing of Christ? The apostles referred again and again to "these last days" as they were moving from the old covenant to the new, from Moses to Christ, from law to grace, from a carnal understanding of the Word to a spiritual, and from shadow to reality. For them it was truly the last days of one order and the dawning of another within themselves! It is easy to shove the purposes of God in us off to some distant time or age, but God would have us enter them now! Our latter day becomes the time of transition in our own experience, whereby we move out of one understanding and experience into another. Methinks that I have passed through a number of "latter day" periods in my walk in the Spirit as I have moved from realm to realm and from glory to glory in the heavens of God! It is always in the last days that we begin to *see God in a greater way and in a higher dimension of the revelation of Himself*. It is indeed wonderful!

The Lord tells us to "anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see," and yet, is not the eye-salve something of Himself — for truly Christ is the only Healer! We are instructed to buy the eye-salve of Him! No matter how much we strive for light, it is of no use; regardless how much we struggle, it is in vain. It is not that you are a little carnal, so you cannot see light, and that I am a little pious, therefore light comes; or that you are a little lazy, so you cannot see light, and I am a little diligent, therefore I see light. Enlightening the eyes of our understanding does not depend on the self-effort of our striving and struggling, but on the purpose and power of God! Alas, how many there are today who make their own light by lighting lamps and kindling fires. When darkness comes, they do not wait till dawn, till the sun rises, till God moves afresh by His Spirit; they themselves go to kindle a fire, to stir up something soulish by

self-effort, to make light themselves. God says that all those who kindle a fire to enlighten themselves shall end in sorrow. That is God's decree!

Some in this very hour are not willing to wait for the inworkings of God to bring the true manifestation of the sons of God, so they are out claiming to be manifest sons, walking in a light that God has not kindled. And what a poor light it is! A brother said recently, "We have been declaring manifest sonship for fifty years and have not seen any manifest sons. It is time to stop talking and come out from behind the veil and manifest." And I suppose he is out there "manifesting." But I can guarantee you that he is not manifesting anything beyond what we have had for the past two thousand years! And *that*, my beloved, has not gotten the job done! More of the same will *never* bring the nations into the kingdom of God or deliver creation from the bondage of corruption. I would rather believe that the fresh word of sonship and the kingdom and the sovereign move of the Spirit that has come progressively over the past fifty years, and which is now bearing kingdom fruit in a called and chosen remnant, has within it greater potential to bring us to the fullness of our sonship than any word or move of God that has been in the earth for *two thousand years* and still hasn't brought us to the full revelation of Christ! If I had planted bananas here in El Paso every year for the past two thousand years and never got even one bunch of bananas, I think I would have the wisdom to understand that bananas aren't going to grow here and it is time to move on to something else. GOD HIMSELF is moving us onward into this new day of the kingdom, it is His work, and it is marvelous in our eyes! We have now passed through the "last days" of the church age within ourselves and are seeing the form of the Son of God appearing in a people prepared for the new age of the kingdom we are entering. If you are not able to see this, my friend, I counsel you to "anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see."

The scripture is clear that "where there is *no vision*, the people perish" (Prov. 29:18). Ray Prinzing once pointed out that translated literally, the people are "naked," for our vision is our covering until we are swallowed up into the reality of its fulfillment. We *perish*, or fall away, naked and ashamed, unless we have received of the Lord *a vision*. There is no doubt that this reveals clearly why so many past moves of God have gone into apostasy. There can be no stagnation in the kingdom of God, no *status quo*, for God's purposes are progressive, ongoing, and ever advancing from glory to glory! The moment we receive no *new vision* even the light we have begins to burn out and turn to darkness. Still, it is not enough to *have a vision* — we must progress onward to ***become the very fulfillment*** of the vision within ourselves! My deepest prayer is that all who read these lines may have *open eyes* to see as God sees, to understand and comprehend all that God is speaking in this great day of the Lord, all that God has prepared for His called and chosen ones, and follow on to be progressively developed and prepared for its consummation.

You do not understand a thing by memorizing it. You may memorize the whole Constitution of the United States of America or the whole Bible and not understand any of it. I have met people who prided themselves that they had read the Bible through "from cover to cover" numerous times and had put to memory whole chapters and books of it — yet it was obvious that they were utterly blind to the great spiritual truths and eternal glory within the pages of this blessed Book of Books. You do not understand a thing by hearing it, by seeing it, by reading it, or by any representation that can be made of it. You only understand by *knowing*, the knowing that comes by the spirit of *revelation*. "The *eyes of your understanding* being enlightened" is knowledge — personal, real, conscious possession. That insight into a thing that gives the true knowledge of it is what it means to "see." What depths this gives to the words of Jesus to His disciples: "And I'll tell you something else and this is the truth, that there are some of you standing right here in front of me who will not die before you have had a ***dramatic insight*** into

the kingdom of God and how it comes with power" (Mat. 16:28; Mk. 1:9; Lk. 9:27). It is not to see it outwardly with the eyes, it is to see it inwardly with the understanding. It is not merely to repeat, or be able to tell about it, but to *know* it. It means a **dramatic insight!** The dramatic insight reveals how the kingdom of God comes with power; that is, it releases the power within to bring into fruition that which we have *seen!*

The purpose of *seeing* looks toward *becoming*. Until we have experienced that mysterious transformation that is the result of **dramatic insight** the work of God is incomplete. And becoming is not for our benefit or glory, but to fulfill the high purposes of our Father in the earth! We are not curiosity seekers, or thrill seekers, nor do we have any desire to go out to "meet needs" on the level we have in the past. There are plenty of believers to meet needs on those levels! God has shown us a vision of something greater, higher, grander, with kingdom dynamics, to raise all creation to higher realms in God. The veil has been drawn back, and we have caught a glimpse of the glory of sonship and what it means for creation! This vision is now working in us, purging, purifying, quickening, changing, preparing to be revealed in us. How we groan as we find this heaviness of the veil of flesh still upon us, to blur and make hazy that which we would behold more clearly. The carnal mind cannot see God! But oh! There is eye-salve from the hand of the Master and our vision is increasing daily with the increase of God. Aren't you glad!

My heart leaps within me as I contemplate this wonderful reality — being CHANGED! From the distant mountain peaks of faith comes a sound as clear as morning chimes. It is the voice of the inspired apostle sounding out from centuries past, "*Beholding* as in a glass the glory of the Lord, *we are changed* into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (II Cor. 3:18). Beholding — we are changed! How important are our *seeing eyes!* It is the same message — "We shall be changed...in the twinkling of an eye!" We are changed by a beholding, by a looking, by **a look**, often necessitating a turning. Sometimes it takes a lot to turn us! The Psalmist cries out, "*Turn us*, O Lord. Cause Thy face to shine and we shall be saved" (Ps. 80:3,7,19). It is only as we turn in the direction of the present glory that we can know transformation! You can read the history of revivals, you can study the exploits of men of faith in centuries past, you can reminisce about the great visitations of God of yesteryear. There is not enough power in such things to transform you! And there is no need to cry, "Lord, do it again!" for God *will not* do it again. You can count on it, for our God is ever progressive in the outworking of His purposes, and He doesn't retrogress to "do it again." That is the vainest of hopes! This is a new day and God is doing a new thing! Transformation comes only in the light of the present glory and revelation of Jesus Christ. We must turn, to behold Him as He is, to behold Him in what He is doing, not in what He has done. If you can only tell me what God did two thousand years ago, or fifty years ago, or five years ago, or yesterday, it is TURNING TIME!

It will take more than sermons on sonship and exhortations on the great purposes of God to conform us to the image of the Son of God. We must **see Him** to be changed into His likeness! The elect of the Lord are now seeing Him **as He is!** We have come beyond the chorus singing, hands clapping, shouting Amens and Hallelujahs, prophesying and preaching to one another about the deep mysteries of God so that we can be changed. Thank God for all those things, but they do not change us! It is only in **meeting Him** as Thomas and Paul and John met Him. That is the truth of the book of Revelation! Christ must be revealed to us, and, praise His name, He is being revealed to all who have eyes to see. We are now hearing His voice speaking to us out of the deepest recesses of our spirits. We are communing with Him upon the heavenly mount Zion in the glory of God that radiates from the face of Jesus Christ. Sonship is being established in our lives by personal association with Christ Himself!

I am willing to stake all that I have and all that I am on this one bold assertion: No man or woman can ever be changed into the image of God or put on incorruptibility or be changed into the glorification of immortality to be a manifest son of God until he has cast off the yoke of the carnal mind and the bondages of human tradition and religion, and the clinging to any and all former visitations, movings, and workings of God, in order to MEET THE FIRSTBORN SON PERSONALLY, COMMUNE WITH HIM INTIMATELY, BE JOINED VITALLY WITH HIM IN THE UNION OF HIS MIND, NATURE, AND LIFE, and then continues to walk in the light and glory of what he sees.

The promise of this vision assures us of the perfecting of the powers of our spiritual life. "Anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see!" When Moses desired the vision of the glory of God, he was warned that no man can see God's face and live. No man can stand in the full blaze of divine glory until he himself corresponds in nature to that glory. The glare of the eastern sun on desert sands has dazed men's eyes; the fierce, gleaming radiance of sunlight on the snowclad hills has blinded human sight, and none can, with naked eye, behold the sun in the sky. How, then, can our mortal vision turn its gaze upon the glory that is ineffable? When John on Patmos saw the glory of God's Christ he "fell as dead" in the overwhelming presence. Our nature is not constituted to bear the blaze of uncreated light. But this restricted nature is not for ever. For the burning radiance of His holy light shining upon us releases us as we are exposed to it from the obstructiveness of our own impaired senses, and then with purged heart, renewed mind, and quickened life we perceive Him. In this world if a man stares at the sun he will be blinded. But in the higher world of the spirit to gaze upon the countenance of the Son of Righteousness is to be CHANGED! It is indeed wonderful!

We enter this world with five senses: sight, hearing, smelling, taste, and touch. These are natural physiological and soulful senses, and feed information to our natural mind. Peter writes about our new birth, explaining that we are "being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever" (I Pet. 1:23). This new birth is by an incorruptible seed, by the Word of God, even that Word which was from the beginning, which is also the true light and the life of men, and which "lighteth every man coming into the world" (Jn. 1:1-4,9). When we are born of the Spirit, we receive these same senses on the higher plane of spirit, in the inner-man body. In the natural no one has ever been able to see in this world unless they have been born. So it is in the spiritual realm! Jesus speaks of this spiritual sight in His conversation with Nicodemus, saying, "Except a man be *born again* he cannot **see** the kingdom (realm) of God" (Jn. 3:3).

The question follows — what is meant by the term "born again"? Jesus tells us that "that which is born of the flesh *is flesh*, and that which is born of the Spirit *is spirit*" (Jn. 3:6). Birth is not the beginning of human existence, but it does mark the beginning of human identity. Though we already exist, we have no name, no birth certificate, no legal identity, no citizenship, no civil rights, no ability to inherit — until we are *born!* The baby that is born already existed in the womb, and even before that its life existed in the sperm of the father and the egg of the mother. Some say that human life begins at conception, but that is not entirely true. The writer to the Hebrews clearly tells us that Levi (the son of Aaron, the high priest) existed *in the loins of his father Abraham FOUR HUNDRED YEARS BEFORE HE WAS BORN!* Not only did his life exist in the loins of Abraham, but he *paid tithes* to Melchizedek while he was in the loins of Abraham! "And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, paid tithes in Abraham. For he was yet in the loins of his father (Abraham), when Melchizedek met him" (Heb. 7:9-10). So, when did Levi's life begin? You see, if Abraham would have died before Isaac was born, there never would have been a Levi! Levi would have died with Abraham, yea, *in Abraham*. To murder Abraham would be to murder not just one man, but to also murder all his progeny.

None of us began at the moment of our conception, just as none of us began at the moment of our birth!

That which is born of the flesh *is flesh*. That which is born of the Spirit *is spirit*. That is the mystery. The flesh child *is flesh* before it is born, else it could not be said that that which is born of the flesh *is flesh*. Likewise, the spirit child *is spirit* before it is born, otherwise we could not say that that which is born of the Spirit *is spirit*. Spirit is born of Spirit, just as flesh is born of flesh. But flesh has to *be flesh before* it is born. And spirit has to *be spirit before* it is born. Therefore the birth is not its beginning! The birth merely brings the babe, which already existed, flesh or spirit, into a new realm, into an awakened consciousness, into a new awareness, a new dimension, into a new standing, into new rights and privileges and inheritance — but the birth is *not* the beginning of its existence! Can you not see the mystery? If mankind were not already *spirit beings* in the womb of the Father they could not be *born into the kingdom of God* by the Spirit! It's just as simple as that.

God is the Father of *spirits*. But let us remember, a father does not *father* his offspring at the time of the offspring's *birth*. Oh, no! The father fathers his child in one sense at the time of conception, but in God's estimation, as we have seen in the case of Levi, the father is the father of every child who is contained in his life. Abraham was the "father" of Levi, the record plainly states, four hundred years before Levi was born! Now we read of God, "Besides this, we have had earthly fathers to discipline us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject unto the *Father of spirits* and live?" (Heb. 12:9). Someone says, "Oh, yes, God is the Father of every *born again* person who is now a child of God." But let us see what the scripture says about this. "O God, the God of the *spirits of all flesh*" (Num. 16:22). That we might better comprehend, I must follow this instructive passage with some pertinent questions. Does *every flesh man* have a spirit? Is every man, saved or unsaved, composed of *spirit, soul, and body*, or do only believers have a spirit? If every man has a spirit, where did his spirit come from? Did it come from God? Did it come from his parents? Did it come from the devil? Was *your spirit*, when you were born, *already "fallen"*? When did your spirit originate? Did it originate at the moment of your physical birth? Did it originate at the moment of your conception in the womb? Did it originate before your conception? Was it already a "fallen" spirit before you were born? If not, when did it "fall"? Is God actively in the business of begetting "fallen" or "dead" spirits? Is God really the Father of the *spirits of ALL FLESH*?

There is another passage of scripture which will greatly aid our understanding. "But there is a *spirit* in man, and the *inspiration* of the Almighty giveth them understanding" (Job. 32:8). It is something great in man, as the speaker, Elihu, conceives that he is spirit, and, as being such, is capable of being inspired. For he is not, as many teachers suppose, referring to the historical fact that the Almighty breathed into Adam, in the beginning, the breath of life; but, speaking in the present tense, he magnifies man as being able to be inspired, *because he is spirit*, and it is God who inspires him!

It is important that we get the connection between "spirit" and "inspiration." The only reason man can be "inspired" is because there is within him a "spirit." The word "inspiration" denotes the act of *in-breathing*, that is, man can "breathe in" or be "breathed into" only because there is within him a *spirit*! It means to be visited internally, to be raised in consciousness, understanding, and intelligence. In this sense Bezaleel, when working on the tabernacle in the wilderness, was inspired as he was "filled with the Spirit of God, in wisdom and in understanding, to devise cunning works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, and in cutting of stones, to set them, and in carving of timber" (Ex. 31:1-5). A man is in-spired when he is raised internally, in consciousness, thought, feeling, understanding, perception, ability, or

action by a divine movement within! It is *God's Spirit* quickening *our spirit*, and thus bringing a change, a release, a quickening, a raising so that our spirit may function as it was designed to function. This is what Jesus described as "born again," the spirit that already existed as the offspring of God being brought forth, just as a flesh baby is brought forth into the world, into a new realm, a new level of identity, a new consciousness, a new expression, a new ability, a new standing, new rights and privileges and inheritance! That which is thus "born" of the Spirit is *spirit!*

Just as it is the distinction of a crystal, that it is transparent, able to let the light into and through its close flinty body, and be irradiated by it in the whole mass of its substance, thus obtaining and expressing a glory it does not possess apart from the entrance of light, without being at all more or less than a crystal, so it is the grand distinction of all humanity that it is penetrable by the Spirit of God, able to receive, entemple, and radiate the Holy Spirit; to be energized by Him and filled with His glory, in every faculty, feeling, and power. Thus "the *Spirit* beareth witness with *our spirit*, that we *are* the children (offspring) of God!" (Rom. 8:16). And "because ye *are sons*, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son *into your hearts (spirit)*, crying, Abba, Father!" (Gal. 4:6). "There is a *spirit* in man, and the *inbreathing* of the Almighty giveth them understanding."

The seed of God is in every man, and that seed *is the spirit of man*. But you meet the drunk on the street, you see your unconverted neighbor, you rub shoulders with the people of the world, you watch the evening news on television, and you don't see God in anybody! That is because God in every man is a *seed*. A seed doesn't do anything. It just is. It can lie on the shelf for fifty years and never express a thing! Seeds have been found in the tombs of Egypt that are more than three thousand years old, and they look today just as they did when they were placed there, but they have never produced a harvest. You see, my beloved, just as the seed (sperm) of a man and the seed (egg) of a woman must *conceive* in order to change, grow, be born, and express and accomplish, so must a seed of the vegetable kingdom be *germinated* in order to be productive. The life is hid in the seed, but it is covered by the outer shell and abides in a state of dormancy, inactivity, or death. It must be planted in the earth, then subjected to two things: heat and moisture. The rain falls upon it, the sun shines upon it, and suddenly there comes a mighty release! There is a stirring of that life that is restrained on the inside, the shell that conceals that life bursts open, and the life within springs forth, puts down roots, and grows upward; it breaks through the earth and is "born" into a new world, a new realm, a new expression, a new form, and a new ability. It rises high enough to draw its life from new dimensions.

Can we not see by this that the spirit of man is indeed the seed of God but it is buried in, encased by, the outer man of the flesh, the carnal understanding, and the natural consciousness. Just as a credit card or a cell phone must be *activated*, the spirit of man must be activated! Until it is activated it is not a living, pulsating, energizing, ruling, growing power in man. It must be *germinated, quickened* by the power of the invigorating rain of God's Word and the warm sunshine of God's Spirit! Once our spirit is quickened by God's Spirit, it springs forth into *birth*. And that which is born of the Spirit *is spirit* — if it were not spirit, the offspring of God, it would not be quickened into God-like-ness by the act of re-generation!

Once the spirit of man is birthed into the kingdom realm of God, just as a flesh and blood baby is birthed into the world, he then becomes aware of his five *spiritual senses* in the spiritual realm. The five senses of the outer man are able to see, hear, taste, touch, and smell natural things; but these same five senses in the world of the spirit are able to see, hear, taste, touch, and smell all spiritual and heavenly things which are invisible and incorruptible, as the apostle

explains, "...eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him — but God HATH REVEALED THEM UNTO US **BY THE SPIRIT**; for the *spirit* searcheth (out) all things, yea the deep things of God" (I Cor. 2:9-14).

When we are born (quicken) from above the FIVE SENSES OF THE SPIRIT WORLD are released and become operative in the inner-man body, which is Christ. Gradually, as this inner man grows and increases we discover and become aware of these senses, the **eyes** of our understanding being enlightened, becoming wider and wider to the things not seen by the natural eye of understanding; by degrees the **hearing** of faith increases until every good promise of God is established as truth within; in time we come into **touch** with the Lord and His invisible presence, glory, and powers; little by little we **taste** and see that the Lord is very gracious, finding our food and sustenance out of the spirit realm rather than the outer world; after a time we come to appreciate those attributes of love, mercy, grace, and goodness and those sacrifices and incense-prayers and praises which are a **sweet odor** unto the Lord, and a fragrance of life unto men. As the natural senses can be cultivated, so can the spiritual; and the cultivation of these spiritual senses constitutes marks indicating our growth in grace, our development as sons of God, to the completeness of our new selves in the glory, honor, and immortality of the divine nature.

The scriptures are plain. We can have eyes and not see, ears and not hear — so we must have two sets of eyes and two sets of ears — we have ears within that can hear on a level that is not heard by the outer ear, and eyes on a plane that can see into a realm that is not seen by the outer eye. "*The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places...*" (Eph. 1:18-20).

The sons of God have eyes within them that see on a level that is not seen by the eyes of the outer-man body. You can have 20/20 vision with your physical eyes and never see what you see with the "eyes of your understanding." It must forever be settled in our hearts that there is no true reality in any of the things that are seen by the outer eye, for how can we say that things which are always changing and passing away are realities? The only abiding things in the whole universe are the things which are *not seen* by the outer eye, and yet it is not that they are really invisible, for they are merely invisible to the kinds of eyes we have in our outer-man body. The Holy Spirit has faithfully recorded of Moses, that grand hero of faith and spiritual vision, that "by faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured as **SEEING HIM WHO IS INVISIBLE**" (Heb. 11:27).

Here is the mighty power of man's regenerated spirit: it sees what others cannot see! It sees, amid the thousand things natural men see and are guided by, something infinitely greater and more real — it SEES GOD! No wonder it leads a man to think and act differently from other men. On everything it looks at, the bright light of eternity is shining! No wonder that under the inspiration of that vision it can do mighty deeds, for it sees God its life and power. Let me here say to every saint of God that just as, in any pursuit, the eye can be trained to see what others cannot see, so the spiritual eyes of the new creation inner-man body can be trained to see God everywhere. Abide in His presence until the heart is filled with it. You will begin to recognize HIM in everything that happens! Seek to walk in the light of His countenance. Seeing the **invisible** will make it easy to forsake this world and do the will of God! Then you

will see all things *as they really are!* The heavenly world is shut up from the natural man. He cannot see eternal things! He sees only natural things of the lower world.

"Anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see!"

Ah, God has called out a people in this day, even out of lukewarm, self-satisfied, self-sufficient Laodicea, to know Him and walk with Him as king-priests in His kingdom. And may I with all reverence add that if your eyes do see the precious truths and special calling of God for this hour, then lift up holy hands in praise and thanksgiving and worship to HIM who has called and chosen you by His grace. "Blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear" (Mat. 13:16). While we recognize the blindness of the church systems of man, and admonish the Lord's elect to purify themselves from all the Babylonish spirit and ways of the old dying church order, yet — we cannot rail upon those precious believers who are now blind to these wonderful things — they are our brethren, fellow members of the great household of God, though they stand not with the Lamb upon mount Zion. Let us not puff up with pride because of what we see, as though our light is brighter than any other, but with all humility of mind make our calling and election sure. The words of the following poem are pertinent to all who *think themselves to be something higher than they are:*

The Spring blew trumpets of color;
Her green sang in my brain —
I heard a blind man groping
"Tap—tap" with his cane.
I pitied him his blindness;
But can I boast, "I see?"
Perhaps there walks a spirit
Close by, who pities me —
A spirit who hears me tapping
The five-sensed cane of mind
Amid such unguessed glories —
Of a realm where I may be blind!

Chapter 61

The Church In Laodicea

continued

"As many as I love, I *rebuke and chasten*: be zealous therefore, and repent" (Rev. 3:19).

The trials and testings which are the daily experience of those apprehended of God in this hour are designed to develop a character worthy of one called to reign with Christ in His kingdom. Our Father rules and overrules in each of these for our good. Sometimes they take the form of chastening, as we read, "If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not?" (Heb. 12:7). Ordinarily we think of the word "chastisement" as signifying correcting for wrongdoing. But in the scriptures it is especially used to convey the idea of education or instruction in righteousness. The word in Greek which is translated chasten is *paiedeia*, and comes from the word *paideia*, which means *child*. The verb is *paiduo*, and has the meaning of "to train, to educate, to instruct, to teach." Chastisement is, therefore, the training, education, instruction, and correction of ignorance for the child's learning. Those chosen to reign with Christ in the authority and power of the kingdom of God need to have practical lessons in character development — lessons of a very high order! Consequently we receive chastening such as no other creatures in the universe have been subject to, aside from our Lord. We must receive the training necessary to fully conform us to our Father's mind, will, and ways in every instance and under all circumstances.

God is chastening His sons, training them as a father trains his child. He is educating us and bringing us under discipline. He is not punishing us because we have done wrong, but He does correct us that we may learn His ways. Discipline is much more than punishment. Discipline is something you do **for** your child, not **to** your child. Discipline is part of the character you build into your child that will give him a way of life. Correction is necessary for children! A baby is an innocent little thief. It takes everything it can lay its hands on, and constantly misappropriates unless watched. It has not any notion of what is right. It understands nothing of wisdom. We have to teach children everything! One of the greatest curses of this country is that children are not lovingly, but firmly, corrected, restrained, and taught righteousness. They are permitted to be their own masters and do their own thing when they ought to be under government. Armed with the understanding that chastisement is more than punishing for wrong doing, it is clear that if a man is always beating his child, but never blessing; always grumbling, complaining, and criticizing, but never praising; always discouraging and putting down, but never encouraging and inspiring, he will destroy the child. God is a loving Father and does not want to punish us at all! Yet, it is better to correct and teach us that we may obey Him, than for us to end up as spiritual delinquents! Spiritually spoiled brats, who only receive *blessings* and *benefits* from the Father, as many Christians seek, especially those in the "faith" movement, will not reign with Christ in His kingdom!

Bennie Skinner once shared this wise counsel: "You need to know God in all the sides of His nature; if you knew all the sides of God's nature, you would understand how a God of love can allow bad things to happen to good people, and not only allow it, but bring it to pass. When you know God in all the sides of His nature you do not think of Him as an indulgent old granddaddy who lets everybody do anything they want to, and He still loves them anyhow — 'it's alright darling, everything will be wonderful in the end.' Ah, yes, it *will* be wonderful in the end — but let me tell you something, beloved; before you get to that end you are going to discover another side to God's nature. When I had children born to me I loved those children *unconditionally*. There were no reservations to my love, for I am a father. Regardless of what they did, how they acted, or what they didn't do, I still loved them the same. But suppose I had said to them, 'I love you — I don't care what you do,' and just let it go at that. Do you know what kind of un-holy terrorists I would have raised? Do you know what kind of juvenile delinquents I would have reared if I would have said, 'Anything goes, everything goes, I love you darling, it's all right, it's O.K.,' and never taught them a thing about life or responsibility. Can you imagine how they would have lived?

"There are multitudes of people today who think of God in this way and so they think of themselves like that as parents. They don't want to bear the responsibility of showing another side to their nature! They equate love with permissiveness. They invest nothing into their children to teach them and train them. Consequently the children grow up to be delinquents. The real problem is **parental delinquency!** If you know and understand God and the different sides of His nature it will put a balance in your life that will be reflected in your home, in the way you treat your wife, in the way you treat your husband, the way you treat your children. Each of us, though we are one person, has various relationships and offices. I am a *father*. I am also a *son*. I am a *husband*. Furthermore, I am a *citizen* of Palm Beach County. I am a *member* of the human race. I am a *neighbor*. I am a *pastor*. I am all these things and more — and yet I am but one person. I do not act as a father in the same way I act as a husband. I do not act as a husband in the same way I act as a son. I do not act as a son in the same way I act as a neighbor. I do not act as a neighbor in the same way I act as a pastor. I have all these different sides to my nature, yet I am but one person. GOD HAS MANY SIDES TO HIS NATURE, BUT HE IS ONLY ONE GOD. These sides of God's nature are revealed through His **names**. For instance, the name **Yahweh** reveals the Father side of God. Yahweh is the stern One. Yahweh is the Law-giver. Yahweh is the Head. Yahweh does not deal with us in the same way that Jesus deals with us as Saviour! The Saviour is gracious in all ways, but there is awesome responsibility with being a Father. It requires wisdom, knowledge, and backbone!" — end quote.

Our heavenly Father is a wise parent! He it was who inspired the words, "Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him." We are not to despise this correction, no matter how severe or painful, and we are not to faint when we are rebuked or admonished of Him. We have come to realize that this is for our good and is part of our training as sons of God! How full of truth are the words of the wise man, "He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that *loveth* him chasteneth him betimes" (Prov. 13:24). If the parent spares the rod, or does not correct the son, then the Bible says that such a parent *hates* his son! But the parent that *loves* his son chastens him betimes. The word "betimes" carries a special significance also, for it figuratively means "be up early at any task" with the implication of earnestness.

This definition takes chastening out of the realm of emotion and puts it in the realm of what is best for the son. The emotional reaction of the parent to the misdeed of the son is not allowed in the act of chastening at all. It is entirely upon the basis of what *must be done to train*,

educate, instruct, teach, and develop the character of the son. It is a necessary action to bring the son into line with the ideal of the father for him. This is an exact picture of God's love for His family of sons! *It is God's business* to chasten us and He does it with an earnestness and perseverance that we know nothing of!

This love that we are under today is a chastening love! It is a love that prunes, that shakes, that molds us and makes us to be just what our Father purposes for us to be. We have heard parents say again and again, "I don't want my children to go through what I had to go through." So they work and struggle and sacrifice to give their children something better than they had. In many instances those parents are only indulging their children, handing everything to them on a silver platter, making life easy for them. These children do not *learn the lessons*, the principles of hard work, thriftiness, vision, perseverance, integrity, and purpose that the parents learned "through the things they suffered." So the children grow up thinking the world "owes" them something, and they are not a credit to their parents. It is the ones who come up the "hard way," the University of Hard Knocks, if you please, who generally are the ones who impart something to the uplifting of the world.

God is not that foolish! The love of God is a love that chastens. The book of Proverbs is a book of wisdom that teaches many beautiful principles of just and righteous living. In many cases these are written in the natural to parents, but God is doing this very thing today in the spiritual! It is this love of God that is doing it. One proverb says, "Chasten thy son, and let not thy soul spare for his crying" (Prov. 19:18). In plain language, if your child is crying and wailing because he is being spanked, or because he can't get his way or do what *he* wants to do, don't let up the pressure just because of his crying. I remember when I was a child, my father had a razor strap, for he had at one time been a barber. That razor strap was one of the instruments applied to my "seat of learning." I well remember my favorite scream while he was spanking me — "Stop! You're *killing me!* You're *killing me!*" I would wail this over and over again, but my father was a wise man. He knew he wasn't killing me, so my crying had no affect at all on the punishment! Should he have had pity and stopped, the effect of the chastisement would have been lost. Sometimes we get to the place where we cry to the Lord, saying, "Lord, I cannot take any more of this. I'll die if you put any more upon me." But like my father, the Lord just keeps pouring it on and pays no attention at all to us, though we cry loudly.

Was it not the Lord Himself who taught us this wisdom, "Withhold not correction from the child, for if thou beatest him with the rod, *he shall not die*" (Prov. 23:13). If our heavenly Father pitied us every time we whimper and cry when He is correcting us, and left off the correction, we would never amount to anything. We might spend eternity playing a harp on a golden street, but we would never rule the nations or deliver creation from the bondage of corruption! If God gave us everything we want, and answered every prayer we pray, and kept us from all the things we don't want to face, He would have nothing but a family of spoiled children on His hands. We would be no good for the age and the ages to come, nor qualified in any way to judge the world and angels!

How we praise God that He chastens us while there is yet hope, and He does not spare when we begin to cry. He goes right on, because He knows the end that He wants. He is training *sons* to govern the world when the time is ripe for it, and to reveal His nature, glory, and power to all creation! God knows what He wants to do in us, and we can groan and cry and wail all we want, but our Father will go on with the chastising. That is the kind of love and wisdom that will produce a son that the Father will be proud of, unto whom He can commit the reins of His government, and be willing to be glorified in!

We all know that a horse must be broken, that is, its *will* must be broken before it is of any practical use to man. God put that will in the horse, but it must be broken and made to conform to the will of man. Just as surely did God put the will in man, and just as surely the self-will of man must be broken and made to conform to the will of God! What a credit we will be to our Father, and what a benefit we will be to creation when HIS WILL has fully become OUR WILL! We do not like chastening and we had just as well admit it. No chastening for the present seems to be pleasant. But chastening will pay rich dividends in us when we have matured into the full measure of the stature of Christ. So we are truly thankful that God's chastening is just as it is and we would not have it any other way. I read the story of a man who told how his grandfather used to make him kiss the paddle after every whipping that he gave him. And if he didn't, he would get another whipping until he did! He told it in a humorous way, and on the surface it may sound comical to some, or cruel to others, but there is a great lesson in it. We can either resist God's instruction and get another whipping, or learn to thank Him, and *kiss the paddle He is using on us*, realizing that it is part of the process to mold us and make us what He wants us to be!

Stacy Wood told a story that a young man in the Marine Corp. had related to him. He said, *"One morning during boot camp training, our Drill Instructor took us out to a field where he ordered us to dig a long, deep trench. Furthermore, he told us we could not stop to eat or rest until we had completed the task. It took all day in the hot sun to complete our assignment. As the sun began to set in the west, we began to take comfort in looking forward to a good hot shower, a meal, and a full night of rest. Our Drill Instructor returned to check on us just before the chore was completed. As he approached, we could not believe what we heard. He appeared full of anger and was shouting, cursing, and fussing at the top of his voice. He said, 'Who told you to dig this hole in my field!' Someone said, 'You did, Sergeant!' He said, 'Who told you that?!' No one dared to argue with him. He then said, 'Fill that hole up!' It took nearly the whole night to complete the job and no one got any rest, or food, until we completed it.*

"This young Marine went on to say, *"I did not understand this discipline until I went to Vietnam. There I learned that such training often made the difference between life and death! On the battlefield I experienced the necessity of going without sleep for days at a time. Yet, it was critically important to remain not only awake, but alert, even when our physical bodies needed rest."*

This discipline was a hardship on those young recruits while in boot camp, and to them appeared absolutely meaningless and un-called-for! It probably made some of them angry. It certainly was not a pleasant experience at the time! However, it yielded the intended result on the field of battle where that training was so very, very important. In like manner, the Lord faithfully tutors and trains those who are to serve in the Lord's army which shall fight in the trenches in battle with the forces of sin and death, defeat the kingdom of darkness, and bring the kingdom of God to pass in the earth! We must learn to *endure hardness* as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. Everyone who fills a position of trust and responsibility in the kingdom undergoes discipline. Every *son* undergoes discipline, for if we are without chastisement, the apostle tells us, then are we bastards, and not sons. God disciplines us that we may share in His holiness. Thus, all who are called to sonship have learned to submit to the Father of spirits and live! There is great and eternal purpose in all the severity of our Father's dealings, and we have learned to love and appreciate this wonderful Father who would so fashion us and make us that which we could never become in any other way.

Oh wondrous love of God! Not a love that allows us to be indulged by God and gives us the privilege of doing just what we want, but a love that will "beat us within an inch of our lives" and

then raise us up in the image and likeness of God. Remember the words of Jude. "Keep yourselves in the love of God." Do not foolishly ask God to slacken His hand of chastisement, but keep yourself in the love of God, always looking at the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ. This will bring us into the life of the ages! This is the only way there. We used to have the idea that because Jesus died on the cross, everything was paid and finished and there was nothing but love, joy, peace, and prosperity forever. The death of Jesus, however, **WON'T KEEP US FROM LEARNING OBEDIENCE THROUGH THE THINGS WE SUFFER**. It is the suffering under the Father's hand of chastening that will bring us to perfection and show us the path of life! All this is going on in Christ Jesus, for we are His workmanship, created unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. Our Father will do what is best for us until we become a credit to Him. Then shall the voice come from heaven, proclaiming, "These are my beloved sons, *in whom I am well pleased!*" Then shall our revealing and showing forth unto the world begin, and the fame of us and our glory shall spread abroad throughout all the world and unto the extremities of the unbounded heavens!

These words by brother Paul Mueller beautifully express the depth of this blessed truth: "There is another rod of God that concerns us: it is the Lord's rod of discipline and correction. Job referred to this rod when he said, 'Wherefore do the wicked live, become old, yea, are mighty in power? Their seed is established in their sight with them, and their offspring before their eyes. Their houses are safe from fear, **neither is the rod of God upon them**'" (Job 21:7-9). As we look about us in the world today, we can see that the wicked live just as Job said they did, without the rod of God in their lives. The wicked enjoy wealth and the power which that wealth brings. They live the so-called 'good life,' for their lives are free of the Lord's rod of discipline and correction. But it is not so with the chosen saints of the Lord! Our lives are wondrously and strangely predestined of our Father to attain to the fullness of sonship in Christ through the discipline of our trials.

"Throughout our journey in this life, with every step we take, we will see the rod of God in our lives. At times, our lives will be interrupted by a strange set of circumstances that are unique and unexplainable. But we must know that our loving Father predestined us to the adoption of sons, and His rod is that set of disciplinary circumstances in our lives designed to lead us to the fullness of the life of Christ (Rom. 8:29). Others may live in abundant prosperity and health, enjoying the things of this world, but we are being disciplined by the rod of the Lord, and are separated unto Him for His holy purposes. If we are truly called and chosen of our Father to become manifest sons of God at this time, we must experience His strange and unique rods, including the rod of selection and separation as well as His rod of discipline.

"The chastisement of Father's rod is unique to true sons. All the sons of God are now going through some form of chastisement, or will soon experience it. The prophet declared, 'The Lord's voice crieth unto the city (the heavenly Jerusalem): **hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it**' (Mic. 6:9). When the Lord applies His rod of correction to our lives, it is an indication that He wants to teach us something wonderful and important. The Lord's rod brings a message to us, therefore we should hear the message of the rod. In every trial, He is doing something wonderful in our lives! When a strange form of discipline unto correction comes our way, we will then reply to our Father, 'Abba, Father, what lesson do you want me to learn through this experience?' Father has a rich, new message for us in every application of the rod, a message we could not receive in any other circumstance, so we are admonished to **'hear ye the rod.'**

"Furthermore, we should not only hear the message of the rod, but we also should understand **'who hath appointed it.'** The rod of correction, that must come into the life of every true son,

is that experience that will perfect us and bring us into the fullness of the life of Christ. By the wisdom of the mind of Christ we will recognize the chastisements in our lives as the rod of God, and not Satan's works. The devil would rather keep us living in constant ecstasy, and our minds thus dulled to the voice of the Lord. Satan does not want us to be perfected and would not send these tests and trials into our lives! But God is applying His rod to our lives to keep us alert and aware of His voice and leadings, and to perfect us and conform us to His image and likeness. We have grown spiritually beyond the doctrines of the old order. Now, we no longer see the devil in our lives. The Lord has taken the devil out of our minds, out of our doctrines, and out of our lives. Now we know the truth! Now we know **'It is GOD which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure'**" — end quote.

A strange but wonderful statement from the inspired pen of the prophet Isaiah says, "When thus it shall be in the midst of the land among the people, there shall be as the shaking of an olive tree, and as the gleaning grapes when the vintage is done. Wherefore *glorify ye the Lord in the fires*, even the name of the Lord God of Israel" (Isa. 24:13,15). Those of God's elect who walk in the dealings of the Lord in this hour have truly learned to ***glorify God in the fires!*** We glorify God in the fire when we bear it patiently. We glorify God in the fire also, when we are really and fully persuaded God will not put us in the fire except for our good, and His own glory. We glorify God in the fire when we say, "Lord, don't let the fire go out until it has purged away all the dross. Then we glorify God when we wish for the good of the fire, and not to have it extinguished; when the soul can say, "Here I am, my God, do with me as seemeth good in Thy sight."

We glorify God in the fire when we are not grumbling and complaining, but humbly submitting to His will, content to walk by faith and not by sight. We glorify God in the fire, when in the midst of the fire we can sing God's high praises. Years ago we learned to sing the high praises of God in the assembly of the saints, in great joy and rejoicing. But now, praise God, we have learned to glorify God *in the fire!* Thus the children of Israel glorified the Lord; the song of the three Hebrew children in the fiery furnace is a sweet song! as are all songs that are made in the fire. Then we glorify God in the fire when we can bless God for not letting us alone; but we glory in tribulation, knowing that tribulation worketh patience. Blessed are you that have gotten into Christ's fire! Blessed are you that have found His fire in your souls, in whatever fires He has been pleased to send you, and into whatever furnaces He has been pleased to cast you!

Our hearts and souls are the workshop of God. It is there that He is changing us and bringing us into union with Himself in the spirit. And what a mighty work it is that He is doing there! The change comes not by a wonderful spiritual experience with waves of joy and glory. Oh, no! It is the blow of His hammer that breaks our hard heart! It is the stroke of His ax that strikes at the root of our life! It is the plunge of His pruning knife that cuts away the natural, worldly, and religious things that sap our spiritual strength! It is the furnace heated seven times hot that consumes our dross! It is an overthrow, a shipwreck, utter desolation that He brings to our carnal mind and our old religious ways! It is His bitter cup of suffering that mellows our self-confident spirit! And without ceasing God works — the everlasting God, He neither slumbers nor sleeps, sang David in one of his sublime psalms. Absolutely without sleeping He works. He visits us in our dreams, He searches our reins and instructs us in the night seasons, as if He had no other man's perfection on His hands but ours! We see, we hear, we taste, we feel Him and His work in us every day and night, and every hour and moment of the day and night! This is the experience of every son of God who walks with Christ in the spirit and is being changed into His image and likeness!

One of the most interesting places in the world to see, I have been told, is the Royal Palace in Tehran, Iran. One of the things that makes it so interesting is that it has been recognized as one of the most beautiful buildings ever to have been constructed. And yet, when they were building it, a catastrophe occurred. The main entrance hall was going to be lined with mirrors. The architect had ordered the mirrors to be shipped from across the ocean. When the shipment had finally arrived, the mirrors were uncrated ever so carefully. But to the astonishment of the architect, many of the mirrors had been shattered en route. And what wasn't broken would never cover the designated area. They were useless.

As the crew was preparing to haul the splintered glass to the dump, the architect suddenly had an idea. "Stop!" he ordered. "Don't throw them away." Then he ordered that the mirrors that were still intact be broken into fragments as well. And so, every last mirror was shattered into fragments. Then they hauled the small pieces to the worksite and began piecing them together again into what became an exquisite mirrored mosaic. They used this innovative technique to cover pillars and to cover the dome and some of the different hallways. The effect was phenomenal! The mirrors pick up light, like a prism, reflecting rainbows of color throughout the rooms. They were broken to be made beautiful. *And that is what happens with us as well! God breaks us to make us the revelation of His glory!*

The deep mystery of our Father's chastening is that He is not punishing us for not being what we should be, but He is making us what he has purposed for us to be! When He is chastening us He is making us chaste, pure, clean, undefiled, and bringing us into His likeness. He not only chastens us, He also "scourges every son whom He receiveth" (Heb. 12:6). *Scourge* is a pretty strong word! Scourging is the word used for the beating that was given with a whip called the "cat of nine tails." It was a whip with nine lashes, with little balls of lead tied to the end of the lashes to give them greater force when brought down on the bare back of the victim. The victim would be tied to a post, his back made bare, and when the beating was over his back would be cut to shreds.

This is what Jesus suffered just before His crucifixion. Our English word "scourge" literally means to strip the hide off, and when the scourging is over there is little hide left on the victim's back. It is instructive to note that the first five letters of the word spell "scour". When something has a residue or coat of dirt, grease, or other undesirable substance on the surface of it that spoils its appearance or usefulness, then we scour it to remove the film, or the covering that should not be there. Usually an abrasive material is used to remove this film, such as Comet or Brillo pads. When the scouring is finished, and the film removed, the vessel shines forth in all of its beauty!

That which the Lord has to get rid of in us is the covering of the old fleshly nature and carnal mind which conceal and mar the beauty of the Christ within. What our Father is doing when chastening and scourging us, is stripping away our old self-nature which obstructs the glory of the divine life within. This covering of the old flesh must be removed to let the glory of the Christ shine forth! This God is doing with His chastening rod and His scourging whip; removing the filthy film of our old fleshly nature and religious ways, taking the hide of carnality off, until our vessel shines with the beauty and glory of Christ and is made useful in the kingdom of our Father.

When receiving chastening and scourging from the hand of God there is nothing pleasant about it; it is not an occasion for great shouting and rejoicing. The words of the apostle Peter are fulfilled in us, for he speaks of our being "in heaviness through manifold testings" (I Pet. 1:6). Yet, when we consider the end of the chastening we can rejoice and praise and thank our

Father for what He is producing in our lives, for truly "the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, be found unto praise and honor and glory at the unveiling of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 1:7). As we submit to the testings and trials, which are the instruments of the Lord's rod and of His whip, and endure them patiently, they bring forth in our lives His righteousness, beauty, and perfection. We will be holy as He is holy and perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect. The old fleshly self-nature will be gone, and Christ will be all in all within us. We will be like Him! We will do only those things we see our Father do, and speak only those words which we hear from Him. If we are to be king-priests in His kingdom, working with Him in the restoration of the suffering creation, bringing the dominion of the kingdom of God into the life of every man and nation on the face of the earth, there can be no interference in us that would keep us from doing wholly and always the perfect will of our Father. The old carnal nature and the old religious mind can never do this! Only Christ in us can be this submissive to the Father's voice and the Father's will — there is no way we can be. There has to be a complete stripping away of the tough hide of the outer man, so we can come into the formation of Christ, to be the revelation of the Father upon earth. As we presently endure the chastening of the Lord, let us remember the words of the writer to the Hebrews, who tells us that in all these trials, "GOD DEALETH WITH YOU AS WITH SONS"(Heb. 12:7).

This indeed is the pathway to sonship! Sad to say, there are many who glibly mouth the truths of sonship but who are not walking under the Father's disciplines which are common to all the sons of God. To use the very words of scripture, these then are "bastards, and not sons." We would do well to remember at all times that sonship is a WALK. It is not just a "message," a "revelation," a "doctrine," or even a "truth" to be put to memory and repeated. IT IS A LIFE TO BE LIVED AND WALKED OUT. Sonship involves training and discipline, and all who are apprehended of the Lord for sonship must be seen passing through the disciplines, instructions, corrections, trials, testings, provings, chastisements, and scourgings of the Lord. Let us therefore walk through this time of intense preparation with faith and confidence, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith, keeping our eyes on the goal set before us: to live in His life and partake of His holiness. This is the best and most sound advice anyone can give to the sons of God who are passing through the fiery trials and severe dealings of this present hour, along with the inspired words spoken to Job, "ACQUAINT NOW THYSELF WITH GOD, AND BE AT PEACE."

Yes, I was living to myself — was dead:
Self — with its hopes and dreams was all I had;
But soon the Lord fulfilled my prayer to know
The power of His cross — 'twas death below.
I asked contrition — He sent me pain;
For purity — but anguish came again;
I asked I might be meek — He broke my heart;
I asked — I knew not what — the better part.
I asked to know what death was to the world,
And quickly all my living hopes were spoiled;
I asked to be like Him — His image bear —
He placed me in a furnace, sitting there
Like one refining silver, till He see
The reflex of His image bright in me.
I asked that I the daily cross might bear,
It lacerated me — the wounds I wear;
I blindly prayed, not knowing how, nor what,
He took me at my word — it mattered not.

Then I began to shrink from following near,
And well-nigh prayed Him to depart through fear.
 To suffer was not pleasing to the flesh,
 I feared to pray lest suffering come afresh;
 But I had gone too far — on I must go —
The virtues of His cross had pierced me through.
 In me His promise now fulfilled must be —
 "Suffer with me, and you will reign with me!"
 Ah, I had only heard of love — but now
 I feel it, Oh! I feel its living glow.
 He fastened on me such a look of love,
Withering to self — tender, all words above;
 Follow I must, whatever may betide;
 I love the cross — I shelter in His side!

Chapter 62

The Church In Laodicea

continued

“Behold, *I stand at the door and knock*: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me” (Rev. 3:20).

The book of Revelation furnishes us with a sequential overview of the comings of the Lord. Its inspired title is found in the first verse — “The Revelation of Jesus Christ.” The Greek word for “revelation” is *apokalupsis* meaning “unveiling, uncovering,” and hence, “revealing.” This is expressed in Revelation 1:7, “**Every eye** shall **see** Him...” The error of the unspiritual and unenlightened mind is that it immediately assumes that every eye must see Him at the same time and in the same manner. But the multitudinous ways in which the Lord comes and comes and continues to come throughout the illuminating pages of this wonderful book indicates to us the *progressive* revelation of Jesus Christ, the many-faceted and many-splendored appearing of the Lord from one degree of glory to another until, when all is finished, every creature in heaven, earth, and hell shall have had a revelation of the Son of God! (Rev. 5:13).

With what divine genius does the Holy Spirit on the pages of God’s Word portray the living Son of God coming and standing in the midst of the seven churches! This is an earthly scene. The risen and glorified Christ was present in and among the churches. Jesus had promised to come back, and according to chapters two and three of the Revelation He *had* come back! Then follows swiftly the tragic scene of Jesus Christ, the blessed Head of the church, standing *completely outside* the Laodicean church!

It is not my purpose here to explore the present condition of the church systems, but when Jesus sent His message to the wealthy church of Laodicea, which boasted that she was rich and increased with goods and had need of nothing, He portrayed Himself as One standing *outside* the door. He was not within, as He should have been, but on the outside. Behind the doors that were locked against Him they were preaching *about Him*, and singing *about Him*, and working and building *for Him*, but He Himself they had left outside. The membership of the church of Laodicea is large and prestigious, its seats all engaged, its income assured, its organization perfected. Men of good business judgment manage its affairs, in the same shrewd way that they manage their business affairs. The services are made impressive with eloquence and music and well-appointed ritual. Its Sunday School prides itself on its thorough, up-to-date organization and large attendance. It may support some missionaries in the foreign field, for that is the modern thing to do.

Never in the history of the world has there been so much preaching and so much human effort, or so many multi-million dollar church buildings, Christian programs and concerts, so much church membership, or so many outreaches to convert the world; but the living Christ, locked out of their grandiose schemes, ***stands outside!*** The whole church system of our day is built on

flesh-appeal programs and promotions rather than the power and glory of the Holy Spirit. In spite of all the glib mention of His name, the truth is that Christ stands outside the church system and His Holy Spirit is not in its works. The thundering message of Christ to the Laodicean church will not even penetrate in to fall upon the already occupied ears of the masses who assemble there, but will be heard only by individual believers. Notice what He says, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: IF A-N-Y M-A-N hear my voice, and open the door, I will come IN TO HIM, and will sup with HIM, and HE with me." "If ANY MAN will hear!" "If any man WILL HEAR!"

You meet one that is religious, awed by the crowds, the buildings, the great meetings, the charismatic speakers, the beautiful television programs, the professional music, and the wonderful works supposedly being done. They exude the spirit that they are indeed "rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing." They can talk much of the milk of the Word, their spiritual gifts, and religious toys. But they know nothing of the present truth of Him gathering to Himself a remnant to bring them into His perfections. They are well versed in the traditional doctrines about the devil and the antichrist and the so-called rapture, but they know naught about the mighty move of God in the earth today to bring many sons to glory, a vast company of manifest sons to bring the kingdom of God in power upon all men and nations. You cannot begin to speak of the deep mysteries of the kingdom, of God's grand purpose to restore all men and the whole creation into God again, or of those divine quickenings which the Holy Spirit of truth has whispered into your being, for they have no ears to hear them. Were you to declare them in the churches of our day, they would cast you out! Their eyes are closed against the bright vision of that which lies before us at the manifestation of the sons of God and the consummation of God's great plan of the ages. They are dull to the keen-edge of the Spirit's working. Yet, blessed be God, there is a people whose ears have been touched by the finger of God, a holy race of king-priests who have been quickened to hear the voice of the great High Priest who speaks from the MELCHIZEDEK REALM. There is a man, yes, a many-membered man, who **has heard His voice, and has opened the door, and He has come in to them, and today sups with them, and they with Him!**

Christ, the Spirit, is completely without the camp! He is outside the camp of the systems of this world, including the political, economic, and religious systems of man; He is outside the camp of the denominations, churches, and fellowships; He is outside the camp of those who continue in the old ways of the dead, church order of the past; He is also outside the camp of anything that is of man, or that man's works have created. No longer is He dealing with the apostate systems of man, but knocking, knocking, knocking at the heart's door of **individual men and women**, saying to them, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if **any man** hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to **him**, and will sup with **him**, and **he** with me." This passage can only refer to the spiritual presence of Christ coming to any **individual**, to **any man or woman** who will open their heart's door to intimacy of fellowship and vital union with Christ.

As one has written concerning this significant passage, "The message is to 'any man,' a message that abandons the multitude to their religious play, to their church creeds and their church Christ's. This is the church of the individual. It is the individual believer with a *personal relationship* to Christ. For the man who will forsake *all else* and sup with Christ this an age of glory, an hour of preparation such as we have never known. This is a time when the Spirit of God is speaking to you *as an individual*. He seeks to sup and dine and feast with you apart from all the religious confusion about us. It is a glorious day when we see the promise that is ours in this hour."

To sup with Christ is to commune vitally with Him; it is to fellowship intimately with Him and freely partake of all that is proffered by His Spirit. He comes in to dine! It is there, deep within — in the inner union of soul and spirit — as nowhere else, privately and alone, that spiritual edification and understanding and participation in heavenly things begins and continues and consummates. Multitudes of believers are weak and sickly in their spiritual lives simply because they depend only on external things — meetings, sermons, singing, ministry, public prayers, programs — and never come to truly know and experience the Lord FOR THEMSELVES. But all who have received the call to sonship have obtained this glorious experience of **Christ within**, it is now happening for others, and it shall yet happen for more who “hear His voice.” It is, first and foremost, an individual experiencing of Christ within ourselves.

Not many of the teeming millions of earth who profess to know the Lord are ready at this time for this high and holy calling! They still fill the pews of the church in Leodicea, and have failed to hear the Lord’s voice calling from without. But those who have heard His voice, and have opened the door, are feasting with the Lord in the third feast, the feast of Tabernacles! It is a blessed fact that the feast of Tabernacles is taking place now, but only those with spiritual understanding know it. The rest are busy “star gazing” — watching the clouds — waiting to go to a banquet in the sky. While they wait, snug and smug in their denominational beds, the Lord is calling a people to feast with Him. The Lord stands knocking at their door — but they sleep on.

The awesome scene is portrayed in the beautiful Song of Songs, the Song of Solomon. The believer (Shulamite, type of the church) speaks first and says, “I sleep, but my heart waketh: it is the *voice* of my Beloved that *knocketh*, saying, Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night” (S. of S. 5:2-6). The word “voice” means “sound.” We have the same construction here as in Revelation 3:20. In both cases the terms “knock” and “voice” are synonymous in meaning — “I stand at the door and *knock*,” “If any man hear my *voice*.” This reveals that the knock by which the Lord announces His presence is in reality His *voice*, and throughout the scriptures a voice is used to symbolize a *message*. The Lord’s voice is the Lord’s message, His present truth which He desires to convey to His people. The message goes out to many, just as the seed of the kingdom is sown in all kinds of soil, and the kingdom net catches a multitude of many kinds of fish. It is the sound of her Beloved that knocks at the door! Her Beloved (Christ, the Spirit) knocks, not only once, but He continues to knock; He calls her to arise and shake off the slumber that locks her in its embrace.

The sleeping believer replies, “I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them?” How often when our Lord is calling us to a deeper revelation of Himself, He finds us asleep! We have washed our feet of all the dust of the day, we have cleansed our walk in all those areas He has dealt with previously, we have put off our garment, we have prepared a soft bed of ease, and we have said to our souls, “A little sleep, a little slumber, no need to press on any further at this time, let us rest in the experiences we have had and the truths we have learned.” You see, dear ones, she was not only His love and His dove, she was still His *undefiled*! This is one who has walked intimately with the Lord and experienced deep cleansings, separations, and dealings. This shows that her greatest failure was in lying down to rest and not watching with wide-open eyes for His coming and the further revelation of Himself! And when He came, she was slow to rise and let Him in, she had kept Him waiting throughout the night. She had not gone off into spiritual fornication with the systems of man, she had not mingled with the world, she had committed no gross sins of the flesh, she had not been flirting with those who hated Him, as many who are called by His name are doing today; she had not lost her chastity. She was just spiritually lazy, she simply did not seem to have the stamina

to go further. She felt that she had reached a plateau; she had attained to a high place in Christ; but now she deserved to lie down and rest, but not to go to sleep; but she was soon lulled into a half-slumber.

In desperate ardor her Beloved endeavors to enter her room, but the door is locked. She had not only closed, but had locked and bolted the door! When she locked the door, she did not mean to lock HIM out; she only desired that her rest might be undisturbed. She had no thought of refusing to get up and let HIM in, nor did she deliberately lock the door so HE could not get in.

She only wanted a little rest! This is always the way slumber steals in upon those who have received the call to follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth! Those who hear the call, but fall short of *following on all the way* — it is not their set purpose to reach the place of stagnation and loss where they finally find themselves. They just forget that it is through the avenue of sleep — indifference — that spiritual poverty comes and robs them of the glory of the fullness of Christ within themselves! Slumber does not prepare us for great attainment, it only paves the way for us to be defeated and robbed.

Then we read, “My Beloved put His hand in the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for Him. I rose up to open for my Beloved...but my Beloved had withdrawn Himself, and was gone: my soul failed when He spake: I sought Him, but could not find Him; I called Him but He gave me no answer.” While she was sleeping, He had knocked; while she was refusing, He had called; but by the time He had finally aroused her from her momentary lethargy, He had withdrawn. She little realized the gravity of her sleepy refusal to arise and open to Him! She thought He would wait until she had stirred herself. He had continued calling and knocking through the night, though she had treated Him as a stranger; though she had snuggled more deeply into her bed of ease, and left Him out in the darkness until His head was wet with the night dew, and His locks with the drops of the night.

Beloved reader of this message, have you heard your Lord’s voice calling you to enter into a deeper relationship with Him? Have you heard Him bid you come apart with Him, to leave everything and everyone that hindered you and enter into a higher realm of revelation, separation, and reality in Him? Have you kept your Lord waiting while you pampered your flesh, or while you did something *you* wanted to do, or while you lingered in the old religious ways that could never lead you into the fullness of Himself? Did you have some “religious work” which you felt was very important? Did you have some association you felt you could not break? Did you tell the Lord to wait until you could leave them, or finish what you were doing? Have you heard Him chide you because you neglected Him, because you were not putting Him and His high purposes above all else, because you would not scale the heights with Him in the Spirit, to commune with Him in the secret place of His presence and glory, because you were not following on to **know Him** in deeper measures? Oh, yes! There are many in this hour who think to respond and obey, who desire to come out and go away with Him, who want to arise and commune with Him in the heights of mount Zion, and sup with Him in the feast of Tabernacles, who are going to explore the deeper measures of His wisdom, His love, His power, and His glory which He waits to disclose — but *not until some propitious moment when they have finished what they are doing!*

How glorious is the walk in the Spirit with Christ in this great day of His unveiling in His elect! I cannot imagine what life would be like in this fear-filled maniacal world of today if we knew nothing of God’s great *plan of the ages*. How dark and uncertain everything would be! It is the truth, the truth of Christ’s coming in us, the truth of sonship the hope of creation, the truth of the kingdom of God coming in power and great glory, the truth of the deliverance of creation from the bondage of corruption, the truth of the restoration of all men to God, the truth of His glory

revealed in the manifest sons of God, the TRUTH THAT CHRIST HAS REVEALED TO US AND WITHIN US AS WE HAVE SUPPED WITH HIM AND HE WITH US — this truth gives us hope for today and for tomorrow. What anticipation it stirs in our hearts!

Ah, the believer so accurately described in this moving drama had closed the door and locked it. In her snug bed of religious myths, folklore, and fairy tales and personal indifference she had disrobed and gone to sleep. Her Lover was up and had come to commune with her and ravish her heart with His love, revealing Himself to her on yet a higher plane, and to call her away with Him to the mountains of Bether (separation), to the top of Amana and Shenir (the high places), and to the heights of Hermon (the mount of *transfiguration*). He came knocking and calling her to great and mighty things in the kingdom realm of God. When she, at her own time, opened the door, lo! He was gone. The hour of her visitation had passed!

In this midnight hour the lukewarm church of Laodicea has no room for Christ and His glory and has their door closed against Him. He has been standing outside and knocking at the door! He is not within, as He should be, but on the outside. Behind the door that is locked against Him they are loudly preaching about Him, earnestly working for Him, but He Himself they have left outside. We hear much about the great “revival” that is in the world today. But methinks that the revival is but the stirring of the Shulamite upon her bed as she endeavors to awaken herself out of her stupor to the call of her Beloved. I assure you that He will not remain in the place of a beggar at the door of His people forever! His voice will cease and you will be left in your bed of fairy tales and dreams and delusions! You can go on dreaming about a banquet beyond the stars, and continue to ignore His knocking at the door of your heart for entrance and love and union today. Many *individuals* have heard His voice and have opened their door, and He has come in, and is supping with them, and they with Him. The feast is now spread! A new kingdom day has dawned! Throughout this “evening time” as the kingdom of God has dawned in the hearts of His called and chosen elect, the Lord has been standing at the door of the church in Laodicea knocking, and those who have had hearing ears have recognized His voice, have opened to Him, and together with Him they have been enjoying the great feast of truth and reality which has been spread before them. And now, now! He is turning from the door, His head is wet with the dew of the night, His locks are dripping with the night drops, and sadly He is departing from all the church systems of man, leaving them with their cherished traditions and the vanity of their fleshly pursuits. But for those who have opened the door and let HIM in, great and glorious things are prepared!

It is true that Christ stands outside the church systems of man, knocking, that he who hears may open the door. That is the sense of the meaning of Christ’s message in its *corporate* application. There is, however, a further and deeper sense in this message on the *individual* and *personal* level. The Christ who knocks at the door of our individual heart is on the inside of each of us, in our spirit! There is a pure realm within man, an inner sanctum, an eternal dimension — the Holiest of all. Christ is in our spirit, and though we hear His voice as part of the corporate body of Christ, yet, is it not from *Christ within our spirit* that His voice comes to us? You see, my beloved, Christ is in our spirit, knocking on the door of our soul! He is in our spirit, knocking on the door of our body! He is saying, “If any (outer) man hear my voice, and open the door, I will not only be joined to your spirit and be one with you in spirit, but I will come into your soul and sup with you there, I will come into your soul and be fused with your soul; I will come into your body and sup with you there, I will come into your body and be fused with your body, and you will know in the totality of your being the fullness of my perfection, wisdom, power, life, and incorruptibility!”

It is in this experience that the soul is truly saved and this corruptible puts on incorruption and this mortal puts on immortality, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. So you see, dear one, while we are believing *into* and entering *into Christ* in one dimension of our experience, **He is entering into us FROM WITHIN!** In the typology of the tabernacle in the wilderness **we** begin **our journey into Christ** in the outer court, at the brazen altar, where the lamb is slain to take away our sins; that is the order in which the priest, in his redemptive ministry enters into the tabernacle. Then we progress onward through the holy place where we are filled with the oil of the Holy Spirit, feast upon the bread of the body of Christ, and worship at the golden altar where we are transformed by the fire upon the altar from a cold, hard substance (incense), into a spiritual fragrance that wafts its way through the veil into the very glory and majesty of God; finally, we awaken into the consciousness of the most holy place of His fullness! But in the **outworking** of Christ in our lives, **He** begins in the inner sanctuary (most holy place) of our spirit, breaks forth from behind the veil to live, walk, express and manifest Himself in our soul (holy place), and finally to show forth His life in our body (outer court) realm. As we go in, He comes out, and there is effected a perfect union, for in this commingling there is the formation of the God Man — Christ, Head and body. It is He in us, and we in Him! Herein lies the power and glory of sonship!

You can never in a million years transform your soul by imposing laws or demanding reformation. And there is nothing that you can do for the body that will deliver it from the law of sin and death and bestow immortality. The Holy Spirit could not have used a more descriptive term than “dust” in describing the natural man! “Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return” (Gen. 3:19). A chemical analysis of the human body reveals that twenty of the ninety-six elements that comprise the universe are present in man — substances such as carbon, nitrogen, calcium, phosphorous, sulfur, chlorine, fluorine, potassium, sodium, magnesium, iron, etc. All the elements are those found on the surface of the earth! Health foods, vitamins, herbs, exercise — at best these can only slow down the process of corruption and disintegration, postponing for a little season the inevitable catastrophe. You can eat bean sprouts and yogurt and drink teas and swallow supplements by the handful, all of which are themselves but corruptible substances of earth, and have not one whit of power to administer eternal life to a corruptible organism. It is merely adding corruption to corruption!

Immortality does not come through any natural, earthly, material, physical, or temporal element that can be added to the body. So Jesus says — “If you want a transformed soul and an immortal body — Behold, I stand at the door and knock! I’m knocking from the inside, at the door of your soul and your body; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in!” When He marches triumphantly through the corridors of your soul, and steps into the territory of your body; when His Lordship and the power of His Life are established there; when the Bridegroom (Christ, the Spirit) marries and is joined in union with the Bride (soul), and in this union of Life they fully and completely occupy their home (the body), there will be manifest the full and complete salvation and perfection of the WHOLE MAN! Aren’t you glad!

This is the Lord who has come to the door of your life and mine today. This is the Lord who claims the right to reign, and from whose patient, haunting pursuit we can never get free! Behold, He stands at the door and knocks. While the sands of time are running out and the hurrying days mold our destiny, He stands at the door and knocks. While the purposes of His kingdom march onward, and the hour for the manifestation of the sons of God draws nigh, He stands at the door and knocks. Tenderer than the kiss of a little child, mightier than the flashing lightnings of heaven, He stands at the door and knocks. The moment any man opens the door and permits the Christ of glory to emerge from his spirit to enter into soul and body, to sit down there, to take up residence there, to sup there, to be Himself, all that He is, there, that man

enters an entirely new realm. He has passed from the limited knowledge of a distant Christ to CHRIST AS HIS LIFE. He has turned from the temples of carnal zeal and fleshly prosperity. Christ no longer stands at the door of a vast multitude gathered within the Laodicean church of this dark age. He comes now to that “little flock” of footstep followers who have been set aside of the Lord for the most intimate and personal visitation. How wonderful it is when the Christ comes IN to sup with us and we with Him! How blessed we are to have that intimate and sacred communion with the Lord!

The very next words of the Lord, after saying that He stands at the door and knocks, beseeching an entrance to sup with us and we with Him, are these, “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne” (Rev. 3:21). The great truth in this hour is that God is bringing us into union with Christ as *sons of God*. The wonderful work He is doing in us is part of that glorious purpose! The overcomer is the one who leaves the congregation of the Laodicean church to enter into union with Christ *within himself*. “I will come *in to Him, and sup with him.*” Father’s creative work within us is being fulfilled as He draws us out of the old and from all that relates to the past order of things. He may separate us from all outward fellowship until we learn to fellowship only with Him! “Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ” (I Jn. 1:3). He also may confine us and close all other doors to us, shutting us up to Himself, and silencing all other voices but His. We may feel lonely and restricted, but the real purpose of our loving Father is to continue His grand work of making us His kingdom firstfruits, a people in whom He has established *His Life* to be revealed to all creation in authority and power.

As we continue to sup with Him and walk with Him in this strange time, we are making a significant transition. The Laodicean church is not admitting Him, nor are they eating and communing with Him, nor are they listening to His voice that they might learn His will and do it in this great hour. But in those who hear His voice, and sup with Him, He is establishing His kingdom — His new administrative order for the new kingdom day we are now entering. Just as there is a change of ages, so is there a change of orders! The first step is to let go of the old, for God can not establish the new in people who cling to the old. Without a doubt, many who read these lines have already been dealt with by Father and have left the old church order, coming out to wait in Father’s presence to hear and learn the truths and principles and realities He would teach us and raise up in our lives in the power of Christ. We have progressed beyond the spiritual nakedness, lukewarmness, blindness, self-satisfaction, and spiritual poverty of the Laodicean church order. The Lord rebuked and chastened us so that we repented of our former ways. When the Lord knocked on the “door” of our hearts and lives and began to speak to us, we heard His still, small voice and invited Him in to sup and commune with us. And now we follow on to truly be an overcomer in the fullness of all that means!

I WILL SUP WITH HIM AND HE WITH ME

“If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and *will sup with him, and he with me*” (Rev. 3:20).

I speak the truth when I say that the hour has come, and now is, when all the elect of the Lord have begun to KNOW THE LORD FOR THEMSELVES. All who have received the call to sonship have come out from all the promotions of man to seek God, walk with God, hear His voice, know God intimately and powerfully, that *God Himself* might be *our Father* and sup with us and we with Him. We opened the door reverently and joyfully, and before we realized it we found ourselves digging deep in the storehouse of God’s treasures of wisdom and knowledge and sitting with Him at His banqueting table. He has spread a table before us in the presence of

our enemies, He has led us through green pastures, He has revealed to us fountains of living water flowing unceasingly *from within*; He has caused us to rest beside cool, still streams; and HE, the Great Shepherd of the sheep and Bishop of our souls has come to abide with us and our cup overflows with the unspeakable riches of His grace and the wonder of His glorious and eternal reality. Isn't it wonderful!

How precious the knowledge that we have a God who hungers, thirsts, deeply desires, to feast with His people — a God who from the beginning has tried to show us that His greatest delight is not in showing His authority, but in enjoying intimate and close fellowship with His own. He set a feast of fruits before Adam and Eve, the likes of which man has never been able to reproduce, and then He walked with them in the garden in the spirit of the day and communed with them face to face. He ate with Abraham in his tent at noonday. He spread a table in the wilderness for the entire nation of His chosen, and He gave them the very bread of heaven. Jesus performed His first miracle at a wedding feast. He fed five thousand on a hillside. He did not hesitate to attend feasts, and ate and drank with men until He was called a glutton and a wine-bibber. He went up to Jerusalem to celebrate the feasts of Yahweh. And He has established the new covenant with a feast, the great spiritual feast, wherein He has given the redeemed His own body (word) for their meat and His own blood (spirit) for their drink, that death might be swallowed up of life. He has promised through the prophet Isaiah that in the latter days He will make a great feast of spiritual blessings and benefits for **all nations** upon His holy Mount (Isa. 25:6). And the greatest feast of all — the marriage supper of the Lamb — ushers a people into the most intimate relationship with their Lord! It is not in meetings, preachings, teachings, prophesyings, singing, or any outward exercise that we enjoy the marriage supper of the Lamb; it is at the marriage union of our “soul bride” with our “spirit bridegroom” that we discover *within ourselves* the glorious marriage feast provided by our Father!

We are commanded to feed upon Christ, to eat His flesh and drink His blood, “for my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed” (Jn. 6:55). No longer are we to feed off the husks of man's sustenance, no more are we to feed off the putrefaction spread upon Babylon's polluted tables, but we are invited to feast on the bounties of the fullness of Christ in an exceedingly rich and intimate manner, thereby drawing our sustenance from Him. “As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me” (Jn. 6:57). “I am the bread of life...” (Jn. 6:35).

There is an old song of the church that has a profound meaning. It says, “Jesus has a table spread, where the saints of God are fed; He invites His chosen people, Come and dine!” That table is in the heavens of God's Spirit, and in the Spirit and by the Spirit we are seated there. Paul confirms that we have been “raised up, and made to sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 2:6). There is a table of the Lord spread for us in the heavenlies! Jesus said to His disciples, “I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father has appointed unto me; that ye may *eat and drink* at my table in my kingdom” (Lk. 22:29-30). Moses, Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and the elders of Israel ate at the Lord's table on mount Sinai. “And they saw the God of Israel: and there were under His feet as it were a paved work as a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness. And...the nobles of the children of Israel...saw God, and *did eat and drink*” (Ex. 24:9-11).

What an awesome picture! Seventy-four men of God, seated with Him in the height of a mountain peak, eating and drinking! What a supernatural table! What glory was there! It seems from the record that it was so overwhelming that none but Moses could take it in. Can we not see by this that the one thing the Lord seeks above all else from His chosen ones is

COMMUNION AT HIS TABLE! Oneness around His heavenly table! A continual abiding in Him as our food, our strength, our enjoyment, and our *life*!

A sister in the Lord sent us the following beautiful testimony. “I had a marvelous vision while alone in a secluded cabin atop the mountains by Lake Arrowhead. It was in this very place that I stayed for seven days, snowbound in 1981, when God began this miracle transformation in me. The flood gates were opened; scripture has come alive; I hear the *voice* clearly now from God Himself and all things are being made known to me from the Word who became flesh and now dwells among men, including me. On this occasion, however, it was a balmy day atop the mountains as I watched the squirrels scampering across the balcony and the sassy bluejays compete for the corn and nuts on the railing. My husband had gone for a hike in the woods and I felt a strange kind of listlessness that one often experiences in saying final farewells to things they know shall never return. Somehow I knew that every stage of my walk with Christ and the experiences of my life in general, were being buried in the past forever. I wasn’t sad about it, but I was certain about the finality of it all, and I wondered what was happening to me and where it all would lead.

“I began to talk with the Lord about it, and I *do* mean talk *with*, for I hear His voice now whenever I take the time to converse with Him personally and I no longer pray ‘at’ Him or sort of hope I will ‘hit’ something out there that hears and answers; but I have conversations and hear Him as clearly as any human on this earth. I don’t remember the first part of our conversation, for it was only the Father talking with me by His Spirit. Then I looked at where we were. We were sitting at a table! At first it seemed like it was just a cozy little table where we were about to sup together. There were wine goblets in front of us, and I had a flash of, ‘What would the church world think if they knew Jesus drank wine!’ But, He read my thoughts and only smiled at the foolish ideas and values of humans in their doctrinal treadmill. There was a loaf of bread on the table and meat, a roasted fowl of some kind, a platter of fish, and huge bowls of fresh juicy fruit.

“Then I looked around and realized there was no floor under me. I mean — no floor at all! Nothing. I was suspended, yet my feet were on something that felt solid, but I saw nothing there. I was sort of up in the sky; yet when I looked directly at Jesus, it was more like I was in a romantic little private café with just Him and me there. I had a strange feeling of a very, very personal, but totally pure and holy love between Jesus and me that is unlike any love or any relationship I have ever had. I can compare this with nothing I have known before. Deep and pure and wonderful beyond words and His face, that face so very kind and so penetrating with healing in His very glance as if His eyes were able to look deep into my soul and love away every disappointment and sorrow and tear I’ve ever shed. He seemed to convey to me that He was there with me through all those and He had taken them all upon Himself back into the past to that tree at Calvary and they were buried there. All I was experiencing were phantoms, lies that haunt and torment when one doesn’t know they are not real and have been buried in the tomb with the crucified Christ.

“After this I noticed that we really were not in a tiny room together, but as I looked around in the heavens, more light was shed on the table and I saw that it was instead a very, very long table. In fact, it was extended as far as the eye could see, and only then disappeared because of distance. It was simply in space, suspended in the heavens, though I did not see the earth below, at least not at first, and then not the earth I’ve always known. It was very exciting and a wonderfully breathtaking view.

“I was aware that I was sitting at the head of the table as if I was being treated like a queen, and Jesus was there to serve me. That embarrassed me, and I did not think it was right; but I didn’t

want to offend Him. So I asked, 'Who prepared *all this food!*' He said that He had done it Himself...that He had prepared it just for me, even in the presence of my enemies. But I didn't see anyone around, and didn't have any personal enemies anyway, though I grieved at the enemies of the cross that I knew about. He smiled. I was getting more and more uncomfortable sitting at the head of the table though, and He said, 'Say what you are thinking, N——, because I can see your thoughts anyway, you know.' 'Well,' I said, 'since you know what I am thinking, I must say that I do not feel right about sitting at the head of the table. I will stay here if it is what *you* want, Lord, but I really believe I would feel better if *you* sat in the head seat and I sat at the side.' He agreed and we traded seats. He seemed pleased with that and said that it was an act of proving I no longer wanted to control my life but had come to prefer HIS headship to my own, or anyone else's. I didn't know about all that; but I did feel better with HIM at the head of the table and me at the side!

"During our meal, we did eat. While we ate, famous men came up to the table and without really noticing the Lord or myself, grabbed a platter of food from off the table and disappeared with it. I recognized Jimmy Swaggart, and Billy Graham as a young man with galoshes and an overcoat, and some others still in public ministry today, including Oral Roberts, and some others I did not know. I asked, 'Who are these men?' The Lord said, 'They are ones who were given a heaping serving of Truth at one time, but they settled for just that and never returned for more, or to sit with me and sup until I bade them go back out and serve others.' 'Then don't they know they need to do that?' I asked. 'No,' said Jesus, 'they have had that food devoured long ago, and now they pass around an empty plate, too busy still taking glory for that first meal that they don't even know they no longer have anything of value to offer.' He seemed very sad at this, and I wanted to comfort Him for a change. Isn't that a strange thought! He said, 'All those characteristics, even of divine compassion, are from the heart of the Father, which is why ***we are getting to look more alike all the time.***'

"Jesus smiled even more broadly at me. 'After all,' He confirmed, '*we are* family now. We have the same Father, don't we?' His eyes twinkled with merriment and I quickly forgot His sad look as I took a big bite of the drumstick in front of me. In fact, I had plenty of everything which was, by far, the most delicious food I had ever tasted and I was quite satisfied. But even after I was full and content with the enormous feast set before me, I looked down and it was all still there as though I had never touched it! I was very puzzled by this. The Lord answered my thoughts and told me, 'No matter how much you eat, and how tasty and nourishing, it is beyond compare; it will always still be there for more and more and more.' I knew He was talking to me about the Word of God! No matter how much I feast, it is *always* a gigantic banquet and we still haven't even made a dent in it. I have come to feed off of it as a source of very real life, and it continues to feed me as it unfolds within me and I get my fill; yet I never get my fill! I am always satisfied, yet I continue to look forward to more of my daily bread.

"What a banqueting table the Lord Jesus sets before me, and I praise Him for this miracle food. I cannot do justice or rightly describe to anyone what has happened inside me, but it is a glorious and never-ending supper with the Lord Jesus Christ. In fact, that is exactly what it is — THE LORD'S SUPPER! It is the Lord's supper in the final, heavenly way that He has told us about in the Word and now by His precious loving Spirit, 'I will not drink wine again until I can drink it *new with you* in my Father's kingdom.' He drank wine with me that day, and ate with me, and I with Him, and He said, 'I HAVE BEEN KNOCKING ON THE DOOR FOR SO LONG, and I continue to knock on the doors of other's hearts, and if they will open the door, I will go in and sup with them as well.' *But the chairs at that endless table were empty at that hour.*

“I remember that the practical side of me arose within and I wondered if the food might not spoil awaiting the arrival of the wedding guests; for I realized this intimate loving meal with my Jesus was the marriage supper. He said, ‘It won’t spoil. It will wait till they arrive.’ Then I wondered if I couldn’t take (are you ready for this awful humanness) a *doggie bag* of some of the food back with me. I knew it was *of the Spirit* and thought perhaps it might give others a taste of the Truth of this wondrous living meal. But Jesus smiled again and said to me, ‘You have been taking great heapings of my Word to others in the prophetic revelations I have given you for them; but as you well know, it hasn’t triggered anyone’s taste buds for more of the Truth thus far!’ We both were grieved at this dreadful fact. ‘But then, child, *it is not yet time*. Be not dismayed. No matter what you do, it is the work of my Spirit that alone can enable others to see *Truth* even as you now see it.’ So I didn’t feel like such a failure after that. He was pleased with me, in our supping together, so I wanted to rest in that.

“Then I became aware that crumbs fell off both His plate and mine, yet there was no floor to pick them off of, and I was concerned about cluttering (the practical me again). Jesus said to let them go for the dogs. ‘Dogs?’ ‘Yes,’ said the Lord, ‘these are morsels of Truth that they clamor for and yet settle for on earth and believe they have the full course dinner! They have nothing to compare it with, so they believe they have it all.’ ‘How sad,’ I replied. ‘Only the crumbs I now spill are available to the weak and hungry lambs, for the famine grows worse and worse in this terrible time.’ That is why I was saying, ‘I’m starving to death in this place!’ referring to church meetings before God dragged me out of them to be taught by Him. ‘*You were hungry,*’ the Lord replied, ‘so I feed you now myself.’” — end quote.

There is a great law of life revealed in the Lord’s invitation for us to *sup with Him*. It is in the fellowship, the communion of supping intimately with the Lord that His life, His mind, His nature, His will, His ways, His very self is communicated to us, yea, imparted to us. Let me give you an illustration. All the communications of men with one another lie as it were in two strata — two stories with a floor between them; one story is deeper than the other. In the upper, superficial story, men tell each other what they know. All schools, all books, belong in this superficial realm of companionship. In the deeper story men give each other what they are. All true communion, all merging of wills and lives, belong in the profounder realm. Do you know the difference? You go to a man’s school, or read his book, and there are great and precious things that pass from him to you. The facts which he has gathered in his industrious study, the ideas that have come forth like stars out of the darkness of his concentrated thought — these he can give you and he does, and you are richer for them. He has only to teach; you have only to attend and understand. But by and by you come to *know the man*, to fellowship intimately with him, to love him, and to count his will better than your own. You absorb his spirit into your life. Then, is there not a new kind of communication birthed between your life and his? Does he not give you things that he could not give before — not only facts, ideas, and information — but motives, hopes, fears, loves, emotions, inspirations? You have passed from the upper to the deeper story of communication, and the passage took place when you passed over from listening and learning to loving and communing!

There are many today who have met Christ in the upper, superficial story. We once met Him there in meetings, sermons, teachings, prophesyings, scriptures, programs, activities, and as we listened, He told us things we never could have known without Him. The teachers we met were inChristed men called apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. Our classroom was the church. The lessons we learned were truths, precepts, and principles of the kingdom of God. But now, thank God! We have met the Christ in the deeper chamber where, as we sup with Him, and He with us, He reveals to us His heart and the very secret of His being and in the union of our life He *makes us like Himself!*

Oh, the blessedness of private, personal, intimate communion with Christ! I would rather spend one day alone in communion with Christ, than a whole week with all the precious ministers I know in this word of the kingdom. Yea, I would rather spend a day in communion with Christ alone, than in the company of the twelve apostles even, were it possible for them to pay me a visit. If we have the joy of intimate fellowship and vital communion with Christ the Lord, what can add to it? It is Christ who constitutes heaven! The presence of Him, the flame of His love, the rays of His glory are heaven indeed! If there is any other heaven beside the glorious presence of Christ, I shall not covet it. If I have Christ, Christ is enough for me, as says the Psalmist when he makes Christ his habitation, his portion, his strength, his life, and the ultimate end of all his desire. "The Lord is my portion," says my soul. And again, "Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations." And, "When I awake with Thy likeness, I shall be satisfied." "For me to live, is Christ."

Though we find deep satisfaction in the sweet communion we have with Christ, the secret converse we have together as He journeys with us through this wilderness, how oft our hearts yearn for HIS FULLNESS, when all veils and limitations of earth shall forever pass away! There are times when He makes Himself so real that our small capacity can hardly stand the strain of such revelations. It is as though we were bringing a pint cup to receive the waters of Niagara; even the earthen vessel is almost carried away! But the day is coming when our capacity shall be so enlarged, that we can receive the full unveiling of our Lord and the glories that are His; and He will give us such revelations of the Father that we shall enter into His joy and glory, for all that is His is ours in Him. Then we shall see Him as He is, and shall behold all things clearly, with nothing between to obscure the vision. This corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality. The Father's name shall be written in our forehead. The nations shall walk in the light of that city which we are, where the Lamb is the Light and the throne of God is in the midst of her.

We come to know Christ in His presence and fellowship when there is fulfilled within us the words of the prophet: "The Lord is in His holy temple; **let all the earth keep silence before Him**" (Hab. 2:20). It is not the earth of mountains and valleys, of streams and forests, but THIS EARTH WHICH WE ARE that must learn to keep silence before God, for it is **this earth** of our body which **is the temple** of God, bought with His precious blood and consecrated to be the habitation of God through the spirit. This earth, with all its carnal desires and ambitions, with all its fleshly wisdom and zeal, must be brought to holy silence and reverence before the King of Glory; and we must come to know Him, not in the abundance of words by which we constantly clatter in prayers, entreating God for this thing, and that blessing; but in waiting patiently before Him and listening **until He speaks to us**. It is in holy quietness before God that the deepest witness of the Spirit comes, testifying to our spirits that we are the sons of God, and there the Father draws nigh and delights in us and we enter into the full enjoyment of the Father's love.

It was at the commencement of Jesus' public ministry that an event happened which so attracted the attention of His disciples that they wrote it down. After a day full of wonders and works at Capernaum, the crowd in the evening became still greater. The whole town was before the door; sick were healed, devils were cast out. It was late before they got to sleep and in the throng there had been little time for quiet or for secret prayer and communion. And lo, when they rose early in the morning they found the Master gone! "And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, He went out, and departed into a *desert place*, and there prayed" (Mk. 1:35). In the silence of the night He had gone out to seek a place of solitude in the wilderness; and when they found Him there, He was still communing with the Father.

Oh, my beloved! If you and I would be manifest sons of God, we must especially contemplate Jesus praying alone in the wilderness. There is the secret of His marvelous life! What He did and spoke to man, was first SPOKEN AND LIVED THROUGH WITH THE FATHER. He who would be like Him in His walk with the Father in sonship may simply begin here — to follow Jesus into solitude. Even though it cost the sacrifice of night rest, of business, of intercourse with friends, or ministry to desperate needs, the time must be found to be alone with the Father. This is the path of sonship! The sermon on the mount was not a message to babes teaching them how to act to be good little children of God; it is the very essence of the *principles of the kingdom of God and the life of sonship*, teaching *sons of God* how to be sons of their Father, in what nature to live and reign in the kingdom. And in that wonderful kingdom teaching the firstborn Son of God reveals the great truth that it is in the closet, in the secret chamber, with closed door, or in the solitude of the wilderness, that the Father must be fellowshipped every day in the communion of His life. If Jesus, the firstborn among many brethren, needed it, how much more we! What it was to Him it will be for us. While we greatly appreciate the blessed fellowship with other saints of like mind and spirit, and there is a time for that, yet it is quickened to our hearts that it is *from heaven alone* that the power to walk in *a heavenly life* can come!

I have known saints who were embarrassed because of the frustrating failure of being able to pray in public. Now, while there is an occasional place for public prayer, the God-ordained place of prayer is in the enclosed privacy where there is no other motivational influence than the fellowship of a son with his Father. I do not hesitate to tell you that I do not enjoy public prayer. I would rather *never* pray in public! It is unnatural to me. Why do others need to hear the words that are addressed to my Father alone? I cannot pour out my deepest heart or express my most intimate thoughts, desires, concerns, and confessions in the ears of the listening multitude, or even in the hearing of my most intimate friend, or even my beloved wife. Not one word of my prayer is meant for any but my Father, not one word of my prayer is directed toward any but my God. It is this being with the Father, and the Father alone, that is the essence of sonship prayer. And that brings to mind again the solitary nights of clear starlight which Jesus spent on the hills of Galilee, when the holiest events that ever occurred in a human soul took place in His, when marvelous discourse with the Father unfolded within His consciousness the reality of His sonship to God, when it must have seemed as if a quite unique tone released itself from our earth and made its way to the farthest expanses of the heavenlies above. And now — in the secret place of the Most High His younger brethren, the sons of God, are bidden to live this over again!

The life of sonship is a hidden, inner life, having to do with the spiritual and invisible One who sees in secret. It is a secluded life, hid with Christ in God. The life in Christ neither strives nor shouts, nor does one hear its voice in the streets. It shrinks from all outward displays, whether showy public almsgiving, conspicuous religious exercises, oratorical prayers, ceremonious fastings, broadened phylacteries, processional parades, clerical costume, titles, or degrees, or holy tones. Like a planet around the sun, it rolls in its orbit of obedience to the Father without fanfare or advertisement; like the sun itself, it shines without noise.

We live in a Laodicean day of much feverish running to and fro, and Martha-like preoccupation about much serving; a day of organizations, conventions, gatherings, seminars, television shows, public meetings, and programs of all sorts. It has almost come to be understood, even in “sonship” and “kingdom” circles that we can do nothing for God unless we organize, promote, and hold a public meeting. The secret life of aloneness with God has largely given way to the public life of gatherings, meetings, and activities. The closet has given way to the synagogue. And that is not sonship! There is indeed a time for corporate expression, but first and foremost let our watchword be: *Alone with God*. We need to *hide* ourselves with God before we *show*

ourselves for God. And many who call themselves sons of God have not hidden themselves with God long enough to have much to show for God! That is the truth. All true sons are coming to intimately and fully know the Father in the secret place, to be prepared and equipped by Him there, before they are shown to the world in the long-awaited manifestation of the sons of God!

Chapter 63

The Church In Laodicea

continued

“Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man *hear my voice*, and open the door, I will *come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me*” (Rev. 3:20).

Many wonderful things are said to those who *hear the voice of the Lord!* In the days of His flesh the Lord Jesus said, “The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall *hear the voice* of the Son of God: and they that **hear** shall **live**” (Jn. 5:25). To John on Patmos the Lord said, “If any man **hear** my voice, and open the door...” If any man hears His voice and knows that He seeks entrance, if He allows Christ to come in, the promise is, “I will come in to him, and will dine with him.” This has to happen spiritually, for no one can come into us as a physical person! The door has to be the entrance into our consciousness, into the avenues of our life. Christ longs to dine with us! He wants to eat with us, and we with Him. He wants to share His life with us, that we might become the *bread of God* to the famishing creation about us. So the wisdom, knowledge, life, nature, power, glory, and spiritual realization that is in the life of Christ comes to us as we eat together! “Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.” The food of every son of God is the **Word of God** — not the letter of the Bible, but the **living Word which Christ our life is!**

Listen now, with bowed head and contrite spirit, to the heart-cry of the lovely Shulamite as she, possessed by the godly desire to enter into a closer relationship with her Beloved, and to know Him in deeper measures of intimacy and union, which is also the deepest desire of the Lord’s elect in this new kingdom day, implores, “Tell me, O Thou whom my soul loveth, where *Thou feedest*, where Thou makest Thy flock to rest at noon: for why should I be a veiled one straying beside the flocks of Thy companions?” (S. of S. 1:7). All that the world or any creature can give, is as ashes to that hungry soul that is longing for a revelation of his Lord. Nothing else can satisfy, neither the Lord’s people (companions), nor the food of any other field. All other love is as husks, to the love and companionship of Christ, who alone is imperishable reality. The lovely Shulamite maiden in the Song of Solomon represents the elect of God! Truly those who are the called and chosen of the Lord long to be **fed by Him**, and by Him alone. They would know **where He is feeding His flock**, that they may join that company which follows the Lamb to Zion’s holy hill and feasts with Him upon the mountain of His holiness.

It is absolutely amazing, the miracle of the ages, to see how God is drawing those who are willing to pay the price to go all the way with God in this momentous hour. His hand is upon every one of them, and He is drawing them *to Himself* in increasingly deeper measures. There

is no self-satisfaction with those whom God is drawing, in whom He has created the hunger after reality. Though we are always satisfied with Christ, on whatever level we have experienced Him, it seems that the more we feed upon Him and the more fulfilled we become in our relationship with Him, the hungrier we are for Him! The more we drink of the living waters of His spirit and truth, the more satisfied we become and yet the thirstier we are! The cry of the Psalmist has become our very own, "As the hart pants after the waterbrooks, so pants my soul after Thee, O God!" The closer we draw to God, the more Christ is revealed to us, the more satisfied we are, and yet the more fervently our hearts pant for Him. This is because a portion of our being has been satisfied, and the portion that remains desires Him all the more! The reason many of God's people are not hungering and thirsting after Him, to know Him in a greater way, is because they are not feeding at all, or are eating the unappetizing, impure, contaminated food of the carnal doctrines and childish programs of the church systems, and drinking lukewarm muddy water from the polluted streams of Laodicea!

Those who have received the call to sonship have been melted down by the dealings of the Lord, that they might cry to the Lord with a voice that would go right up into His heart, "O Thou, whom my soul

loveth, tell me where Thou art feeding Thy flock, that I may ever keep step with Thee and not be lingering

over food that is dried, withered, and untimely, even though it may once, in some revival or experience of the past, been fresh. Guide me, that I may walk in every ray of light, that I may feed upon every morsel of present truth, which is the fresh revelation of Thyself, that I may derive the quickening power to be all that you have called me to be and fulfill all of my Father's will." "Tell me where Thou feedest Thy flock," is the fervent cry in the hearts of all the sons of God! We do know and thoroughly understand that only to the degree that we *eat of Him* are we able to *be what He is*.

There was a time when doctrine was the passion of my life. I was an avid student of theology and meticulously examined various doctrinal systems. Some of them I rejected, and others I embraced. I thought it was most important to search the scriptures and, from the letter of the Word, to determine what is the truth about a great number of things. Then I got into the gifts of the Spirit and for a season miracles were happening and wonderful healings and deliverances, and the gift of prophecy gushed forth like rushing streams from the mountain tops. Then God began to open the realm of sonship to my wondering spirit, and He has brought me to the place over the past many years where my one and only desire is to SEE HIM, KNOW HIM, and PARTAKE OF HIM who is the living reality. Many of the doctrines we have learned may or may not be true, and whatever you or I believe about them, I have discovered that the Lord is not nearly concerned about them as we are. In fact, when the Lord reaches out to touch people and move in their lives, He pays no attention at all to *what they believe* about the Godhead, water baptism, sacred names, soul sleep, Sabbath days, and a thousand other issues men quibble about. I am telling you that the **living substance** of Jesus Christ is exciting me more than anything else that I have ever found in the scriptures or in the realm of experience! The food for sons of God is the "living bread" which if a man eats of it he shall never die; and the drink for sons of God is the "living water" which if a man drinks of it he shall never thirst. The words of the hymn writer have become gloriously alive in my heart:

Break Thou the bread of life,
Dear Lord to me —
As Thou didst break the loaves

Beside the sea;
Beyond the sacred page
I seek Thee Lord —
My spirit pants for Thee,
O Living Word!

The law of the New Creation demands a change, a transformation — everything God puts within us WE MUST BECOME, until we *are* what we *contain*. The transition is from mere possession to a state of being. We have quoted the scripture, “Christ is made unto us righteousness,” and we have confessed, “Christ is my righteousness!” We have talked about imputed righteousness, imparted righteousness, and how Christ within us is the righteous One. That is a great and blessed truth! But if you never get beyond that you are like a baseball player who hits the ball and only gets to first base. For you see, the scripture also says, “He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that WE MIGHT BE MADE THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD IN HIM” (II Cor. 5:21). You will discover a great truth when you understand the difference between *Christ made righteousness unto us*, and *we made the righteousness of God in Him!* In the first I seek the Lord and find Him as my righteousness. In the second I press my way into the fullness of God and discover that all He is, which has been credited to my account by grace, I MAY NOW EXPERIENTIALLY **BECOME!** Entrance into Him takes me out of the realm of imputed righteousness and places me into the reality of realized righteousness. This brings transformation into the image of God! It is union with God in His personality, and participation with God in His nature and ability.

Let me illustrate. In the process of a chicken being formed the egg must first be fertilized. In the moment the egg is fertilized the new little chick comes into existence *in the egg*. A tiny little speck of blood appears in the yoke of the egg. That speck is the embryonic life of the chick formed in the egg. You still have the egg — the white, the yoke, the shell — and within the egg is that little germ of life living and growing. But the egg is still the egg and the chick is the chick. Each is separate and distinct from the other. The marvel of it is that as the chick develops the Creator has wonderfully provided for the chick to live off the egg. Both the yoke and the white of the egg are drawn upon by that life, consumed by that life, absorbed into that life, completely swallowed up by that life. Once the chick was in the egg. But now the egg has *become* the chick! The life of the chick in the egg consumes the egg, and when that little chicken finally pecks his way out of the egg — where is the egg? ***It's walking on two feet!*** There it goes! Isn't it cute! Why, the egg now has feathers! The egg *is* the chicken, whereas before the chicken was *in* the egg. The egg has been changed — metamorphosed — transmuted — and has become the chicken. Can you not see the mystery?

One of the laws of nature is that *what you eat becomes you*. It has been said that you become what you eat, but that is not quite correct. ***What you eat becomes you!*** Over the years I have gained and lost weight from time to time — sometimes in significant amounts! When I weighed fifty pounds more than I do now, every one of those pounds was *me*. They were one and all J. Preston Eby. They came from eating steak and potatoes, and, of course, many other things. The steak and potatoes *became* Preston Eby! The beef that once grazed contentedly in the pasture was now *raised up into the human family*. Out from the vegetable kingdom, the lowly potato had now by transformation been raised up into the kingdom of man. That beef and potato had truly BECOME A HUMAN BEING. They no longer existed as steak and potato — now they were — ***me!***

When I waddled down the street no one exclaimed, “Look at that 180 pounds of steak and potatoes!” It wasn't steak and potatoes walking — it was me. You could examine that paunch

around my middle under a microscope, by Xray, or any other sophisticated medical test, and you would not find one microgram of steak, nor one molecule of potato. What I eat becomes me! What I drink becomes me! What I take into me to contain, becomes me! I take it in and contain it to this great end — that it become me. What a beautiful figure this is of that which is spiritually transpiring in the lives of God's sons in this day of the Lord! God puts Himself into us, His righteousness, His peace, His joy, His nature, His power, His wisdom — and HE IS MADE UNTO US ALL THAT HE IS! But we are not content, as are others, to just contain this life. Oh, no! As we live by His life Christ is raised up in us — AS US. The Word is made flesh in us, the heavenly is transmuted into the earthly, and we become what we contain. No longer is Christ made something unto us, but we now BECOME ALL THAT HE IS! It is not any more Christ in me the *hope* of glory — now it is only THE GLORY! Christ and I are one. There is no difference. That is the glory of sonship. Oh, the mystery of it!

Go with me now to the land of Israel, almost two millennia ago. It is the month of Nisan, and a prettier spring one could hardly remember. This “beginning of months” in the Hebrew calendar corresponded roughly to the latter part of our March and the first part of April and marked the end of Jesus' three and a half years of sonship ministry. Sometime during the day Jesus was asked by His disciples, “Where would you like to take the Passover this year?” (Mk. 14:12). Always before, Jesus had seemed to know where they would observe the Passover together, but this time His instructions were rather strange, even to those disciples who again and again were surprised by the things Jesus would say and do. He told Peter and John, “I want you to go and get a place ready for us to partake of the Passover.” They replied, “Where do you want us to prepare this place?” “Go into Jerusalem,” Jesus replied, “and you're going to see a man carrying a pitcher of water on his shoulder. I want you to follow him, and whichever house it is he shall enter, you ask for the owner of the house, and tell him, ‘My Master asks, Where is the best room where I can keep the Passover with my disciples?’ He will show you a large upper room at the rear of his home, completely furnished. I want you to stay there and make all the necessary preparations.”

For about a month now the entire city had been in preparation for this important feast. Bridges were repaired, walls whitewashed, sidewalks and drains cleaned and repaired, decorative friezes painted, as the whole city took on an expectant, excited pace. Thousands of lambs were brought in from all parts of the countryside, and ceremonial preparations were under way in all homes for days in advance. The priests would carefully select lambs “without spot or blemish” out of the herds on the tenth day of the month — three days before Jesus sent Peter and John into Jerusalem to find their guest chamber. The lambs were brought into the slaughtering houses in the city.

There is one important point we must notice carefully. As we examine the biblical record it becomes clear that Jesus intended sitting down to a paschal lamb supper *about 20 to 21 hours before all the rest of the Jewish homes would be doing the same thing*. This truly was to be, then, a *special supper!* After they had all taken their seats around the table, Jesus, having led them in prayer and pronouncing a blessing on the food in a particularly moving manner, told them, “I have had the deepest desire to eat this Passover with you *before I suffer* (that explains why He was celebrating it *early!*). Because I'm telling you, this is the last time I will eat it with you *until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God*” (Lk. 22:16). The disciples were undoubtedly puzzled. They knew they were sitting down to a Passover supper with the roasted lamb, bitter herbs, unleavened bread, the cups of wine; they knew that Jesus was particularly heavy in His spirit and unusually serious and saddened. And so the supper commenced.

Then, a new phase of the supper seemed to develop. They had all eaten when Jesus took a loaf of the flat unleavened bread, began to break it, and again blessed it, gave it to them, and said, "Take and eat of this, because this is my body which is given for you." As Jesus broke this bread into pieces He knew that in only a few hours His very flesh would be broken open in great wounds — that He would be fulfilling His role in this fleshly life as a great sacrifice on behalf of the whole human race, for and unto whom He would give His "body" in a spiritual dimension, which body is His "Living Word," for it was the "Word" which had been *made "flesh"!* Later, He took the vessel of wine and blessed it, then poured it saying, "Drink, all of you, because this cup is the New Covenant *in my blood* which is shed for many. Because I'm telling you that I will not drink of the fruit of the vine from now on until the day that I *drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom*. Whenever you drink this cup, I want you to do it in remembrance of me, because whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you will be proclaiming the Lord's death until He comes." His blood is His *Life*, or His *Spirit*, for "the *life* of the flesh is in the *blood*."

There are many things to learn from types and anti-types, for by them truth is taught with greater force than any uttered words. I would like to point out that the Last Supper was a **memorial**. "And He took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do **in remembrance** of me" (Lk. 22:19). Paul also referred to this event when he wrote, "For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus in the same night in which He was betrayed took bread: and when He had given thanks, He brake it, and said, Take eat: this is my body, which is broken for you; this **do in remembrance of me**. After the same manner also He took the cup, when He had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, **in remembrance of me**" (I Cor. 11:23-25).

I don't know how Christians came to the conclusion that the "Last Supper" was in fact the "first" of a **new ritual supper!** This wasn't something that Jesus did uniquely on that night. This meal, the Passover meal, was something that was done *annually* at that time of year as a memorial to the first Passover in Egypt when the firstborn of Israel was saved by the blood of the slain lamb. The Passover meal was always concluded with bread and wine. By this the children of Israel had memorialized the death of God's Lamb for fifteen hundred years! They memorialized it with a type and shadow — *bread and wine*. In type, the flesh of the lamb and the blood of the lamb were the same as the bread and the wine — two different figures of the same thing. And so we read that "*Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us*" (I Cor. 5:7).

For all those years they had, in symbol, been partaking of His body and blood as bread and wine. So the Last Supper was but one of many hundreds that figured the offering up of Christ for the life of the world. He was *not* doing something new! He was *not* instituting something different! He was doing the same thing Israel had done every year for fifteen hundred years which symbolized what our Lord was about to bring to completion and fulfillment on the night when He ate the supper with His disciples. The bread Jesus blessed and served to His disciples that night represented His body, while the cup of wine represented His blood of the New Covenant, which was shed for many for the remission of sins. It is His *life* that takes away our sins! It all represented our salvation. When Jesus blessed the bread and wine, and told His disciples to partake of it, He was illustrating the wonderful truth that their salvation was now being accomplished and fulfilled. As Jesus spoke those words, Father was arranging the events that would fulfill His eternal purposes for the salvation of all mankind. All that was required at that time was for Jesus to have His body broken and His blood poured out, releasing into humanity the living Word and the incorruptible Life that was in Him. He gave it not only *for* us, but He gave it *to* us. TAKE, EAT! That is where our salvation is, eating and

drinking of Him in the power He has made available through His death, releasing all that was true in Him to become *our very substance and life!* Isn't it wonderful!

No one realizes better than I the difficulties faced when declaring the things I am teaching here. But I must emphasize again that when the Lord Jesus said, "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come," THE LORD WAS SPEAKING FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE ISRAELITE WHO KEPT THE PASSOVER FEAST! He was not instituting a *new ritual*, a *new ceremony*, or a *new ordinance*, for Jesus did not come to establish more types and shadows and outward observances. Oh, no! He came to *fulfill* all the types and shadows within Himself, He came as the *fulfillment* of all the law and the prophets, He stepped upon the scene as the *reality* of everything that the natural and literal and outward feasts of Israel pointed to! So — why would He set up a *new ritual* to memorialize a *reality* that had already come? The very thought is absurd! You see, precious friend of mine, Jesus wasn't **telling them to eat bread and drink wine as a new ritual observance**. It was **not a command!** All He said was, "As oft as ye eat *this (Passover) bread*, and drink *this (Passover) cup*, ye *DO* show forth the Lord's death till He comes." It was just a **statement of fact in reference to the annual Passover meal**.

On the night of the Last Supper the Lord had not died yet, the Lamb had not been killed, Christ our Passover had not yet been slain for us. More than three years before this hallowed night John the Baptist had declared, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (Jn. 1:29). Jesus was the Lamb of God! He had been separated from the flock as a pure and spotless Lamb qualified to be offered up in sacrifice. But the Lamb had to be slain at the time of the Passover to take away the sins of the world! At the Passover meal the Lord said, "As oft as ye eat *this bread* and drink *this cup*, ye do show forth (typify, signify, point to) the Lord's death till He comes." The great soul-gripping truth is this. Jesus was not referring in these words to a new ordinance they were to observe under the New Covenant — He was speaking of the Passover meal they were right then eating, which the children of Israel had been eating for fifteen hundred years, and which many of them, including these disciples, would *continue to observe for some time* (Acts 21:20; 18:21; 21:18-26) **until the new order of spiritual reality had been completely established in the Lord's New Covenant people** (I Cor. 5:8; Heb. 9:8-11). It was a time of transition, and only gradually did the Lord's people grasp the truth that since Christ had *fulfilled* all the Old Testament outward feasts and ceremonies, it was no longer necessary to perform external rituals. It was the higher revelation of the apostle Paul which finally established the great truth that the feast of Passover is now fulfilled *spiritually within us*, and weaned the saints away from those outward observances. "For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us; therefore *let us keep the feast*, not with *old leaven*...but with the *unleavened bread of sincerity and truth*" (I Cor. 5:8). Sincerity means *purity*, that which is unmixed with the old; truth means *reality*, not the shadow, but the *substance!* That's how we keep the feast!

Therefore, indicating the old, natural, ritual Passover meal, we read, "And He took bread, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me." Let me say it again — these words do *not*, by any stretch of the imagination, establish a new "Christian ordinance"! The Lord is telling His disciples, "Take this bread that I *now give you* and eat it with enlightened understanding — this Passover bread which you have eaten for fifteen hundred years means my body which is broken for you. Now eat it tonight, and on any future occasion when you may keep this Passover feast, not as a memorial to the lamb in Egypt those long centuries ago, but eat it in the full comprehension that it memorializes ME! I am the Lamb to which all other Passover lambs have pointed — and tomorrow I will die for you!" That, my beloved, is why this meal is rightly called the "Last

Supper” — it brought the **end** of the shadow — the true Lamb was now coming into view! Therefore, “As oft as ye have eaten, do eat, or continue to eat this bread, and drink this cup (of the Passover meal), ye do show forth (signify, typify, point to) the Lord’s death till He (the true Lamb) comes (and is slain for you).” It should be clear to every thinking mind that the Lord is not talking at all about a **new ordinance** the church was to keep for two thousand more years; rather, He was speaking of the Passover meal He was eating with His disciples *that very night!* The true Lamb was even then “coming” to be slain; He was that night on His way to the slaughter!

How quick the Lord’s people are to take something the Lord does and make a ritual, ceremony, or tradition out of it! Thus it is that the Lord declares, “Your tradition has made the word of God of no effect.” By our tradition of continuing the *symbol* of eating bread and drinking wine to show forth the Lord’s death till He comes, we make His coming as the Lamb of God, our Passover slain for us, of **no effect!** Hear me, my beloved, HE HAS COME! The Lord has come! The Lamb has come! The literal Passover meal is ended! There is no more *shadow* or *type*, no more *memorial* to His death, for the REALITY is here! The life of God’s Lamb is now realized within us spiritually by the power of the living Christ!

It is my deep conviction that the New Covenant is a **spiritual covenant** of reality and life, not containing within it any Old Testament style external rituals or outward ceremonies. It was the *Old Covenant* that stood in “meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them *until* the time of reformation (change)” (Heb. 9:10). In celebrating the *fulfilling* of the Old Testament feast of Passover Jesus said, “I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, *until that day* when I drink it *new* (in the New Covenant, spiritually) *with you in my Father’s kingdom*” (Mat. 26:29). Luke records it thus: “I will not anymore eat thereof, until it **be fulfilled in the kingdom of God**” (Lk. 22:16). In my spirit I hear the words of Paul explaining this mystery, “Who **hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son**” (Col. 1:13). And, “The kingdom of God is **not meat and drink**; but righteousness, and peace, and joy **in the Holy Ghost**” (Rom. 14:17).

According to Jesus there was coming a day when He would drink a new wine with His disciples in the kingdom of God that would be of superior quality. That new wine represents a new *life* and *spirit* of which His chosen ones would partake; it is superior wine for it speaks of the fullness of the Spirit. That new wine, when we have truly drunk it with Him as we sit at His table and sup with Him and He with us, will provide full and complete salvation for the entire Christ body, who are all sons of God. To drink this new wine of superior quality, with Christ in our Father’s kingdom, shows that we have been transformed into His image and likeness. It also shows that we have inherited the kingdom prepared for us from the foundation of the world. THIS IS TAKING PLACE WITHIN US NOW AS WE SUP WITH HIM, AND HE WITH US! The old wine of external observances *represents in a figure* the transforming power of His life, but the new wine of superior, kingdom quality contains within it the power of the Spirit and will complete the process of our full salvation, making us kings and priests in the kingdom of God after the order of Melchizedek. To drink this new, kingdom wine, we must become new wine vessels. Our Father is now making us new wine vessels, that we may fully drink of the new and superior wine of the incorruptible glory and life of the kingdom of God!

That the bread and wine of this new superior kingdom quality is not physical, natural wafers and wine is clear from Paul’s teaching about “communion.” Hear what he says! “The cup of blessing which *we bless*, is it not the COMMUNION OF THE BLOOD OF CHRIST? The bread which *we break*, is it not the COMMUNION OF THE BODY OF CHRIST?” (I Cor. 10:16). Then, that we may clearly understand what elements he is talking about Paul adds, “For **we** being

many **are (the) one bread**, and one body; for we are all partakers of that **one bread (Christ)**" (I Cor. 10:17). The word "communion" is from the Greek *koinonia* meaning "partnership, participation, intercourse." Can we not see by this that WE ARE IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE BODY OF CHRIST! WE ARE IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE BLOOD OF CHRIST! This is not fulfilled by wafers and wine, but in our union with Christ where we drink living blood, the wine of Christ's Spirit that flows through His corporate body. We are also eating His flesh, the living Word of His substance made flesh in us.

Jesus said, "I am the bread that is come down from heaven." He certainly did not mean that He was a wafer you could pop in your mouth on Sunday morning! As we partake of **Him**, not in a wafer, but in spirit and in truth, by the power of the Holy Ghost, we eat of that bread and become that one bread. As **He is broken** among us, His life shared, His word communicated from member to member, we are partakers of that one bread and satisfy our souls by being filled with all the goodness of God. We have all hungered for fellowship with those of like precious faith, yet this too is a haunting shadow of the past. There is a communion beyond a mere assembling of bodies in one place — there is a communion of *kindred spirits* in the *secret place of the Most High*. As we enter into union with God we have a fellowship divine through the transmitting power of the Father of spirits; spirit conversing with spirit: this is truly the communion **beyond the outward and external**. This communion is known only in the kingdom of the Spirit, which is the kingdom of our Father! This is the assembly of the heavenly mount Zion and the Jerusalem which is above; this is the communion of the assembly of the first-born-out-from the Father! This is being one with the Father, and with the Son, and with each other in the Spirit!

Paul says that the cup which *we bless* is the communion of the blood of Christ, and the bread which *we bless* is the communion of the body of Christ. The cup most churches bless is the cup of Mogan David wine or Welch's grape juice, and the bread the vast majority of churches bless is communion wafers or soda crackers. That is *not* the cup the sons of God drink of, nor is it the bread the sons of God eat of! When we are unified together, one in Him, we become that one bread which is the bread of life. This bread is sweeter, more delicious, giving superior strength and substance above any of the cheap imitations of religion. What a remarkable people you are — the elect of God! You are in the world to unveil the presence and life of the Lord. You sit at the Father's table eating and drinking in the kingdom of God as our Lord Himself prophesied you would. Your calling is to give yourself to humanity that they might be quickened and caused to live in the presence of God. Therefore, the cup which **WE BLESS IS** the communion of the blood of Christ in the Spirit, and the bread which **WE BLESS IS** the communion of the Word made flesh in the body of Christ! Oh, the mystery of it!

We are that one bread, His life in us is that precious blood, praise His name! We do not bless the outward cup of the Old Covenant, we bless the cup of the New Covenant which is new in the kingdom of God. Here is a description of the most perfect and spiritual communion service you can ever attend: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, **I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.**" The church world has never *discerned the body of Christ*, they have not perceived that it is HE who dwells in the midst of His people and that it is there, in His body, that He lives as the bread and the blood from heaven. When we speak the words of His life, and minister in the power of His life — this is the Lord's Supper!

It all boils down to whether we understand the Word by the Spirit, or carnally; whether we believe that eating His flesh and drinking His blood can be done physically, or whether it must be done spiritually. It is an utter impossibility to eat or drink Christ with my physical mouth;

therefore, I can only eat and drink of Him in the same spirit in which He spoke to the sinful woman of Samaria, "I have water to drink, which if a man drink of it, he will never thirst again." I so eat and drink in remembrance of what He accomplished for me at Calvary! I so eat and drink in participation with Him in what He is to me and in me right now! I can say with assurance that once you eat and drink this superior bread and wine with Him in the heavenly and spiritual kingdom of the Father, the old-order carnal ordinances of the church systems will never satisfy!

There are natural foods that you can feed people and they will hunger again. The nutritious strength and life received from these foods are only temporary, they last only for a season. There are doctrines and creeds and rituals and words of men on the religious buffets of the church systems that have no life in them, that can neither support life nor sustain life. But there is a bread from heaven that if a man eat of it he shall never die and never hunger again! With the disciples of old our heart's cry is, "Lord, evermore give us this bread!" We desire *this bread*, and our Father is giving it to us as we yearn for Him.

God has purposed to reveal every aspect of His purpose through His Christ, Head and body. So we are living this very day in a progression. God is marching on! He wants to reveal Himself and unfold this glorious One that we call the Lord Jesus Christ. He is standing at the door knocking. Open the door and invite Him and He will come in to you and will sup with you on a plane where you have never before known Him. God is preparing a people at this very time who are yearning for a further revelation of the Lord. These apprehended ones are not looking back fondly on the "good old days" when God moved in mighty power, wishing that they could have continued to move in those days of glory. This people God is preparing today is not lamenting or trying to recapture or perpetuate the glory of the past. It is a true and wonderful fact that for every "day" in God there is fresh manna, there is that fresh unveiling of the glory of Jesus Christ. This is not a time for God's sons to try to recapture the past, or try to warm over the glories of yesterday. I heard a brother who teaches the message of sonship and the kingdom of God, just the other day say, "I'm looking for God to move again like He did in the great Latter Rain outpouring." Oh, no! I have no desire to see God move again as He did in 1948 or on any other date in history. This dear brother has missed the point altogether. None of those former moves of God, no matter how powerful and glorious they were, brought the kingdom of God to pass in all the earth, nor did they deliver creation from the bondage of corruption. They blessed a few of earth's people, and then went the way of all flesh.

There is something brand new for you and me today in the economy of God! The elect of God are now in a time of patient waiting as they are being prepared for the hour when the younger sons of God shall attain to the measure of the stature of the fullness of the firstborn Son. Some people don't like to *wait*. Some brethren say we have waited long enough, so let us step out from behind the veil and begin to evangelize and do all those things we have already done in Passover and Pentecost. Methinks they would not have tarried in the upper room either, they would have already left the hundred and twenty and gone out on the streets of Jerusalem passing out tracts! And they would have aborted their calling and missed the glory when it came! This is not a time for those who treasure the beautiful hope of sonship to get excited about doing exploits for God in the waning anointing of yesterday or by the threadbare methods of the past, even if they do *call* it sonship. The glory that fills our expectant souls today is born of the knowledge imparted by the mind of Christ that the hour of His manifestation draweth nigh — the hour when Christ shall come in fullness to be revealed IN HIS SONS, and they shall reign over the earth.

From time to time the Lord speaks to me in dreams — usually at about six o'clock in the morning. Some years ago Larry and Betty Hodges were scheduled to be here in El Paso to share with the saints. That morning I awoke from a dream. In the dream I was in a large hall such as is used for meetings and functions of various kinds. At one side of the hall, against the wall, was a table. To the right of the table were a few people seated in chairs along the wall. Brother Hodges was standing before the table, facing the wall, ministering to the people seated against the wall. His back was to the large hall. He was ministering from a manuscript on the table — I could see that it was typewritten, with a number of pages, and double-spaced like a manuscript prepared for a publisher. He had reached the bottom of the first page and was speaking words that caused a great excitement in my spirit. I was thinking within myself, "Amen! That's right, brother! That's what the Lord has been teaching me!" It seemed it had something to do with *death to self*.

Then I noticed two long tables out in the center of the hall. And I noted that brother Hodges was facing the table and the people along the wall — his back to the hall and the tables. I was aware that a great number of people would soon be arriving. The tables, however, were cluttered with food and dirty dishes left over from a previous banquet. There were two place settings that had not been used at the head of one of the tables. Obviously, the banquet that had been held there had ended, and things were not ready for the people that would be coming. I thought, "We must clear all this away and make preparations for the arrival of the people." Someone began to help me and we cleared the tables. Then a folded map appeared in my hands. I laid the map on a shelf — and awoke from the dream.

In my meditations that morning the Spirit gave me understanding of the dream. Needless to say, I was very curious to see what brother Hodges would be ministering that day! I saw that the manuscript he was ministering from was like an *unpublished manuscript* — a fresh word, a new revelation for a new day — unknown to the masses of believers. It is that which can only be known by the Spirit and is witnessed to by those who are hearing from God in this hour. Those that receive this word are few in number — a "little flock," the "remnant" of the Lord. But there is coming a great change! God is soon to move in a new way, in the power and glory of the kingdom of God, and there shall be a great ingathering. Multitudes will flow into the kingdom of God, and many nations will say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths: for the law of the Lord shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (Mic. 4:2). But things are not quite ready — there are yet preparations to be made!

The tables with the left-over food and dirty dishes speak of the previous move of God — the feast of Pentecost. It was a glorious feast with rich blessing for many — but the feast has ended. There were two tables — the early and the latter rain — but the meal is over! Only remnants of blessing and vessels remain. Those that were ordained to come and partake of that feast came and ate. Some that were bidden to the feast didn't make it, or refused the invitation, represented by the two place settings that had not been used. The truth that gripped my spirit was just this: the former feast is over and God is now speaking from an unpublished manuscript! We have not passed this way before, and God has not done in the past what He will do in this new kingdom day! What He has to say has only begun — for brother Hodges was still reading from the *first page* of the manuscript. He is dealing with His called and chosen elect about the *price to be paid* to participate in the new thing God will do — hence my impression that the portion of the manuscript being read from had something to do with *death to self*. The Lord is also dealing with His chosen ones about the preparations to be made for the next great move of God — the feast of Tabernacles! In the feast of Tabernacles the sons of

God shall be revealed! There shall be a great ingathering, multitudes brought into the kingdom of God.

This is the hour of preparation. Let us prepare our hearts! Let us leave behind the feast that has ended. Let us not sit any longer at the table, eating the left-overs of what the Lord prepared for another day. Those who have heard the call of the Spirit have now set their sights and hearts upon the feast that is ready to dawn! In the dream brother Hodges had his back to the hall with the tables of left-over food and dirty dishes. In other words, he represented that those called to sonship in this hour have renounced the feast that has ended, have turned away from that with which God is finished. He was ministering from a higher realm, speaking of a new day, and pressing into a new glory!

Finally, I saw that the map represents our present walk in the Spirit and our destiny in God. In this day God is raising a people into heights never known by man. He is ushering a people into a new place in God, into a realm in the Spirit, into an attainment, a ministry, and a glory never before experienced by any except our glorious Head, the Lord Jesus Christ. We are now preparing our hearts for the new and greater thing the Lord is doing and shall do in our day!

The Lord promises to sup with each one who opens the door and promises also that the one who does open the door will sup with Him. Let us look at the real meaning of this word “sup.” It is from the Greek *deipneo* meaning “to dine, i.e. take the principle or *evening meal*.” There is a point here that the English translation does not make. To many *supper* is not a main meal. The Greeks ate three meals in the day. *Breakfast* was only a slice of dry bread dipped in wine. *Lunch* was seldom eaten at home; it was a scratch meal eaten in a city square or wherever a man happened to be. But *supper* was the last and main meal of the day! This was the meal at which a man sat and talked for hours, for now there was time, for work was ended. There is something very lovely here! It is not a mere courtesy visit, paid in the passing, which the Lord Jesus offers us. It is supper! He desires to come in and sit long with us, and to wait as long as we wish Him to wait, until we have heard all His words, understood all His will, and until we are filled with all the fullness of this last and greatest feast!

Those overcomers who are called to sonship in this day have received a personal invitation from the Lord of glory to have supper with Him! He has ushered us in to the “marriage supper” of the Lamb! We have already eaten with the Lord at other times and on other levels, but now He has called us to come into union with Him and “sup” with Him. For some years we ate breakfast with the Lord in the Outer Court. It was the feast of Passover — bread and wine. Then we entered into the Holy Place and had lunch with Him. It was the feast of Pentecost. But now we have been invited to *supper*, the *third meal* of the day. This is also the third feast of the Lord, the feast of Tabernacles!

What sets the feast of Tabernacles apart from all the others is the abundance enjoyed during the feast. It's the full harvest. At the celebration of Tabernacles, not only had the barley and wheat been harvested, but also all other grains, the fruit of trees, the olives, the grapes, all that could possibly serve as food or drink. The harvest was complete! On the spiritual plane this points to the fact that God has been using His people everywhere to whatever degree He has prepared the vessel for that revelation of the Christ. There has come a beautiful unfolding of His purpose, the outflow of His life and the manifestation of Himself throughout the church age, right up to the present time. But there shall yet come the ultimate, the total, and complete revelation of Jesus Christ — not a narrow, limited thing, not to get a number of people saved and filled with the Spirit, and healed and blessed and used — but the kingdom of God coming with power and great glory through manifest sons of God, as an expression and manifestation

of God in His total capacity with no limitations, with all the power, with all the glory, all the might, all the majesty, all the authority, so that nations will be swept into the kingdom of God, creation delivered from the bondage of corruption, the last enemy, even death, destroyed from off the face of the earth, and all things made new. It is indeed wonderful!

Oh, what a grand and glorious realm lies before us in the feast of Ingathering! The day of the full fruit of the Spirit! The day of Perfection! The time of full and complete redemption, spirit, soul, and body! The full and complete experiencing of HIMSELF! The fullness of Strength and Power and Glory! The Feast of feasts! The strange part of the whole thing is this, that the whole purpose and plan of God for this new day of the kingdom of God is completely obscured and lost amidst the shout and euphoria over the “firstfruits” of the Spirit which we received in Pentecost. Those who glory in the “firstfruits of the Spirit” do not know what this day is about! They can see the healings, deliverances, miracles, prophecies, gifts...and so forth; and they understand not that it is God in His great mercy inviting His people to enter on in to their full inheritance. They do not realize that all this is but the foretaste and earnest of their heritage, and that God bids us arise and come away with Him to the great Feast that lies before!

One cannot explain to an unregenerated and unbelieving man what Passover means unless God causes him to see it. Passover is distinct from anything that an unbeliever has ever experienced! There are those who have experienced Passover, knowing the joy of sins forgiven, yet they have no comprehension at all of what it is to experience Pentecost. It is like trying to explain the world of man to a worm! Today, there are believers who have experienced both Passover and Pentecost and yet, they are as blind as bats to what the feast of Tabernacles is about. I am declaring to you that there is a **third realm** in God for us to experience! Some feel that they are already living and walking in the feast of Tabernacles, but I am sure they are walking in the assurance of the *revelation* of it more than in the *reality* and *power* of it. The truth is, there is a fullness that we do not yet have! This third dimension brings His Lordship with all the authority, power, and glory that brings. And this feast, being the last, brings perfection! It brings the consummation of our salvation in spirit, soul, *and* body.

This third dimension in God is the place where you and I, in the spirit, appropriate *all the fullness* of the Most Holy Place. Some are talking about coming out from behind the veil and manifesting sonship to creation, yet it is evident in their lives that they have not yet *experientially appropriated* the full glory, power, and dominion of that superlative of all realities in God. Coming out from that realm is premature! Blessed are they who are called to this great Feast, that which supersedes Pentecost, that which is the BALANCE OF THE MEAL of which Passover and Pentecost were merely the first courses! And the balance must therefore come, the remainder of the meal which will give strength to the laborers to go forth and accomplish great things for the Master. Aren't you glad!

Chapter 64

The Church In Laodicea *continued*

“To him that *overcometh* will I grant to *sit with me in my throne*, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne” (Rev. 3:21).

The phrase “to him that *overcometh*” is very clear in the Greek. It is in the active voice in contrast to the passive voice. What that means is that it is participatory. The person is involved with the activity, rather than just permitting something to be done to him. Overcoming is an action verb. It implies that one *has succeeded, is succeeding, and shall succeed* in the endeavor. Now, the mood is a participle here in the Greek. What that means is that the verb “overcome” has, as it were, an *i-n-g* on the end of it. It shows a present tense action. Since we all live in the present, it implies overcoming — *now*. Therefore it should read, “To him that *is overcoming* will I grant...” The only place that any of us can be an overcomer is in the situation at the present moment! We can’t go back and undo the past. Nor can we speculate about the future. All overcoming has to be accomplished in our NOW! This time that God has given us in His dealings is our opportunity to conquer and gain the victory in all situations and circumstances.

The seventh stage of our progressive journey to perfection is where we hear Jesus say, “To him that *overcometh* will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne.” It is significant to notice that our Lord says, “*in* my throne.” We need to understand what this means! Paul tells us that through His death, resurrection, and ascension Jesus was raised up to sit at the right hand of God in the higher-than-all-heavens. This does not mean that Jesus has for the past two thousand years been sitting beside a physical God, or a God limited to some particular spot in the universe, on a physical throne. In the first place, God does not exist in a physical form! He is omnipresent spirit which fills this whole universe, of which our scientists tell us there are more galaxies out there than all the individual grains of sand on all the beaches of the world. And each of those hundreds of billions of galaxies contain billions of trillions of stars, suns, planets, and moons!

Therefore, you cannot limit a God who is the originator of all these marvels, the source of their flaming energy, who upholds all things by His power, and who *fills all things* with Himself. “Whither shall I go from Thy presence?” the Psalmist asks. There is nowhere to go! Should you travel a billion light years into space you would still be surrounded and overwhelmed by the presence of God. You cannot limit this God, or put Him in a physical form, for He is “the *light* which no man can approach unto” — the very source of all the energy of the universe! The expression, “raised up to sit at the right hand of God” is a figure of speech denoting Christ’s *spiritual position*. In His glorified humanity He is the revelation and expression to creation of all the authority and power of the invisible God, yet He is not in His glorified humanity the invisible God. He, positionally, is at the right hand of God. The idea of God sitting on a throne and Jesus sitting on the throne beside Him ruling with Him denotes Jesus having been raised up in

His glorified humanity to express within Himself the authority and power of the One whom our eyes cannot see.

When Jesus says, “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne,” that is what He means. Notice, He did not say, “I’ll let him sit beside me on a throne.” Rather, “I’ll let him sit *with me in my throne*.” This denotes us having been raised up to the same state of glorification and exaltation and co-rulership with Jesus. Everything He is, the sons of God are! Then He said, “Even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne.” So when we see Jesus sitting in the Father’s throne, we know that the Father’s throne is His throne, and therefore our throne is likewise the Father’s throne. At the last stage of our journey we also are raised up as the full expression and revelation of the authority and power of almighty God, our Father!

Perhaps this is too great for the faith of some to receive, but all who have truly received the call to sonship *do embrace this truth in the full assurance of faith* and know within themselves that it is the revealed plan of God for His called and chosen elect. Ah, “It is not by might, nor by power, but *by my Spirit* saith the Lord!” This is not something that might happen or might not, for “He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love; having *predestinated us unto placement as sons* by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will” (Eph. 1:4-5). That which God has predestined He will bring to pass! He appointed us to sonship before the foundation of the world. May your soul rejoice in this precious truth, my beloved, may it fill you with the godly determination and divine faith to hasten your journey toward that place which is prepared for you!

The seven messages to the seven churches close with these three great earthly figures of eternal truth — the *door*, the *table*, and the *throne*. This order none may reverse or alter! We must open the door, we must sit at His table and sup with Him, and He with us, and *then* we will be raised up to His throne!

Many years ago, amidst a great moving of the Spirit of God, the revelation of sonship fell with wonder upon our ears and burst with glory within our hearts. We sat enraptured for hours at a time, day after day, and were taught by the Spirit about the Father and His purposes and about that elect company He has called and chosen and apprehended to be His *sons*, ordained of God to rule with Him in His kingdom and restore all things into God. We learned that these sons would have unlimited power — power over everything — power over sin, power over sickness, power over the elements, power over demons, power over all the power of the enemy, power over Satan, and power over death. We were going to rule and reign in power, and our eyes sparkled like diamonds in the light and our hearts swelled with joy in expectation of the wonderful position and authority we would soon have in the kingdom. We could think and talk of nothing else but the power we would have, and in our glorying we tried to usurp and demonstrate this power. We were intoxicated with illusions of grandeur as we pressed our way into the kingdom and the exalted position of sitting on the throne with Jesus and ruling the world and the vastnesses of infinity forevermore.

It is true, wonderfully and gloriously true — the sons are destined to sit on the throne with the Lord, they are going to rule over the nations, and they are going to have power beyond our wildest dreams; power to bring salvation to the masses, power to reveal the secrets of men’s hearts, power to heal every manner of sickness and disease with a word, power to do great signs and wonders, power to speak to the rulers of the earth in every realm of politics, economics, education, business, entertainment, and environment with divine wisdom and

omnipotent authority and demand their obedience to the word of Christ; power to raise the dead out of their coffins after they have been embalmed, and out of their dark graves in the cemetery, power to deliver the whole creation from the bondage of corruption into the liberty and glory of incorruptible life! That is the true revelation of manifest sonship. That is the original revelation of manifest sonship as birthed by the Spirit of God in the days of the moving of His power among the called and chosen of the Lord. Many today scoff at such a hope and seek to water down and dilute the revelation, applying it on a lower level, making manifest sonship nothing more than a spiritual believer under the old order of Pentecost, where it is impotent to accomplish all that we have spoken. But those are the words of bastard sons, who share not the mind, heart, and vision of the Father!

Yet — there was a truth that was withheld from us in the beginning, and later revealed by the Spirit, the truth that as the firstborn Son of God was made a **priest** after the order of Melchizedek, and as the Son reigns as a **priest** upon His throne, so the sons must also be. Christ is referred to in scripture as “a **priest** upon His throne.” It is not the kings who reign, but the priests! It is the fact of the priest being given ruling authority that makes the priest to also be a king. He is not a king who becomes a priest, but a priest who is given rule. And so we read, “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be **priests** of God and of Christ, and shall **reign with Him** a thousand years” (Rev. 20:6). Ah, it is the **priests** that reign! Can you not see the mystery? A king without a priestly nature is no king at all — merely a despot. We have a dual role to fill in the government of the kingdom; we are not only to be kings with authority, power, and dominion; we are also to be priests with priestly hearts of mercy, love, compassion, and reconciliation.

It is a lofty position to which we are called, and for which we are being prepared. Sonship, yes! Kings and priests, yes! But why equipped with such power and glory? To SERVE! For it is written, “Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, **and my servant**, whom I have chosen” (Isa. 43:10). As kings we reign and rule, as priests we serve and bless, for the ministry of the priest is that of a servant, and we REIGN BY SERVING! Little did we understand in those early days the processings that would be necessary to bring forth in us a kingly and priestly nature! We had no idea of what it would take to produce within us a priestly nature, the spirit of priesthood. We heard the part about “sitting in the throne” but we missed the full implication of what the “overcoming” would involve. We did not yet understand that the way **up** is **down!** The carnal mind would have us believe that the way **up** is **up!**

The way up is revealed for every son of God in the life of the firstborn Son, who is the example and pattern for us all. “Let this mind be in you,” the apostle Paul exhorts, “as it was also in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 2:5). What is that *mind* that was in Christ Jesus? Was it His mind of wisdom, His mind of discernment, His mind of holiness, His sense of Godhood? Oh, no! Here is what it is: “Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: **but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Himself the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and...humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross**” (Phil. 2:6-8). What a downward path that is! All the way from the glory of the Father’s bosom to the humiliation and death of the cross! And along the way He shared all of our sorrows, pains, difficulties, problems, doubts, fears, weaknesses, “made in the likeness of men.”

“Wherefore!” That is what Paul says next. “Wherefore God also hath **highly exalted Him, and given Him a name that is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and**

that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:9-11). The way up is down. That is the eternal truth for every son of God as revealed in Jesus Christ! You see, my beloved, before we understood this great truth we pressed our way into the sonship ministry, we "stood on the promises," demanded of God our sonship "rights," and sought to seize the throne. It is true, precious elect of the Lord, that God wants to take us UP — high into the realms of God — UP to the throne — but our Father would teach us and have us thoroughly understand that the way UP is always DOWN!

Our Father wisely submits us to all that is common to man, He compasses us about and leads us down, down, down into trials, testings, difficulties, problems, sorrows, pain, suffering, misunderstandings, humiliations, reverses, and losses; for it is only by these that the *compassion* of priesthood can be worked into our lives. Wouldn't it be wonderful if God could just *pour divine compassion into us* in some kind of instantaneous spiritual experience! But that is not how you get compassion. Jesus has shown us the way! "For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God...who may have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that *he himself is compassed about with infirmity*" (Heb. 5:1-2). "Compassed about with infirmity." Compassion is worked into us through our partaking of the troubles of those to whom we are to minister! I personally have a special compassion for people restricted to wheelchairs, and it floods my heart every time I see one, because some years ago I came so very, very close to spending the rest of my life in a wheelchair. The Lord was merciful and wonderfully delivered me out of my trouble, but I *tasted* of what it would mean to be so limited and helpless. Oh, what compassion, what understanding, what pity, what tenderness of heart that creates in us! Those who have suffered abuse, or illness, or habits, or problems of many kinds, once delivered out of it and transformed, are best suited to minister to others who are held captive there. No one else understands the problem, or the solution, as they! That, my beloved, is the way to priesthood. And priesthood is the way to kingship!

There are certain basic principles of the kingdom of God that must be a part of the frame of mind and experience of all who press forward into sonship to God. We are learning to think like God! We are learning how to RULE WITH CHRIST IN THIS LIFE. So many saints are weak, frustrated, and defeated. But those called to sonship God is blasting out of the lowlands of lethargy, discouragement, oppression and defeat, into a vibrant walk with Christ in the high places of peace, joy, and triumph of His kingdom. We are encouraged by the words of our brother Paul, "Strengthen yourselves in the Lord and in the power which His supreme might imparts. Put on the complete armor of God, so as to be able to stand firm against all the stratagems of the devil. For ours is not a conflict with mere flesh and blood, but with despots, the empires, the forces that control and govern this dark world — the spiritual hosts of evil arrayed against us in the heavenly warfare. Wherefore put on the complete armor of God, so that you may be able to stand your ground in the evil day, and, having fought to the end, TO REMAIN VICTORS ON THE FIELD" (Eph. 6:10-14, Weymouth).

We are called to reign with Christ from the highest heaven! Such all-embracing majesty is too vast for my feeble understanding, yet I know by the Spirit that the body of Christ is in practical preparation for the explicit purpose of *universal dominion*. But how can a man rule over principalities and powers and universes if he is unable to *rule his own spirit*? "He that ruleth his own spirit is better than he that taketh a city" (Prov. 16:32). The awful betrayal, trial, mocking, beating, and crucifixion of Jesus is the most shining example. It is difficult to imagine any humiliation more bitter than that! It is the worst indignity that anyone can be called upon to endure. Few have ever had to bear it. Never was dishonor less deserved, never was dishonor so bravely borne. Through that fierce and heated hour our Lord bore Himself with quiet dignity.

Others were convulsed with uncontrolled passion, cursing, screaming, blaming, rebelling; He alone was calm and self-possessed. His victory over *Himself* was greater than His victory over His enemies! In such experiences of provocation, truly, “He that ruleth his own spirit is better than he that taketh a city.” God is a God of principle. He does not do anything by chance. It is my deep conviction that what happens in your life and mine is ordained of the Father to teach us the laws of the kingdom — the pathway to authority and the ways of dominion. Learn this, dear one, and you will know one of the fundamental principles of reigning with Christ: **OUR AUTHORITY IS OVER SPIRITUAL WICKEDNESS FIRSTLY IN OURSELVES!** “To him that overcometh will I (consequently) give power over the nations: and he shall rule them...” “To him that overcometh will I grant (consequently) to sit with me in my throne...”

As sons of the Most High, we have access to the same strength that enabled Jesus to live an overcoming life — and to conquer even death. He now gives us that same authority and power that gave Him victory over sin, death, hell, and the grave. Have you ever wondered what would happen if Jesus would come and transfer places with you? If suddenly He would come to dwell in ***your body!*** I have often wondered what He would do if He had my circumstances, my weaknesses, my lusts, my pressures, my problems. If the Master came to me and said, “Move over, I am coming to live in your house for a season!” I do not doubt that in a short period He would have all of my problems straightened out and all of my weaknesses and turmoil under control. He would overcome all of the things that I struggle with. But the wonderful truth is — **HE HAS COME! HE DOES LIVE IN MY BODY!** “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but *Christ liveth in me...*” (Gal. 2:20). “But ye are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God *dwelleth in you*” (Rom. 8:9).

Do you feel overwhelmed with problems? Then let me show you how to discover the ***challenge*** that lies in every obstacle. I promise that if you look for the challenge, you will find it, and then you will be able to turn the *stumbling-stone* in your pathway into a *stepping-stone* to the throne! The divine principle of which I speak is found in the prophecy of Isaiah, “Out of the desert shall come streams of water” (Isa. 35:6). What a challenge — to get streams out of the desert! Out of every obstacle comes a new challenge — an opportunity to overcome, to *do* the “impossible”. This is the point I want to make loud and clear! For if you want to overcome as Jesus overcame, you will need to tap into the dynamics of this principle. ***The only force that can cause weakness and failure is a challenge that is mistaken for a problem!*** But there will be no failure when we discover the ***challenge in the problem***, grab hold of it, and use it for a stepping-stone to higher ground. On the other hand, we can never overcome anything as long as we allow some horrendous problem to blind us to the divine challenge that is inherent in every obstacle. In our Father’s great school of sonship, in His effective training program for the future rulers of the world and the universe, He knows just exactly which obstacles to place in our pathway for our development and processing. If we try to use our faith to “move the mountain out of the way,” such action will not bring us where faith can be perfected and ***overcome*** the mountain — scale its heights, climb over it, and *conquer it!*

Some of you who read these lines are facing severe problems today, seeming insurmountable obstacles, and are feeling frustrated, at this point, by my apparently trivial treatment of circumstances that tower so ominously and menacingly before you. You think I don’t understand just how bad your situation really is, or how many times you have failed. Listen! I would not make the solution so simple, if it were not simple. These are principles I have *proven* in my own experience through years of walking with God. The answer lies so near — right there within you! The secret lies in whether you view your situation as a *problem* or a *challenge*. “What difference does it make,” you say, “whether I call it a problem or a challenge?” The difference is all-important!

Here's why. If you perceive an obstacle in your path as a problem, you will nurture negative emotions in respect to it — frustration, fear, anger, hopelessness, despair, depression. These emotions are grave-diggers — they carve out the pit of failure and death in which to bury you! On the other hand, if somehow the Holy Spirit can give you the revelation of it, if you can see by the inspiration of the Almighty that the obstacle is **God's challenge** — you have received the **kingdom attitude** in which spiritual (divine) emotions are released — faith, hope, confidence, peace, rest, encouragement, joy, thanksgiving, wisdom, knowledge, understanding, and power. These positive emotions, the fruit of the spirit, energize you and propel you *through* and *over* and *out of* and *above* the obstacle, issuing in strength and triumph! You see, precious friend of mine, the only problems in the world are problems that are *perceived* as problems. When the problem ceases (in your mind) to *be* a problem, then the problem is no longer a problem! Although the problem may still exist outwardly, yet, when the problem is no longer a problem *to you*, you have risen above it, scaled its heights, *over-come* it and conquered it! Who cares how high a mountain is if he has climbed over it or is flying above it!

A. E. Rowe, a great champion of faith in Christ, was reared as an atheist. For years he preached the gospel of grace and shared his experience of how he came from total unbelief to a true faith in the living Christ in these words: "I was reared as an infidel. My parents and all of my immediate relatives were proud of their unbelief. I was nourished on the vaunting skeptics of the ages. But I observed with what futile amazement all the skeptics from Celsus to Welles stood around the cradle of Christ, and I wondered how this helpless babe should have been thrust into the world in a time when Roman greed and Jewish hatred and Greek subtlety should combine to destroy it. Yet, this most impressive combination of forces the world has ever known served only to advance the cause of this infant, born in a stable. And I marveled that this poverty-stricken, uneducated plebeian from the remotest of villages in a despised province who exercised no authority, commanded no army, held no office, received no honors, wrote no books, and who died in early manhood, the most contemptible of deaths, a malefactor on a cross, between two criminals; and yet today His name is still the most esteemed on earth — I marveled at this!

"No unbeliever could tell me how it was that His word is still charged with the same power that it had nineteen hundred years ago and how He could reach down with pierced hands and pull human monsters out of a world of iniquity and transform them, overnight, into flaming evangelists and steadfast heroes of faith. They died in torturing flame, on crosses, and beheaded with the ax that others might know the love and mighty power of Christ that had brought deliverance to their souls. Nor could anyone tell me how this isolated Jew could utter words, at once so simple that any child could understand them, and yet at the same time so profound that the greatest intellects that the world has ever known have not been able to plumb their shining depths. The words, the life, the character, the power of this man, the greatest enigma of all history, and any naturalistic explanation only serves to deepen the mystery and make more puzzling the paradox. But I discovered that the paradox was made plain and the mystery was solved when I accepted Jesus Christ simply for what He claimed to be — **the Son of God**, come from heaven, the Saviour of men. But more than that, *my* Saviour, and *my* Lord. I learned to thrill at the angel's words, '*Behold, unto you is born a Saviour which is Christ the Lord.*' Even more than that, I learned the greater truth that though Christ, a thousand times, in Bethlehem be born, **if He be not born in thee**, then thy soul is still forlorn" — end quote.

I know another truth like unto this. Just as Jesus was a *nobody* in the eyes of the world and religion of His day, but His words and His acts and His life were freighted with such power that they changed the course of history, dethroned all the gods and goddesses of the pagans, and

conquered the world empire that ruled the earth, SO IS IT WITH ALL WHO ARE CALLED TO SHARE HIS THRONE! Few, if any, of God's called and chosen ones who are being prepared as overcomers destined to reign with Christ in His kingdom, are known in the halls of government, respected in the commercial empires of the nations, approved by the educational systems or schools of higher learning, or acclaimed by the vaunted religious systems of men.

These saints of the Most High to whom the kingdom shall be given are simple people, unknown, unlettered, unheralded, unrecognized, and unsung! The world knoweth them not, even as it knew Him not. They are all hidden away in their own little Nazareth, the place of no good thing; but it is there that the Father of glory has appeared to them, proclaiming them His sons, revealing His heart, opening His word, teaching His ways, purifying their souls, transforming their lives, giving them His mind, His wisdom, and bringing them to maturity and perfection in His own divine family. At the appropriate moment these will be empowered with the fullness of His Spirit, just as Jesus was at the Jordan; their bodies clothed with the pure garments of the incorruptible Life of Christ, their mortality swallowed up of His Life, just as Jesus was in His resurrection; they shall enter upon the stage of history as unknown and unannounced as was Jesus when He strode into the wedding at Cana of Galilee on that day of His "showing forth unto Israel."

In the Old Testament we read a most wonderful account of Hannah, the wife of Elkanah. Elkanah and Hannah lived in the days when Eli was the priest and the judge of Israel. Elkanah had two wives, Hannah and Peninah. Peninah had children, but Hannah was barren. This was a source of much sorrow to Hannah, for Peninah apparently ridiculed and scorned Hannah and caused her much distress because the Lord had shut up her womb from conceiving. Hannah wept and was grieved in her spirit because of her barren state. Every year Elkanah went up to worship at the house of the Lord in Shiloh, which was about fifteen miles from his home. At one of these visits Hannah prayed to the Lord in deep sorrow, with weeping and bitterness of soul, saying, "O Lord, if Thou wilt look upon me, and give me a son, he shall be given to the Lord as long as he lives."

Eli the priest saw Hannah praying in the temple with such desperateness and thought perhaps she was drunk, but Hannah assured Eli that she was only in travail of spirit because of her barren state. Eli then blessed her and said, "Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of Him." The Lord heard Hannah's prayer and gave her a little boy; and she called his name Samuel, which means, "Asked of God," because he had been given in answer to her prayer. While he was still a little child, Hannah brought Samuel to Eli, the priest, and said to him, "My Lord, I am the woman who stood here praying. I asked God for this child; and now I have promised that he shall be the Lord's as long as he lives. Let him stay here with you and grow up in God's house." And we all know the story of Samuel, how he heard the voice and word of the Lord, how he became one of the greatest of the prophets, and how powerful was his prophetic ministry that it is written of him that not one word that he spoke fell to the ground. He did all the will of God and spoke only the words of God all the days of his life!

As we prayerfully meditate upon the experience of Hannah and her son, we are able to see that she is a type of the true church of Jesus Christ, the barren wife, in contrast to religious Babylon which claims to have many children. As the Lord caused the barren wife to bring forth a son of promise, even so the Lord is bringing to the birth a son company from His favored wife, the bride of Christ. We who are apprehended of the Father unto the calling of sonship are fulfilling the type shown in Samuel, for we are His *manchild* of promise and are to be considered the Lord's possession, even as Hannah returned Samuel back to the Lord. And just

as Samuel heard the voice of the Lord and spoke the words of the Lord, which words never failed, but brought forth the kingship in Israel, so are we hearing the voice of the Lord, and are appointed to speak the words of the Lord, and bring His authority and dominion to pass in the earth in this appointed day! As we endure the trials and testings of this present time, and await the fulfillment of our destiny in God, let us be aware continually of the fact that we belong to the Lord and have no right to direct our own lives.

Before we leave this point of our thought, I want to share another portion of Hannah's prayer in the house of the Lord in Shiloh. She prayed in the spirit of prophecy, saying, "The Lord killeth, and maketh alive: He bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up. The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich; He bringeth low, and lifteth up. *He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory:* for the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and He hath set the world upon them. He will keep the feet of His saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness; for by strength shall no man prevail. The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken to pieces; out of heaven shall He thunder upon them: the Lord shall judge the ends of the earth; and He shall give strength unto His king, and exalt the horn of His anointed (the power of His Christ)" (1 Sam. 2:6-10).

Here in Hannah's prophetic prayer we see many wonderful truths and divine principles which reveal the sovereign purpose of God to take those who are esteemed as nothing by the standards of this world and, through His processings unto perfection, to exalt them to a position of kingship and dominion over the earth. It is the Lord who takes a life out of the present realm of earthiness and death and raises it up into incorruption and glory! You see, all is in HIS sovereign power and that is why the kingdom of darkness can never prevail in spite of all its cunning devices. There is a most amazing statement in Hannah's prophecy, for the word of the Lord declares, "The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich..." Our hope of the kingdom of God is rooted in our knowledge of God — the very truth that He is sovereign and that He controls the destiny of all men, including both the poor and the rich, on whatever level that is applied. We might think that the Lord controls only the destiny of those who are His predestinated people, but such is not the case. HE IS LORD OF ALL! ALL are in His hands and the steps of every man are ordered of the Lord. I do not presume to understand all the "whys" and "wherefores" in God's appointments in the lives of men, both evil and righteous; I simply believe His word and perceive that it is as He has declared it.

That "all things are of God" is declared over and over again in the scriptures. Did not the Lord say to Pharaoh, that wicked man of rebellion against all that was of God, "Even for this same purpose have *I raised thee up*, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared *throughout all the earth*" (Rom. 9:17). The infinite wisdom of God's mind cannot be ascertained by the carnal little heads of natural-minded men. We have God's own word for it — He is the sovereign Lord who controls *all things!* I would not be surprised if some of the compatriots of the prophet Amos may have thought he was speaking blasphemy when by the Holy Spirit he said, "Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? Shall there be *evil* in a city, and *the Lord hath not done it?*" (Amos 3:6).

And again, "That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, THAT THERE IS NONE BESIDE ME. I am the Lord, and there is none else. I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil. *I the Lord do all of these things*" (Isa. 45:7). It is completely impossible for any man to truly know God until his soul has been taught that before all things, through all things, in all things, and after all things standeth God, omnipotent, omniscient, immutable, eternal, purposeful, and filled with righteousness, love, kindness, and

truth. He was before all things and by Him all things consist. There is no angel, principality, or power anywhere in all the endless vastnesses of infinity that does not hold his authority by direct appointment of God. In Him all men and angels and creatures live and move and have their being. By Him and for Him and to Him are all things. From Him everything comes, by Him everything exists, and in Him everything ends bringing glory to God forever and forever, Amen!

Armed with this understanding that God controls the destiny of all men and all events it is not difficult to see how the word of the Lord through Hannah is fulfilled. When we consider the word of the Lord further we see the great purpose and process of God in raising up the “nobodies” of this world to the very throne of His glory! We read, “*He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory...*” What a word! Thus, we find God’s stated purpose in making anyone poor, humble, and needy: that He might raise them up out of their poverty and abasement, and make them inherit His throne of glory! The Lord has given me a message of encouragement, consolation, understanding, and purpose for the poor nobodies of this present world who have received the call to sonship. That message is that God has made us poor for a glorious purpose: ***that He might raise us up again to inherit His throne!*** If ever you tend to doubt that you can attain to such a high and holy calling, remember this prophecy and assure yourself with the fact of God’s sovereignty. Hannah’s prayer stated further that God’s ability to raise up the poor, and even the beggar (the needy ones), and make them inherit His glorious throne is based upon the fact that the pillars of the earth are His, and that He has set the world upon them. God lays all foundations and controls all things! He raises up, and He casts down, according to His own sovereign purpose and power. No one would have believed that an unknown itinerant preacher from Galilee could have conquered all the pagan gods of the civilized world. But He did! Neither Caesar nor Pharaoh nor the philosophers of Greece would have believed that a handful of ignorant fishermen from Galilee could have, in the space of thirty years, turned the world upside down. But they did! The same omnipotent God will stand up His unknown, unlettered, unheralded, unsung, unrecognized *sons* in the earth in this, our day, and by the revelation of His wisdom and power in them cause the kingdoms of this world to become the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ. **THE SAME GOD WILL DO THIS! You can count on it!**

Jesus is the firstborn among many brethren, but the entire house of sons is, in the book of Hebrews, called the “church of the firstborn” — the body of that firstborn Son who is become the Head of the ORDER OF THE FIRSTBORN. Jesus was the firstborn and as such received the inheritance of the firstborn. By His love and purpose we share with Him, counted as heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ in the inheritance of the firstborn. That inheritance includes within it the very throne of God — His omnipotent authority, power, and dominion over all things!

Let me close with this illustration. At the performance of an opera, the first part of the evening is given over to the playing of the *overture*. As I understand it, the overture is made up of, or contains, parts of all the main numbers of the whole opera. The overture is an overall pre-view, or glimpse of the opera throughout until the end. But following the overture, the action goes back again to the beginning, and the whole opera is performed in its detail until the finish. Thus the overture presents the plot in portions and points to the end, so that one who has never heard it, will have a view of the action and the climax of it. But, as I pointed out, following the overture the action returns to the beginning and the detail of the whole plot is played out. However, both the overture and the detailed action come to a common end or result.

Let all who read these lines grasp the great truth that THE MANIFEST SONS OF GOD ARE THE OVERTURE OF GOD'S WHOLE GREAT DRAMA OF SIN AND REDEMPTION. Jesus is the overture for the sons, while the sons are the overture for all creation. The working out of redemption and restoration into the image of God is revealed first in *the man Christ Jesus*. In the manger of Bethlehem He was born in weakness, a little child that made a woman cry. He took upon Himself our humanity in the ultimate weakness of it, a child raised by poor parents in a small dusty village in an out-of-the-way province of a despised land. He lived in weakness and was crucified in weakness. And against all odds — out of that weakness He overcame all things, including death, and has ascended to the throne of the universe! He is the first, and so far the only, **perfected man**. This gives us knowledge of two wonderful things. Through Jesus we have the knowledge of both the **beginning** and the **end** of God's great drama of sin and redemption — MAN IN THE IMAGE OF GOD! But we also have the knowledge of the dealings and processings by which man is brought to that end. And **we are the overture**, the preview, the firstfruit, the demonstration of all God's creative and redemptive plan, presenting upon the cosmic stage of the universe the final end that God has in mind for His whole vast creation!

“To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne.” That is the wonderful climax of our journey through the seven churches, the glorious end of our progression into God!

About The Author

J. Preston Eby was born into a Mennonite family in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. While still a toddler his parents received the baptism in the Holy Spirit through the witness of some Pentecostal brethren in the area. They were led of the Lord to sell their business and move to Alabama to do missionary work. In his twelfth year Preston was filled with the Spirit – and in that same year the Holy Spirit sovereignly unfolded to his understanding the wonderful truth of the reconciliation of all things and all men unto God. No one else around him – in family or church associations – embraced this revelation. Through those early years he kept this truth to himself and pondered it in his heart. Later he came into contact with, and was touched by, a mighty move of the Spirit known as the "Latter Rain", with emphasis on the body of Christ, gifts of the Spirit, laying on of hands, impartation, five-fold ministry, prophetic ministry, spiritual worship, the kingdom of God, and going on to perfection, unto fullness of sonship to God.

The Lord pressed him into a deeper walk with Him, intensifying within his heart the truths of sonship and the kingdom of God, already planted within as seed through the visitation of the Lord as Latter Rain. Along the way he became associated with brother Gerald Derstine and The Gospel Crusade in Sarasota, Florida, serving as an associate minister with him for eight years, first co-pastoring and later pastoring the Revival Tabernacle in that city. His wife Lorain and he, with their family, were on the mission field in Latin America for a total of five years, with ministry in several other areas as well. For seven years, following this, he was an elder in a fellowship of believers in El Paso, Texas where they witnessed a precious move of the Spirit and a body of saints flowing together in the liberty and life of the Spirit.

Eventually the Lord changed even that order, and in 1976 led him into a full-time writing ministry directed to those who are called and chosen as elect of God to grow up into the full stature of Jesus Christ as sons of God. The writing ministry includes a monthly message titled KINGDOM BIBLE STUDIES as well as a number of booklets on various subjects. This ministry is greatly expanding throughout the world and our sincere hope and earnest prayer is that this course shall redound to HIS GLORY in encouragement, strengthening, edification and blessing to unnumbered thousands of God's elect sons everywhere – that creation may at last witness the true manifestation of the sons of God, setting all creation free from the bondage of corruption, restoring all things to God, and bringing to pass the glory of the kingdom of God throughout the whole earth and unto the unbounded heavens.

KINGDOM BIBLE STUDIES are sent free to anyone upon request. God's Word is always free to all. God's way is, "Freely you have received, freely give" (Mat. 10:8).