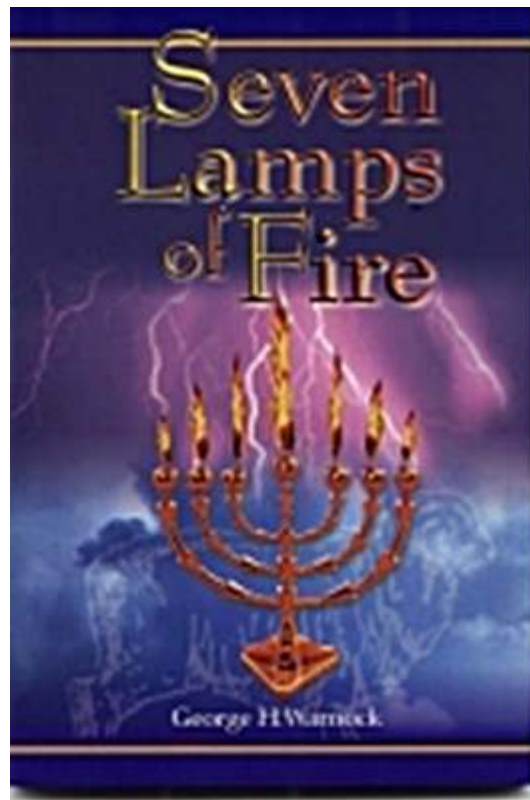


Seven Lamps of Fire

by George Warnock



INTRODUCTION

I had not planned on any introduction to this writing. But as I came towards the end I felt a short introduction might serve as a *cock-crowing* to some of God's people.

As I read and reread the seven letters to the seven churches, I cannot help but know that here in *the free world* at least, our Lord is calling His Church to repentance -- and for the same reasons He called *five of the seven churches* of Asia to repentance. He even threatened He would remove the Lampstand from one church that had so much going for them .. for a reason we would hardly consider to be valid. After all they were doing good works, laboring in the work of the Lord, were patient in trial, could not tolerate those who were evil, had keen understanding to try those who claimed to have apostolic ministry, and proved them to be false, carried faithfully the burdens that God put upon them, without fainting and dropping out of the race .. Surely a church of this calibre would receive top marks from the Lord. But this is the church, to whom the Lord said He would remove their Lampstand, if they did not repent. What was their problem? They had forsaken *FIRST LOVE*. What will it take to cause us to know how greatly we have fallen, and to come back to the simplicity and purity of our Love for God, and for His people? I do not have the answer, but I know the Lord of the Church *is the Answer*, and that He walks among the Lampstands fully qualified and prepared to deal with every problem in the Church.

A few days ago I was thinking of Peter. He loved his Master, but when everything went to pieces he was suddenly frustrated, disillusioned, angry, offended -- and ready to throw it all up. He even went so far as to openly deny his Master three times in a row. Then something happened that Jesus had predicted. Suddenly the cock crowed, and Jesus turned and looked at Peter, and caught his eye. That one timely look at Peter, brought him to sudden, devastating repentance .. and he went outside and wept bitterly. It was the beginning of the restoration of his faith and hope in the One who said: "Peter, I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not".

I know this is our total answer. And my hope is that this writing may be a timely *cock-crowing* to many who are troubled and perplexed, perhaps even disillusioned and offended with God's people, or with their Lord. Or, just plain Laodicean -- neither cold, nor hot -- and not realizing our Lord requires *one or the other*, and cannot tolerate the mixture. Whatever our problem may be, I trust we too may be *caught by the eye of Jesus* as He turns, and looks at us. For I know those eyes of the bleeding Lamb will bring us to irreversible repentance, where there is no turning back, no looking back.

"For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro
Throughout the whole earth,

To show Himself strong in the behalf of them
Whose heart is perfect toward Him" (2 Chron. 16:9)

-- George H. Warnock -- April 17, 2001 --

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CHAPTER 1 - THE JUDGE STANDS AT THE DOOR

The Storm Clouds are Gathering

Jesus warned His disciples before He went away that prior to His coming there would be very turbulent times in the earth, and exhorted them to be always praying, always walking before God in vigilance and sobriety .. for this alone would fortify them with the strength and grace they would require for that hour (see Lk. 21:36). He refused to give them any schedule as to when He would appear but He emphasized the need to be ready at all times. He used the illustration of the night watches and indicated He might come at any one of those watches, and therefore they must always be on the alert. But He indicated that He may tarry beyond what His servants thought He would, and that the sense of expectation that was there in the beginning would gradually fade from their hearts and minds. And so, as the night dragged on there would no longer be any sense or awareness that their Lord's coming was near .. and they would live in ease and contentment under the false assumption that "My Lord delayeth His coming.." (Lk. 12:45). I recall the sense of *imminence* that prevailed in the church back in the early days of my childhood. As children we had the feeling that perhaps within ten years .. and it would all be over. We didn't know what that would mean .. except that a *rapture* was supposed to take away the church, and the rest of the world would go through great tribulation. I wasn't sure I was ready for rapture, but I personally decided in my mind that if any one came along to put the number 666 on my hand or on my forehead -- I would be a martyr, and die. At least that was the impression we got from what the preachers would say: "You know .. we're going to be raptured out of here before real trouble starts, but you can be saved during the great tribulation if you don't take the mark of the beast". I am not poking fun at the doctrine by any means. It's far too serious a matter for that. But I did not understand in those days that a martyr is one who is faithful in life, as well as in death -- and he may never be killed and still be a martyr. For example, the beloved John was a *martyr* (Greek '*martus*', a true and faithful witness, though there is no record of him having been killed). Nor did I understand that great tribulation has been the lot of the followers of the Lamb throughout their history. Also, I came to understand later that God has a mark reserved for His people, which will immunize them against the onslaughts of Satan, as he seeks to corrupt their minds "from the simplicity that is in Christ". It is the *mark* of His Spirit imprinted in our minds -- God's seal, that no beast or dragon can erase. This mark is called "the seal of the living God", which God imprints upon the *foreheads* of His people. This seal is God's sign to all spiritual powers, good or evil -- that these are chosen in Christ; and a sign of assurance to those who are sealed, that they need not fear the winds of God's wrath, when they begin to blow upon the earth. (see Rev. 7:2, 3). How do you suppose the beast and his kings are going to "make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them"? Right now we wonder how many people are actually aware

that the Lamb is King of all kings, and Lord of all lords, and that He reigns as a *Lamb on the throne*. But in that day there will be a faithful witness of the Lamb in the earth .. so strong a witness that the nations and leaders will hate them, and seek to destroy them and their King. For these people are true representatives of the Lamb, and the beast will make war against them. They are "called, and chosen, and faithful". They are *with the Lamb*, even as they walk in the earth. They follow the Lamb wherever He may lead them. He went through great tribulation in the days of His flesh, and He does not hesitate to lead His disciples into great tribulation. But together, they come forth as victors. He leads them to living fountains of waters. They stand with the Lamb on Mount Zion, as overcomers. They feast with Him at the marriage supper of the Lamb. And finally they overcome the dragon *by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death*" (Rev. 7:17; 12:11; 14:1-4; 17:14; 19:7).

We know the storms of tribulation are already brewing, for we can see the lightning and the thunder coming closer.. As we read the list of the sins and wickedness that inevitably lead to God's wrath, and compare it with what is going on in the world today -- we cannot help but know that God's righteous judgments are near at hand (see Rom. 1:17-32). For His longsuffering and patience .. though age enduring, must eventually bring forth His righteous judgments in the earth. We can only wonder how much longer God can wait before His wrath "is revealed from Heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness" (Rom. 1:18). We have just about reached the limit of moral apostasy, where there is such depravity that men and women have what the apostle Paul calls *a reprobate mind* -- a mind that is so devoid of any sense of moral discernment that they argue and march for *rights* to live the life style they have chosen -- and do not know the difference between *good and evil*. Nor do they even want to have God in their thoughts. When it comes to this state of depravity, God has no other choice but to pour out His wrath from Heaven.

But there will be a faithful ministration of the Lamb of God in that day, through a people who follow Him. And these will be fiercely persecuted and hated -- because sooner or later they will discover it is the Lamb on the throne who is sending these judgments, and they will identify His followers. And in the end we hear even the rulers of the earth crying out to the rocks and the mountains, "Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and *from the wrath of the Lamb*" (Rev. 6:16).

God's Judgments begin with His House

God's first concern is for His people, because the Light that God ignited in the church when He went away, has almost been extinguished. How and why? Because when we refuse and deny the Light, Jesus has warned us: "If therefore the Light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness" (Matt. 6:23). No doubt we have seen much of God's judgments in the church already .. but I fear

many times we do not even consider them to be His judgments .. because *science* can generally explain what is happening. The world, including the church, is full of much devastation, sickness, heart ache, broken homes, wounded men women and children. There are physical and psychological problems in overwhelming proportions, in the church almost equally as in the world. We have long lost our status as being radically different from the world .. for the Light God intended us to be, has almost been extinguished. Yet through it all, the general thought among evangelicals is: the Lord will come and get us out of here one of these days .. and then He'll bring us back after *the marriage supper of the Lamb* and set things right in the earth!

But it has happened according to the lamentation of God through the prophet Jeremiah: "My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken Me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water" (Jer. 2:13). We have defiled God's inheritance in the earth. We have allowed so many carnal and worldly things to come into the church, in the foolish supposition that if we become more like the world we will not be considered to be so radical after all, and we might be able to win some of them to the Lord. In this day, especially in our free land, we can relate to the world quite well. We can emphasize how God is gracious and loving, so they need not fear to come to *our church*. Come and enjoy listening to our wonderful orchestra and choir -- and make God to be your loving daddy! *You can come to our church and have lots of fun*. I am reminded of what the late A. W. Tozer said, and I would like to quote a paragraph or two from a tract I came across entitled --

"The Old Cross and the New"

"The old cross would have no truck with the world. For Adam's proud flesh it meant the end of the journey. It carried into effect the sentence imposed by the law of Sinai. The new cross is not opposed to the human race; rather, it is a friendly pal and, if understood aright, it is the source of oceans of good clean fun and innocent enjoyment. It lets Adam live without interference. His life motivation is unchanged; he still lives for his own pleasure, only now he takes delight in singing choruses and watching religious movies instead of singing bawdy songs and drinking hard liquor. The accent is still on enjoyment, though the fun is now on a higher plane morally if not intellectually.

"The new cross encourages a new and entirely different evangelistic approach. The evangelist does not demand abnegation of the old life before a new life can be received. He preaches not contrasts but similarities. He seeks to key into public interest by showing that Christianity makes no unpleasant demands; rather, it offers the same thing the world does, only on a higher level. Whatever the sin-mad world happens to be clamoring after at the moment is cleverly shown to be the very thing the gospel offers, only the religious product is better.

"The new cross does not slay the sinner, it redirects him. It gears him into a cleaner and jollier way of living and saves his self-respect. To the self-assertive it says, Come and assert yourself for Christ. To the egotist it says, Come and do your boasting in the Lord. To the thrill-seeker it says, Come and enjoy the thrill of Christian fellowship. The Christian message is slanted in the direction of the current vogue in order to make it acceptable to the public.

"The philosophy back of this kind of thing may be sincere, but sincerity does not save it from being false. It is false because it is blind. It misses completely the whole meaning of the cross.

"The old cross is a symbol of death. It stands for the abrupt, violent end of a human being. The man in Roman times who took up his cross and started down the road had already said good-bye to his friends. He was not coming back. He was not going out to have his life redirected; he was going out to have it ended. The cross made no compromises, modified nothing, spared nothing; it slew all of the man, completely and for good. It did not try to keep on good terms with its victim. It struck cruel and hard, and when it had finished its work, the man was no more." -- by A. W. Tozer

The cross of Jesus meant pardon and forgiveness and cleansing from all sin .. and certainly we must never lose sight of that. But to the apostle Paul the cross meant *much more than that. It meant that the old man, the old life .. was no more.* This is a revelation of Christ we must have, if we are going to walk in the pathway of true discipleship. We must know that we were crucified with Him, when He hung on the cross.

"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, who loved me, and gave Himself for me" (Gal. 2:20). He died for us on the cross. And we were crucified with Him..

It is only too evident that even dedicated Christians are very much aware that we fall far short of vital identification with Christ and His cross. And it is true we cannot make it happen. No amount of self-inflicted punishment can make it happen. But I am assured that the Lord who walks among the lampstands, is going to restore that true Testimony of Jesus in the earth -- and the world will rise up against that Testimony, and seek to destroy it from the face of the earth. And this is where the true cross is revealed .. when His people begin to shine forth with the Testimony of Jesus. I know this is happening in parts of the world today .. but here in what we call *the free world* -- we are far from it. *Our freedom is not because we stand for democratic principles of free speech and expression. It is rather because we walk hand in hand with a world that hates God and His Christ.* When God rises up in our midst, and brings forth a true Testimony of Jesus in the land -- *we could very well face the same kind of persecution that other nations are suffering today.* But as long as our Light continues to degenerate into a state

of darkness -- there is little reason for people who dwell in darkness to complain too much about us.

God is Jealous over His own Name

God is always Jealous over His people, for His Name's sake. And so the Psalmist cried out: "It is time for Thee, LORD, to work: for they have made void Thy law" (Ps. 119:126). When God's people have made *void* God's holy and righteous precepts and go their own way, only God can solve the problem. Only by divine intervention are we going to see the changing of His people from a position of tolerant acceptance of status quo, to a position of radical change. And intervene He will, for it is His holy Name that is at stake. He has declared His intention, and He will not back down. He must have a holy, righteous people in the earth, because He is just as concerned about the integrity of His Name now as He was in the days of old. God reminded a backslidden Israel how they forsook Him even in the days of their bondage in Egypt, and served other gods. Then when He brought them out by a mighty and sovereign deliverance, and took them into the wilderness -- they rebelled against Him in the wilderness. Later He planted them *in the mountain of His inheritance* in Canaan .. and it wasn't long before they changed their God for the gods of the heathen in their midst, whom they were supposed to subdue (see Ezek. 20:1-31). And so He declared His intention --

"Thus saith the Lord GOD; I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for Mine holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went. And I will sanctify My great name, which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them: and the heathen shall know that I am the LORD, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes". And then He goes on to speak about the New Covenant .. which in later times was to include people of all tongues and all nations: "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give unto you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep My judgments and do them" (Ezek. 36:22-27). God was referring to the nation of Israel, because they were first in line. They were that "good olive tree". But when their Messiah came, their hearts were hardened still further, and they failed to see Him.

God's Wisdom revealed in Israel's Fall

The nation of Israel did not receive their Messiah, because of the hardening of their hearts. But no man or nation is so important to God that God must cancel His plans, and wait for that man or nation to repent. What is important to God is the integrity of His own Name. And so God *did not stop the clock of His purposes pertaining to Israel*. Rather, much to their dismay and confusion, and because of

their unbelief -- they cut themselves off from the Covenant Tree of Israel. **"All Israel"** was not cut off .. it was just the unbelieving branches that were cut off. Most of the early believers in Christ were Jewish. (I am aware that a serious division had erupted between the mainstream of Israel, and the Jews of Judah -- especially in the days following Solomon's reign. But I use the terms *Israel* and *Jews* as synonymous, as Paul often did in His epistles). In process of time as the Gospel went far and wide among the Gentiles .. there was a gradual shift from a Jewish presence, to a Gentile presence in the church, especially because of the ministry of the apostle Paul. But God did not delay His purposes concerning Israel. Rather, it was the occasion of Israel's rejection that prompted God to open the door to the Gentiles, and make them to be a part of *the commonwealth of Israel* (Eph. 2:12, 13). There was a certain difficulty in all of this as Gentile converts multiplied, and many of the Jewish leaders hardly knew how to handle it. But Paul makes it very clear in many of his writings that there would be no postponement of God's plan for Israel, because of their failure. Rather He chose to bring the Gentiles into the Covenant, by grafting these *wild olive branches* into the tree of Israel. As Jeremiah prophesied, the *green olive tree of Israel* had many dead branches, and God kindled a fire upon it (Jer. 11:16). God used the occasion of Israel's failure, to intertwine His redemptive purposes for Israel, with the rest of mankind -- and by His cross He destroyed the *enmity* between Jew and Gentile, so as to create in Himself from these two antagonistic segments of mankind, **one new man, so making peace** (Eph. 2:15). And so, while zealous religious scribes and Pharisees were preparing the Passover by way of commemorating the redemption of their people from Egypt, they were also plotting the crucifixion of their Messiah! And the Messiah Himself would become in the wisdom of God the Last Passover, who would put an end to Jewish sacrifice and offering for ever, and bring about a perfect redemption for fallen man from every tribe, and kindred, and tongue and nation .. Consequently the blood He shed on the cross became the blood of the New Covenant that God had designed for Israel. But the New Covenant was intended for all nations -- so the gospel of Christ was sent "to the Jew first, and also to the Gentiles". But because of their disobedience God sent them to the end of the line, and they became *last*. God delayed nothing when Israel as a nation cut themselves off from the Covenant. Nor was **all Israel** cut off -- it was just the unbelieving branches that were cut off (see Rom. 9:6, 7; 11:17).

Now if we are not prepared to receive the New Testament scriptures as equally inspired as the Old Testament scriptures, we are dishonoring the Author of both Covenants. And if this be so, we must accept the apostolic interpretation of the Old Testament. For it was the same Spirit who inspired the writing of both Testaments. If we believe this, then we must accept what the apostle Paul said about "the seed of Abraham". God was not speaking "of seeds, as of many; but as of One, And to thy Seed, which is Christ" (Gal. 3:16). So what about all Israel being saved? He tells us clearly: "They are not all Israel who are of Israel, but in Isaac shall thy seed be called" (Rom. 9:6, 7). And what does this mean? Paul explains this very clearly also: "That is, they which are the children of the

flesh, these are not the children of God: but ***the children of the promise are counted for the seed***" (Rom. 9:8). So, if we accept the New Testament as God's word, it is very clear what Paul means when he refers to ***all Israel***: "If ye be Christ's, then are ye ***Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise***" (Gal. 3:29).

God did not postpone the New Covenant He promised to Israel. Rather He extended more grace to the undeserving nations, enabling them to respond to God and become His chosen people also. He is quick to do this when His people fail to walk before Him in obedience and in the fear of God. He does not delay *the marriage supper* when the day arrives, and the invited guests do not show up. He sends out His servants to bring in others .. anybody .. anywhere .. from the streets and the lanes .. men and women of honor, or dishonor .. good or bad. That's what He said, and that's what He is doing (Matt. 22:8-10). I am not teaching that God replaced Israel with the Gentile Church. *He only replaced the dead branches of Israel, by grafting in wild olive branches from the Gentiles -- and the Tree of Israel continued to flourish. By the cross, we are told, Christ made in Himself of twain (of these two segments of the human race), "one new man, so making peace"* (see 2 Cor. 3:1-11; Rom. 11:13-28; Eph. 2:11-20). He did this, not by condemning Israel to extinction, but by destroying the *enmity* and taking away *the middle wall of partition* -- and joining them together as ***"one new man"*** in Christ. This is the new Israel .. the remnant of old Israel that remained in the Tree, combined with wild Gentile olive branches that were *grafted into the same Tree*.

Israel to be Grafted in Again.

"Many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first" (Matt. 19:3). This is the way it happened when Jesus came to confirm the promises made to the fathers. But next time around it will be arrogant branches in the church who will be cut off, who have disdain (and sometimes a lot of hatred) for Jewish people. *(When I speak of the church, I generally speak of it as the corporate people of God who call themselves Christian -- but recognizing that the Lord alone knows those who are true Christians, and have the Spirit of Christ). The Name of Jesus* has been blasphemed among Jewry much as *the Name of Israel's Jehovah* had been blasphemed among the Gentiles in Old Testament times. But regardless of the persecution that the people of Israel have suffered at the hands of so-called *Christian* nations .. God will open their eyes when the Lamb of God is revealed in the appointed time as their Messiah. What a glorious day awaits this repentant Israel when they shall say of the anointed witness who comes to them in the power and nature and character of our Lord Jesus: "Blessed be he that cometh in the Name of the Lord" (Matt. 23:39). This 'he' could be an Arab, or a Palestinian, or a person from Germany, or Japan, or China, or England .. it matters not. For this anointed one comes to them in the name of the Lord Jesus, bearing His image and likeness, and shining with the Light of the Lamb of God. Then their eyes will be opened, and they will see their living Messiah, still bearing the scars

of the wounds that He received from their forefathers. But because of *the spirit of grace and of supplications* that God will pour out on the house of David, there will be a deep repentance. "They shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn" (Zech. 12:10). What a day, when a people long forsaken and desolate, shall be grafted back into the Olive Tree of Israel. But let us remember this: when God brought Gentiles into the Olive Tree, there was a lot of teaching going forth from Judaistic Christian teachers that the Gentile believers must become Jews, by observing circumcision and the law. This was strongly resisted by the apostle Paul, and the conclusion at the conference in Jerusalem was clear: *we are to receive the Gentiles without trying to make Jews out of them, by circumcision or other Jewish rituals* (see Acts 15:1-21). But this Judaistic teaching continued in many of the churches -- and perhaps it was for this reason that God raised up a strong church in Antioch, where God's people were free to move in the Spirit, unhampered by the pressure of this Judaistic element.

Now a strange thing is happening today, as many of God's people are reaching out to the Jewish people. They are promoting Jewish customs, and Jewish traditions, and keeping Jewish feast days, and sharing their vision of a *restored temple of wood and stone, and of animal sacrifices*, and so forth. The beloved Stephen was stoned to death, for declaring that God had no delight in their temple that was built by man -- and now many Christians are excited to hear that some orthodox Jews have serious plans to build a new one like it! The prophet Ezekiel said that God would "*do better unto you than at your beginnings*" (Ezek. 36:11), and the Book of Hebrews clearly shows us what those *better things are*: a better Covenant, a better Priesthood, a better Sacrifice, a better Sanctuary, a better Country, a better Mercy Seat, a better Altar. For in *Restoration* God not only restores a people to His favor -- He lifts them much higher than in their beginnings. (This is the emphasis in our writing, Evening and Morning)

Right at that point where their long-awaited dream of Messiah had been fulfilled - - the Gentiles were grafted into the Tree of Israel, and became "*with them* partakers of the root and fatness of the Olive Tree" -- and of the New Covenant with all its *better things* (Rom. 11:17).

God did not take them *back to temples and sacrifices and rituals that He had ordained for Israel in her beginnings*.

Nor will He take the new Israel back to former institutions they had in Old Testament times, nor to former or present institutions that we have had in the church. Paul describes *this restoration, as --*

Life from the Dead

At the appointed time God will remove the veil from their eyes, and will graft them back into the Tree that we were grafted into -- *and beyond where we are now. Together we will partake of the power of His resurrection* -- in a far greater fullness than either Israel of old, or the church of today .. has ever known. For this new Israel -- will be known as the New Jerusalem, *the only Jerusalem that is mentioned in the letter to the Hebrews, or in the Book of Revelation*. It is the Holy City, the Bride of the Lamb -- on whose *gates* are written *the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel*, and in whose *foundations* are written *the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb* (see Rev. 21:12-14). Does this not show us that the true Israel and the true Church are joined together in One Habitation of the living God?

The apostle Paul reminds the Ephesians how at one time they had no part in *the commonwealth of Israel* -- but now by grace they are "no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are *built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief Corner Stone*" (see Eph. 2:14-20). This is the foundation of the New Jerusalem, comprised of both Jew and Gentile, which have been recreated to become *one new man in Christ*. It is our heritage right now, as the apostle has reminded us: "Ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the City of the living God, the Heavenly Jerusalem" (Heb. 12:22; also Gal. 4:26), though we recognize that this Holy City is yet to be revealed in the earth, in all her glory.

An Object Lesson in the Potter's House (See Jer. 18:1-6)

It is common for the church to sing about God's intention, and His sovereign ways -- without really believing what they are singing. I think the Lord will very often project His truth into many of our songs, and because of the lyrics and the rhythm we enjoy the song without really taking it to heart. We have these beautiful songs about the Potter and the Clay -- and we humbly acknowledge that we are just the clay. And if our hearts are right -- God may just take us at our word. He may answer that prayer -- and change the vessel in His hands very drastically. But He may not do it our way. We may see a little problem, and ask God to fix it. But what if He chooses to devastate all our plans and ideas, and bring us to naught -- in order that He might form that *vessel of mercy* that He wants"? For God is looking for *vessels of mercy* in this world that is full of hate and cruelty and violence. For many decades I have seen a very zealous church, sending forth our young men and women to evangelize the nations -- and today there are two or three times as many sinners on the globe as there were back then. I was as zealous as any of them to work for God in this suffering world, and bring the light of the Gospel to those in other nations who knew Him not. But somehow the vessel I hoped to be -- got marred in His hand, and for a long time I wondered why.

God had a word for Jeremiah, and it is fitting for today, when so many are being taught that it is in their hands to fulfill their own destiny. God sent him over to *the potter's house*, to learn a lesson. Jeremiah obediently went his way, and walked into the shop, and here was a potter working on a vessel. As the potter's wheel spun around and around, the potter would use his nimble fingers in the clay while the wheel was turning -- to form a vessel. But suddenly something happened. The vessel was marred *in the hand of the potter*. I wonder if God caused it to happen to teach Jeremiah the lesson He knew the prophet needed. It was a beautiful object lesson; and as Jeremiah looked on he saw the potter do the cruelest thing. He took the clay in his hands, crumbled it all together into a formless lump -- and started over again. He didn't try to mend the vessel. Nor did he discard the clay as useless .. he just worked on it again. There was no word from the vessel: "You can't do that! What are You doing to me? I thought I was just about ready for service .. and now look at me!" But when you gather together it is easy for you to join with the rest of the people as they sing:

"Have Thine own way, Lord,
Have Thine own way ..
Thou art the Potter .. I am the clay ..
Mold me and make me, after Thy will ..
While I am waiting, yielded and still."

--And then go home after the meeting, and continue to blame God for *making you again another vessel as seemed good to Him to make it*. And perhaps not even realizing that you had prayed He would do that, as you sang that song in the meeting.

But as you keep your heart fixed on Him, and continue to love Him in spite of the way He continues to demolish your plans -- sooner or later you are inclined to believe that God caused the vessel to be marred; because He knew it would take that to break your will, that the Potter might have His own way in your life. Perhaps we can even hear Him saying, not audibly but in that quiet way He often speaks without saying any words:

--Before I crumbled your clay you were deaf and slow to understand My ways .. but now you are sensitive to that inner voice of My Spirit. No longer do you need the *bit and bridle* that men use on horse and mule, to bring you into line with My plan.

--Once you were confident in your strength, and felt a little superior to those who were weak, but now you freely confess with My servant David, "Before I was afflicted, I went astray: but now I have kept Thy word" (Ps. 119:67).

--Or with My servant Job, who loved Me and was confident in the understanding He had of his God. But after his great trial he makes this confession: "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth Thee: therefore

I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:5, 6). And you hear the Lord replying, Now you understand why I brought you to dust and ashes .. because that is really what you are by nature. I choose to use vessels of clay, but those vessels must be pliable in My hands, that I might make it and remake it, as *seems good to the Potter*.

--Perhaps you had not realized how faulty your walk with God had been -- and you hear Him saying: Once you were *lame*, but you didn't realize it. But after I humbled you in the confrontation at Jabbok .. you limp as you walk, and the people wonder why. But I see one who was crippled by My hand, that you might walk with Me as a prince of God. Now you are truly an overcomer, because you have been overcome by the smiting of the hand of the mighty God of Jacob.

--Or you might hear something like this: "You wanted *gifts of the Spirit* desperately. And it was I who put that desire in your heart for *gifts*, because you need My gifts in order to function effectively in the body of Christ. But now having fashioned you anew, as *seemed good to the Potter*, you desire and long for only *one thing*. You no longer desire the gift, but the Giver. It is no longer the reward of a fruitful ministry that you look for, but you rejoice in the Reward that I AM. For to you I give the promise that I gave to My friend Abraham, "Fear not, Abram, for I am thy shield and thy exceeding great Reward" (Gen. 15:1).

Then we have the story of Naomi and Ruth. You may often have felt the way they did. Both of them had lost their husbands -- and Naomi decided she would return to her home in Israel. Ruth insisted she would go with Naomi -- and together they walked along the road to Israel -- helpless and forsaken, and wondering why God had dealt with them so harshly. Naomi knew of better times, for she was raised in Israel, and loved the God of Israel even in this time of her dilemma. But Ruth was from the country of Moab, where they worshipped their own gods and did their own thing -- knowing nothing about the God of Israel. Nevertheless in spite of the bitterness in Naomi's soul, she still loved her God -- and Ruth was drawn to her and wanted Naomi's God to be her God. And so she followed along with Naomi to this strange and foreign land. And when they got to Bethlehem, Ruth went looking for a field in which she might glean a little barley, and it *just happened* that the field she chose belonged to Boaz, a wealthy patriarch in Bethlehem. He was very generous to her, and told the young men to leave a few handfuls of grain here and there, for her to glean. What a surprise it was to Naomi, when she went home with a bushel of barley that she had gleaned from the fields of this benevolent stranger!

That's the first part of the story, and it's all very beautiful. But God had something far greater in mind for Naomi, and for Ruth her daughter-in-law. They were both very grateful for the bushel of barley, but it was nothing compared to what God had in mind. Now *it just happened* that Boaz was a near kinsman to Naomi, and therefore to Ruth her daughter-in-law. Naomi explained to her that Boaz might find it in his heart to take her as his wife, which he was expected to do according

to the law of Moses. And so Ruth in timidity, and yet in confident assurance of what Naomi had told her -- actually went to the threshing-floor where Boaz slept, and proposed to this wealthy patriarch of Bethlehem. Ruth's late husband was an Israelite, and a near kinsman to Boaz. Boaz knew of a kinsman to the family that was still closer than he was -- but the closer kinsman declined when Boaz mentioned that in redeeming the land he must marry Ruth as well. And so Boaz took her under his wing, and she became his bride.

Now she could say in truth: "I thank you for the barley that I gleaned in your fields when I came from Moab. I came here as a poor and needy widow, and an outcast. Your barley was a wonderful gift in my time of need, and you were very generous and kind to me. But now I have all your fields, and all the grain that you grow in it. Yet all this is really nothing .. because now I have *you, and you have me*".

And from that union in the fullness of time there was born in Bethlehem of Judaea, the home town of Naomi and Ruth -- a Savior, which is Christ the Lord!

O how differently we would respond to the hand of the Potter, if we could see beyond the veil, and understand that *as we keep our hearts right, and do those very simple and ordinary things that God puts in our hearts to do -- we are fulfilling our true destiny in God*. And only when we move beyond the veil of this life will we understand the reason *why* there were so many *whys* in our walk with the Lord..

And so now as you sing those songs that reflect the deep inner longings of a soul for His God, you care not for the beat of the drum or the clanging of the cymbals - - because you listen to the words -- words that have taken on new meaning:

"Have Thine own way, Lord,
Have Thine own way;
Thou art the Potter, I am the clay .."

Now your true joy and delight is to hear the Word of God, and do it. Now you are learning to *abide in Him .. and He in you*, for you have discovered that He is your true and everlasting Reward. Your Habitation is in God .. and God's Habitation is in you.

The Purpose of Gift and Ministry

I gave this brief summary of the Book of Ruth, to give a little object lesson of God's intention in giving us His gifts. O how anxious we have been to have gifts that work, and ministries that are effectual, and to produce good fruit for the Kingdom. And this is well and good. But very often we are losing sight of God's intention in giving these gracious gifts and ministries. It is to nurture us in Truth, that we might make room in our hearts for the Presence of God Himself .. that He

might fully occupy this temple that we are. *Only then will the world know where to find the true God.* Then all else is taken care of .. when we are ready to exchange --

The part for the whole ..
The gift for the Giver ..
The barley for the Owner of all the fields ..
Abraham's gifts for Abraham's son ..

So when Rebekah sees her Isaac, she drops her gifts, and lights from her camel, and runs to his arms ..

Then Ruth, far from despising the corn she got from Boaz -- only to look for more the next day -- begins a new life, living with Boaz in his home and hers ..

Then we can say, "I am my Beloved's, and His desire is toward me.."

We can be confident of this: nothing will fall short of God's desire for our lives, as we come into His yoke, and walk in abiding union with Him.

I know all this may sound very elementary to some. But as far as I can observe, there is very little desire among God's people to make this transition from *the gifts of the Spirit .. and into the more excellent way.* I know we cannot make it happen. No amount of knowledge can bring us into it. But my hope and trust is that in all that we are speaking about, God will use it to produce hunger and thirst in His people, and great desire -- for *the more excellent way.* For He *hears the desire of the humble, and will prepare their hearts* (Ps. 10:17).

God must have a Prepared People.

Let us not have the idea that our High Priest in the heavens is filling in time while He waits for the signal to descend for His people and gather them to Himself. Can we not understand that He ascended into the Heavenly Sanctuary to accomplish a ministry in the heavens, even as He had faithfully finished the work the Father had given Him to do in the earth? By this I mean He is there as our Mediator of the New Covenant, to fulfill in His people all that He accomplished by His cross when He came to earth. As the Mediator of the New Covenant He will be faithful to minister the virtues of the New Covenant to His people, as surely as Moses was faithful to minister the Old Covenant to the House of Israel. The apostle reminds us that Moses was *faithful in all His house* (Heb. 3:5). Can we not somehow believe that the New Covenant is *better* than the old one, and that our Mediator has more power and virtue invested in Him to finish the work in the heavens, than Moses had to minister a law of death and condemnation to a wayward people in the wilderness? God spare us from calculating schedules that are supposed to indicate the time of the Lord's appearing. But let us seek God more for the outworking of the New Covenant in our lives, that we might be ready

to see Him, and hear the words, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant". For the Father is not the least concerned about the way we calculate end-time schedules. He is motivated rather by that inherent longing He has in His heart for a Holy Church, a Holy Bride .. that will be compatible with His Son. All Heaven is alert and sensitive to the ministry of the Spirit in His church, for all Heaven knows that the Lamb on the throne is worthy of the very best that the Father is able to procure for the Son. And He will continue to minister to this holy church, to this beautiful bride, until she has come into the stature of grace and virtue that God has designed.

God wants a *habitation for Himself* .. not of wood or stone. He had all that centuries ago, and found no delight in it. So when is Christ coming back? Let us rather change the question. *How do we prepare our hearts for His Appearing?* Christ is coming for a glorious Church, a spotless Bride. *Has the Bride made herself ready?* Our High Priest will continue to intercede for His own, until He has prepared a people who are "called, and chosen, and faithful". And the ministries He has set in the body are only valid if they are hearing and speaking from the heart of the High Priest in the heavens. His true prophets will always seek to turn the hearts of the people from their evil way (Jer. 23:22). *It is preparation that God's people need in this hour -- a "washing of water by the word".. not calculations as to when He will appear.*

The People were in Expectation

There was excitement among the people when the story got around about Zechariah and Elizabeth, and the son that God had given them in their old age. Then many miles away there was a couple living in Nazareth, called Joseph and Mary. But before they were married the angel Gabriel came to Mary and announced she was to be the mother of the Son of God. She did not doubt what he said, but wondered how it could happen, for she was a virgin. Gabriel explained to her: "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). Then Luke tells us the story how God arranged the registration ordered by the Emperor. Mary and Joseph were just serving God in the little town of Nazareth, just living the humble lives of ordinary peasants. But their Child had to be born in Bethlehem, according to the prophet Micah (see Mic. 5:2). Now the Emperor of Rome became part of the plan -- for it was he who made the decree that all people were to register in the town of their ancestry. And so Joseph and Mary made arrangements for this arduous journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem. And while there she gave birth to the Messiah, as the prophet had said it would be ..

Then John came on the scene to prepare the hearts of the people for their Messiah. He was a *Voice in the wilderness*, and his message was a message of repentance. The Messiah is coming on the scene! Repent, change your covetous ways! Give to those who are needy! Be satisfied with your wages! The King is

coming! Many of them repented, whose hearts were open. But like today, many of them were consumed with curiosity, and they would ask: Are you Elijah? Are you that prophet? Who are you anyway? The Pharisees want to know. But His answer was clear and concise: "I am the Voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord". He was just a Voice, but in such tune with God - that it was a clear sound from Heaven. God's prophets do not spend their time answering questions as to how, and when, and in what manner He will appear. God's message is: "The Lord of Glory is coming .. Prepare your hearts to meet Him!"

God Most High overshadowed the whole process related to His coming, with very diligent foreknowledge and wisdom, and put it all together. It was all according to scripture, and every detail of His Appearing was prearranged and known of God - but no man could have put it together before it happened. And yet from the highest in the political and ecclesiastical realms, to the humblest and lowest of His servants .. the whole scenario was carefully overshadowed and made manifest in the earth in the day His Appearing.

Preparation for His Second Appearing

I have just mentioned how it was when Jesus came the first time, that we might understand this very important principle -- that in spite of the knowledge we might acquire concerning the Kingdom, we may have hearts that are very unlike the King -- and therefore not ready for the Kingdom. I think there are many who know the Kingdom Message, who are caught up with the vision of Kingdom power and authority .. and are still far from poverty of spirit, meekness, lowliness, humility, and a pure heart. If the Kingdom Message does not produce these virtues in His people, there is little value in the message. God would draw us to repentance, that He might beautify us with the garments of salvation, that we might be ready to stand before the King, and be compatible with Him. For He comes for a holy and spotless Bride, who must be cleansed *with the washing of water by the Word*.

The burden of the Spirit is to lead His people into all truth. He wants to lead us in His ways. Oftentimes He will lead us in wilderness ways, for His ultimate desire is to lead us close to the heart of God, and therefore His ways are designed to bring us to a humble and contrite heart. Some have the notion that because He is coming soon we've got to come up with ingenious plans to *get the job* done. And He who is Lord of the church is crowded out of His temple, and replaced with the wisdom of man. We have sought to use the Holy Spirit to do our bidding and bless our efforts, rather than submitting to His authority and lordship. We profess we want His presence with us, but too often he is relegated to the back seat -- rather than at the wheel, in full control. You can be sure of this, if He is not in charge, if He is not at the wheel -- we as a church are going nowhere.

Where are those Rivers of Living Water?

"Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord". Didn't Jesus clearly promise us that out from our innermost being would flow *Rivers of Living Water*, if we believed on Him, and received His Spirit (Jn. 7:38). There must be several millions of people here in this part of the world who profess to be *filled with the Holy Spirit*. But where are those Rivers of Living Water that Jesus promised? And even the cisterns we have made, are almost dry. There are about as many problems in the church, as there are in the world around us -- mental and spiritual and physical sicknesses, and oftentimes the same kind of sins, and the same kind of devastation in homes and families. Why then do we continue building "cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water" instead of repenting of our presumptuous ways, and seeking God earnestly for those Fountains of Life to flow once again from the House of God?

Our Great High Priest in the Heavens has every provision, in His own glorious Person, in His own glorious Ministry in the heavenly sanctuary .. to bring His people forth in the radiance and glory of Christ. And the Holy Spirit is in the church to take those glorious virtues and graces that are in our Lord Jesus, and manifest them in our midst. This is why God gave us His Spirit .. not so we may use Him for our agendas, but that He might be Lord in our midst, to show forth the mighty operations of God as a Testimony of the living Christ.. As surely as we forsake God's Way and choose the ways of men, we will wander farther and farther away from God's intention and desire. We cry out to the world to repent, and believe the Gospel. But God is crying out to His people to repent .. "Or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick" (Rev. 2:5). Surely we must know that when He removes the candlestick .. there is no longer any Light to shine in the darkness about us. I wonder how many candlesticks have been removed from our communities, and the people do not even realize it .. because the people are still gathering together week after week. But is there a Light shining from the candlestick? It is time to "search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord".

CHAPTER 2 - HE WALKS AMONG THE LAMPSTANDS

God's burden 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 left His church in the world *to be the Light of the world*. And when men say—"Don't bother me with those far-out things—my burden is to reach the world for God"—How much more ignorant can we get? He left His Church here in the earth *to shine with His Glory*. And when the light of the lampstand flickers and goes out—we are but a dead light bulb, having the form of a light, but it is not shining in the darkness. The *full glory of Heaven* was here when Jesus was here. And when He went away, *the full glory of Heaven* came down again, to abide in His people in the earth. This is what the ministration of the Spirit in our midst is all about. I think most of God's people recognize we are not walking in the glory of the Light that came at Pentecost. Why then are we content to abide in the fading glow of a dimly burning lamp, rather than coming back to the Light? He wants to walk in our midst with even more Light, not with less than what we had in the beginning. For *the path of the just is that way—it shineth more and more unto the perfect day*—and the Lord promised *greater works* through His people, than what He did when He was here, because He has *all power in Heaven and in earth* to invest in His people. . .

He shall Take of Mine and Show it unto You

God's people have always been prone to fall short of His desire. . .and it is because we lack vision. We grow accustomed to the darkness, and think it is normal. But God declares He cannot rest, *till the righteousness of Zion goes forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth*. Let us not think for one moment that we are intruding into forbidden territory, if we seek to appropriate the glory of Heaven here and now. Jesus admonished us to pray to the Father, "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth as it is in Heaven". Do you think then that God is displeased with us when we pray that way? The apostle would remind us that what we now have in the Spirit, is really a portion of *the powers of the world to come* (see Heb. 6:5). Certainly much of what we are saying pertains to the next age. . .but He would have us partake of those powers here and now. How far may we go in that realm? Only as far as the Lord by His Spirit and His Word may lead us. *All power in Heaven and earth is His*, and the apostle Paul prayed that we might know *"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. 1:19, 20). These are *the dimensions* of the power that is available in Christ. Our real concern, then, is not "how far can we go". . .for we can go no higher than the Spirit will lead us. Our real problem is to learn to *abide in His yoke, and have an ear to hear what the*

Spirit is saying to us. Then there can be no presumption in seeking to go ahead of God, nor any unbelief that would cause us to fear the unknown way. The heart of God continues to cry out for His people to move on into those greater heights and depths in God, His concern always being *lest we fall short of His desire, not lest we go beyond it* (Heb. 4:1).

But we must guard our minds against presumption, in this matter of *taking a leap of faith, or stepping out in faith*. I don't know where they got that from, unless they are thinking of Peter stepping out of the boat to go to Jesus. But Peter knew better than trying to do that. His petition was very clear: "Lord if You tell me to step out of the boat, and walk on the water—I will do it". *There can be no faith, if we move out on our own initiative, rather than in the will of God. And only as we have presented ourselves to Him as a living sacrifice, can we prove what is that good, and well-pleasing, and perfect will of God.* The very resurrection power that raised Jesus from the dead is available to His church. . .but only available *as we move in the Spirit, and abide in His Presence.* We are too short-sighted, like the children of Israel. They thought it was great when two men brought a large branch of grapes into the camp—carrying it on a stick between them. But when God said, "Now move forward and take the whole land"—well, that was just too far out. God told them to do that, and so there was faith inherent in that word. . .if they would just walk in obedience. . .But they refused to obey, and turned away in fear and unbelief. (See Heb. 4:2). Let us not think the few grapes and pomegranates we have received in spiritual gifts is God's total answer. It is just the foretaste to *urge us forward . . . to move us into the fullness of God's inheritance.* I am afraid there is not much left of the fruit of Canaan in our midst, and even those grapes of Eschol, and the pomegranates and the figs of former revivals—are now but a fleeting memory of the good old days. Many are looking for a return of those blessed times of a past revival—instead of anticipating a still greater glory that lies ahead. For no matter how great those days were in the past, the full measure that God has reserved for His people is yet to be revealed. The Spirit of God abides here in the Temple that we are, that in union with Him we might receive the fullness of those virtues, powers, graces and riches that are in Christ Jesus. Think not that this would rob Christ of His glory—rather it will bring greater honor and glory to His Name. For Jesus said, "He *shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you.* All things that the Father hath are Mine: therefore said I, that He shall take of Mine, and shall show it unto you" (Jn. 16:15).

What does this mean: Show it to us?

As long as our Lord Jesus is the High Priest on the throne of Glory interceding for His us, the Holy Spirit will be in His church to take from the exalted Christ, and *show* it to His people. I recall in earlier days how this left me with a certain sense of uncertainty, as to what He meant. To just gaze on things that He shows me? I am not interested in just seeing more truth, understanding more about the mechanics of doctrine. I didn't feel it was enough for the Lord to *show me*

something from the throne. I wanted to partake of it. But one day I understood that *all that is in Christ, is Light*. Therefore when He *shows us something He is actually shining it forth into our hearts*. He Himself is the Word, the living Truth. There is no concordance, or the best of dictionaries, that can define *truth* in any sense of completeness, so as to give us the full understanding of what God has in mind. We appreciate the scholarship that seeks to explain clearly what Bible words really mean, and I would not want to minimize that in any way. But we must know that the Holy Spirit alone can cause us to see the truth that is in Jesus. *He shall take of Mine, and show it unto you*. So I look up the word *show* in my dictionary and it says: *to describe, to present to view, to point out, to display, to exhibit, to disclose, to appear, to come into sight*". The definitions are good, but I am blind, or I cannot see afar off. I am also deaf, or hard of hearing. And my mind is slow to understand as I should. *I want to see. . . I want to hear. . . I want to understand*. So I come to Him in my blindness, and say: *LORD SHOW ME THY GLORY!* and yet I continue in my struggle to see. Then one day I feel His touch on my eyes, and I see dimly, like the man Jesus healed. . .and I observe men walking *as trees*. But He does not leave me in that condition, if indeed I long for truth and righteousness. He touches me again. . .and again. He continues to look upon me. . .again. . .and again. For He is Light, and when He *shows us something "the entrance of His Word giveth Light"*. We must *come to the Light*. It is the Light of His presence that causes us to see. It is the Light of His presence that causes us to hear, and to understand. My dictionary cannot do that. Jesus said, "the light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light" (Matt. 6:22). *Full. . .you mean completely full? With no shades of darkness at all? Yes, Jesus emphasized that—"full of light. . .having no part dark"* (Lk. 11:36)

So this is the Lord's answer to us who bemoan how little we see and understand. If He *shows us we see it*, because "He is *the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world*" (Jn. 1:9). And therefore He admonishes us to "*walk while ye have the Light, lest darkness come upon you . . . and to believe in the Light, that ye may be the children of Light*" (Jn. 12:35, 36). *Children of the Light! Born into realms of pure and brilliant Light! All that the Father hath* has been invested in Christ. He is pure Light, and Jesus tells us "the Spirit *shall take of Mine, and shall show it unto you*" (Jn. 16:15).

Changed. . .By Seeing Him

You and I cannot see *Him* and remain unchanged. We are aware of our darkness, and there is a tendency for creatures of darkness to seek out dark places, because their eyes are not conditioned to see the brightness of light. Yet He encourages us to "Come to the Light". . . for it is only *Light* that can dispel the darkness. Then He says, "believe in the Light" until we are born anew into realms of Light. Then as His Spirit abides within us—He is faithful to take all those virtues, graces, and all the excellencies that are in Him, and *show them* unto us with that penetrating, transforming Light from realms of Glory. Then His

illuminated ones *show* it to others. And these enlightened ones *show* it to still others. And that's what the ministration of the Spirit is all about, so that each member of the body participates in the Light and the Glory, and transmits the Light to others: That "we all, with open (unveiled) face beholding as in a glass (reflecting as a mirror) the Glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. 3:18).

John Writes to Brethren in Tribulation

John was on the Isle of Patmos because of His witness for Christ, and the Lord gave him the Book of Revelation to share with the church. John saw this One who was *like unto the Son of man walking in the midst of the seven candlesticks* in the earth. For John was in tribulation, and God chose him to be representative of His people, as *your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ*. We know he was the beloved apostle—and an apostle is one sent of God to declare God's message to the people. But he cannot do that effectively except he takes his place as their *brother and companion*. Every ministry sent of God has *authority* from Christ. . .all the authority that he needs for the faithful ministration of Truth to the hearts of others. But if his authority is going to remain strong in the Lord, and strong in the church, he must take his place as our brother, not as our lord and master. John was our *brother in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ*. Moses went through the wilderness with the people, and suffered with them all the trials they experienced in that *waste and howling wilderness*. Caleb and Joshua who longed for Canaan, remained with the disobedient ones another 38 years, for they needed these men along the way to encourage them as they endured suffering and trial and tribulation. Ezekiel sat with the captives of the house of Israel. And Daniel went into captivity with the captives of Judah. God said He would shorten the days of tribulation, "for the elect's sake". So His elect will be in tribulation, and will minister and give strength to others in tribulation, as John did.

But what about the Day of Wrath? Doesn't God say we have not been *appointed unto wrath*? Yes, but let us read His provision for that: "Ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. For *God hath not appointed us to wrath*, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess. 5:4-8). It is as clear as words can make it: we are delivered from *wrath* because we are clothed with *the armor of Light* (Rom. 13:12)—because we are the *children of light*, because we are *sober and alert*, because we are wearing His armor, *the breastplate of faith and love, and the helmet on our head, as the hope of our salvation*.

The Lord tells us clearly that it will be *immediately after the tribulation of those days* when men "shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" and He shall "gather together His elect from the four winds" (see Matt. 24:29-31). With God's holy armor overshadowing us, we are fully prepared for any tribulation that might come, when His wrath is revealed from Heaven against the evil that is in the world. I say not these things to confirm a doctrinal position, but to encourage God's people in this late hour to put on that armor, and to keep it bright and clean, for the Day of the LORD is near. *The whole armor of God* is totally sufficient not only to deliver us, but to make us effectual as soldiers in His army, to overcome "in the evil day, and having done all to stand" (see Eph. 6). Or as the old Weymouth translation says: "having fought to the end, to remain victors on the field".

I believe God wants to arouse His church to know that great tribulation is upon us, and there will be no rapture at the sounding of the first trumpet, but rather "at the last trump" (1 Cor. 15:52; 1 Thess. 4:16). Some nations have had their share of tribulation, and many martyrs are resting under the altar awaiting God's day of vengeance. But the Lord encourages them: "that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled" (Rev. 6:11).

Understanding the Symbols

We are aware that the Book of Revelation is full of symbols, for we are told in the introduction to the Book that the angel *signified* it unto John—or made it known to him in signs, or symbols. We need the Lord's wisdom, as we seek to understand what God would show us. But our quest must always be for the living Word. . .and not just an understanding of the letter of the Word. And we must recognize that heavenly things are not to be calculated by natural measurements, nor by man's earthly time tables. It is not a case of *spiritualizing* the Word, in the sense of making the Word less real and less meaningful—for God's order is: "first. . .that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual". And so the *spiritual nature of things is higher than the natural*. Knowing this we must be taught by the Spirit, and only as He gives understanding by the Spirit will we know what He means by *numbers, and dimensions, and beasts, and dragons, and altars, and precious stones, and tabernacles, and temples*. The Spirit is more real than the physical and the carnal. . .and God wants us to be *spiritual men and women*. It doesn't mean we are to become intangible and invisible. The bread God gave Israel in the wilderness was *spiritual bread*, and the water they drank from the rock was *spiritual water*—because its origin was from Heaven, and its purpose was to make the people *spiritually minded*, as they ate of the bread, and drank of the water (see 1 Cor. 10:2-4). The Spirit has come into our lives to give us *the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him*—and only as we are taught by the Spirit, will we understand what God would show us.

One Like unto the Son of Man

John was *in the Spirit*, and this is what he saw:

"And in the midst of the seven candlesticks *One like unto the Son of man*, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and His hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and His eyes were as a flame of fire; and His feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and His voice as the sound of many waters. And He had in his right hand seven stars: and out of His mouth went a sharp two edged sword: and His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength" (Rev. 1:13-16).

He looked like the One that Daniel saw: "A certain man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz: His body also was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as *lamps of fire*, and his arms and his feet like in color to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude" (Dan. 10:6; also Dan. 7:9). The men that were with Daniel at the time didn't see what Daniel saw, but His presence was so awesome that "a great quaking fell upon them, so that they fled to hide themselves". And even Daniel, though he saw the vision, it robbed him of his strength, and his very flesh seemed corrupt and horrible in his sight, and he felt weak and helpless. How carnal must we be, if we can calculate and surmise WHEN the Lord of Glory may *appear*. . .with hardly any thought as to HOW we need to prepare our hearts for that awesome Appearing! If we could see the Lord of Glory stand in our midst—as John saw Him. . .as Daniel saw Him—how differently we would walk and work and minister in the church! How ignorantly we think of God, and speak of God, as our big and loving daddy! Certainly He is all of that to babes in Christ. But O how He longs that we come to maturity as sons of God. . .not losing any of those child-like qualities of simplicity, purity and tenderness—but fearing Him all the more as we grow older in Christ—knowing He is "Glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders"? (Ex. 15:11). "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him" (Ps. 89:7). We are talking about that holy fear for our Father, whom we love so much that we *fear and tremble* lest in any way we offend Him, or do those things that grieve His heart. "Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name" (Mal. 3:16).

His Sacrifice. . .Totally Pleasing to God

He who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands as our great High Priest has everything that we need to conform us to His image and likeness, and bring us into the full intention of His purposes. For by His death on the cross He has fully dealt with the sin problem. It was there that our Lord became the true Sacrifice for sin, not only to redeem us back to God, but to deliver us from every

vestige of sin and the curse that we inherited from Adam. Certainly we have inherited sins and sicknesses of one kind or another from father or mother or grandparents. But let us not waste our time on that, for there is an unbroken line of problems, habits, unclean things, sicknesses, infirmities of one kind or another that take us all the way back to Adam's transgression. Then the Last Adam was born into our family, and on the cross He bore the curse of sin and death and all the sicknesses and frailties of the human race. When cruel, violent men took Him and nailed Him to the cross, it was because of their sin and ignorance and rebellion that they did so. They walked in darkness, and could not tolerate the Light that was in Jesus. But it was God who transformed the hatred and malice of men toward Christ, into a Sacrifice that was holy and well pleasing in His sight. For "It pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He hath put Him to grief: when Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand" (Isa. 53:10). O mystery of all mysteries, "That God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God" (2 Cor. 5:19, 20).

God's Intention in Redemption

But our Redemption covers more than release from the prison-house of sin, and reconciliation back to God. He wants us to know that He purchased us for Himself that we might become His own inheritance. . . His Church, His Body, His Temple, His Home, His Abiding Place. As the High Priest on the throne, yet walking in the midst of the lampstands by His Spirit, His desire is to impart all those virtues that are in Himself to His people in the earth, that we might become that cleansed and holy habitation that He desires for His praise and glory. When we come to this understanding we can no longer be satisfied to remain where we are now. . . for we are still far from that image and likeness of the Son, that God has desired. And if God cannot rest until this happens—as we draw closer to His heart we feel that same sense of unrest that He feels. Are we satisfied—just to make it inside the pearly gates—when we know God cannot be satisfied until the righteousness of His people goes forth *"as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth"* (Isa. 62:1)?

Boaz could not rest until he concluded this matter as Ruth's kinsman-redeemer. The corn he gave her was good. But he must have her as his own, and his inheritance was to be her inheritance. God rested on the seventh day when He finished the work of creation. But it wasn't long before man sinned and God's rest was broken. Then God went on working. . . working in chosen ones in the course of history. . . until He would discover that ultimate rest in His Love: "The LORD thy God in the midst of thee is mighty: He will save, He will rejoice over thee with joy; He will rest in His love, He will joy over thee with singing" (Zeph. 3:17). It was this longing for *REST* in God's heart that gave birth to the whole plan of redemption;

and do we just want *to make it inside the gates* and care less about God's desire for a people in His image and likeness? Our High Priest in the heavens cannot rest until He has established righteousness in the church, cleansed her from all defilement, and made her to be that holy vessel that is compatible with the heart of God. Then the Son will say of His many brethren. . .and in the same breath: "Look at Me. . .and Look at these children that God has given Me". Talk about signs and wonders! These His sons and daughters are the ultimate sign and wonder that God is preparing for display before angels and before men. The Captain of our Salvation was made "perfect through sufferings" (Heb. 2:10). Our Captain came from Heaven to earth to find this quality of *perfection*, and do we think we just go from earth to Heaven to find it? He comes into our nature, that together with Him He may introduce us as signs and wonders in Israel: "Behold, I and the children whom the LORD hath given Me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the LORD of hosts, which dwelleth in mount Zion" (Isa. 8:18; see Heb. 2:13, 14).

Our Great High Priest

And so we have a great High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary who is totally sufficient in Himself to accomplish the other half of our redemption. . .to take this company of redeemed slaves and so minister to them, and change them, and transform them. . .that they might become the sons and daughters of the Most High. They are to be fully graced and beautified with all the graces and virtues and perfections of the Son. *Priesthood* is the essence of His present reign in the heavens—"a Priest forever after the order of Melchizedek" (Ps. 110:4). He reigns as a "Priest on the throne" (Zech. 6:13). And His priestly ministration is for His redeemed people, for whom He shed His blood. He is endued "with all power in Heaven and in earth" to accomplish the desire of God's heart. And like Aaron He bears on His heart and upon His shoulders the names of His people. In that first high-priestly prayer that He prayed while yet on earth, He was intentionally praying aloud, so His disciples would have some understanding of His exalted priestly ministry when He was raised into Life, and glorified.

"As Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him. And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou has sent" (Jn. 17:2, 3).

He prayed for His chosen ones that they would have this quality of life, that is called eternal life. . .and He defines eternal life as knowing the Father and the Son.

He prays for those whom the Father gave to the Son, that the Father would keep them from the evil one.

His people are to have the same glory: "the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them; that they may be one, even as We are one".

He emphasizes again and again, this quality of union with His people that would come about as they partook of the same glory that was on Him.

And then because of this glory that was first on the Son, and now on His many brethren the world would know "that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved Me". Then having finished the work on earth, He was glorified, and enthroned as our High Priest to intercede for us before the throne. John was "*in the Spirit*" and saw Him walking "in the midst of the seven golden lampstands" with majesty and awesome authority. He is prepared and qualified to deal with His church, no matter where they are, or what their problem might be. He speaks to the seven churches—and through these letters to all the churches to the end of time. He is totally sufficient for every situation. He gives John a message for each church. But there is always a church within the Church, as it was with Israel. "*They are not all Israel, which are of Israel; neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but in Isaac shall thy seed be called*" (Rom. 9:6, 7). He speaks to all, but His appeal is always to that one "who has an ear to hear what the Spirit is saying". That's how it was in times of old: "The Lord sent a word unto Jacob, and it hath lighted upon Israel" (Isa. 9:8).

1. To the Church at Ephesus (Rev. 2:1-7)

He stands before the church at Ephesus as the One who holds *the seven stars in His right hand*. He wants us to know He has full authority over the ministries that He has set in the church. The prophets understood this kind of discipline in the hand of God. Jeremiah came to a sense of futility, because the words he spoke to the people from the heart of God—sounded like a joke in the ears of those who heard it. He finally decided, enough is enough. "I will not make mention of Him, nor speak any more in His Name". So he tried to hold it in. . . and the fire that should have gone forth to others kept burning in his bones so intensely that he had to let it out (Jer. 20:9). It was no golden trophy in those days to become a prophet of God—it was rather a burden that brought reproach and shame. Isaiah also had the feeling that his ministry was a total failure. . . yet he knew he was hidden in the hand of God, and that the word he spoke was like a sharp sword. "He hath made my mouth like sharp sword; *in the shadow of His hand hath He hid me*" (Isa. 49:2). This is the secret of the true word. *He who conveys the truth of God to others, must himself be hidden away in the One who holds the seven stars in His right hand. Only then will that word come forth as God intended: alive, powerful, penetrating, and "sharper than any two-edged sword"* (Heb. 4:12).

The whole body of Christ in the assembly ought to be a part of this ministration of truth. Special ministries are set in the church, to bring the whole body to this place of maturity—so that each member will be a ray of light in that particular Lampstand. We know this is scarcely happening, but this is God's intention: and a faithful ministry will seek to edify the members of the body in such a way that each member will find his place in the body: whether it be *the mouth, or the ear, or the eye*—or some other *vital organ*. Only then will the body of Christ see

clearly, and hear accurately, and speak with authority and purity. But the *lampstand must be illuminated with the Light of Christ, if it is to be a true Testimony of Jesus in that particular area.*

The Lord commends the Church at Ephesus for their labors, their patience, their hatred of evil, and for trying and proving the apostles who would visit their assembly. And so it appears they had *good doctrine*. But because they had left their *first love* He declared He would remove their lampstand—if they did not repent. We see a lot of excitement, a lot of emotion, and hear a lot of good music emanating from churches all over the land. But we can only wonder how many of them realize that the Lord has removed their *lampstand*—and that they are no longer the Testimony of Jesus in their community, that they once were. When the people of God leave *first love*—the Lamp of God will burn low, and will soon die out—no matter how good their doctrine might be. Their advertisements in the newspapers and in front of the church buildings may continue to announce that their church is one of the best—but the Lamp of God may no longer be there, and they do not know it. He calls the Church at Ephesus to repentance—but He appeals especially to those who have a hearing ear: "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches". And to those who overcome He gives this promise: He will give them "to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God".

2. To the Church at Smyrna (Rev. 2:8-11)

He stands before this church as "the First and the Last". He presents Himself as the One "which was dead, and is alive". He is the fullness of all the graces and qualities that are mentioned in all the letters—but this is a suffering church, and He reminds them that He is touched with the feeling of their infirmities. For He Himself suffered much. . . was crucified and is now alive. He does not call them to repentance. No doubt their sufferings had already brought them to a place of repentance, and to a contrite heart. But the battle is not over yet, and He would encourage them to faithfulness and endurance. Again His word goes forth to all. All may not embrace it, but He knows there is power in the spoken Word to make it effective in those who "hear" it. They had suffered much, but the test is always this: "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life". Again He appeals to those who "hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches". And to these overcomers, who stand in jeopardy of their lives daily, He reminds them. . ."He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death".

3. To the Church at Pergamos (Rev. 2:12-17)

Here the Lord is seen holding "the sharp sword with two edges". The people are living in the midst of a stronghold of Satan, but they will find the strength and power they need—in *the sharp sword with two edges*. They are holding fast to His name, and keeping the faith, and at least one of them had been martyred. But the Lord had *a few things* against them. Our Lord requires a church that is

holy and clean, and He must deal with the *few things* that are troubling the church. A little leaven may leaven the whole lump. There were some who held to the doctrine of Balaam, the false prophet who counseled Balak to invite Israel to come and worship their gods, and to eat things that were sacrificed to their idols, and to commit fornication. These unclean spirits of Balaam abound in the world about us—and like the men of Israel who bowed to the gods of Moab, the church has opened her doors to many unclean and defiling spirits that alienate their hearts from God. The allurements and enticements that are spewing into our homes through books and videos and the internet are reaching mammoth proportions, and mothers and fathers had better do all they can to keep their homes clean, and dedicated unto the Lord. Our Lord's weapon against them is "the sharp sword with two edges". . . but 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. Our Lord is ready to arise in our midst to cleanse His church; and when God's people seek Him desperately, all the resources of Christ will once again shine forth in our midst, by the Holy Spirit. But He asks us to drive out the abominations that grieve His Holy Spirit. . . who like the Dove, is easily offended—and flies away. Then the sword of the Lord will be "quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, 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).

There was another problem in Pergamos. Some held the doctrine of the Nicolaitans. . . which He does not explain. But the word itself is a combination of two Greek words that mean: *conquer the people*. From that we gather there was a sect in Pergamos who sought to take control over the people, rather than ministering righteousness and life that would bring them into the liberty of the Spirit.

In these messages to all the churches, God wants us to understand that our High Priest in the heavens has every provision in His own Being. . . not only to bless, and give good gifts, and heal the people—but to cleanse from all defilement of flesh and spirit. We are quick to latch on to the blessing part. But we must turn our faces again to the Lord of the Church. . . and see Him standing in our midst with *the sharp sword with two edges*—not to destroy us, but to circumcise our hearts and minds. Only then will we come to true worship—that state of heart and mind where we "*worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh*" (Phil. 3:3). He must have an overcoming people in Pergamos—for we are certainly dwelling where Satan's throne is, and we are not prevailing against him. God help us to hear the cry to the church at Pergamos: "he that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches". And then for the overcomer He has this promise: "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it".

4. To the Church at Thyatira (Rev. 2:18-29)

The same Lord speaks to the church at Thyatira—but again He doesn't look the same as He did in His appearance to the other churches. He doesn't change—but He has many facets of His Being, and there are many graces and virtues and judgments that He must bring to His people. "These things saith the Son of God, who hath His eyes like unto a *flame of fire*, and His feet are *like fine brass*". O how we need to see Him *as He is*. . .if we are going to be changed into what He wants us to be! He acknowledges the *works, and charity, and service, and faith, and patience* of the church. Then what more does He require?

In Thyatira He must deal *with that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess*. Because of her charisma and her wonderful prophecies, some of God's servants were living in fornication, and eating things sacrificed to idols. Jezebel was Ahab's wife. Ahab was king—but Jezebel would act as a queen in her own right; and if Ahab would have certain leanings toward God, she would be quick to take matters in her own hands. What is foremost in her heart and life, was her hatred for the word of the Lord, that comes from the mouths of His prophets. There is a lot of uncleanness in many of the churches, and that Testimony of Jesus which gives a clear word from God, is not there in counsel and in might, to deal with it. . .

I know God is going to begin a cleansing in the prophetic word that is going forth. Many are crying out for another Elijah! Another John the Baptist! But there is a prophetic movement in the church now—and there is a lot of mixture in it. It has not yet come to the place where there is a true Testimony of Jesus. Generally the prophetic utterance is not bringing forth a purging, cleansing work in the people. . .but because there are wonderful prophecies, the people are blessed, while the leaven of evil is still working. When have we witnessed what Paul spoke about. . .when one comes into the assembly who is an unbeliever, and prophecies are going forth, and the secrets of his heart are revealed, "and so falling down on his face, he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth" (1 Cor. 14: 25)? It is almost unknown. The Lord stands in the midst of this charismatic church of Thyatira, with *eyes like unto a flame of fire, and His feet like fine (burnished) brass*, calling them to repentance. His judgments will be true and righteous, for there is a ministry in His hand that the Lord is preparing for the day when He will rise up in judgment. We must look into those eyes that are as *flames of fire*, and our feet must be purged on the *altar of burnt offering*, before we will be able to deal effectively with the sins in others. Then there will be an anointing to minister righteousness and truth in the fear of God, bringing conviction and righteous judgment.

When those holy flames from the throne come into our midst. . .those whose hearts are turned to God will cry out: "The LORD He is the God! The LORD, He is the God!" And the prophets of Baal will be destroyed. Later on Jehu was anointed, and commissioned to deal with Jezebel, and she was trampled under

the feet of his horses. Many in the church are inclined to feel that if one is able to bring forth beautiful, powerful prophecies, that surely God must be in their midst. The true vindication of prophecy is whether it strikes the hearts of men with conviction, and heart-searching, and the fear of God. "I the LORD search the hearts, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways. . ." (Jer. 17:10).

To the faithful in Thyatira He gives words of caution, and assurance: "That which ye have already, hold fast till I come". And to the overcomers He gives this promise: "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". All this may sound very drastic and cruel for the followers of the Lamb. But they are not ruthless dictators. They will do nothing that the Lamb of God will not do. . .they are simply following Him, and doing as He is doing, by His anointing and authority.

The word *rule* in the above passage speaks of *the rule of a shepherd*. It is the rule of the Shepherd Lamb, and of those who follow Him wherever He may go. The true shepherd will lay down his life for the sheep as Jesus did. These overcomers will not be judgmental nor dictatorial. But their word will be powerful, as they abide in their Lord. It was only through the word that proceeded from Jeremiah's mouth that he would be able to *root out, and pull down, and destroy, and throw down*. All of this was to clear the land, that he might *build and plant* by the same living Word (Jer. 1:10).

There is an added promise to the overcomers in Thyatira: "And I will give him the morning star". As the Lord shares His power over the nations, with the overcomers; so He shares the glory of the Morning Star, for He tells us: "I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and Morning Star" (Rev. 22:16). The overcomers in the church will yet arise in the earth as the *morning star*, radiating the Light of Christ, and proclaiming to creation the promise of a new Day.

5. To the Church at Sardis (Rev. 3:1-6).

"These things saith He that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars". Do we see what He is showing us? This dead church at Sardis must see the One who is glorious and magnificent. For it is only as we see Him, that we will be like Him. He shows Himself to us that we might come alive, by seeing Him. This is what His mediatorship in the heavens is all about—and this is what the ministry of the Spirit in the earth is all about—"He shall take of Mine and *show it unto you*. He stands in the midst of Sardis as the One who has *the Seven Spirits of God*. The number *seven* speaks of completeness, of fullness. We have no problem believing that all facets of the Godhead have come to fullness in our Lord Jesus. But our struggle now is to see and know that all this fullness that is in Christ has been invested in His church, by His Spirit who dwells within us. And though

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*", and the little life that was there was close to death. But why would the Lord show Himself to this church, as One full of Light, and resplendent with Glory? Because this is what our churches need to see, if they are going to spring forth in life. "In Him was life; and the life was the light of men" (Jn. 1:4). He shines forth into the darkness, that He might cause the darkness to flee away. He comes to us who are "dead in trespasses and in sins". . .to give us life and light, as we find the grace to respond to the Light. And He continues to exhort them: "Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die". They had a good reputation in their city. But God says, Repent. . .your reputation in the eyes of men means nothing. Consider the things you have heard and been taught, or "I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee". "I will come upon thee". . .He said. But some would remind us, "This of course is not the *Second Coming*". Perhaps not. But is He not the same Lord? I am confident that when the Lord reveals Himself in the church with those flaming eyes of fire, it will be a *coming of the Lord* as awesome to that church, as when He comes in clouds to judge the nations.

He will have an overcoming church in Sardis. . .for He rises up in Sardis with Seven Spirits (described in another place as Seven Lamps of fire). He takes authority over that church which has despised His Lordship, for He holds the *seven stars in His right hand*. He is grooming a people in His right hand, for faithful and true ministry in the House of God. He has the power and authority to execute His righteous judgments in their midst. And to the overcomers He gives this promise: "the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and 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". "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches".

6. To the Church at Philadelphia (Rev. 3:7-13)

To this faithful Church, our Lord gives this message: "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".

The Lord shows Himself to this church as the One who is holy and true, and has "the key of David". The Key of David is only mentioned once in the New Testament (in this passage), and once in the Old. And it was long after David had passed away, when Isaiah was prompted by the Spirit to mention *the key of David*.

"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 David, What is it?

We have no reason to believe that David had any insight as to the eternal significance of the House of David until God revealed it to him through Nathan the prophet. God would not allow David to build Him *a House*, as David had proposed to do. But in refusing this, God sent Nathan to David with a word that was much higher—a promise that had eternal significance.

1. God was not interested in a Cedar House (2 Sam. 7:7),—or a House of any other kind of material, for that matter. But somehow it lingers on in the hearts of religious people, that they must build some kind of structure *For the Glory of God*. He did ordain tents and temples in the past, but only as types and shadows of the True Temple, not built with hands. His desire has always been a desire for a Habitation in *the humble and the contrite heart*.

For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones" (Isa. 57:15; also Isa. 66:2)

2. God was going to build David a House (vs. 11). True, David's son Solomon was appointed to build a Temple, and God gave David the blueprints for it (see 1 Chron. 22:7-10; 1 Chron. 28:11-12). But even Solomon recognized that it was not in any sense a dwelling-place for God. It was just to be a house of prayer, a place where God's name would be known in Israel, and among the nations (2 Chron. 6:18, 40).

3. The House of David was to endure forever (vs. 13). . .for His *Seed*, even the Lord Jesus Christ—would come from the House of David, and "of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end" (Isa. 9:7).

"Then David went in, and sat before the LORD, and he said, Who am I, O Lord GOD? and what is my house, that Thou hast brought me hitherto?" (vs. 18). It was no doubt in the Tent of David, where he sat and exalted the Lord for His greatness and mercies—summing it up in these words: "Do as Thou hast said. And let Thy name be magnified for ever" (2 Sam. 7:25, 26)

In the context of what Isaiah had said about *the Key of David*—He was talking about the irresponsible government of Shebna, who was over the House of David, and how God was going to displace his government with another, who would be faithful in his stewardship.

There were breaches in the City of David, and Shebna was not ruling in a responsible way. Isaiah said, "It is a day of trouble, and of treading down, and of perplexity. . .a day of breaking down the walls, and of crying to the mountains". The defenses of Judah were inadequate to protect the city. There were "breaches of the City of David"—and they were tearing down the houses to fortify the wall. Their water supply was endangered. But Isaiah's charge was this: "Ye have not looked unto the Maker thereof". God was calling for *weeping and mourning*, but they chose rather—"joy and gladness. . .*eating flesh and drinking wine*". And God declared he would violently take away the old government, and roll it *like a ball into a large country*. Shebna who was over the king's house was

living in ease and splendor, while all this was going on. . .heedless of the troubles that were piling up, and God said He was going to install a new government, and lay the Key of David on his shoulder. This was the first mention of *the key of David*, and the Lord quoted this prophecy in His letter to Philadelphia—confirming that He was the One of whom Isaiah had spoken.

And so the real application of this Key, is for the Government of Christ. God is going to bring forth a new ministry, a ministry that has concern and respect and honor for the House of God. A key is being cut and formed and prepared for the hour of still greater troubles that lie before us. Our Lord has that Key on His shoulder, and He holds true ministry in His right hand. He knows when to close doors, and when to open doors. . .and no man will be able to close the door that He opens, nor open the door that He closes. Man will have nothing to do by way of electing the elders and counselors of the flock, nor in dismissing them. The ministry will not be subject to the will of people, nor will they lord it over the people. Elected superintendents or bishops or archbishops will not set up ministers under them, hire them or fire them, and move them from one assembly to another. The democratic system of government will no longer exist in the church, for *Government* in the church is a *spiritual ministration*—just as spiritual as the ministry of apostles, prophets, teachers, miracles, and healings. The Lord of the Church holds *the key of David*. . .and He will open doors and close doors at His discretion (see 1 Cor. 12:28). . .The name *Eliakim means God raises up*; and I believe we may expect some awesome changes in the church, as the Lord in our midst raises up a true spiritual ministry in the House of David. I am talking about the Church of Christ. A carnal ‘church’ may still be functioning in that day by the name ‘church’—but the One who has the Key of David will exercise His Lordship in the *called out people* of the true Church.

The Preparation of the Key of David

As we consider the life of David, it is evident how God prepared the Key that would rest on his shoulder. The Key was something that was formed in his life, as he submitted himself to the ways of God. One does not receive the Key as a free gift. Nor was David aware, in all the trials and tribulations that he went through, that God was forming a Key that would remain in his family through all generations. Let us consider how God formed this Key in the life of David.

1. God had chosen David, and David was aware of it.

We must know we are here by God’s choosing, if we are going to move with Him in the stream of His purposes, and come forth with a heart *after the heart of God*. God simply chose David. . .and I’ll leave it to others to search out the reason why. Nevertheless it is always true that He requires from His chosen ones—faithfulness and endurance and patience. The *called and chosen* of God must also be *faithful*. And because they know they are called, this knowledge nurtures a godly fear that produces faithfulness in their lives. With every step along our

pilgrim way we know we were destined for higher things than anything we see about us, and we seek to know His will and direction in all we do, lest we mar His purpose in calling us. Without this knowledge we would be inclined to do what we could in our own strength, and arrange and promote schemes to make our ministry effective in the church, or in the world about us. But with the knowledge of His call and His choosing in our lives—we hesitate to walk the highway that leads to success. Rather we will seek out the pathway that He desires for us—and ask for grace to walk the rugged, or the narrow, or the unpopular, or the unknown way—though it may seem meaningless in the eyes of others.

We know the story of the downfall of Saul, Israel's first king. God designated Saul as king, at the hands of the prophet Samuel; but the whole thing came about because the people wanted to be like the nations around them, and they demanded a king. God went along with their desires, but He had other plans prepared for the day when man's plan would come to naught. He appointed David, a man *after His own heart*, to replace the man that was self-willed and rebellious in heart. God in His predetermined ways does not wait till calamity strikes before He starts working on the solution. He makes provision for it while things are still moving along *successfully*. And we can be sure He is doing that today. He that hath the Key of David is going to use that Key, to establish righteous government in the House of David. God's people who understand the deplorable state of the church, must be encouraged to know that He is grooming the hearts of men and women who are *called and chosen and faithful*—who will be ready to stand in the gap when the kingdoms of men come tumbling down. God is preparing a people after His own heart who will be ready to don the mantle of a meek and humble shepherd, when the hirelings flee from the flock, or when God drives them out. He is preparing a people *of mercy* who will be ready to stand in the gap, when our social structure collapses. They have God's anointing on them now—in the day of their weakness. Often they feel like David when he said in his trouble: "I am this day weak, though anointed king" (2 Sam. 3:39). For weakness, and suffering, and rejection for the sake of the truth is one of the ingredients of the holy anointing oil. It takes the myrrh of suffering to give true incense to the ointment on the head of the one who in the purposes of God will become a *vessel of mercy*. For God must have vessels of mercy in this world that is full of hate and malice and cruelty. And the irony of it all is this: that earthly governments which profess to be merciful and helpful to people in distress, are making laws. . . or tolerating laws, that promote a reckless disregard for God and the Bible, in the name of *human rights*—in the consequence of which our families suffer more trouble, more abuse, and more devastation than ever. The bottom line in all of this confusion is: "There is no fear of God before their eyes".

2. David respected Saul's anointing.

David knew the grace and strength and meekness that was in that holy oil, for he could never forget the day when Samuel poured the oil on his head, and the sense of God's fear that invaded his spirit at that time. He knew also that Saul

had received a portion of that same anointing. However, unlike Saul—the anointing that David had was *mingled within him*. He said, "I shall be anointed with fresh oil" (Ps. 92:10). And the word *anointed* in this passage means more than *poured upon*—it means thoroughly mixed and mingled together. In reality David's whole being was invigorated and mixed with the anointing. This is certainly God's intention for His people, for "God hath *tempered the body together*, having given more abundant honor to that part which lacked" (1 Cor. 12:24). It was the same kind of oil on Saul's head—but in Saul's case it never really penetrated his heart and mind. So in spite of Saul's intense hatred toward him. . . David was very much aware that Saul was God's anointed, and that he must never use the anointing he had to fight against another anointed vessel of God. *We in the church must remember this, and never try to cause any damage to another anointed ministry, nor rejoice in his downfall*. It is the prerogative of Him who has the Key of David to deal with rebellious, yet anointed leadership.

David truly grieved over Saul's jealous heart, and did what he could to help the man in his obstinacy. While still very young he would minister to King Saul with songs from the Lord, giving the king temporary relief. But he would dodge Saul's spears and leave them in the wall behind him—rather than throwing them back. The door to the kingdom of David was open to him on at least two different occasions, but because he knew it was not God's open door to the kingdom, he simply closed that open door.

Let us be sure we understand this important thing about *open doors and closed doors*. *With the Key of David you open closed doors—but with that same key you close open doors*. So many of God's people do not realize that. "The door is open, so I must go in" seems to be the thought. Otherwise, "Why would God open a door, if He did not want me to enter?" I know at least one reason—and I have already mentioned it. God was testing David's heart as to his *faithfulness*. God arranged an opportunity for David to take the kingdom—to test the reins of his heart. God even caused a *deep sleep* to come upon Saul and his men, to make the key easier for David to use. Had he not known he was *called and chosen*—He might very well have taken the reasonable course, seize the kingdom there and then. . . and fail the test of *faithfulness*. The key on David's shoulder was becoming more and more real to him, and he simply *closed the open door*. We can not help but wonder how many times we may have rushed our way through *open doors*, or even tried to pry them open with our wrecking bar—when in fact God was "searching the hearts and trying the reins".

3. David learned to walk in strange and difficult ways.

Knowing God was leading him in these very distressing ways caused him to draw near to his God, rather than to run from Him. When the billows of trouble went over him, and it appeared he would be swept away, he cried unto God. . . and those very billows of trouble caused a "deep, calling unto deep" (Ps. 47:7). Blessed is that man or woman, boy or girl—who finds it in their heart to cry out to God, to pant after God like the hart *panteth after the waterbrooks* when troubles

assail—and praise Him in all situations, though it seems God is nowhere in sight, nor cares. David longed to walk in God's way, far more than he desired to possess the promised kingdom. As a good shepherd of Israel, he knew he himself was but a sheep. . .and in this way he won the hearts of the sheep of the Lord's pasture. His friends in the days of his rejection found love and fellowship with him. . .and followed him not for reward, but out of love for the one upon whom they recognized the grace and the anointing of royalty.

4. David maintained a healthy fear of God.

He knew God had a plan for his life. . .and this knowledge produced in him a godly fear. He sought to keep His heart fixed on God. He could never forget the anointing oil that flowed from the horn that Samuel brought to Bethlehem that memorable day when he was a young lad tending sheep (1 Sam. 16:13). He recognized the folly, and the snare of acting on his own. . .the snare of making choices that might seem to be to his advantage, but not in accord with the will of God. He was not an opportunist. God was forming a *key* in his life that would lead to open doors into the true riches of Christ. If we know God has a plan we had better be diligent to go God's way, rather than seeking to unfold that plan ourselves. We cannot miss God's plan if we walk in His way. But we can sure miss it if we think we know the plan, and try to make it unfold with our own ingenious keys. *The key of David* was always very simple: *Let God arrange it. . .Let God put it together.* Peter in the prison house could rest and sleep, and wait for the angel to shake him, and command him to walk out of the prison a free man. But he too had to learn that he was only *free. . .to become the Lord's bondsman*. Slothfulness in the eyes of men might very often be an inward wisdom in the eyes of God. If it is God's plan, God will cause it to happen in His own way. David knew how to deal with the bear out of the woods. . .and the lion, that attacked his sheep. And this gave him confidence to deal with the Philistine. He had learned God's way, and he knew the armor of Saul would only cumber him with a heavy burden, and he chose to go forth against the enemy in the *Name* of the Lord God of Israel. He knew he had come to the battle for that day and hour. But the success and the glory of that moment did not consume him with pride, because God allowed persecution and rejection to come on the heels of his victory. Through jealousy, Saul had become his enemy. . .and on the verge of a successful career in the kingdom, David was suddenly forced to flee for his life.

Many years David walked in rejection, all the while honoring Saul and loving him—until one day Saul was slain in battle at the hands of the Philistines, Israel's avowed enemies. David mourned and lamented over Saul, rather than rejoicing in his downfall. Nor did he make plans to take over the kingdom. Why should he meddle with it now, when he knew God alone was responsible for the anointing he had, and for His watchcare over him all his days? He waited rather for God to open the door in His own way. He didn't go looking for the lost and perplexed sheep of Israel. He had found a safe refuge among the Philistines. . .at least

much safer than what he could find anywhere in Israel. Now that Saul had been removed from the scene, he asked God if he should return to Judah. God said, "Yes". "Where?" David asked. And God said, "Go to Hebron" (2 Sam. 2:1). Imperceptibly at first, but with greater and greater clarity of understanding as we walk with God—the Key of David is progressively formed in the lives of His obedient people. Then the men of Judah came to him, and anointed him as king over the house of Judah. And several years later the other tribes of Israel came, and anointed him king over Israel.

5. David longed for a Habitation for God.

He was quick to repent of his sin, with godly sorrow. He came to a place of humility and contrition of heart, and wrote that beautiful Psalm in which he testified: "A broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise" (Ps. 51:17). The contrite heart is a heart that is broken, crippled, torn. And yet the prophet Isaiah could say that God desires a people like this for His own habitation: "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones" (Isa. 57:15). The bruised ones, the crushed ones, the ones who are torn and crippled—O how can we imagine the high and lofty One desiring such a heart for His own habitation? Except as we see Him revealed in Jesus, condescending to come from realms of glory, to live as a pauper among men: poor and needy, rejected, forsaken. . .and ultimately bruised and broken for your sins and mine. And so because Jesus is like that, and God is like that, He desires a habitation with those who are like that. David's great passion was not to do great things, nor even to take the Kingdom—but to discover God's habitation. He said, "I will not give sleep to mine eyes, or slumber to my eyelids, until I find out a place for the LORD, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob" (Ps. 132:5). And so his very sufferings and tribulations in the wilderness experiences of his exile, these actually became *the key of David* that opened the door to God's habitation.

May we learn from all these attitudes in David that became factors in the formation of the Key on his shoulder. What do we desire more, the Kingdom. . .or the King? A throne. . .or a Habitation for God, and with God?

6. David was quick to shut down a Faulty Program.

David desired to go God's way, but when he missed it—he had enough wisdom to shut the program down. Would God that His church could recognize that her programs are simply not working. But David learned the hard way—and discovered *The Key to Mount Zion*. The *key of David* was a key that was formed in his life, as he sought to walk with God. . .but there was much more that he had to learn concerning God's ways before he could use the key effectively. The kingdom was now his; but a part of Jerusalem was still under the control of the Jebusites, who felt very secure in their stronghold of Zion. But David's men took

the stronghold by ascending a tunnel like entrance up the side of the mountain, and came upon the Jebusites by surprise. Mount Zion then became David's capital city, and his kingdom was solidified. But because David had a priestly heart he longed for the return of the Ark of God, which had remained in the house of Abinadab for many years. The people had never sought after the Ark all during the reign of Saul, and up to this time. So they sent the priests to bring it back without seeking God for *His way*. It was just a thoughtless decision. . .and so easy to make. They chose the *way* of the Philistines—which is always man's way, and the logical way: Let's make a cart for it, get a team of strong oxen to haul it, and have a couple of overseers there to make sure everything will go well. Man's actions are generally determined by common sense, and the thought is: Does it work? David had good intentions, but he never sought God as to His *way* in the matter. The result was total disaster: the oxen stumbled a bit and the strong man put out his hand to steady the Ark, and God smote him dead. David had made a serious mistake. . .but he had wisdom enough to shut the program down when He realized God was displeased. True to the *key* that God was forming on his shoulder—David sought the Lord earnestly, and God showed him the right order. The priests of the Lord must carry the ark on their shoulder. The ark was designed with that purpose in mind for it had staves on each side, which rested on the shoulders of the priests. And so they brought the Ark back the right way, and to the right place.

7. The place of David's Kingdom. The place of the Priesthood.

David had learned a tremendous lesson from his mistake. *He shut down the program and sought God.* Surely the priests at Gibeon were anticipating the Ark coming back to be placed in the Tabernacle where it belonged. But God had revealed to David that *the place of his kingdom was also to be the place of priestly ministry, and of God's habitation.* And this revelation gave birth to a prophetic song that David wrote concerning God's dwelling place in Zion. David had already taken Zion for the seat of his kingdom. But now God showed him that it was to be more than that—it was also to be the place of God's own habitation, in the Tent of David. David's kingdom was to be of a priestly nature. The kingdom was not to be *one thing*, and the priesthood *another*. A man who has power to do great things, kingdom things—can easily become corrupt. But if he has a priestly heart, he has partaken of sacrifice and offering to God, and God is pleased to abide within Him, and do kingdom things through him. The kingdom of David would be priestly in nature, and strong in kingdom authority, because its very essence was priestly access into God's presence, and God's habitation with him in Zion:

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. I will abundantly bless her provision: I will satisfy her poor with bread. I will clothe her priests with salvation: And her saints shall shout aloud for joy" (Ps. 132:13-16).

David had discovered the *key* to shut doors, as well as to open doors. He was not a priest, and as a king of the tribe of Judah he had no right to go into the Tent to worship God. . .who dwelt between the cherubim, in the Most Holy place. But God was beginning to reveal to him "the Key of David", and he opened the door of Zion for the Ark, and left the Most Holy Place of the Tabernacle, empty. The *most holy place* was now in the Tent of David on Mount Zion.

An Open Door into the Tent of David (See also our writing [From Tent to Temple, Chapter 2](#)).

And what an open door it was for David! With *the key on his shoulder*, David went ahead and pitched a tent for the Ark on Mount Zion. It was just a flimsy tent, but it became known as "The Tent of David" for his generation, and for the generations yet to be born. Amos spoke of it as a prophetic type of the expanded Israel, when God would begin to call out a chosen people from the Gentiles, and join them together with Israel in the Tent of David. And the apostle James confirms this, when he spoke before the Council at Jerusalem. He advised the Council not to try to make Jews out of these converted Gentiles—because God had said through the prophet Amos, that the other nations would be brought into the Tent of David in later times. And now that this was happening, James advised the Council to receive the Gentile converts freely without all these Jewish rituals. They all knew that the Tent of David was very much unlike the Tabernacle of Moses, and had nothing to do with Jewish ritualism. (see Acts 15:17; Amos 9:11, 12).

David knew that Mount Zion was not only the place of his own kingdom, but also the place of God's habitation. He would go inside that tent and commune with His God who *dwelt between the Cherubim*, and God's people would sing about it in the church that was yet to be born—even as the singers did who were appointed to praise and glorify the Lord before the Tent of David:

"One thing have I desired of the LORD;
That will I seek after,
That I may dwell in the house of the LORD
All the days of my life,
To behold the beauty of the LORD,
And to inquire in His temple" (Ps. 27:4).

David had discovered an *open door* into a new and different kind of Tabernacle, which was nothing other than the *Most Holy place*. No lavers, no altars, no special vestments to wear, no tables of bread—nothing was needed but a humble and a contrite heart. . . He would walk freely into his own private sanctuary, and there commune with his God. It was the beginning of the transfer of an old order to a new. . .the beginning of a priestly kingdom, where self sacrificing priests would have kingly authority to rule and reign in righteousness and peace. *Kingly authority* I say. . .but exercised by humble and contrite priests

whose concern was for the House of God, and not for themselves. Our exalted Lord Jesus holds *the key of David* that will open the door into the Holiest of all, "by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh" (Heb. 10:20). This is the ultimate *open door* that Jesus sets before the church. It is access into the very presence of God. . .not through priestly ritual. . .but through *One Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus*. The *key* is on David's shoulder—for the shoulder is a place for carrying burdens, and that is where the staves of the ark were placed. The priests of the Lord in Israel must carry the ark—rather than delegate their burden to others. It was called the Ark of His strength (Ps. 132:8). It was a *heavy burden*, but they were not to organize some kind of an institutional cart with wheels, to make the job easier. But along with the weight, there was also the weight of God's glory, that dwelt between the cherubim. Paul carried heavy burdens, but he called them *our light affliction*, because he knew that they were actually preparing him for "a far more exceeding and *eternal weight of glory*" (2 Cor. 4:17). Jesus bids us to come into His yoke. That means carrying a burden. But He tells us that if we are in His yoke we will "find rest unto our souls", because we carry our yoke in union with Him who is our Strength, who worketh in us mightily.

The Door is Open, for Refugees from Satanic Strongholds

In the context of the letter to Philadelphia, the emphasis concerns the doors of false Satanic religion, which Jesus calls *the synagogues of Satan*. The true Jews in the sight of God are those who are circumcised in the heart. Before the new converts were called *Christian*, which first happened in Antioch, the converted Gentiles were simply part of the Jewish synagogues, for the true Jew is really one whose heart has been renewed by the Spirit. "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; 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; whose praise is not of men, but of God" (Rom. 2:28, 29). Paul recognized the true meaning of circumcision—it was never intended to be a mere ritual, but a sign that the man was a true son of Abraham. Long before the gospel went forth, there were many Gentiles who attended the synagogues, who believed in the God of the Jews. But according to the law these Gentiles must be circumcised, in order to become a Jew. And so the Gospel of Christ in the beginning was preached in the synagogues. Paul likewise preached in the synagogues, whenever there was an open door—and he evangelized with this principle in mind: "To the Jew first, and also to the Gentiles". But with the light of the Gospel that God gave him, the Lord Jesus was the Messiah. . .and Christ the Messiah must be All. Paul could not tolerate the mixture of Judaism with the Gospel of Christ. It was a new day, and the Gospel Paul preached emphasized that circumcision was not enough—Christ must become Lord in our lives, and there must be a circumcision of the heart. Very often he found himself in conflict with the synagogues because of his teaching, and finally he turned to the Gentiles.

In refusing the Lord Jesus as their promised Messiah—it was inevitable that some of these synagogues would become *the synagogues of Satan*. It was evidently this way in Philadelphia. It wasn't that the disciples were trying to make inroads into the synagogues of Satan. *With the Key of David on our shoulder, we do not try to make things happen. We must always wait for God to do it His way.*

Rather, because of the faithfulness of this church the Lord Jesus said He would *"make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee"*. . . *The Seven Spirits of God go forth into all the earth*—and He went forth and began working in *the synagogues of Satan*, without the church even knowing what God was doing. . .

God must Go Before—Then His Glory will Follow After.

If God does not go before us we become entangled in the wilderness, and come up against a Red Sea, with nowhere to go. The children of Israel were terrified when they realized they were shut in—with the Sea before them, and the enemy behind them, and a wilderness on either side. *But God was leading them by the Pillar of Fire by night, and the Pillar of Cloud by day*—and this is always the Key to victory. Then when the enemy came near, the Pillar moved through the host, to the rear. There is no point of *going*, if God is *not sending*. And when He sends, He will go on ahead, and His glory will follow after. "For ye shall not go out with haste, nor go by flight: for the LORD will go before you; and the God of Israel will be your rereward (your protection behind you)" (Isa. 52:12).

This is always God's way. We read of the great revivals of Charles Finney, and certainly it was a tremendous awakening. But the hearts of the people were impacted with great conviction and awareness of their need of God—long before Finney went to their city. You can't make these things happen. God has not changed, and He will do things like this again, and greater—but it will be through a people who walk close to the Lord, as in Philadelphia. Then the Lord in their midst has the Key—to do what He wants to do—and His people hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches.

The Spirit of God had gone before, and began working in Gadara, before Jesus had arrived—and this poor victim who lived in the tombs was in the right place when Jesus stepped out of the boat. Suddenly the demon possessed man saw Him, and "when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and *worshipped* Him" (Mk. 5:6). He didn't need any one to explain to him how he should worship. All we need, all the world needs, is to be impacted with His mighty presence, and catch a glimpse of His glory. But in the absence of that mighty presence, we organize worship teams for the house of God, to show the people how to do it—and then try to attract the sinners into our congregations to hear the beautiful music. Music can add much to the praises of His people, but only if the musicians are instruments in God's hands, and are themselves in tune with God. Otherwise, it becomes mere entertainment.

God went before Paul, when he felt the Lord leading him to Ephesus. Nor did he organize an army of Christians to go against the evil strongholds in that city. But the impact of the presence of God brought frenzy to the evil strongholds, "And fear fell on them all" because of this "Jesus whom Paul preacheth" (Acts 19:13-19).

There are no closed doors anywhere in the world, if we walk with Him who has "the key of David". Neither are there any open doors. *But the ultimate secret of the key of David is knowing that our Lord Jesus holds that key; and that we must leave it on His shoulder, rather than seeking out some ingenious locksmith that will try to open the door for us.* Our Lord would not be pressured by anything. . .except by the will of the Father. Jesus said of His own brothers: "My time is not yet come: but your time is always ready" (Jn. 7:6). He wasn't slothful, neither was He ambitious to fulfill His ministry. *It was this quality of obedience that brought about our salvation.* And God must have an obedient people, always ready to do His will—but moving only in God's way—before we are going to make an impact on nations.

After David had been anointed as king of Israel, the Philistines heard about it—and came against him. Naturally he considered he should go forth in battle—but he was becoming more sensitive concerning *the key*, so he inquired of the LORD. "And the LORD said unto him, Go up; for I will deliver them into thine hand" (1 Chron. 14:9, 10). God gave him a great victory. The Philistines were routed, and David's men burnt the gods of the Philistines that they had left behind when they fled. But a while later the Philistines came again and set up their camps in the sight of Israel. And again David inquired of the LORD. . . "Shall I go against the Philistines"? . . .and God said "No!"

Well, it worked before—isn't that sufficient reason to use the same method again? If you discover something *that works in the work of the Lord, keep doing it.* This is man's reasoning, because he does not understand that God never repeats Himself in like manner as He did it before. This is why God's people get frustrated when they follow all the principles of past movements of God, past revivals, and try to make them work for a new revival. And of course I am not denying that the principles of seeking God, obedience, hearing His voice. . .are always necessary and always valid. But *His way is in the sea, and His path in the mighty waters. . .and we can never search out His ways by our own wisdom, for His ways are untraceable.*

God said, "No, do not go against them. . .but go around them, and take your stand by the mulberry trees", *"and when thou shalt hear a sound of going (of marching) in the tops of the mulberry trees, that THEN thou shalt go out to battle"*

(1 Chron. 14:15). Why is that so important? It's just another lesson we must learn regarding the *key of David*. David's ear was becoming more and more sensitive to God's voice, and God's ways. "Wait!" God said (and I am just paraphrasing)—

"Wait till you hear the marching of the heavenly hosts in the top of the mulberry trees—then you will go forth, and you will know the Hosts of Heaven have gone before you. . ." It was a tremendous victory, and the Philistines as well as the surrounding nations knew it had something to do with David's God. "And the *fame of David* went out into all lands; and the LORD brought the *fear of him* upon all nations" (vs. 17).

It was not too long before when "David was *afraid of God*"—because God had smote one of his servants dead for touching the Ark. But he learned from his mistake—he knew he must always *seek God for His way*. And now David becomes famous because of this great victory, and *the fear of David comes upon all nations*.

Nations are not going to fear our God, nor obey the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, until there is a return of a holy fear of God in our midst.

The key of David for Mount Zion, is also the key of David for all nations.

We had better be sure we have the key to Zion, the key to God's Presence in His church, the key that will bring a holy fear of God back to His people—before we assume we can come up with keys for taking the nations for God.

The key is nothing less than moving in the anointing, walking in the Spirit, and knowing His abiding presence in our lives. *And knowing for a certainty that He carries the key on His shoulder, and that we must let Him be in full charge in whatever He wants us to do.* But it is a learning process. Unlike the *gifts of God*, this key is a progressive working of God in the lives of His chosen ones. They learn through experience that they simply cannot make anything happen that is worthy of God's approval, except as they move in the will and in the way of God.

I am confident that it was our Lord who closed the doors to China in the middle of the last century. . .for He would have a true and vital *church* in that great land. But this kind of *revival* did not happen until He who has *the key of David* put a stop to the missionary programs of the church *in the free world*. I do not say these things to discourage any man or woman who is called to minister in certain nations. We must be faithful to know His voice, and go as the Lord may send. But we must be sure that it is "He that hath the key of David" who is opening the door. Those nations out there that have known physical, as well as spiritual famine, and persecution. . .do not need our expertise, our musical bands and dance troupes, and our *Christian Rock-N-Roll* to bring our gospel to them. This will do more harm than good, and *the fame of the church will become more infamous than it is now in many nations*. I want to quote a few excerpts from what is called: "An Urgent Message from the Persecuted Church in Russia"? Here are a few excerpts:

"For thirty years we have suffered intense persecution, and now freedom is bringing another great harm to our churches. This damage is coming from the Christians in America who are sending rock music and evangelists accompanied by rock bands.

"Our young people do not attend these meetings because we have all committed not to participate in secular entertainment.

"This is a great burden to our hearts. Many come with Bible in hand and rock music. We are embarrassed by this image of Christianity. We do not know what words to use in urging that this be stopped. We abhor all Christian rock music coming to our country.

"We need spiritual bread, please give us true bread, not false cakes. . .

"We were in prison for fifteen years, and eleven years, for Christ's sake. We were not allowed to have Christian music, but rock music was used as a weapon against us day and night to destroy our souls. We could only resist with much prayer and fasting. . .

"Now it is Christians from America who damage our souls. We do not allow this music in our church, but they rent big stadiums and infect teenagers and adults with their rock music. . .

"We call this music from hell. We urge all Americans to stop giving money for the organization of such concerts in Russia." (*Peter Peters, and Vasilij Ryzhuk, Moscow. . . excerpts from a letter written in 1991*).

O how God Most High must be grieved with this kind of nonsense. And all we can wonder is, how long before He stands before the church here in the West, and in other affluent '*Christian*' countries, with *eyes as flames of fire*, and with *the sharp sword with two edges*.

But our Lord has a Philadelphia Church alive in the earth. . . though perhaps small in numbers. God has set before them an open door, and no man can close it. They are keeping the word of His patience, in the midst of trial and testing. God said He will not test them beyond what they are able to endure, "but will with the temptation (trial, test) also make a *way of escape, that ye may be able to bear it*" (1 Cor. 10:13). Many in the earth have known trial and tribulation beyond what any of us here in the *free world* can imagine, and they testify that God has been faithful in their hour of trial, and '*made a way of escape*' and enabled them to endure it. And many have sealed their testimony with their blood. I believe many of the persecuted churches have already had their share of tribulation, and will be spared when greater trials come upon the world.

To the overcomer in Philadelphia He gives this promise: "I will make him 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, which cometh down out of heaven from My God: and I will write upon him My new name".

7. To the Church at Laodicea (Rev. 3:14-22)

The Lord of the Church stands before Laodicea as "the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the beginning of the creation of God". We pray our prayers, and say *Amen*. It is the last word of our petition before God: "Lord, may it come to pass". He is the *Amen* to the heart's cry of His people, who have long been crying out to Him. And He is the *Amen* to His own intercessions before the throne of God, on behalf of His people.

There is a lot of boasting in Laodicea, but God knows it is false. We say, "We are rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing"—but the Lord sees us as "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked". The song and the laughter continues in the House of God, and they call it *the joy of the Lord*. I know God wants us to *rejoice in the Lord* in good times or in bad. But I wonder if God is not very often saying, "Take away from Me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols" (Amos 5:23). And even a true prophecy is often like it was when Ezekiel spoke the word of God to the people: "Lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not" (Ezek. 33:32).

The Lord sees us as *border-line* Christians: "thou art neither cold nor hot; I would thou wert cold or hot". He stands by our lampstand, fully prepared to correct us, and He tells us why: it is because He *loves* us. We are often inclined to think that His goodness is the proof that He loves us—not realizing "that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance" (Rom. 2:4). But hear what He says: "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent". He has every provision to make us rich with the true riches of Heaven, to clothe us with the pure white garments of His own righteousness, and to anoint our eyes that we might see with clear vision. He wants to shine upon us with the Light of Heaven. He is "the faithful and true Witness" and He wants to make us to be the true Testimony of Jesus in the earth. He has not forsaken Laodicea, but He stands outside the door—because He cannot tolerate what is going on inside. He wants intimate fellowship with us, not senseless programs and entertainment.

He wants to Come in, and Dine with us

The people inside feel they are doing very well, because God is blessing, and the church is prospering. But He is outside the door, and He calls out: "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". He says I want to "*eat with you. . .and you with Me*". I want to have *supper* with you. I want to share My life with you, and I want you to share your life with Me.

O how little do we understand that this kind of mutual fellowship with Him is God's total answer to a world that lies in the *bondage of corruption*. We profess we want to take the Bread of Life to the world. But He is in Heaven now, and He wants us to be that Bread to a famishing world. Only as we partake of Him, do we become the Bread of Life that He wants us to be. And this can only happen when we dine with Him, and He with us. *We cannot eat of the Bread of Life, and fail to see Him, and know Him—and then become the Bread of Life for others.* After the conversation the two disciples had with the Stranger who joined them in their journey to Emmaus—it appeared the Man was going to leave them at the crossroads, and go in a different direction. But the words He had spoken so burned in their hearts that they invited Him to come and lodge with them. He was not surprised about that—I am sure He was hoping for the invitation. But He may have gone in a different direction, if they had not constrained Him. He always looks for the invitation.

"And it came to pass, as He sat at meat with them, He took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew Him" (Lk. 24:30-31).

He longs to dine with us. He wants to eat with us, and we with Him. He wants us to share His Life, and become the Bread of Life to the world, when He would go back to the Father. So He joins us unto Himself in one body—that we might be one with Him, and have His Life to share with others. Only when He takes the bread in His hands and breaks it. . .only then shall we see Him and know Him. And only then do we become broken bread in His hands. . .for others.

"The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? *For we being many are one bread, and one body, for we are all partakers of that one bread*" (1 Cor. 10:16, 17).

The Lord has promises for those in Laodicea who will hear His voice—as great as He has for any of the other 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". But we do not sit with Him in His throne over there, if we do not sit and dine with Him here. "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches".

CHAPTER 3 - FROM HOLY PLACE TO MOST HOLY

There were three areas in the old tabernacles and temples, which were types and shadows of the "true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man" (Heb. 3:2). They served as "the example and shadow of heavenly things" (vs. 5). Our Great High Priest in the heavens has a "more excellent ministry" than those who served in the earthly temples .. as far surpassing the priestly ministries of that day, as the New Covenant surpasses the Old Covenant (vs. 6). Those old institutions and sacrifices and ceremonies were only intended to be "a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things" (Heb. 10:1). Now that the True Sacrifice has been offered, and in resurrection has become our great High Priest *after the order of Melchizedek*, we are bidden to forsake the old, because *a new and living way* has been "consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, His flesh" (Heb. 10:20). There is much beautiful teaching from these older temples, if we understand that they were all but types and shadows of a better way, a better sacrifice, a better temple, a better covenant .. and mediated to us by a better High Priest.

Now the *outer court* was but an open place in front of the Tabernacle, to which the people of Israel would come with their sacrifices, and the whole compound was surrounded with a fence of linen curtains. But the Tabernacle (or Tent) was situated inside the compound, on the western end. The Tabernacle was in two parts called the Holy Place and the Most Holy. Aaron and his sons would have to go into the Holy Place in their course of ministry, having first washed their hands and their feet at the laver. As one would come into the Holy Place on the eastern end, you would see the candlestick there on the south, the table of shewbread on the north, and on the west end, close to the veil, was the altar of incense, where the priests would offer up incense before the Lord.

But the High Priest alone had access into the Most Holy Place -- and this only once in the year on the Day of Atonement. Having performed his high priestly ministry before the Ark of the Covenant in the Most Holy place, he would return to the people .. hopefully with some very special Word that God had given him for the nation. We have spoken considerably of all this in a previous writing .. and we only mention these few things here by way of introducing some of the special characteristics of the Most Holy Place. The apostle speaks of these two areas when he says: "the sanctuary (or the holy place), and after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all" (Heb. 9:1, 2). (See also see our writing [From Tent to Temple, Ch 1](#)).

The Veil was Rent, that we might Go in.

This Holy Place, in type, speaks of the ministration in the church, and her access into God's presence. And so as Aaron tended the lamps, and furnished them with oil to keep them burning, giving illumination in an otherwise windowless and dark area -- so we see our High Priest in the midst of the seven golden lampstands, fully graced and adorned with priestly garments, and Himself radiant with the Light of God. John had been banished to the Isle of Patmos because of the Testimony of Jesus Christ. On a certain day which he calls "the Lord's day" he was "in the Spirit". Some believe it was the first day of the week, because the church was accustomed to gather together "on the first day of the week" (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2). But *the Lord's day* in this passage is one word in the Greek, and it is an adjective .. as if to say *the Lordian Day*, if there were such a word. I believe it is this Day that pertains especially to our Lord Jesus, as the Mediator of the New Covenant. Suddenly John was *in the Spirit*, for the Lord had a message for John that pertained to the church in all her days, and he must see these things in the Spirit realm, and by the Spirit.

Let us Go on to Perfection

John was *in the Spirit* in the first part of the Book (Rev. chapters 1, 2, and 3). It was a picture of the Holy Place, and John saw the High Priest ministering in the Holy Place of the church. But in Revelation 4, once again he is "*in the Spirit*" in a Most Holy Place, as the Voice said unto him: "Come up hither". There is a still higher realm *in the Spirit* that he must see .. and in seeing it, minister the same to those who are "companions in tribulation and in the kingdom and in the patience of Jesus".

The whole purpose of the ministry that God has set in the church is to bring us into the Holy Place -- and from there into the Most Holy Place. Some teach we are already in the Most Holy Place, because the veil has been torn asunder. Yes, the way is open for us to enter, but we are not in there just because the veil has been torn apart:

"Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh; and having a High Priest over the house of God; *let us draw near with a true heart* in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water" (Heb. 10:19-22).

The door is open for us to enter! But we are not there just because the door is open. Rather, He bids us to *draw near, with a true heart, and in full assurance of faith.* The reason we draw back must be because the veil is now over our eyes, so that we do not see Him in His glory. Let me illustrate it this way. When Moses came down from the mount, having been in the presence of the Shekinah glory

for 40 days -- his face radiated that glory to the people in the camp. They were afraid to come near him at first, but he beckoned to them and they drew near, and he gave them the words that God had given him. But as the Glory began to fade away, Moses put a veil over his face, until he went in to speak to the Lord again. The apostle Paul interprets this as meaning that the veil on Moses' face really signified that the veil was on the hearts of the people, for he said: "When Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart, nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away". The veil on Moses' face was really a veil over their hearts and minds when he talked to them. But when he went in to speak to the Lord, he took the veil away (see 2 Cor. 3:14-18; Ex. 34:33, 34). The type is very clear: the veil into the Most Holy Place has been torn asunder. But as it was with Israel, *the veil is upon our hearts if we are not abiding in His Presence. But when we turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away.* We need to ponder this .. and seek the Lord very earnestly for the eyesalve of His Spirit, that we might *move beyond the veil, and be transfigured by the glory of His face.*

So here we are in the Holy Place. There is light from the lampstand, holy bread from the table of showbread, and incense that we offer at the golden altar of incense. We have all the gifts and ministrations of the Spirit. But somehow there is not that faith, that confidence, that assurance that there is something more; because the thought is -- we have all the gifts of the Spirit, what more do we need? But the word is very clear: *the gifts and ministries that God has placed in the body, are for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, -- Till .. Till .. Till .. we come to something higher.* Ministry is not the ultimate end -- *it is rather intended to prepare us, nurture us, teach us, strengthen us, edify us "till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ".* And the apostle continues to expound on this, showing us that *the ultimate end of ministry is to lead the people of God into perfect love* (see Eph. 4:11-16).

We have had some very powerful ministrations of gifts and ministries throughout church history -- but rarely have God's people gone beyond the Holy Place of ministry, and into the Most Holy Place of constant and abiding union with Him who is enthroned upon the mercy seat. God forbid we should in any way minimize the effectual functioning of true ministry in the body of Christ. But I know the springs of blessing are drying up, and many of God's people are feeling the famine -- with much church attendance, and much religious activity -- but not too much of that mighty Presence of God in our midst. We need to be encouraged! God is more concerned about it than we are. And He is going to give more grace (perhaps in the midst of more suffering and tribulation) -- to move His people forward into the Most Holy Place of His Shekinah glory and presence.

We must not think we can trust in the knowledge we have of the Kingdom of God .. nor consider we are closer to the Kingdom because of that knowledge. For if

our knowledge of the Kingdom does not produce the *fear of God in our hearts, and lead to repentance, to poverty of spirit, to meekness, and to humility* -- we are still far from the Kingdom -- because these virtues are the very essence of the Kingdom of God. We are solemnly reminded of what Paul said of the children of Israel: that most of those who crossed the Red Sea, and ate of the bread from Heaven, and drank of the water out of the rock -- and came to the very door of Canaan -- their hearts were hardened, and they did not enter the Land, including most of those who had searched it out. And they died in the wilderness.

The Psalmist also gives a solemn warning to those *who know how to praise God, and those who know how to worship God -- but have no intention of going any further:*

"O come, let us sing unto the LORD: Let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation". (see vs. 1-5).

Then we come to worship --

"O come, let us worship and bow down: Let us kneel before the LORD our Maker". (see vs. 6-7).

All this is good, commendable, and the Lord delights in the praises of His people, and in true worship. But then he gives this solemn word of counsel:

"Today if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness: when your fathers tempted Me, proved Me, and saw My work.." (vs. 7-11).

Yet in spite of all His wonderful provisions, bread from Heaven daily, and the pillar of Cloud by day, and the pillar of Fire by night -- they grieved God's heart, and did not enter into His Rest. (See Ps. 95). Much as He may delight in the praise and worship of His people -- there is much more. He is looking for the right heart, the tender heart, a heart that does not get offended at God, nor does it test Him and try Him. He looks for the heart that is fashioned *after the heart of God, because He is looking for a Habitation for Himself.*

CHAPTER 4 - COME UP HITHER

"After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me: which said, Come up hither, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter" (Rev. 4:1)

"Come up Hither"

John must move higher in the Spirit in order to see the full glory of Christ in the Most Holy Place. True, he was *in the Spirit* on the Lord's day when he heard the voice of the Son of Man walking in the midst of the lampstands. But the ministrations of Christ in His church are intended to bring us into the place of His throne, still higher than where we are now. When John heard the invitation to "Come up hither" he was "Immediately in the Spirit". When He speaks to His people, as He did to John, with a trumpet sound from Heaven .. suddenly there is power in His Word to make it happen. "Let us draw near with boldness" the apostle said. But somehow the voice seems to be dim, and it doesn't happen. "Immediately" John was there -- at the Source and Fountain Head of all the glory that he had seen earlier. Now he is in the realm of pure Light. In the Holy Place there is light from the lampstand, which I believe represents all the gifts and ministries of the Spirit. We need all that supply of the Spirit that He has given, to bring to us words of wisdom and knowledge, new measures of faith and understanding. We need those gifts of healing, and discerning of spirits. All these gifts are like rays of Light from the Most Holy Place .. and we must have that Light. But God wants this Light to shine from His people in a blaze of glory that will fill all the earth. Gifts and ministries were never intended to do that -- **but rather to show us the way to that higher realm.**

Like Ruth we are thankful we may glean in the fields of Boaz, whose name means: *In him is strength*. Boaz was *strong* on behalf of the servant girl from Moab. He told his reapers to leave *handfuls* of grain on the ground, for Ruth to gather. This was very generous of him. Then when he had promised to be her kinsman redeemer, he gave her "six measures of barley" strictly as a gift. She did not have to glean it from the fields. How thankful we must always be for "every good and perfect gift" He bestows upon us: whether we glean it with hard work, or He simply pours it into our bags without us even asking Him for it ..

But He wants to bring us still higher .. beyond the place of receiving gifts. He wants us to give ourselves to Him .. as Ruth did. And He wants to receive us unto Himself .. as Boaz received Ruth. Let the flower fade away from our lives, and make way for the fruit. Let the Holy Place of ministry give way to the Most Holy Place of abiding union with Him who "dwells between the cherubim". Thankful as we are for the gifts, let us understand this: *God's purposes fall far*

short of His desire, if we are not always looking for the more excellent way -- a relationship with Him, where we live together in the same home. His desire is that we dine with Him, and He with us: "I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one" (Jn. 17:23). God's desire is to bring us into still greater depths in the Spirit. What does this really mean, to be --

In the Spirit?

You fill your cup with water -- so the water is in the cup. You throw the cup in the river -- now the cup is in the river. Jesus said, "Abide in Me". But in the same breath He said, "And I in you". Christ is in us .. is that not sufficient? It is if we realize He comes into us that we might come into Him. He wants us to be immersed in the River .. cup and all. It's wonderful to walk in the waters of Life .. up to our ankles .. our knees .. our waist. But we fear to go further, because we feel we are losing our footing. We fear to commit ourselves to the surging River of Life. We fear to "Launch out into the deep, and let the shorelines go.." We fear, because we don't really know our Father well enough, to commit our all into His care. A little bit of self-control seems more desirable, than casting our all upon Him. I know we find it difficult to understand what God has in mind for us, by way of coming into the fullness of the Spirit. But He wants us to pursue that -- just as the children of Israel knew very little about Canaan, yet followed the Cloud of His Presence. As we follow on to know Him, He will be faithful to bring us to the fullness that He desires. Let us consider some aspects of *the fullness of Christ*.

Spirit of Faith.

In the gifts of God, we receive a measure of faith. As we are faithful in that measure, so He would bring us further into the *spirit of faith*. Abraham had faith to leave his country and go into a foreign land, at God's bidding. His whole life was a life of faith. And in process of time, and because of God's dealings -- he came to *faith* that was so complete, that he surrendered his beloved Isaac on the altar of sacrifice -- being assured that God would raise him from the dead. His faith had progressed from a faith that believed God for direction in life, faith for a promised seed, faith for an inheritance in the land of promise -- to the ultimate of faith where he would surrender it all back to God on the Altar of Burnt Offering. For he knew that his God was the God of power and of life. His faith had become *resurrection faith*.

Paul talks about *resurrection faith*, that was always there, because he was "always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus". Certainly he had *faith* to do many wonderful miracles in his ministry. But *the spirit of faith* goes far beyond that. "We having the same *spirit of faith*, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken". He was quoting what David said when he had been in situations of death many times, and yet the Lord was faithful and *delivered him from death* (see Ps. 116:8-10). We say we want everything God has for us. But are we prepared to get all that, and then surrender it all back to

Him on *the Altar of Burnt Offering* -- as Abraham did, as David did, as Paul did? Only then may we experience *the power of His resurrection*: "Knowing that He which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you" (see 2 Cor. 4:10-14)

Spirit of Worship.

We go to places of worship. We are taught to worship under certain influences -- as music, or under the direction of a worship leader. I realize in songs of praise we sometimes have musicians to lead the songs. And this is well and good -- if the musician is a worshipper, and in tune with God. But *true worship* goes beyond the singing and the praising. God is looking for "true worshippers", *who worship the Father in Spirit and in Truth*. If we abide *in the Spirit of worship* we worship at all times. Like Abraham, when he pitched his tent he erected an altar of worship, no matter where he was. People will ask us, "Where do you worship?" The woman at the well thought it was a case of Samaria, or Jerusalem -- she worshipped in the mountain near Samaria, and you Jews, she said, worship in Jerusalem. But Jesus taught her a lesson we all need to learn: *It's not the place, it's not the church setting, it's not the musical program, it's not in an evil situation or a good one -- true worship must be in Spirit and in Truth.*

Abraham was a worshipper. In obedience to God He loaded Isaac down with the wood of *the burnt offering*, and announced to his servants: "I and the lad will go yonder *and worship*, and come again to you" (Gen. 22:5). Strange way to worship! It really is, if we do not understand that the finest ingredient in worship, is a heart that lays all on the altar of God -- even the best that God has given.

Job was a worshipper, in good times or in evil times. Once when Satan came before God, God boasted in Job's integrity. Notice it was God who raised the issue -- and Satan charged Job for having selfish interests in worshipping God. Why wouldn't he worship God, when God was so good to him, and fenced him in so well that not even Satan could get at him. This was Satan's argument against Job. And so God let Satan take everything away, including his health, his sons and daughters, his flocks and herds -- and all that he had. But there and then he sat in the ashes, and worshipped God. He had no worship team to help in this, nor was his worship motivated by happy laughter. But there was a deep inner knowledge that the God he served was great and awesome, and worthy of all worship -- simply because of who He is. Spiritual songs ought to bring us to a total bending of our hearts and minds and our wills to God. If you will run through the word *worship* in your concordance you will find that *worship* is very often attended with a kneeling down, a bowing down before Him, or a falling prostrate on your face on the ground. It is a spontaneous response to the awesome awareness of God's presence, or of His righteous judgments. One cannot prearrange it, or cause it to happen. It is a deep inner consciousness that God is great in holiness and majesty .. and that we are helpless and undone before Him -- yet loving Him for who He is. But we cannot really define it, for it is a state of

being that is always in the heart of a worshipper, and may manifest itself in so many different ways.

But nothing before Calvary or after .. nor in the ages to come, will ever equal the quality of *worship* that ascended before God, when the Son of God "through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God" (Heb. 9:14). And never could any incense ever offered on Jewish altars be compared to the pleasure that filled God's heart, when the incense of this Burnt Offering ascended to Heaven, fulfilling the commitment that He made to the Father: "Lo I come, in the volume of the Book it is written of Me, to do Thy will O God".

Spirit of Prayer.

"But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, *praying in the Holy Ghost*, keep yourselves in the love of God" (Jude 20). How effectual is this kind of prayer! One may be praying *with the Spirit* in a language he understands, or in a language which he does not understand (1 Cor. 14:15). But the Holy Spirit is our Intercessor here in the earth, as the Lord Jesus is our High Priest and Intercessor before the throne. And the apostle reminds us of this, when he says: "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities" which literally means: "The Spirit joins Himself to our weakness". Often there may be no words one could say, nor any real understanding of the situation at hand. "For we know not what we should pray for (or, we know not how to pray) as we ought, but the Spirit Himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Rom. 8:26). The Spirit alone understands these deep inner groanings in the Spirit, "and He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God" (Rom. 8:26, 27). We should seek God's will, even in our prayers. For the Spirit has come into our lives, to be joined unto us in such union with Him that there is a continual communication of our hearts with His. Paul speaks of this, as *praying without ceasing*, and "*praying always* with all prayer and supplication *in the Spirit*, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints" (see 1 Thess. 5:17; Eph. 6:18).

I am not convinced of the effectiveness of prayers that are regimented by leaders in the church who have their own programs and agendas to fulfill. The burden the Lord in all of the seven letters to the churches of Asia, was never: You must pray more! Rather His burden was to bring the people of God to repentance, to be watchful, to be awake and alert, to be patient, to return to first love, to be faithful, to hold fast to their witness, to keep the word of His patience, to seek the true riches, to keep their garments clean, and to have hearing ears to "*hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches*". With the *Key of David* on our shoulder, we should be inquiring more of the Lord, as to His will and His way in our lives -- *rather than telling Him what He's got to do*. Then will our prayers be strong, effective, and fervent -- when we are truly walking in the Spirit, and motivated by His desire and His burden for us, and His way to bring the Bread of Life to others.

It is the responsibility of each member of the body, to carry that particular burden that the Spirit has laid upon his shoulder -- each in his own walk with the Lord. When we come to this, the whole body will be edified, and will become the Testimony of Jesus in the earth.

Spirit of Prophecy.

"And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren that have the Testimony of Jesus: worship God: *"For the Testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy"* (Rev. 19:10). John did the same thing again, in Rev. 22:8. And each time the Angel said: "See thou do it not". The word *angel* simply means *messenger*, and in this case he was a man, who had gone beyond the veil of this life. He was just one of the brethren like John, who had the Testimony of Jesus. A little later he describes himself as "thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren the prophets" (Rev. 22:8). We do not know who he was -- but it is evident from what he said to John that there was something higher than a prophetic ministry, for he said: "the *Testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy*". What then is the Testimony of Jesus?

The Old Covenant Testimony

To understand better how the *Testimony of Jesus* may be called *the spirit of prophecy* we will refer first to the Old Covenant. For even in the Old Covenant, the letter of the law was not sufficient in itself to send forth this clear *Testimony* of God in their midst. We must emphasize that *the testimony* that terrified the nations that came in contact with Israel was not the fact that the tables of stone were in the ark of the covenant, along with Aaron's rod, and the pot of manna. Their enemies could not even see those holy things in the Ark. Rather, what terrified their enemies was the fact that they knew Israel's God was identified with the Ark that went before them, and as they went into battle. The Ark was carried on the shoulders of the priests of the Lord, not by the men of war. And when the Ark moved forward Moses prayed: "Rise up, O LORD, and let Thine enemies be scattered". The Testimony of Israel was powerful because of God's holy presence. And when the wicked priests of Israel thought God must save them for the sake of the Ark -- they were terrified to see the Ark taken by the Philistines. Israel thought that if they brought the Ark into the battle it would be a sure defense against the Philistines. But you cannot manipulate God when you despise His holy Name. Both Hophni and Phinehas, who had turned a deaf ear to God, were slain in battle. Eli the high priest, when he heard the tragic news .. fell backward and broke his neck and died. Phinehas' wife was with child, and no doubt had proud thoughts of this child, who (if a son) would be eligible for priestly garments and anointing. But when she heard the sad news she went into immediate travail, and brought forth a child whom she named Ichabod -- and then died in her sorrows. The Ark was preeminently the Ark of His Presence. It was God's dwelling place in Israel. And it was this that made the Tabernacle to be *the Tabernacle of Testimony*, and the people themselves to be a *Testimony in*

Jacob (Ex. 38:21; Ps. 78:5). And the reason God ordained all that, was to give a picture in type and shadow of the real Testimony that He had reserved in His heart for revelation in the fullness of time.

The New Covenant Testimony

Our Lord Jesus calls Himself "the faithful and true Witness" (Rev. 3:14). In His life on earth, and now in the heavens, He is the faithful and true Witness. Even in the earth He only spoke those things which He had "seen and heard" from the Father" (Jn. 3:32). He was God's Testimony in the earth. "I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father hath taught Me, I speak these things" (Jn. 8:28). Jesus said of His disciples when He was about to go away: "And ye shall be witnesses unto me" (Acts 1:8). So when the Holy Spirit came to fill them and empower them, and abide within them, Peter was able to give forth a clear *Testimony* concerning the Lord Jesus -- just as they would in a court of law. They testified to what they had *seen and heard*. God confirmed the word He gave them with great power, and their *Testimony* got them into trouble with the world -- especially with the religious world. As they stood before the judges, who commanded them not to speak or teach "in the name of Jesus" -- Peter's reply was simple and clear. They were witnesses of the power of the risen King whom the rulers had crucified, and they could not be silent: "We cannot but speak the things *which we have seen and heard*" (Acts 4:20). John likewise declared what He had seen and heard: "That which was from the beginning, which *we have heard*, which *we have seen with our eyes*, which *we have looked upon*, and *our hands have handled*, of the Word of life.." Then he goes on to say: "*and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us*" (1 Jn. 1:1, 2). In a declaration like this by the Spirit .. then we too become witnesses -- if in truth we have ears to hear and eyes to see what the Spirit is saying. The Testimony of Jesus shines forth from the lamps in the church, and it is the Lord Jesus Himself who sustains the Light. This is a corporate Testimony in a people who walk in Spirit and in Truth, and *this "Testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy"*.

The Church at Corinth *came behind in no gift*. With all of their faults, there was a certain prophetic witness that was far beyond what we see in the church today. We have already mentioned it: how prophecies coming forth in the church would cause the unbeliever to "fall on his face, and worship God, declaring that *God is in you of a truth*" (1 Cor. 14:24, 15).

People continue to cry out: "We need another Elijah! .. We need another John the Baptist!" But God has something even better in mind. Twice John fell at the feet of this shining one who was showing him heavenly things. And twice the man rebuked him for his error. For this *angel* was a man who had gone on, perhaps one of the prophets; for he said, "I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren that have the Testimony of Jesus" .. And the second time, "I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren the prophets". And he said to John, "Worship

God: for the Testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (see Rev. 9:10; 22:9). Is he not reminding us, who are often captivated by the charisma of some great prophet -- that the Testimony of Jesus in the earth is something better than having a great prophet?

It is a corporate Testimony, *a people moving in such union with Christ that they speak as one voice, and shine as one Light, in this world of darkness*. They do not come to this mutual Light by ecumenical dialogue, but by coming under the Lordship of Christ who walks among the lampstands, following the Lamb wherever He goes, and loving not their lives even *unto the death*. They will be crowned with *Holiness unto the Lord* upon their forehead, and with the oil of His anointing on their heads. But these crowns may become *crowns of thorns* if they are prepared to be true and faithful witnesses in the earth. John was a true witness, and it brought about his exile on the little island of Patmos. We do not know whether John was actually slain for his *Testimony*, but he was a *martyr* because like Paul he was "always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake", and the true witness is one who is faithful in life as well as in death. He will be hated for his prophecies, not glorified -- because true prophecy in a time of spiritual declension will reveal the hidden works of evil in the people, and will seek to turn their hearts back to God. Often this kind of persecution will come from some segment of the apostate church .. who have political clout. But this true witness will know he must follow his Master, loving not his life unto death. Yet he will know also that nothing can hurt him, or prevent him from fulfilling the appointments of God, until his work is finished. Their enemies will both fear and hate them, for by their very presence in the world about them, they will be declaring the Testimony of Jesus in "the spirit of prophecy", with Jesus the conquering Lamb going before them.

CHAPTER 5 - A GLIMPSE BEYOND THE VEIL

John is bidden to "Come up hither" and view the Heavenly Sanctuary behind the door "that was opened in Heaven" (Rev. 4:1). We mentioned how the veil was torn asunder, that separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy -- and so now we have access into the very presence of God. There is a certain teaching in some segments of the church .. about our *standing in Christ*, and our earthly *state*. I have no problem with the doctrine, and I have found it gives strength and a living hope .. knowing that God has placed us in that holy standing because of the redemption we have in Christ Jesus, even though we have not arrived. And God sees us in that heavenly calling, even as we seek to pursue it. In consequence of this, there is an open door into the immediate presence of God .. into this position that He has purchased for us by His blood. Paul places a lot of emphasis on this *position* in Christ where God has brought us by His grace:

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Eph. 1:3).

"But, God who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved); and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:4-6).

There are many scriptures like this, especially in Paul's writings, and we need to be assured of this lest we flounder in times of trial and temptation. But we must recognize *this high and holy standing in Christ, is also a high and holy calling* -- and not just a Term Deposit in Heaven which we cannot draw from till we get there. We badly need to draw from it in this life. I have never been satisfied with a doctrine that promises so much for The Hereafter, and very little for *The Here*. Scriptural *hope* is beyond *faith*. It is both *sure and steadfast* because it is anchored there within the veil, "whither the Forerunner has for us entered" (Heb. 6:20). He is there as our High Priest and Mediator of the New Covenant. When storms assail -- we feel the tug on the anchor to encourage us to keep following on, for He is there within the veil. The veil has already been torn asunder between us, and He beckons us to "*draw near* with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water" (Heb. 10:22). And to "come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:16). The Spirit encourages us to explore "what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be *filled with all the fullness of God*" (Eph. 3:18, 19). God has much for His people that we cannot see, or hear, or comprehend as yet -- and so He gives us His Spirit to show us things that our minds cannot comprehend .. to draw us closer to the heart of God.

Behold, a Throne in Heaven

When John heard the call to "Come up hither" .. Immediately he was *in the Spirit*: "and, behold, a throne was set in Heaven, and One sat on the throne". John was *in the Spirit* before, and saw One like the Son of Man walking among the lampstands. Now He *is in the Spirit* in a higher dimension, and he sees the glories of the throne in the Most Holy Place, where our Lord Jesus rules as a Lamb upon the throne. As we read on we see Him in the very center of the throne, for He is there as our High Priest preparing a place for His redeemed, "that *where I am* there ye may be also". He bids us to "come boldly unto the throne of grace" in every hour of need (Heb. 4:16).

"And round about the throne were four and twenty seats (thrones): and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment, and they had on their heads crowns of gold" (Rev. 4:4). This is the heavenly sanctuary, and those who reign with him in priestly ministry, are there around the throne. They are clothed in priestly array, with golden crowns on their heads. The high priest of the order of Aaron wore a mitre on his head, and engraved in gold were the words which revealed the essence of his consecration: *Holiness to the LORD*; and when they were anointed with the holy oil, they were *crowned with oil* (see Ex. 28:36; Lev. 21:12). As members of Christ we are a *royal priesthood* (1 Pet. 2:9). In Solomon's Temple there were *twenty four princes* of the sanctuary .. which I believe would typify these twenty four elders. "And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices; and there were *Seven Lamps of Fire* burning before the throne, which are *the Seven Spirits of God* (Rev. 4:5). The lightnings and thunders are to prepare the great storm that is coming, which in its full manifestation will bring to naught the kingdoms of men, and all the powers of evil will be subdued under the feet of Christ. But in the midst of the storm there is a *rainbow* of promise to the people of God, speaking of the Covenant of Life and of Glory that is being mediated by the High Priest on the throne. And *the Seven Spirits of God* are working mightily throughout the earth (Rev. 5:6). John was given a preview of what would take place in the earth and in the heavens, as the Lamb begins to move in "the day of His power".

Four Living Creatures (see our writing, [From Tent to Temple, Ch 4](#))

"And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts (four living beings) full of eyes before and behind. And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle. And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come" (see Rev. 4:6-8).

The *living creatures* are very much like the *cherubim* that Ezekiel saw -- and they minister on behalf of God's redeemed ones in the earth. Therefore they must become acquainted with the wisdom of God that flows from the cross. Peter tells us that they "desire to look into these things" that pertain to our redemption (1 Pet. 1:12). Even the highest powers in the heavens learn wisdom from a church that is motivated and led and endued by the Spirit -- while the evil "principalities and powers" must release their hold on the souls of men as God's people walk in the "wisdom of the cross" (Eph. 3:10). Only the gospel that goes forth in the power and demonstration of the Holy Spirit will make an impact on men who are captivated by a world of darkness. If *the manifold wisdom of God* does not shine forth from a church that is known *in heavenly places*, those powers are secure in their strongholds, and "his goods are in peace" (Lk. 11:21; see Eph. 3:10). (See the writing, [Who are You? -- Ch 7](#)).

The Song of the Elders and the Living Creatures

The description of the *living creatures* is very similar to that of the cherubim which Ezekiel saw (see Ezek. 1:5, 18, 22; 10:14). As the Lamb comes forward to take the book that is sealed with *seven seals*, the twenty four elders and the living creatures fall down and worship Him, "And they sing a new song, saying: Worthy art Thou to take the booklet, and to open the seals thereof; because Thou wast slain, and didst purchase to God with Thy blood *men* of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation, and madest them a kingdom and priests to our God; and they reign upon the earth" (Rev. 5:9, 10 -- Numeric English New Testament, by Ivan Panin, who used numerics to verify the original Greek. Several other versions support this rendering, using *they* or *them* or *men*, instead of *us*, or *we* -- as in the A.V.). I believe *the living creatures* belong to the heavenly hosts of the Lord; but they are very much identified with the earthly redeemed people of God -- and together they sing this song of Redemption.

Ezekiel heard "the noise of their wings, like the noise of great waters, as the voice of the Almighty" (vs. 24), for it is God speaking from Heaven, and His voice was as "the noise of a host". It is the allied forces of heavenly realms, as well as the sounds that come from the hosts of God's chosen ones in the earth. When Jacob left his uncle Laban, and started on his way back to his father in Canaan -- we are told: "the angels of God met him. And when Jacob saw them, he said, This is God's host: and he called the name of that place *Mahanaim*". The word means *two camps, or two hosts*. Jacob's host was now identified with the heavenly host. Jacob was in great fear, and in great need of help -- especially when he heard that his brother Esau was on the way to meet him, and God sent the hosts of heaven to be with him along the way (see Gen. 32:1).

As individuals we have heavenly beings with us, who are commissioned to "minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation" (Heb. 1:14). As His people walk with Him, I believe He wants us to know that we are overshadowed with the hosts of Heaven. We must not exalt them or give them worship. Sometimes they

become visible, for God may see fit to assure His people that God is looking after them. When David was in deep distress he cried unto God, and God rose up in anger against His enemies. David said: "He *rode upon a cherub*, and did fly: yea, He did fly upon the wings of the wind" (Ps. 18:10). We are not to tempt God, by doing dangerous things, and expect the hosts of Heaven to run to our rescue (Lk. 4:12). But we are not to shun danger either, if God calls us to walk in dangerous places.

We have it all wrong in the world, as well as in the church. We want the *majority* on our side, if we expect to get anything done for Jesus. But God cares not about the *majority*, whether it be in the world of politics, or in the church. He generally chooses to work with *the minority* -- then He gets all the glory. The hosts of Heaven provide us with the majority. I think of Elisha to whom the Lord had given information to pass on to the king of Israel, to warn him against a surprise attack by the Syrians, who were enemies at that time. The enemy would seek to take up positions in a strategic place -- only to discover the forces of Israel were already there and waiting for them. This happened two or three times, and finally the king of Syria concluded that there was a spy in their midst, and he was determined to find out who it was. But one of his soldiers knew what was happening, and told the king: "We are loyal men, O king -- but there's a man in Israel who tells the king everything you're planning in your bedroom". They inquired and found out where the man was, and the king of Syria sent a contingent of soldiers to capture him. Elisha was in the little town of Dothan at the time, so they surrounded the town with horses and chariots, ready to capture him the next morning. But when morning came Elisha's servant went outside, and he was terrified when he saw dozens or perhaps hundreds of Syrian soldiers, along with horses and chariots, surrounding the little town of Dothan. He quickly ran to Elisha and told him what he saw: the whole town was surrounded by the Syrians. Elisha calmly told him not to fear .. "We've got more warriors on our side, than they have!" he said. The young man looked around but couldn't see anybody except the enemy. So Elisha prayed a short prayer, "LORD, open his eyes, that he may see". And suddenly he saw the mountain "full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha". The young fellow was excited! Suddenly he realized they had a far greater army than the Syrians. Then the prophet prayed, "Lord, smite the enemy with blindness". So Elisha walked up to the commander and asked him what they wanted. He said, "We are here looking for a man called Elisha .. but suddenly we all went blind, and we can't find our way". "Follow me," Elisha said, and "I'll lead you to the man you're looking for". Then he led them all the way to Samaria, every man holding the hand or the shirt sleeve of his neighbour, with Elisha leading the head man. And he brought them like prisoners of war to the king of Israel. Then Elisha prayed again: "Lord, open the eyes of these men, that they may see". So God opened their eyes. What a shock! The whole battalion was in enemy territory, and at the mercy of the king of Israel. "Will I kill them all, my father..?" he asked Elisha in excitement. "No", said the prophet, "you don't slay soldiers that are captured in battle, do you?. Just give them something to eat and drink, and send

them back home". So they made a great feast for them, for they were very hungry after that long journey -- and sent them back home.

How easily God can handle nations, and armies, and national leaders, and perverse men who presume to fight against God!

"So the bands of Syria came no more into the land of Israel" (see 2 Kgs. 6:8-23).

Of course that was Old Testament, and we do not expect things like that to happen today, do we?.. So is the Old Testament *better and more powerful than the New Testament?*

The New Testament Mercy Seat

The cherubim are identified in the scriptures as protectors and guardians of God's holiness and righteousness, and so must it be with the priests of the Lord. We must become very jealous for God's holiness and truth. When Adam and Eve sinned, the cherubim were stationed at the gate of Eden, turning their swords around in all directions to keep them from the Tree of Life. But now all this has changed, because of the redemption we have in Christ Jesus. Now they are "in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne" to protect the redeemed from the accusations of Satan, who is called *the accuser of the brethren*. Let us understand this very important fact concerning our salvation: *It is God's righteousness, not only His mercy, that becomes our assurance and our boldness as we come to the mercy seat*. And so the apostle Paul declares that we are "justified (declared righteous) freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith, in His blood" (Rom. 3:24, 25). The word *propitiation* is the same word that is translated *mercy seat* in Heb. 9:5: "And over it the cherubim of glory shadowing the *mercy seat*.." The cherubim who once were posted at the Gate of Eden to keep man away from the Tree of Life, with their flashing swords -- are now in the Holiest of All to welcome us back to the Tree of Life. Christ is our Mercy Seat, because of His redemption on our behalf. And now we see the cherubim identified with the Mercy Seat, as were the golden cherubim sitting on each end of the mercy seat of the Old Testament. They are part of the mercy seat .. facing each other, but looking down at the blood that was sprinkled there for our redemption. We are saved by God's *righteousness* as well as by His mercy. And it is because the blood of Christ has made us righteous, "not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Titus 3:5). It is here at the cross that --

"Mercy and truth are met together;
Righteousness and peace have kissed each other" (Ps. 85:10)

The tomb is empty, for Christ is risen -- God's assurance to us that His redemption on our behalf is well pleasing to God. Christ rose from the dead in a *spiritual body* that was not hampered by material obstructions. He walked through closed and locked doors. It was a *spiritual* body, as compared to a natural body of flesh and blood. His resurrected body is still tangible, corporeal, visible .. but now it is *flesh and bones rather than flesh and blood* (1 Cor. 15:44, 45). And so He came out of His grave clothes without any one unwinding the cloth like they did with Lazarus. The shroud was left all wound together as it was when they placed Him in the tomb -- and John took special note of it: "The napkin, that was about His head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself". Bands of cloth were mingled with the embalming ointments and wrapped around the head, and likewise around the body. No man had meddled with it. He had come out of the shroud as from a cocoon, and left it as it was in its original form. No doubt it was still stained with the blood from His head, His hands, His side, and His feet. But this new mercy seat was sprinkled *once for all, by the blood of Jesus*. John noticed further that there were "two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain" (Jn. 20:12).

What a beautiful picture of the old mercy seat that was made of gold, with a cherub on either side -- facing each other, but looking down at the blood sprinkled mercy seat (Ex. 37:7-9). The old one was sprinkled with blood once a year, on the Day of Atonement. But the true mercy seat has been sprinkled with the "blood of the everlasting covenant" .. enacted on earth outside the City of Jerusalem, but eternally imprinted in the heavenly sanctuary by the Spirit of the living God. For He was there that day bearing witness to all that transpired at the cross at the hands of wicked men. And because He was there by God's appointment, what men did in hate and cruelty and in violence was transformed into an effectual Sacrifice for the sins of all the world. And because He is *the eternal Spirit* He has never forgotten what He saw, and He still bears witness to the efficacy of that Sacrifice, and to *the water and the blood* that flowed from His side. And that is why His blood still avails to make the vilest sinner clean.

Some Christian people cherish the thought of a new temple in Jerusalem, where the Levites will serve, and will once again slay bullocks and red heifers for the sins of the people. They tell us that those sacrifices will be *memorial*. Perish the thought! The Holy Spirit is dwelling within to bear witness to *the blood and the water* .. for He is Truth. And as we receive the Lord Jesus and His redemption on our behalf, the Spirit of God comes into our hearts to apply the blood and the water of the Word to our hearts and lives. Read the book of Hebrews and see the folly and abomination of any sacrifice for sins, other than the one that Jesus offered when He became the Lamb that was slain. Those sacrifices back there in the Old Testament were the ones that were memorial -- calling sins to remembrance every year on the Day of Atonement; but also reminding us in the New Covenant, that there was a better Sacrifice offered once for all, when the Lamb of God was slain for the sins of the world (see Heb. 10:3). Let us not think

lightly of this idea of a new temple in Jerusalem, where animal sacrifices will once again be offered on Jewish altars. It is abomination of the worst sort. I believe it was the animal sacrifices in the old temple (which continued on for many years after the true Sacrifice had been offered outside Jerusalem) that brought about the desolation of the temple by the Romans in A.D. 70 -- as foretold by Daniel, and later by Jesus (see Dan. 9:27; Matt. 24:15).

"For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through *the eternal Spirit* offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (Heb. 9:14).

"But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. Wherefore when He cometh into the world, He saith, sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not, but a body hast Thou prepared for Me" (Heb. 10:3-5).

*Five bleeding wounds He bears,
Received on Calvary;
They pour effectual prayers,
They strongly plead for me.
Forgive him, O forgive they cry,
Forgive him, O forgive they cry,
Nor let that ransomed sinner die.*

CHAPTER 6 - THE SEVEN SPIRITS OF GOD

The number *seven* speaks of completeness, fullness, consummation. Here in the Book of Revelation our High Priest is on throne, empowered with all the graces and virtues and powers of God to bring His purposes to a conclusion -- in His Church, as well as in the world. As Genesis is the book of *beginnings*, so the Revelation of Jesus Christ is the Book of *endings*, and He Himself is called The Beginning and the End, the First and the Last, the Alpha and the Omega. And so this Book has many *sevens* in it. We will just cite a few examples of the usage of the number *seven* in scripture:

Naaman the leper must dip *seven times* in Jordan, to receive his healing. There had to be complete obedience. If he stopped at dip number six .. he would have gone back home a bitter, disillusioned man .. accusing the God of Israel for not healing him. He must explicitly obey the word of the prophet. (see 2 Kgs. 5:10-14).

"The words of the LORD are pure words;" the Psalmist said, "as silver tried in a furnace, purified *seven times*" (Ps. 12:6). He starts by telling us "the words of the LORD are pure words". Then why the sevenfold refining process? Because the words He puts in our hearts are pure words from His heart; but once they lodge in us, the Word becomes mingled with our own thoughts; and we are shocked to discover a revelation of the heart, with all its uncleanness, its wrong motives, its hidden agendas. But as we keep the Word, it will produce its own furnace in our hearts, causing a purging and a refining -- if indeed we let the Lord repeat the process again, and again, and again .. *seven times* -- or until *the trial of our faith* has accomplished that *perfect work* in our lives that God intended.

Now I want to speak of ***the Fullness of the Spirit***, which John sees as ***the Seven Spirits*** -- but which he identifies in a functional way as:

Seven Lamps of Fire .. Seven Eyes of the Lamb

"And lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts (living creatures), and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having *seven horns and seven eyes, which are the Seven Spirits of God* sent forth into all the earth" (Rev. 5:6).

Daniel in vision had seen the same Man that John saw: "a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with the fine gold of Uphaz: His body was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his *eyes as lamps of fire*, and his arms and his feet like in color to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude" (Dan. 10:5, 6). By this we understand He is the same Man that John saw on Patmos: "Clothed with a garment down to the

foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and His hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and His eyes were *as a flame of fire*; and His feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and His voice as the sound of many waters" (Rev. 1:13-15). But here in the Holiest of all John sees Him in **the fullness of Light**, and it is this Light that we want to emphasize in the remainder of this writing.

"And there were *seven lamps of fire burning* before the throne, which are *the seven spirits of God*" (Rev. 4:5)

"..a Lamb .. having seven horns and *seven eyes*, which are *the seven spirits of God*" (Rev. 5:6)

The Seven Spirits are manifested in Fire, as well as in Light and we want to consider both of these aspects of the Light of God:

Seven Lamps of Fire

We recall how Abram was about to *cut a covenant* with his God, and how God kept him waiting till it was dark before He came on the scene. And then instead of Abram and his God walking together between the pieces of the sacrifice (in the usual ritual of *cutting a covenant* in those days), God caused Abram to fall into a deep sleep, and God took complete charge of the covenant. In the darkness of the night, "behold a *smoking furnace, and a burning lamp* that passed between those pieces" (Gen. 15:17). God would not allow Abram to interfere with any of this. Abram's part was simply to be the vessel in the Potter's hands -- and yield to what God would do. His part was to drive the birds of prey away, as they sought to consume the sacrifice before the covenant was ratified. His part was to experience the *horror of great* darkness, for God would allow great affliction on His promised seed, as they endured 400 years of suffering and bondage in the land of Egypt. God's promise was sure .. but in His own wisdom, this was the way His promise would be fulfilled. This was His way of preparing the people who would become a living *testimony* in the earth of the might and power and glory of the God of Israel.

Many teach that the baptism of the Holy Ghost and fire, that John the Baptist spoke about, is not for the church -- because it speaks of God's fiery judgments, and the consuming of the chaff in the Day of the LORD. But Jesus identified this mighty baptism as *the promise of the Father* that would take place *not many days hence* (Lk. 3:16 cp Acts 1:5). Certainly it is *judgment*, for God must consume the dross and the filth from our lives -- and this is a painful process, for the God who fills us, is *a consuming fire*. When He comes to us in fire, His purpose is to make us the clean vessels He wants us to be in the House of God. This mighty baptism has nothing to do with that fiery preacher who can stir up the emotions of the people, and get them excited. Isaiah prophesied that God would *wash away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and purge the blood of Jerusalem by the spirit of*

judgment, and by the spirit of burning (Isa. 4:4). When this happens, and not until this happens, will His glory return to our assemblies. For the same *fire* that consumes the filth of Zion will be the Light and the Glory that will dispel the darkness. And then the prophet tells us that Zion will have the guidance and protection of the cloud of His glory .. reminding us of the cloud that led the children of Israel through the wilderness: as a Cloud by day, and a pillar of Fire by night. "And the LORD shall create upon every dwelling place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of *a flame of fire* by night: for upon all the glory shall be a defense (or, a covering)" (Isa. 4:5). The fire that consumes is only to consume the dross from our hearts, and the darkness from our minds .. that we might henceforth be motivated by right desires and impulses, and clearly see the way in which God would have us walk. The fire of God has almost been extinguished in our midst, because as a church we have not walked in the Light that God has shone forth in our midst. And our Lord has cautioned us, "If therefore the Light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" (Matt. 6:23).

The Seven Eyes of the Lamb

"In the midst of the throne and of the four beasts (living creatures), and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having *seven horns* and *seven eyes*, which are the *seven Spirits* of God sent forth into all the earth" (Rev. 5:6).

When we see One *like the Son of Man* walking among the lampstands with *Seven Eyes* .. God wants us to look at Him, because He wants to change us. We can't look into those eyes and not be changed. I recall looking into the eyes of a prophet, whom the Lord used in fellowship with other members of the body of Christ, to bring forth a new prophetic movement in the middle of the last century. When I was called forward to receive *prophecy and the laying on of hands*, after a brief time of waiting he said *Look at me!* As I looked up I was very much aware of light in his eyes .. as he began to prophesy. I will never forget that moment, and I know it was from that time that I began to see the Word of God in a new light. I feel strongly it is time for a new moving of God in the earth. He desires to bring His people into still higher realms of the Spirit. We must have the Lamb look upon us, with those *seven eyes*.

What was the Latter Rain all about?

The movement I mentioned became known as the Latter Rain .. a name that people gave it a year or two later. But in the beginning it needed no name, and they simply referred to it as *this move of the Spirit*. God was graciously pouring out His gifts on the church. These gifts are intended for the edifying of the body .. gifts of healing and miracles and other wonderful operations of the Spirit -- besides gifts that impart spiritual wisdom and understanding. But it was not God's intention to start a new denomination with this prophetic movement, and I think it

is for this reason that those in later generations wonder what it was all about. And they ask, Where is it now? Multitudes of people in all parts of the earth, partook of the blessing of this movement -- and the impact of it has carried on in succeeding generations, as any real move of God should. But as far as I know, it never became a *denomination* known as *The Church of the Latter Rain* -- at least not prominent enough to make its mark in history. And for this reason it is considered by many to have been a little shower that soon evaporated. This has also made it difficult for the critics to analyze and judge it. They cannot just write *headquarters*, and get a copy of the Latter Rain doctrine, like you can with an established denomination .. for there was no official leadership that could speak for all those who had become involved. So the best some of them can do (or should I say *the worst*) .. is to pick out salient remarks in the writings of different teachers whom they know had a part in the movement -- and then tell the world, "This is what they taught in Latter Rain". Consequently very often those who enjoy reading about heresies are feeding on material like this -- *getting a mixture of information according to the perception of those who write their critical reviews*. But we really do not come to know the Truth, by studying the different shades of darkness. We must walk in the Light, abide in the Truth -- if we are to be fortified *concerning them that seduce you* (see 1 Jn. 2:24-28).

In the beginning of the movement there was a certain emphasis on *coming out* of the old systems -- *coming out of Babylon*. But it soon became evident that many would *come out of the visible Babylon*, while bringing some of the system along with them. I recall a few years later what one of the leaders said about his own experience. He said the Lord spoke to him one day, "You are trying to get the people to come out of Babylon, but I want to get Babylon out of you". I am afraid this continues to go on in the church, and because one has left the mainstream of the denominations, and has set up his own organization -- is no proof that he has *come out of Babylon*. The Babylonian desire for greatness and enlargement, and wanting to make a name of renown, and keeping the whole system well under control -- is strong in the hearts of men. And God must deal with all those inward desires that continue to plague the church.

Another of the early leaders who had prophetic insight, mentioned that this movement would go into *all the denominations of the church, but that it would not change the nature of any of them*. This began to happen within a few years. By this time *the cisterns* of the denominations were almost dry, and many of them welcomed the opportunity *to receive the rain of God's Spirit*. But they were not prepared to forsake their credentials, nor was their much incentive to become part of a movement that had no big-name leaders at the forefront. Besides they discovered there was really no need for that. Many prominent leaders in the different denominations were receiving the gifts of the Spirit, and found they could comfortably stay right where they were. All they had to do now, was to add *Charismatic* to their old titles .. a name that took away their reproach as a dead church. With this new anointing there was an infusion of new life which they realized they badly needed. And so their churches grew and prospered.

God was indeed meeting the needs of those who hungered and thirsted for more of God, and I am not denying that. But there was no change in the denominational systems. Some, of course, would come out -- often because of the opposition they received from within. Others remained, who had sufficient support to stay there. I am often reminded of what happened in the Kingdom of Saul. The system was wrong to begin with .. but the people demanded a *king*, and God went along with the desires of their hearts. Many true men of God stayed with Saul to the bitter end. Others resorted unto David, and had fellowship together apart from *the Kingdom*. And when the whole thing came tumbling down, there were many true hearts in Saul's kingdom that realized it was not God's way -- and allied themselves with David.

Consequently in the mainstream of the Charismatic movement, you can get all this blessing, without changing the nature of things too much. You can still be Baptist, Presbyterian, Methodist, Pentecostal, Episcopalian, Catholic -- you name it. And I am in no way saying that all these people in the denominations are false. Many of them sincerely love the Lord Jesus. But the main thrust in the Charismatic realm seems to be *renewal, not revolution*. They may recognize there is need for *adjustment* here and there, but no need for *radical change*. They still want those *showers of blessing*, but not *the baptism of the Holy Ghost and fire*. That would be altogether too devastating. I believe what happened is what Isaiah spoke about: "And in that day *seven women* shall take hold of *one man*, saying, We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel; only let us be called by thy name, to take away our reproach" (Isa. 4:1). In other words, we don't like the reproach of our emptiness and barrenness; nor do we want to surrender our heritage in our traditional denomination. We want to retain all this -- but we want to be called by your name, *Charismatic*. But notice something else that happens --

"In that day shall the Branch of the LORD be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel" (vs. 2). Side by side with all this ecumenicism, and yet entirely apart from it -- God is bringing forth a true Branch of the Lord, which we want to talk about later in this writing.

There was a lot of the Fire of God in the earlier movement of Pentecost, at the beginning of the last century. But the prophetic movement in the middle of the century was primarily the *blessing of rain* that God poured out on the dry ground. It was not God's intention to renew *the denominations*, but to bless and enrich those who were hungry for more of God .. regardless of their denomination. For it has been evident all through church history, that when God moves His people forward into new things, they either come out .. or eventually they are thrown out, if indeed they are seeking to move on with God. *The new wine simply will not survive for long in the old wine-skins.*

And so the rain falls on God's field -- watering and blessing whatever seed is there in the ground -- whether it be the seed of wheat, or of tares .. or multitudes of other kinds of weeds. God's intention is to water His Garden, and He wants to dig out those injurious weeds that grow in our lives. But according to the parable of *the wheat and the tares* (professing Christians who are false but who resemble the wheat) .. God said we must leave it up to Him, and He will deal with it at harvest time, lest we root out some of the good wheat in our ignorance. (see the writing, The Garden of God, Chapter 7)

It appears that the ecumenical movement is proceeding quite successfully in their plan to get all the denominations together in bundles. But the gathering of the tares into bundles .. though it might look like wonderful *UNITY* -- it is not *the unity of the Spirit*. It is rather the binding together of *the false and the unregenerate, who know nothing of the cleansing of the blood of Jesus, and the good seed of the Word of God*. But the Lord knoweth them that are His, and there will yet be a mighty work of *separation* between the wheat and the tares, in the day of God's harvest. In the meantime the tares are partaking of the rains of the Spirit, along with the wheat -- and they have various manifestations in their assemblies to confirm it -- with miracles and signs taking place in their midst. *But the rains of blessing will not change the nature of the seeds that are planted. Rather they will nurture the tares, and the thorns, and the thistles -- the same way they will nurture your corn, your carrots, and your apples*. God help us all now, by His grace, to submit ourselves to those burning cleansing flames of God, lest our good works go up in smoke in the day that shall be *revealed in fire*.

Perhaps what we have said will give a little insight to God's people, many of whom are perplexed and confused about what is going on in the church. People look here, and look there -- and go here, and go there -- hoping to find the true church, or a new move of God. Then they confess -- "Well, yes .. I saw God working and doing good things .. but I saw other things that troubled me.." Many are not sure if they should accept it as a move of God, or from the Devil. I just encourage such people to consider what I have said: God continues to pour out His rain from Heaven on His church. And the Devil continues to sow tares in the same fields. If you are going here and there looking for that *pure working of God in the earth -- do not be surprised when you find this mixture*. And it will continue to be this way until the day when the Seven Lamps of Fire burn the weeds and the chaff, and purge away the blood of Jerusalem, by the Spirit of Judgment and by the Spirit of Burning (see Isa. 4:4). We must continue to cry out for a pure working of God in the earth, and for this mighty baptism of Fire -- for God Himself cannot find rest in His people until His righteousness shines forth *as brightness*, and His salvation *as a lamp that burneth*" (Isa. 62:1).

God beckons His people to Come to the Light

We must come into the Most Holy Place. We must have fellowship with the royal priesthood in a heavenly sanctuary. We must see the throne, and the living

beings that surround the throne. We must be enlightened to see situations as God sees them. We must come to the place where we have *four faces*, instead of one, and see with *seven eyes, instead of two*. We must see by the Light of the Spirit, for only then can we become *as He is*, and cause others to see Him *as He is*. We must see the "Lamb, as it had been slain, having *seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth*" (Rev. 5:6). *We know this is a heavenly scene. But God wants to project heavenly scenes into this world of sin and darkness.* I would like to encourage God's people to anticipate, and prepare their hearts, for the trumpet sound that would bid us to come *still higher*, that we might look into the *seven eyes of the Lamb*. This is what the church needs, and this is what the world needs. I recall reading how Spurgeon, as a young man, was on his way to the church he usually attended, when a sudden rainstorm came up. He saw a small church nearby and he ran in, to get out of the rain. But he stayed for the meeting, and the preacher was emphasizing again and again this passage from Isaiah: "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else" (Isa. 45:22). The preacher noticed the young stranger in their midst, and he turned to him and said: "Young man, look and live!" Spurgeon said, "I looked .. and I lived.." There was life in that word, that caused the young man to see. But how far we have strayed away from Him who is the Centre, the Source, and the River itself .. and replaced the Spirit of Life with philosophies and ritual and musical entertainment We are not going to change the world with the Light of God until we gaze into those eyes of the Lamb. Then will *the eyes of the Lord* travel throughout the earth to bring light and deliverance to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.

The Seven Eyes in the Second Temple

We mentioned that the Book of Revelation is full of symbols in the language of the Old Testament. So let us turn to Zechariah, the prophet whom the Lord anointed to encourage the builders of the second temple. Joshua was the high priest of the new temple, and his name is the same as the name Jesus in the New Testament (Jah .. Savior). Zerubbabel was in charge of building the temple; and his name means *sown in Babylon*. His roots were once there, but now he is involved with the building of the Temple of God in the land of Israel.

We are told that the prophets "inquired and searched diligently" as to the times they spoke about in their prophecies. And God revealed to them that their word was really for those who would be living in the time when Christ would suffer, and enter into His glory -- and the gospel would be proclaimed with the power of "the Holy Ghost sent down from Heaven" (see 1 Pet. 1:12). And so we who live in this time following the resurrection of Christ may look back at those prophecies, and see much wonderful New Covenant truth. For Peter tells us that the prophets were really ministering *unto us*.

God gave Zechariah a vision of the lampstand, with its *seven lamps*. He saw seven pipes that fed the lamps with oil, from the large bowl above it .. which received the oil from "two olive trees". And the significance of this was very clear: Zerubbabel must not trust in his own wisdom and power, but *only in the holy anointing oil*: "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit saith the Lord of hosts" (Zech. 4:6).

And to Joshua the high priest, the prophet gave this word: "I will bring forth my servant the BRANCH" (Zech. 3:8). It refers to the Lord, in union with His many brethren: "Thou and thy fellows that sit before thee". It is He who said: "I am the Vine, ye are the branches.." and who reminds us: "Without Me (severed from Me) ye can do nothing".

Then the prophet went on to say: "Behold the stone that I have laid before Joshua; upon one stone shall be *seven eyes*". *Behold the Stone!* Zerubbabel was the builder of the house .. but God's *builders* must look into those eyes, if they are going to build according to God's plan and blue prints. All over the earth God must have this quality of vision in a people who have looked into the eyes of *the Lamb as it had been slain* -- and in seeing Him are transformed into His likeness. With the two eyes of our understanding, we might see the ministration of the Gospel with 20:20 vision. But how different it will be when His people have clear vision, and see with 70:70 vision. Then we will see with those penetrating, illuminating *eyes of the Spirit* -- and the Spirit will probe the hearts of men, revealing the hidden things of darkness, and causing the Light of Christ to arise and dissolve the darkness.

The Seven Eyes in the Branch of Jesse.

The prophet Isaiah likewise saw the Branch. "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots" (Isa. 11:1).

We want to consider this Branch from the stem of Jesse in the form of a *lampstand*. Some translations refer to the Branch as a fruit bearing Branch. And so He is the root, as well as the center stem; and out from Him who is the Center, these branches grow and bring forth fruit. And we know our Gardener will not be satisfied, nor will He cease His tender care for us, until He comes to His garden, and reaps "the precious fruit of the earth" (Jas. 5:7).

I said .. "His tender care for us". But we may begin to wonder how tender His care is when He takes His pruning knife in hand, and begins to cut and trim us down to size. We look at our vine that is stripped and bare, and wonder how we could ever do anything pleasing to God after all that. Sometimes when we drive by a fruit orchard in fall, or in early spring -- we might be inclined to think: "O I guess that fruit grower is tired of it all, and he's cutting it all down." But no, he just wants more and better fruit. So the Husbandman cuts it back, and prunes -- not just the dead branches, *but branches that are very much alive, and flourishing*

because of the life in the Vine. But He still cuts it back -- because He wants more and better fruit. Are we sure this great work we are doing for the glory of God .. is really for His glory? Rather than *fruit that we are bringing forth for ourselves?* Hosea said of God's people:

"Israel is an empty vine, he bringeth forth fruit unto himself.." (Hos. 10:1).

We insist we are doing it for His glory. But I can do nothing for His glory just because of my good intentions. If He has not authorized it .. if it is not the fruit of abiding union with Him -- He calls it *nothing*. "For without Me (apart from union with Me) ye can do nothing".

1. *The Spirit of Wisdom ... and Understanding*

Apollos, an eloquent teacher of the scriptures, had been to Ephesus before Paul, and had accurately taught the disciples about the Lord Jesus, knowing only *the baptism of John*. Then Aquila and Priscilla took him aside and explained the Gospel to him, and with this further enlightenment he powerfully preached the Lord Jesus, as the One that John had presented in his gospel of the Kingdom.

Then Paul in his journeys came to Ephesus and found the disciples, and asked them if they had received the Holy Spirit. They said they didn't know anything about the Holy Spirit. They told Paul they only knew about *John's baptism*. Paul explained the Gospel further, and they "were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus", the way the apostles had been baptizing ever since the Lord ascended. "And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied" (Acts 19:6).

But writing to this same church later, we find the apostle Paul praying for them, that they might come still higher in the revelation of Christ:

"That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, 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, 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.." (Eph. 1:17-20).

"Filled with the knowledge of His will *in all wisdom and spiritual understanding*" (Col. 1:9). This wisdom and understanding gives us the assurance and peace, that we are walking in His way. It does not necessarily answer all our questions -- in fact He may answer very few of our questions. But like our *understanding* of the universe in which we live. We know very little about God's intricate workings

in creation -- but *"by faith we understand* that the worlds were framed by the word of God, *so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear"* (Heb. 11:3). God did not make the worlds *out of nothing. He made them out of things we cannot see -- invisible things*. Our whole way of life, if we are truly walking by faith -- is full of strange and perplexing happenings -- but He gives us *wisdom and spiritual understanding* to know that His ways are *invisible -- not meaningless nor indiscriminate*. He works in our little world as He did in those worlds out there in space, with intent and purpose. And *by faith we understand*, because we know it is all clear in His eyes. And it is this *spiritual understanding* that causes us to say with His servant Job: "He knoweth the way that I take, and when He hath tried me I shall come forth as gold".

As the Spirit of God comes into our lives .. this is not the capstone. He has come to abide within us, and *to lead us further into those realms in God that as yet we know very little about*. The children of Israel were *baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea*, but most of them failed to know God's ways, and to enter the land of promise (see 1 Cor. 10:1-5). We are still far from the mighty Baptism of Fire that the scriptures talk about. God does not want us to feel we have attained to some spiritual height of glory, just because of *certain experiences we have had along the way*. *Rather, the Spirit of God has come to be our Helper and daily Companion here on earth, to lead us into all Truth, to explore those unseen realms in God -- the lengths and the breadths, the depths and the heights of His glory and presence -- until we are filled with all the fullness of God*. He wants to invade our lives with His mighty presence, until all the dross of our carnal ways are consumed with His holy fire. He wants to purge us with those *seven flames* that burn before the throne, and look upon us with those penetrating *eyes of the Lamb*, that our whole body might be *full of light, having no part dark* (Lk. 11:36).

His gifts are precious gifts from the Father, sent forth to adorn and prepare the Bride for the Son. But like Rebekah, when she catches but a distant glimpse of Isaac, she is off the camel and on her way to meet him. As the day of His appearing draws closer, we are attracted less by the gifts, in anticipation of seeing the Giver. We would not minimize the importance of gifts, any more than we would minimize the importance of the flower on the vine. But when the petals begin to fall off, we know it is time for the fruit to begin to form. Those flowers that adorn your church are going to fade away. Those prophecies sooner or later are going to fail. Many times they are failing even now. Words of wisdom and knowledge cannot stay fresh and vital for long if we continue to pursue the gifts, rather than the Giver. God begins to dry up the flowers, when the season is about to change. There are *seasons* in God, and He wants us to be aware that a change is coming. Be glad if in your desire for God you are sensing a certain futility in church activities that once were vibrant with life. True prophecy will encourage God's people to move forward, and to look for something more. And if you sense that hunger and thirst in your walk with Him, be encouraged! He wants to prepare in us a permanent abiding place for Himself. We need to let Him know

we desire Him to come closer. Let us love Him more. Draw still closer to His heart. Do those things which please the Father, as Jesus did.

"If a man love Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love Him, and We will come unto him, and *make Our abode with him*" (Jn. 14:23). Does this sound *far out and strange*? It is! But still this is what we must pursue, for we know it is the passion in God's heart to take up His habitation in the humble and contrite hearts of men and women. He asks us to choose His yoke, and walk in abiding union with Him.

The Double Branch: Wisdom and Understanding

Wisdom is related to understanding, so we speak of them as close brothers. God tells us: "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding" (Prov. 4:7). It is good if we have a heart that is searching for wisdom .. rather than for some kind of gift that might make us popular and famous. Wise men of old sought for it, as a hidden treasure. So let us search for wisdom, as Job did. He writes a whole chapter describing His search for wisdom. He speaks of the hidden treasures in the depths of the earth, with all its precious stones, and sapphires, and gold, and jewels of coral and pearl, and rubies. Yet he is aware that what he is looking for is still beyond his reach. He continues to probe the secret of wisdom. He asks the sea, and the sea says, "It is not in me". He scours the earth for answers, and wonders if it might be found in the lightning and thunder. But it is not there. He does not find it anywhere in all of God's wonderful creation. But finally he gets his answer from God: "Then did He see it, and declare it; He prepared it, yea, and searched it out. and unto man he said, *Behold the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding*" (Job 28:27, 28). O what a let-down, when men filled with worldly wisdom, are faced with a conclusion like that!

The Fear of the Lord, that is Wisdom.

We are talking about that holy fear of God that is always strong within us, if we love Him. And the more we love Him, the greater will be that godly fear, that will guide us in paths of wisdom, lest we get entangled in things that are displeasing to the heart of God.

"The Fear of the Lord, that is Wisdom." If this be so, then we will shun *the wisdom of the world*. If we truly love God, we will diligently seek His will in all that we do -- and like our Lord, we will *love righteousness and hate iniquity*. We rejoice in the fact we know Christ. But as we seek to walk with Him, we soon discover that *in Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge* (Col. 2:3). Knowing this we cease our searching in any other realm. But knowing that these treasures are still *hidden treasures*, then we seek for the key that will unlock the door to these treasures. And we discover the key to be a *godly fear* of God, lest we stray from the pathway of abiding union with Him, and pursue some course in

life that has been laid out for us by man's device. We need God's mighty purgings to cleanse our bloodstream from *all defilement of flesh and spirit*.

This old world is in a state of bankruptcy, because they have rejected the *wisdom of God* that was revealed in Jesus. "Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" (1 Cor. 1:20). Jeremiah saw the total collapse of man's wisdom: "The wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken: lo, they have rejected the word of the LORD; and what wisdom is in them?" (Jer. 8:9). Then if we sincerely love the Lord and fear Him -- we will not seek to climb the ladder that is called *success* in man's dictionary, but seek rather to walk in a way that may very well seem to be *foolishness* in the eyes of men .. To *succeed* in God's school of wisdom, is so different than the success you achieve in the schools of men. Jesus makes it very clear, and we must come back again and again to the principles of discipleship which He lays before us: *If any man will be My disciple, let him deny himself and take up his cross, and follow me*. And of course, if we do this -- it is considered to be *foolishness* in the eyes of the world, and of a worldly minded church..

God said: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent" (1 Cor. 1:19). It's all coming down. In the meantime we are in the world, and use what God provides for our physical welfare. But the Lord cautions us not to try to get all we can out of the world, to be content with such things as He provides, and consider ourselves to be but *strangers and pilgrims* in the earth.

We spoke a little about *faith and the spirit of faith. Prayer, and the spirit of prayer. Worship, and the spirit of worship. Prophecy, and the spirit of prophecy. We need all His gifts and blessings to show us His way. But God's intention is to bring us INTO THE SPIRIT, INTO THE MOST HOLY PLACE WHERE GOD BECOMES OUR HABITATION, AND WE BECOME HIS HABITATION*. God will have such a people in the day when the wisdom of man is revealed in its nakedness. He will have a people walking in the fullness of the Seven Spirits of God, which proceed from the Lamb on the throne.

The cross on which our Lord Jesus died is the highest form of wisdom that was ever revealed on planet earth -- for it was there on the cross, in the wisdom of God, that Christ overcame the prince of darkness, and the principalities and powers in the heavens, "triumphing over them in it" (Col. 2:15). And this world is yet to see the proof of this, when the Lamb of God shines forth in the world, and is seen reigning on the highest throne in the heavens.

The Spirit of Wisdom and Understanding in Jesus

"The fear of the LORD, that is wisdom" .. because unless we are restrained by the fear of God we can very easily miss God's way in the trials and temptations

of life. Jesus was on trial daily before the wise men who sat in places of authority in the Temple. In their *wisdom* they looked for an opportunity to trap Jesus in His own words. But the Spirit of Wisdom abode within Him. "Master, they said, is it lawful to pay tribute to Caesar or not?" They were no friends of Caesar's .. but they wanted to accuse Him to Caesar. If He said "Yes", they would have grounds to accuse Him before the rulers of the Temple, who hated the yoke of Caesar. If He said "No", they would accuse Him before Pilate, who depended on Caesar for his own power. So they gave him *one of two choices* -- and either way they would have Him in their trap. But this One walked in the Spirit of Wisdom, and discerned with *seven eyes*, and He totally rejected the *Yes or No question* that was devised by the wisdom of men. Yet in His reply He not only answered their question, but He exposed the folly and treachery of their hearts. He took a coin that bore Caesar's name and inscription, and asked them -- "Whose image is that, inscribed there on the coin?" They said, "Caesar's". Then He said, "Pay Caesar what belongs to him, and pay God what belongs to Him".

Then we have the story of the woman taken in adultery. Her accusers thought this would be a good opportunity to accuse Jesus .. whom they knew to be a man of mercy. "Moses" they said, "commanded that this woman be stoned to death .. but what would you say?" Man's wisdom requires a fixed Yes or No decision -- but Jesus did all things according to the Father's wisdom. He awaited the Father's time -- and the Father's answer. Only then do we speak the Father's wisdom. We may not even know why we wait, nor do we need to know. Then after a moment or two of writing on the ground, He stood up, raised His head and said calmly: "Let he that is without sin cast the first stone". Again He stooped, and wrote on the ground. And they went away silently, as they considered their own sinful, accusing hearts. (see Jn. 8:3-11).

He was full of the Spirit of Wisdom .. *and the Fear of God -- for that is wisdom*. It is not enough just to speak words of wisdom. But words of wisdom coupled with the fear of God, are like dry wood kindled with fire. This is why the gifts alone are not adequate for the ministration of the Gospel of Christ. Where is *the fear of God* that penetrates the hearts of men? We may speak words of wisdom, but without this holy fear there is no fire to burn up the dry wood of man's wisdom, and bring it to ashes. Jesus not only spoke the right words -- but He spoke them in God's time, and the words were kindled with God's Fear. *Words of wisdom from the heart of God are not intended to answer hard questions, or to satisfy one's curiosity, but to bring the fear of God upon the disobedient and the ignorant.*

But by far the greatest example of the Wisdom of Jesus, was revealed as the guiding hand of the Spirit brought Him back to Jerusalem from Galilee. Wisdom and understanding always worked together in the life of Jesus. It was in wisdom that He took His disciples and departed from Judaea and went to Galilee, after going through much persecution in Judaea. He was not running from trouble, as some may have supposed. But the time came when He must return to Judaea --

and to still greater persecution, in the will of the Father. The occasion of His return to Judaea was the sickness of Lazarus. And though He loved Lazarus, the Father constrained Him to stay two days longer, until Lazarus was dead. Then He returned by the prompting of the Spirit to Judaea. When He raised Lazarus from the dead, this great miracle became the final straw that prompted the rulers of the temple to crucify Him. He had *understanding* in all that He was doing. He was walking in the Light. He was walking in obedience unto death, *even the death of the Cross*. And now we see Him high and lifted up, and presented to all the world, and to principalities and powers in the heavens, as the highest expression of the Wisdom of God that has ever been revealed on planet earth. "For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach *Christ crucified*, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ *the power of God, and the wisdom of God*" (1 Cor. 1:22-24).

2. The Spirit of Counsel and Might.

Counsel .. and Might. These are twin brothers also. And our Lord Jesus whose name is called "Counselor .. the Mighty God" is our example. But we are only capable of following His example, as we abide in Him and walk with Him in His yoke. Then the counsel we give will carry weight .. even the strength and might of the Spirit of the LORD. You cannot get this kind of wisdom and counsel from books. Then why do I write books? Not because I have the answer to the horrendous problems that are in the church or in the world. But because I feel the Lord wants me to *encourage God's people to press toward a still higher plateau than where we are now*. Generally we sense no urgency in the ministries in the church to move any higher. We must go higher. We must come to Him who is *the Source and Fountainhead of all gift and ministry*. He places all these ministries in the church, to urge us to come higher .. *where Apostle, and Prophet, and Evangelist, and Pastor, and Teacher -- have served their purpose, and God's people have come to the full stature of Christ*. The ministry is here in the church *till we come to that .. and to encourage us to come to that*. Then like Moses and Elijah on the Mount -- they must be hidden away in the Cloud, till all we see .. all we hear .. is Jesus only. A true prophet .. a true ministry of any kind .. must decrease, that He might increase.

We think of *counsel* as good advice, something to toss around in our minds and consider, but not in any way binding. If the counselor gives advice that seems good and reasonable .. we may go along. But the counsel of the Lord is an effectual word from God, that is accompanied with Might. This matter of *counseling* has, in too many cases, been committed into the hands of professionals who study the philosophies of men to equip them for their task. The Spirit of Counsel and Might is greatly needed in the church. We have become overwhelmed with situations that are so tangled and complicated, that not even a man of Solomon's stature could sort it all out. Where is the power and might of the Spirit of the LORD to make our counsel effectual? We must continue to seek

and knock and look for the open door that will bring us higher into the realm of the Spirit, where the Spirit of Counsel and Might will rest upon God's people.

The Church of Christ is intended to be God's *answer* to a world in confusion, perplexity, and distress. But rather than being the answer, we ourselves have become part of the problem. And the reason we are part of the problem is because we have forsaken *the fountain* of living waters, and hewn for ourselves cisterns -- *broken cisterns that can hold no water* (see Jer. 2:13). Instead of looking to the Source of all true wisdom and counsel, we turn it over to those who are schooled in the wisdom of man, to our own confusion. Only the Anointing can break the yoke of bondage that lies heavy upon the church. Only the counsel that proceeds from the heart of God by His Spirit, will carry with it the power that is needed to break the bands, and set the captive free.

The Proverb of the Sour Grapes

I know that we inherit much from our parents and grandparents. I know that their sins may inevitably be passed on to us, and from us to our children .. and to their children. But I know also that the sins of every generation from Adam until this present time, are there in our genetic stream. And as surely as this is so, God wants us to know that all the sins we inherited from our forefathers, and all the way back to Adam -- were laid on Christ when He went to the cross. And also, we must know that God changed that proverb they had in Israel, that indicated that the sons would suffer for the sins of their fathers. He changed it once for all at the cross -- but He changed it back there in the Old Testament, long before Jesus came to earth. It's *the Proverb of the Sour Grapes*. It was becoming popular in Israel, and took quite a hold on the people, as it is doing today. This is the proverb:

"The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge" (Ezek. 18:2).

You know how it goes: "My father lied a lot, and my grandfather cheated, and my uncle abused me when I was a child, and this is why I'm in this horrible state I'm in". Now mind you, I know this is very often true, and it is heart breaking to hear stories like this, stories of devastated kids and mothers and fathers -- and often they come to the church looking for some kind of counsel that will set them free. The truth is this: there is healing, perfect healing, for those who receive the forgiveness of Christ, and who are renewed in their hearts and minds with a forgiving spirit towards others. Too often, however, the thought of some one else being to blame appeals to the counselor, and to the victim -- and they pursue that thought, probing the mind of the victim, as they look for a place to hang the blame. Very often the power of suggestion effectively causes the victim to believe the lie, and receive it as truth. But, true or false .. here is a victim that needs help, and only a word of counsel from the heart of God can bring the help they need. The true counsel of the Lord will lead that bruised and hurting one to Jesus, and

will encourage forgiveness, even as Christ in mercy forgave them. It is certainly not my intention to minimize any measure of good counsel that God's people might be giving to those who are troubled; for I know there are many dedicated servants of God, who are doing what they can to help the suffering, the helpless, and the broken. But I am aware that even those with sincerity and mercy in their hearts, are frustrated because their counsel very often is not effective. Why is it? It is because our Counsel is not with Might, nor does it bring *the Fear of the Lord*. It is because we are not yet abiding in the Spirit of Counsel, and in the Spirit of Might. This is the Spirit that was in Jesus, and God has provided the same Spirit for His people.

God told Ezekiel He wanted the people to know that He is a righteous judge, and "the soul that sinneth it shall die; the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him". And He told the people that he didn't want them to use the proverb of the Sour Grapes any more. (Ezek. 18:3, 20)

Counsel with Might

Counsel in the Spirit, is powerful in its working. If it is from the Lord, it is not merely good advice -- there is the power of God behind it to make it effective. The forgiveness that we receive from the Lord, ought to make it easy for us to forgive others -- if we remember the terror of God's wrath that was upon us before we knew Him. And not only that -- *but the forgiveness that we extend to others brings healing to ourselves, as well as to the one who has harmed us*. I recall the testimony of a friend who once had worked for a certain farmer. It was before he knew the Lord. And one day Nap got mad, and cursed and swore at the man, and walked away. In the meantime he got saved .. and in process of time he understood by his conscience that he owed the man an apology. But the man he had cursed was a hard old man, and he tried to push away from his mind the thought of going to him and apologizing. Besides Nap was very much afraid of him. So he prayed, "Lord, if you want me to apologize, let me walk up to my horse and put on the bridle". Usually his horse would run when he saw his master coming toward him with a bridle in his hand. He could never get to his horse without a pail of oats. "I can tell you," he said, "I didn't take any oats with me that day". But Nap took his bridle, walked right up to his horse, and took off on his errand. He found the man, and apologized to him from his heart. This hard old man broke down immediately .. and they wept together -- for the joy of forgiving, and of being forgiven.

Counsel and Might! They harmonize and work together, when we let the Spirit of the LORD abound within us. Jesus walked in this dimension of the Spirit. And He suffered and died that in His resurrection and ascension, His people might walk in this glorious Spirit of Counsel, and of Might. God will have this kind of *counsel* in the House of God, and God is preparing such a people, even in this time of

their devastation and suffering. As people are victimized and abused, God's people will have the anointing to come to them with the true message of the Gospel, and with the Spirit of Counsel and Might. Then these who are victimized by the oppressor, and learn how to overcome *by the blood of the Lamb*, shall be transformed into *vessels of mercy* to set other captives free. No matter what people have gone through .. men and women, boys and girls, who have known heart ache, devastation, and abuse of many kinds .. by the preaching of the truth in the power of the Spirit, they shall be set free, and their souls shall "escape as a bird from the snare of the fowler". The forgiveness they have received from their Redeemer will have equipped them with might and power, to pour *the oil of gladness* into others who are still in the snare of unforgiveness .. and still drinking the bitter waters of Marah, instead of finding the Tree that will make the waters sweet.

I believe right now there are many in the church who love the Lord sincerely, but who feel *feeble and weak*, and lack that *special honor* from God that they need to be an effectual member of the body. These must be encouraged by the ministry, and nurtured with truth and grace .. that together we might grow into the stature of Christ .. for in the fullness of Christ the whole body merges together on one level. I am speaking of a body that is *tempered together*, not by discipleship seminars -- but by the holy anointing of God, causing the so-called *feeble members* to become mighty in the Lord. When this happens, the apostle Paul tells us that the schisms which are rampant in the body of Christ will be healed, *because every member is empowered to extend needed care and provision one for the other* (see 1 Cor. 12:24, 25).

God's counsel is accompanied with might, because the one giving the counsel is abiding in Christ, and speaking words from the heart of God. That word will not return to God empty .. for even if it is rejected, the one who receives the counsel will answer to God for his disobedience, if indeed the word that has gone forth, was from the Lord. But may God grant mercy on those who feel, because of the virtue of their office, that they have the authority of Christ to bring discipline and correction as they see fit, whether or not they are moving in the mind of the Lord. I have seen a lot of cruelty in this area. If in your walk with the Lord you know you are fully submitted to His will, and have asked Him to try and prove the reins of your heart -- I would encourage you just to commit it all to the Lord, making sure you have no bitterness about it. A man's office in ministry does not *obligate* you to receive his counsel .. if in your love and devotion to God you cannot receive it as from the Lord. But by the same token if he has a valid ministry, he may have *power to exercise judgments that are not God's will*; and for this reason I caution God's people to seek God for deliverance from *offense*, lest the enemy gain a foothold.

I recall a story about William Branham, a prophet of the last century. One time in a large congregation there were one or two in the congregation causing some kind of disturbance. As he sought the Lord quietly as to how to deal with it, the

Angel of the Lord said, "Speak the word, and I will stand behind it". He knew at that moment he had authority to pronounce whatever judgment was necessary, and that it would come to pass. But he sought the Lord in the matter .. and suddenly he knew what he was to say. So he turned to the people that were causing the trouble, and said something like this: "The Angel of the Lord told me he would stand behind the word that I will speak. But in asking the Lord about it, I believe I am to say this: *I forgive you.*" He mentioned the tremendous blessing that came upon him that evening when he went home, and how he sensed God's pleasure in the decision he had made. In the one and only private interview I had with this prophet, he said something like this: "Now no matter what I tell you, or what any prophet might tell you -- you must always go by what the Lord shows you .. because even a prophet of God can be wrong .. you know, Elisha was wrong when he cursed those children, and a bear came out of the woods and killed them .. he shouldn't have done that". I needed to hear this from one whom I considered to have been the greatest prophet of the last century -- because it is often assumed that a prophet who has a powerful prophetic mantle resting upon him .. is infallible, or almost ..

God will vindicate His chosen ones in His own way. For their part, they must abide in God's anointing to be right. Moses was wrong when he smote the rock twice, rather than speaking to it as the Lord had commanded. He suffered for his error, but God did not hold it against him, for God knew it was really the sin of the people that caused Moses to stumble (see Ps. 106:32).

Urim and Thummim

"And thou shalt put in the breastplate of judgment the Urim and Thummim; and they shall be upon Aaron's heart, when he goeth in before the LORD" (Ex. 28:30).

With these hidden gems in the breastplate, God had provided an infallible source of wisdom and understanding for the high priest in Israel. I call them *gems* -- because in their function they were *gems of wisdom* from the heart and mind of God for His people. We do not know what they were nor what they looked like -- so we need not waste our time speculating or surmising. But in matters pertaining to Israel that required wisdom or counsel from God -- concerning situations for which they had no established Word -- God was able to give clear direction to His people, through this priestly function. In process of time Urim and Thummim disappeared; but it was no longer needed, for God began to raise up prophets who had Urim and Thummim in their hearts, enabling them to give clear direction to His people.

We already mentioned *the spirit of Prophecy*, that God will restore to His church. In spite of the uncertain sound that is coming from the church in this hour -- we need to be assured that God is faithful, and once again there will be a clear witness from Heaven, and all men will know -- This is what God is saying. He

rides the heavens on a white horse, and He is called The Word of God. He is also called Faithful and True. And He will have an army following Him .. who likewise will be *faithful and true*, because they follow the Lamb, wherever He may lead (see Rev. 19:11-16.) (For more on Urim and Thummim, see our writing Crowned with Oil, Chapter 6).

The Corporate Testimony

We have already talked about the Testimony of Jesus .. that corporate witness of the Light that shines from His people who are walking in the Spirit. That witness was clear and powerful in Jesus .. and God must have it that way in His people. I recall reading some of the journals of George Fox, and the powerful Light that shone forth upon the people in that day. But as George Fox emphasized that the Light was for all men, and sought to bring others into the Light, the movement that came out of his ministry became a corporate Testimony. They did not idolize him, but they emphasized what their leader emphasized: every man who comes to the Light must walk in the same Light, and there must be an equal brotherhood. And because it was a Light that penetrated a church that was greatly overshadowed with darkness -- there was much persecution *from the established church*. He and his *Friends* walked in it together, as brothers. And shared persecution together, as brothers. Repentant sinners as well as antagonistic church leaders would literally quake and tremble as he stood before them. It was the *fear of God* that made the word of God go forth with might and with power. I used to wonder why it says of the "two witnesses" that they "*tormented* them that dwelt on the earth" (Rev. 11:10), but I understood when I read in Fox's journals this account of what happened in *the house of correction*, in Derby (England):

"The keeper of the prison, being a high professor, was greatly enraged against me, and spoke very wickedly of me; but it pleased the Lord one day to strike him, so that he was in great trouble and under much terror of mind. And, as I was walking in my chamber I heard a doleful noise, and standing still, I heard him say to his wife, 'Wife, I have seen the day of judgment, and I saw George there, and I was afraid of him, because I had done him so much wrong, and spoken so much against him to the ministers and professors, and to the justices, and in taverns and alehouses'.

"After this, towards the evening, he came into my chamber, and said to me, 'I have been as a lion against you, but now I come like a lamb, and like the jailer that came to Paul and Silas trembling'. And he desired he might lodge with me. I told him I was in his power, he might do what he would; but he said 'Nay' that he would have my leave, and that he could desire to be always with me, but not to have me as a prisoner. *He said he had been plagued, and his house had been plagued, for my sake*. So I suffered him to lodge with me ..

"When the morning came he rose and went to the justices; and told them that he and his house had been *plagued* for my sake. One of the justices replied (as he reported to me) that *the plagues* were upon them, too, for keeping me.."

I believe *the two witnesses* represent the corporate testimony of Jesus Christ, whose clear witness will shine throughout the earth. Their sphere of ministry is "Sodom and Egypt" (*where also our Lord was crucified*): not the Sodom that Lot lived in, or the Egypt that made slaves of the Israelites. But those cities speak of the world system that crucified Jesus -- Sodom, which was affluent and wealthy and at ease, and filled with moral corruption. And Egypt, representing the opposition from without, as it was with the children of Israel in the days of their captivity (see Rev. 11:3-11).

The Testimony of Jesus in Gadara

The testimony of Jesus was the clear counsel of God that Jesus brought to the world -- the word that He spoke, and the Word that He was. But it was the Light of God -- which brought fear and confrontation. When Jesus landed on the shores of Gadara -- He didn't go about arranging a meeting. But a demon possessed man came running to Him, out from the tombs which were his home, and said to Jesus "*Torment me not*". Jesus, a Tormentor? That's the view they have in realms of Satanic darkness, for that's the kind of torment they feel when the Prince of Light and Life begins to invade their territory. Yet the man of Gadara came to the Light, for Light is always more powerful than darkness. God drew the man to Himself, in spite of the power of the Legion of devils that bound him. And that is how it was in the church at Philadelphia. Here was a church that walked in the Light, and Jesus told them that He would cause the people to leave the *Synagogues of Satan* and come to them, and worship at their feet. The church was not attempting to open the doors of the synagogues, but the Light that shone forth drew them to the *open door* of salvation, and *closed the door* to the spirits of evil. *I fear we are spending too much time and effort attempting to break down the walls of the Synagogues of Satan, instead of seeking God for the return of the Testimony of Jesus -- the holy Ark of His Presence, the Light of the Seven Spirits that shine from the Seven Eyes of the Lamb.*

What was the result of this mission in Gadara? And do you think Jesus was a little disappointed with the results? With only one man finding salvation? O how God desires to go before us and arrange our pathway. He will do that, if we are moving in His Spirit. Jesus spoke .. and the demons were terrified .. no screaming and yelling trying to get them to '*come out*'. The Legion of demons was terrified, thinking their time had come to be cast into the abyss, and asked if they might go into the swine instead. Jesus gave them permission, and the herd of swine stampeded down the hill and into the lake. The man was freed from his chains, and the people saw him *sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind.*

Then what? Did the crowds come to Him, hoping He would stay around, and have a big deliverance meeting? Not quite that way. "*They were sore afraid*". As the news spread, the crowds certainly gathered around -- but they "*besought Him to depart from them; for they were taken with great fear*". Jesus started back to the ship, and gave the man that was healed a good word of counsel. He was to go tell his friends and loved ones "how great things God hath done unto thee" (See Lk. 8:26-39).

How will this corporate people of power and anointing deal with the inherent desire in the hearts of men to idolize God's man of power and might? Here is your answer. The Testimony of Jesus will not make one popular -- if he does not go along with man's systems. When fearful miracles begin to happen that will cause the pigs of our resources to drown in the sea, the pigs that keep our economy alive and well -- this man of God will not be popular. No matter how great his miracles, he will not be honored and respected if he is associated with this clear and powerful Testimony of Jesus. They will tell the man -- "Will you please get out of here.."

Or like it was in Ephesus, they will try to drive him out. When the business men and the craftsmen in Ephesus suddenly discovered why there was no longer a hot market for the silver shrines of Diana -- they had an investigation and they traced it down to a few people who had turned the hearts of the Ephesians away from their idols, and unto the Lord Jesus who redeemed them. Suddenly there was a great uproar by the capitalists as well as the craftsmen. They were *very much together* on this: "They were full of wrath, and cried out, saying, Great is Diana of the Ephesians" (Acts 19:28). Diana was a Roman goddess, and Artemis her Greek counterpart -- supposedly the goddess of childbirth, and of hunting, and of wild animals, and of nature. Ephesus had become a great city of commerce, and very prosperous -- and the center for the worship of Artemis. Can you imagine the people idolizing a miracle worker when the Gospel of Christ goes forth in such great power that people stop buying all the demonic junk that is spewing out of the mouths of men, from books and magazines, from the web, from the musical world, from the world of fashion, from the world of sports and entertainment? Many Christians imagine it is because we are a *democracy* that we have freedom to worship God, and freedom to send forth the Gospel. Let us prepare our hearts now for the day when the Gospel will go forth in such a brilliant Light -- that the wild beasts in Ephesus will once again rise up and persecute those who love the Truth that is in Christ Jesus.

3. The Spirit of Knowledge and of the Fear of the Lord

Again, these are inseparable branches of truth, in our walk with the Lord. Knowledge without the fear of the Lord is deadly .. as it was when Adam and Eve ate of "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil". They forfeited their fellowship with their Creator, when they lost *their fear of the LORD*. The fear they had after they sinned, was not the fear that abides in one who loves God and walks in

fellowship with Him, but the fear that is born of disobedience, that causes one to hide from his Creator. May our pursuit be confined to one thing: that we might "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 3:18). For He is that Tree of Life, and the fruit we eat from that Tree will cause us to "discern both good and evil" -- God's purpose being that we might have grace and knowledge to seek the good, and refuse the evil. In our eating of the word .. may we always be seeking the fruit of the Tree of Life. Only then will we receive the pure knowledge of the Lord that will nurture us in the word, and enable us to walk in life and in holiness, and grow into the full stature of Christ. We do not need to eat any longer from the Tree of the knowledge of good and evil. For as we eat of the Tree of Life .. our *senses are exercised to discern both good and evil* (Heb. 5:14); for Light will always expose the darkness, Truth will expose the false, and Love will expose the hate.

We honor the scriptures highly; but our knowledge of the scriptures is far from adequate if we are not constrained by the fear of God when we read it. In the days of Josiah, after long years during which the temple of God had been neglected, God had put it in the king's heart to restore the House of God, and cleanse it. In the course of repairing the House they discovered the Book of the Law. Shaphan the scribe went to the king and read it to him. "And when the king had heard the words of the Book of the Law .. he rent his clothes" (2 Kgs. 29:11). If the Word of God does not bring us to *holy fear*, it must be because we are not hearing what He is saying. If it is just *knowledge*, it will *puff up* rather than *build up*. Until we settle this issue of "presenting our bodies a living sacrifice, wholly acceptable unto Him" we will not discover the spiritual direction that we profess to be looking for. And the golden opportunity that shines before us might very well be one of those open doors that God allowed in His wisdom, *to try the reins and the heart -- rather than the doorway to His perfect will*. If we are not sure, why not sincerely ask the Lord to close that door if it is not His will -- and give Him time to do it? What loss there would be were we to discover our niche in life that would give us a certain gratification and sense of fulfillment -- only to discover at the end of the journey that we had not fulfilled the destiny that God had desired for our lives. The true knowledge of the Lord will be accompanied with a holy fear of God -- that will cause us to desire only His will and pleasure, in all our ways.

"That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, 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, 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. 1:17-20). We seek to discover *our calling* in life. And we feel that if we can do that, we will find the fulfillment that we are looking for. But *the revelation in the knowledge of Him is designed to enlighten our eyes that we might see the hope*

of His calling in us, and the glory of His inheritance in us, and the exceeding greatness of His power to us who believe.

If He gives us grace to discover this *enlightenment in the eyes of our understanding* then we are prepared to put *our calling* to one side, and trust Him to lead us in any way He might choose, for it is *His calling in us* that He wants us to discover. And He wants us to know that *His inheritance in us* is far more precious than any inheritance we could procure in this world, or in any gift or ministry that He might give us. For He says to those in priestly service, *I am your Inheritance*. And Power? When we discover He wants us to partake of the power that raised Jesus from the dead -- then we can commit ourselves and all our plans to *the fires of the burnt offering*. For only then is He pleased to come forth in "the *power of His resurrection*".

The apostle tells us that we need *revelation* of the Spirit to see this. Paul knew the scriptures thoroughly -- in both the Hebrew and the Greek -- but he knew nothing of the *hope of His calling* until the God of Glory blazed upon him in a Light that was brighter than the noon day sun. Paul received his gospel by "*the revelation (apokalupsis) of Jesus Christ*", as John did on Patmos. His gospel was there in the scriptures, but the scriptures require *the revelation of Jesus Christ* before we can see it.

The More Excellent kind of Knowledge

It is a new creation kind of knowledge, requiring an inward working of God in our minds, as we put on "*the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that hath created him*" (Col. 3:10).

As our love for God and His family increases .. God is pleased to increase our knowledge and perception of truth. Powerful gifts and ministries without the fruit of the Spirit, can be destructive in the lives of those who have them. Lucifer is a solemn example -- graced with light and splendor, but he began to admire his beauty and excellence, rather than keeping His eyes on the One who gave him all that glory. And so the apostle prayed, "*that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment (or, discernment); that ye may approve things that are excellent*" (Phil. 1:9, 10). Here is a pure knowledge that comes forth from abounding love. True knowledge and discernment will be birthed out from Love .. Love in its many facets of faith, truth, righteousness, endurance, patience, kindness, mercy, longsuffering. As we love Him, we will begin to love what He loves .. and fear Him so much that we hate what He hates. Like our Master we will "*love righteousness and hate iniquity*". It is far beyond the gifts .. for a gift can easily be tarnished with the grime of carnal thoughts and ways. His gifts to us are *rays of Light* that we need, till we come *to the Source of the Light*, which is Christ Himself. And therefore we are admonished: "Follow after charity (love), and desire spiritual gifts" (1 Cor. 14:1).

"That ye may approve the things that are excellent".. knowledge and discernment birthed in our love for God will cause us to pursue *excellent things*. There is no need for us to eat from *the tree of the knowledge of good and evil any more*, because we discover every good thing in *the Tree of Life .. and then we see all else as evil*. With love we discern the hate and the enmity. With truth, we discern the false. With righteousness, we know evil, and reject it. Mercy will flow out against cruelty and hate. We do not seek to expose the darkness by studying all the shades of darkness. But the Light will expose the darkness. For "all things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the Light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is Light" (Eph. 5:13).

This is what the Lord means when He admonishes us to "Judge righteous judgment" (Jn. 7:24). It is a quality of judgment and discernment that comes from abiding union with Him. As we earnestly look for *good judgment* in situations that we come into, and are not sure how to respond, let us remind ourselves that we must abide in the yoke of Jesus, and walk in the Light of Jesus. For in Him are hidden "all the riches of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. 2:3).

CHAPTER 7 - A KINGDOM OF RIGHTEOUSNESS AND PEACE

I know the Kingdom of God is at hand. But I know also that the Kingdom came when John proclaimed it, and the Lord Jesus continued to proclaim it, and to manifest it in the earth when He was here. And that when He rose again and ascended into the heavens, He was enthroned with all the power and glory of the Kingdom of God -- which is really a priestly ministry, forever nullifying all former sacrifices and offerings and priestly activities after the order of Levi. For it is very clear in the book of Hebrews, which we might call *the book of Better Things*, that our Lord is now on the throne that was promised to David, "a High Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek". He will reign on His throne until *all enemies are subdued under His feet*. This Kingdom was planted in the earth when the Seed was faithful to go down in the ground and die -- and it has been flourishing ever since -- appearing *first as the blade, then as the ear -- and is now taking the form of the fruit, the full corn in the ear*. The Kingdom did not come *with observation*, even as our Lord told us. I know it seems absurd to people, including many Christians, that God's Kingdom is growing in the earth now. But it must yet come to maturity in a harvest of *many kernels of wheat like the Seed that was planted*. For this is the Law of the Seed -- it must bring forth after its kind. With our natural eyes we see corruption abounding everywhere, in the church as well as in the world -- and we fail to understand that God has tolerated all these tares and noxious weeds, as they grow along with the pure grain, *until the time of harvest*. Then He will deal with the false, and the corrupt and the unclean -- and will continue to purge the church and the earth, until ***Righteousness shall prevail, in the earth and in the heavens***. For even the heavens are contaminated with evil hosts of wickedness, evil principalities and powers -- and God will have a church that shall prevail against them.

The Branch of Christ

We have been speaking about the Branch that Isaiah saw .. the Branch of Christ, in union with many other sons. Of Him it is said:

"His delight is in the fear of the LORD,
And He shall not judge by the sight of His eyes,
Nor decide by the hearing of His ears;
But with righteousness He shall judge the poor.." (Isa. 11:3, 4 NKJV).

We are inclined to say, "What else can I go by?" This is sufficient evidence in the courts of men: "I saw it happen! I heard him say it!" But this is not enough for God's people in the church .. because we are involved in spiritual warfare, and we must see and discern with faculties that are beyond the natural. We must see and understand by the Seven Spirits of God. *Our minds must be renewed by the*

Spirit of Jesus, as we abide in Him and He in us. Only then can we judge righteously, and become that Testimony of Jesus in the earth that God desires.

Jesus was invited to the home of Simon for dinner. This Pharisee had no doubt heard Jesus speak, and had seen His miracles, and he was impressed. But while at dinner a woman came in .. evidently looking for Jesus. She came over to Him and fell down at His feet, washing His feet with her tears, and wiping them with her hair. Simon looked on, and thought to himself: "Now I will be able to decide if this man is a prophet or not, because I know that woman, and she is a sinner.." So he waited to see if Jesus would prove Himself a prophet by condemning the sinner who sat at His feet. But instead of that, the Prophet discerned Simon's accusing heart, as well as the contrite and broken heart of the woman at His feet. Simon was just thinking those thoughts .. he wasn't saying them out loud. But Jesus *heard what he was thinking, and "answering* said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee" (Lk. 7:40).

He shall not judge after the sight of His eyes. O how we need that Spirit of Wisdom and Understanding, the Spirit of Counsel and Might, the Spirit of Knowledge and of the Fear of the Lord, if we are going to *judge righteous judgment* as Jesus intended! And that is why He is now enthroned in the heavens -- that the same Spirit that was in Him might be poured out upon His church .. that there might be a continuation of His anointed ministry here in the earth.

The Apostles Judged with Inner Light

It is not difficult for us to recognize that Jesus walked with this inner Light abiding in His heart and mind. But it is thought to be unscriptural to teach that God wants His people to walk in the same Light, that we might be *as He is in this world* (see 1 Jn. 4:17). How else will He be glorified, except it be the same glory that was on Jesus, resting on His people? "And the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them; that they may be *one, even as We are one*". Let us be assured of this: our Lord Jesus wants to share His glory with His people -- for it is this, and nothing short of this, that will cause the world to know that "*Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved Me*" (Jn. 17:22, 23).

The early church walked and shone in the world about them with this inner Light. They were nothing in themselves. But Peter was able to say, "In the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk". Stephen shone with that Light .. and they saw his face *as the face of an angel*. As the false leaders of religion stoned Stephen to death, the heavens were opened: and those Seven Lamps of Fire before the throne shone upon him, with the Light of the Lamb of God. Saul of Tarsus saw this martyr fall at the feet of those who slew him, and held their garments -- indicating that he was giving his consent. Relentlessly this zealous Pharisee pressed forward in his *cause*, which was to wipe the church off the face of the earth. Then one day the same Light that shone from the face of Stephen,

burst forth upon this enraged man and smote him to the ground. He saw the Light that was brighter than the noonday sun .. and so brilliant a Light that it blinded his eyes. But that Light penetrated deeply into his heart and soul .. and gave him a deep inner vision, and he was born anew by the same Light that had blinded him. Eventually the Light he carried made a mighty impact on nations who sat in darkness. We are not going to make an impact on nations by telling them about the Light that visited planet Earth and who is now up there in Heaven. We must see the Light for ourselves, and walk in that Light, if we are going to sweep away the darkness that overwhelms the world in which we live.

The Lamb Conquers the Wild Beast

"With righteousness shall He judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and He shall smite the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips shall He slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of His loins, and faithfulness the girdle of His reins. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' (viper's) den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea" (Isa. 11:5-9).

We must be changed .. our minds must be renewed in the Spirit. Jude said "What they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves" (Jude 10). Unless the man is enlightened by God's Spirit, he will go on resisting the Light of God, and perish in his own corruption. Paul gives a detailed account of this beastly nature that exists in the hearts of men. (see Rom. 3:10-18). "Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips.." (vs. 13). There is nothing more venomous than a religious system that has gone into darkness, and *Christianity so called* is no exception. One can hardly imagine the atrocities that have been perpetrated in the name of God by leaders of the apostate church -- all the while thinking they were doing God a service. If that's the way they promote their religion, I'd far sooner die at their hands than join them. Join a den of vipers, just to stay alive? No wonder there have been so many martyrs in church history -- and some of these drained the poison of asps from the lips of their enemies, by saying: "Kill me if you wish, but I will not deny my Lord, just to save my life". I recall the story of a young man who cried out to his parents, when he feared his father or mother might give way to their tormentors, and recant: "Don't do it, mom and dad .. don't deny your Lord for my sake .. Stand true to Jesus .. I couldn't stand to live with the thought that my dad and mother saved their lives by betraying Christ".

This bleeding Lamb also has Seven Horns .. and with those *seven horns* He will conquer over all the mighty ravenous beasts and birds that walk the earth, or fly

the heavens. When the Lamb shines forth from a people in the earth who follow Him -- then will they begin to subdue the hate, and the anger, and the malice of ferocious beasts that come to kill and scatter and destroy. Then shall the *wolf dwell with the lamb, because the Lamb has conquered the wolf*. Think of it! A Lamb is going to tame the lion .. and all the other wild beasts that abound in the hearts of men. But let us never forget how they overcome: *it is by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony, and because they loved not their lives unto the death*.

"And the leopard shall lie down with the kid". The Lamb shall tame the leopard, and remove his ugly claws. Those wicked men who would tear out the hearts of lambs and eat them, are subdued and conquered by the love and mercy of Jesus .. and become as docile and gentle as a young goat or sheep.

"And the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them". When the angel told John that the Lion of Judah had overcome, and had been given authority to open the book of God's awesome judgments in the earth .. he looked, and He saw "a Lamb as it had been slain". All through the Book of Revelation, in 28 places, He is seen always as the Lamb. We must emphasize that our victory over the ferocious beast .. out there in religion, or in the political and social world, or in our own hearts .. is in the Lamb of God, and those who take up their cross and follow Him, and love not their lives unto the death. Saul of Tarsus, the ravenous wolf of the tribe of Benjamin, went about to kill and to destroy those who loved the Light. But he was blinded by that Light on the Damascus Road, by the same Light that shone forth through Stephen. God tamed this *wolf*, and gave him the heart of a lamb, and he too became a *bleeding lamb*. Then God sent him as a flaming minister of the gospel of love, and of truth, and of righteousness. He taught the people how to overcome God's way, as Jesus did: to overcome evil with good, to overcome sin with the blood of Jesus and His righteousness, to overcome slander and rejection with mercy and patience and longsuffering, to overcome hatred and bitterness, with forgiveness and love. He is clothed with "the whole armor of God". "Righteousness" is "the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins". He fights the beast wherever he goes, because the Light that was in Stephen the martyr, is now in him. *The poison of asps* is no longer under his lips. No longer does he tear the church apart with the claws of the leopard, or the fangs of the lion. But he needs armor for his protection, as he fights with beastly men. He needs to walk in truth and in righteousness, when he is thrust into the ring to contend with "wild beasts at Ephesus". But he carries "the sword of the Spirit" at his side, and he knows that sword is mighty in God. Some Jews from *the synagogue of Satan* were so impressed with Paul's power, that they tried to copy it for themselves .. to promote their own perverted religion. But it backfired on them -- the beasts in the demon possessed man turned against the seven sons of Sceva, and "leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded". This brought great fear on the people, "and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified". There was much demonic activity in

Ephesus, and Paul found himself contending with *wild beasts*, and God was working in mighty operations of His Spirit. Those who *believed* began to realize the source of their demonic activities, and came to the disciples of Jesus, and confessed their evil practices. They wouldn't dare sell their books to others, knowing the bondage they had come out of .. so they *counted the cost*, and it was a very high price in their currency. Then they started a fire "and brought their books together, and burned them before all men" (Acts 19:19).

We scarcely hear of happenings like this in our day, because the church in most cases has been normalized by the infiltration of worldly and senseless activities. But God has every provision for us, to make us to be the shining and glorious church that He has in mind -- if we too are ready to *count the cost*, and burn our useless, and sometimes demonic books and programs.

The Creation Groans for Deliverance

We are told that "the earnest expectation of the creature (creation) waiteth for *the manifestation of the sons of God*". Paul tells us that the creation was "made subject to vanity".. not of its own will. But when man who was put in charge of planet earth, lost his fear of God -- God subjected the rest of creation to vanity. Yet He did so in hope. For He purposed that this defiled creation would arise in new splendor, and into "the glorious liberty of the children of God" (Rom. 8:19-21). Creation does not know why it is groaning, or if there is any hope. But God knows why, and He tells us why: it is because they have hope of deliverance in *the unveiling of the sons of God .. which is nothing less than the Son of God Himself being revealed and shining forth in His many brethren*. And it is for this unveiling that creation is groaning and travailing. For these sons will radiate the glory of the Son, not their own glory. Their glory must come to ashes, that the Son alone might be glorified in them. They must become weak and foolish in the eyes of the world and in their own eyes .. that the wisdom of the cross might shine forth in the Lamb that was slain.

It was not the fault of the lower creation that the animals became wild and fierce, and the land of fruitfulness became dry, and barren, and desolate -- it was man's fault. The animals only tear and rend their prey because man lost his fear and respect for God, and in so doing his authority over the animal world and over nature, has been greatly eroded.

In many places of scripture we see how the lower creation became wasted and barren when God's people lost their fear of God. In Haggai's time when the people forsook the welfare of the House of God, to indulge in their own pursuits -- God said to them: "I called for a drought upon the land, and upon the mountains, and upon the corn, and upon the new wine, and upon the oil, and upon that which the ground bringeth forth, and upon men, and upon cattle, and upon all the labor of the hands" (Hag. 1:11). The living creatures in the air, and in the seas, and in the land -- are being harassed with the plagues of the curse that started

when man sinned against God. "Therefore shall the land mourn, and every one that dwelleth therein shall languish, with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven; yea the fishes of the sea also shall be taken away" (Hos. 4:3). All this is happening now, and men of science fear for the survival of the forests, and the rivers and lakes, and the fowl of the heaven, and the beasts of the earth, and of his own existence on this planet. And why is it happening? "Because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land" (vs. 1). And to make the irony of it all the more severe -- many of these men and women who cry out and scheme and push their agendas to save planet earth -- very often "there is no fear of God before their eyes".

It is encouraging to know that when there is a turning back to God -- God is faithful to heal the land which He had left desolate -- and He promises: "Behold, I will send you corn, and wine, and oil, and ye shall be satisfied therewith" (Joel 2:19)

And to the beasts, He says: "Be not afraid, ye beasts of the field: for the pastures of the wilderness do spring, for the tree beareth her fruit, the fig tree and the vine do yield their strength" (Joel 2:22).

Creation fears Man -- When Man fears His Creator

As the hearts of men are changed, so are the hearts of the wild beasts. And so are the responses of the vegetable world about us. We see a touch of this from time to time -- as a foretaste I believe, of the glory of the Kingdom that is yet to be revealed, when the fear of God returns to God's people, and His sons begin to radiate His glory in the earth.

Many years ago I read this story about Sadhu Sundar Singh, a man of India who ministered in the early part of the last century. One evening he was sitting outside on a log, near the mission home where he was staying -- and the people inside suddenly saw something that startled them. It was getting dark, and a leopard was climbing up the hillside, and coming toward the Sadhu who was sitting there enjoying the evening air. They saw the leopard walk over to him, and the Sadhu reached out his hand and gently stroked his fur. Why should wild beasts fear a man such as this, who was walking in the fear of his Creator -- and theirs?

I heard William Branham tell a story something like that. When he was a park warden he had occasion to go into a certain wilderness area. He left his truck and walked some distance, then suddenly he saw this wild bull charging him. The owners had transferred the bull to this wilderness area because he was a valuable animal -- but he was a killer. He reached for his gun .. but he had left it in the truck. Then he said something very unusual happened. Immediately there came over him a tremendous wave of the love of God for that poor creature -- not

a prophetic word of power, but a surging of God's love for this ignorant beast. Then he turned to the bull and apologized: "I am sorry for having disturbed you this way -- now go and lie down". We call situations like this miraculous .. because they are infrequent. But when man returns to God from disobedience and rebellion, the authority that he once had over the planet will return. Our Lord Jesus already has this power and authority, and *reigns as a conquering Lamb on the throne*. And He will share His dominion with His many brethren, *in the day of His power*.

Perhaps many who read these words are asking, When will God manifest His sons in this manner? But the real question is not WHEN it will happen -- but HOW must we prepare our hearts for it to happen? How senseless it would be if we could tame the wild animals that sneak around our home -- and have no power to conquer the wild beasts in our own natures, or subdue the beastly hearts of men that fight against the Lamb and His people? But this we must know: Our Lord Jesus when He walked on planet earth, was Lord of all creation; yet it was in the will of God that He assumed garments of flesh and humiliation -- that He might live and die in our midst as a sacrificial Lamb. Yet even in the days of His mortality, there rested upon Him the full glory of the Father. On more than one occasion this Lamb tamed the wild beasts in the hearts of men -- and there would certainly have been no problem in taming wild animals, if God had any purpose in that. He spoke to wind and wave and sea, and walked on water, and turned water into wine, and multiplied loaves and fishes, and tamed the wild unruly minds of men who were bound with demonic spirits. In the days of His mortality He was manifested as God's Son -- in humility, and meekness, and in power.

The Resurrection and the Life -- Revealed in Mortality

Why should it be any different with others whom He is disciplining as *sons of God*, and preparing them for glory? Even here in our humanity God is pleased to manifest His sons with power and authority in the earth -- for God is greatly glorified in revealing His power and glory in garments of mortality. *The very same resurrection Life that raised Jesus from the dead, abode within Him in the days of His humanity. He was the Resurrection and the Life while He walked on earth. He had power over death, even in the days of His own mortality.* So it was with the apostles -- before they had finished their Testimony in the earth. Paul discovered that the more he suffered in his mortality, the more did he partake of *the Resurrection Life of Jesus*.

"Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be *made manifest in our mortal flesh*."

Certainly in this body we *groan*, as the apostle said -- and it is because we dwell in mortality, and we look for a release from mortality. But while we wait for that, God is pleased to manifest the Resurrection Life of Jesus, here *in our mortal flesh*. Therefore we ought not to be chafing in our spirit for a quick exit from our state of mortality. Do we not desire to partake of the full measure of the suffering of Christ, in this time of our mortality -- that in these sufferings we might know *the manifestation of the Life of Jesus in our mortal flesh*? And do we not realize that it is only in this life that we may suffer with the sufferings of the Lord Jesus? I am not speaking of the diseases of sin that are rampant in the human family .. for these are the sufferings of Adam's transgression; and because of the work of redemption the Last Adam has provided healing for all of these diseases. And the reason we see so very little of divine health, is because of the broken cisterns that we keep digging, rather than returning to the Fountain of Life that Jesus said would flow from one who is filled with the Spirit. But *the sufferings of Jesus are different. The sufferings of Jesus are the sufferings of a true disciple, who follows the Lamb wherever He may lead. They are the sufferings of those who have the Testimony of Jesus, who love not their lives unto death, as they follow the Lamb.* It is only in this life of our mortality that we are able to assume our share of the sufferings of Christ. May God give us needed grace to take up our cross now, for it is in suffering with Him that we may also be glorified with Him -- and there will be no cross to bear on resurrection morning.

Yes, we look for the full manifestation of Christ in His church, and the *manifestation of the sons of God* must begin in these days of our mortality, as it was with Jesus. Then, having partaken of our share of *suffering for Christ, and with Christ* -- may we have the confidence to say with the apostles and with Jesus: *We have finished the work that God gave us to do in the earth.* Be it little or great -- it is faithfulness that He requires. And we can be assured that God judges according to quality, and not according to quantity. For it will be the fire of God in the Day of Christ that will *"try every man's work of what sort it is", not how much it is* (1 Cor. 3:13).

Born Anew by the Father of Lights

We are thankful for *every good and perfect gift* that we receive from *the Father* .. and for the various ministrations of wisdom, and knowledge, and truth, and faith, and healing -- and all the other gifts, that He has bestowed upon us in the body of Christ. But have we noticed that the gifts proceed from *the Father of Lights* (Jas. 1:17)? And if the Father of Lights is our Father -- then we are *the children of the Light*. And He has given us these wonderful gifts -- that we might be *strengthened, edified and enlightened* to walk in His way.

But He does not want us to become so preoccupied with the gifts, that we fail to become acquainted with the Father who gave them. For the Light that shines from the gifts tells me that His purpose in giving us these gifts, is to cause us to grow and mature together in *the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the*

Son of God, until we come to perfect love, even unto the stature of the fullness of Christ. (Eph. 4:13-16).

And so as we hear and see the Light that emanates from the gifts -- we follow the rays upward and higher, until one day we find ourselves totally occupied with the Source of the Light, and the Giver of the gifts -- as we behold "*the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*" (2 Cor. 4:6). Then we understand why He gave us the gifts -- to cause us to turn our eyes toward the Father of Lights, and to understand that he has birthed us into Life and Light, so as to remove from our hearts and minds all the shades of sin and darkness.

But for a season He has left us in a world of darkness, because Jesus the Light of the world, is no longer here. He now dwells "*in the Light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see*" (1 Tim. 6:16). He is now the Light and Glory of Heaven. And as our High Priest on the throne He is pouring streams of Light upon us, *that we might shine as lights in the world, "blameless and harmless, the sons of God without blemish, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation"* (Phil. 2:15). Heaven is already full of Light, for Jesus is there -- and He doesn't take us there to birth us into Light. He wants us to walk in Light *here*, that those who dwell in darkness *here*, might see the Light *here*.

The firstborn Son is Life, and that *Life is the Light of men*. And the other sons that He is bringing forth *must be conformed to His image*, and shine with the same Light that is in Jesus. He is the Father's Firstborn Son, and walked in pure Light while He was here on earth. Then having accomplished our redemption on earth, He went back to the Father -- that from the throne of Light and Glory He might beget a whole family of sons and daughters in the earth -- whom He calls *the children of Light, and the children of the day* (1 Thess. 5:5). And He will continue to shine upon us with His glory .. until we too are *filled with His Light, having no part dark* (Lk. 11:36).

-- And until the whole earth is "full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea" (Isa. 11:9).