

# KINGDOM BIBLE STUDIES

*"Teaching the things concerning the kingdom of God..."*

## FROM THE CANDLESTICK TO THE THRONE

Part 180

### THE SEVEN ANGELS WITH THE SEVEN LAST PLAGUES

(Continued)

“And the first (angel) went, and poured out his bowl *upon the earth*; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore *upon the men* which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image” (Rev. 16:2).

The Revelation is obviously not a prose composition. It is a drama, a moving picture of the unfolding kingdom of Christ in a world of carnality, sin, and death — a picture taken not with a cinematograph, but with the camera of divine revelation. Again and again throughout the book of Revelation we have noted that the vast majority of the events portrayed in the visions of John takes place in one of three realms — heaven, earth, or sea. These, of course, are not the literal, outer heavens of the universe, nor the physical planet earth, nor the actual seas of water. As we know, these symbolize three realms of life through which we pass on our journey from the depths of the kingdom of darkness unto the heights of the kingdom of life and light in Christ. As the voice from heaven declared, “Rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you...” (Rev. 12:12).

Let us understand that there are three realms of conscious dwelling. One is the “sea,” and it is a beginning, as seen in the first chapter of Genesis. The sea bespeaks the *lowest* realm of life and consciousness. The consciousness which dwells in the sea, does not know anything about God. When you are raised out of the sea-realm into the “earth,” you enter a realm which is higher than the sea, but lower than heaven; an in-between realm which at its highest peak kisses heaven, and at its lowest level embraces the sea; yet, in the true sense it is not entirely heavenly or spiritual, nor absolutely wicked and degenerate. In simple terms it is a realm of *mixture*. You first meet God in this earth-realm, and this, my beloved, is the *carnal religious church realm* of the past two thousand years. In this realm you are brought into an *earthy* conception of God and of spiritual things; you see Christ as a literal flesh and blood man; fleshly Israelites and Jews are God’s chosen people; the temple of God is something the Jews will build some day in the earthly Jerusalem; the cross is the old rugged cross of Golgotha’s hill; hell is a literal place of fire and bodily torment; the coming of Christ is a glorified man crashing down out of the atmospheric clouds; heaven is an astral location out beyond the Milky Way with actual mansions, golden streets, river, and trees; and grace and spiritual life are ministered to saints through physical acts of water baptism, communion, and various other outward church rituals, ceremonies, and sacraments.

It requires neither the spirit of wisdom and revelation from God nor any deep spiritual experience with God to believe in a physical Jesus, or in a big God sitting somewhere upon a literal throne, or in obeying church rules and regulations, or in performing rituals and ceremonies, or in waiting to be raptured away to some far-off heaven somewhere. These things are not taught by the Spirit — they are conceived by the natural, *earthy mind*. They are all *pictures* of reality, but not *reality itself*! They are like the toy soldiers and dolls little children play with. Today we see untold millions of these “earthy” Christians in all the historic Christian denominations as well as in the great mega-churches, with their members looking to scripted programs under charismatic leaders, promising them health, wealth, and worldly success. Earth dwellers! We see other millions in doctrinal circles of behavior, like robots going to church, paying tithes, participating in church programs, obeying church laws governing eats and drinks, dress codes, appearance, hair style, do’s and don’ts of all kinds, careful in their parental responsibilities, working at being good employees and neighbors, faithful followers of clean moral principles. Yet, their circle of good works, conformity, and self-effort righteousness becomes a comfortable isolation that resists deep spiritual experience and living spiritual reality, obscures spiritual vision, stagnating the need to mature into the measure of the stature of the *fullness of Christ*. Not only are sea, earth, and heaven three realms of spiritual life and consciousness collectively, but on the individual level they also speak of the triune make-up of man — body, soul, and spirit. Each of us is thinking and living on one of those three levels!

“Heaven,” on the other hand, is the *highest* degree of life and plane of consciousness unto which man can attain; the spiritual, divine, heavenly, and incorruptible life in Christ, in the power of His resurrection, sharing His nature, mind, glory, wisdom, righteousness, and power. The “heaven dwellers” are that people that has been truly quickened, transformed, and raised up to sit with Christ in the highest heaven of God’s Spirit. When we have been raised off the earth, and have been released into the “heavens” of the Spirit and dwell there, then we are conscious of the *true realities*, of things that are *not seen*, the *spiritual realities* of the kingdom of God, which are the *things eternal*. The realities of the kingdom of God are spiritual; they are infinite; they cannot be put into forms, nor can they be touched in earthiness. They are only seen, known, and touched in the spirit and by the spirit.

Do you not think that it is most significant that the plague of the first bowl is poured out, not *upon* the earth, as the King James Bible reads, but *into* the earth, according to the Greek text. The angel pours this dealing of God *into* the earth and *into* the men who have the mark of the beast, and who pay homage to his image. The plague is poured out *into* the lives of the Lord’s people who dwell in the earth-realm of carnal, soulical religion! This dealing of God’s passion originates out of the heavenly spiritual temple of God’s spiritual elect, and it is the very *passion* of God Himself towards His people! It is a *move of God* that is poured out right into the midst of the earth-realm! Oh, the wonder of it! Can you discern the ways of His working? How can God bring about the deliverance and the transformation He desires? Must He first clear a stage on which He can then bring something new? That is not the way in which God works! He does not work so in nature. He does not first clear the forest, so that He may have room to plant new trees. He drops the seeds on the ground; and they sprout and grow towards maturity side by side with and under the shadow of the trees, and eventually overtake the existing trees and displace them, when these grow too old and weak to maintain competition.

God has acted the same way in history. He did not sweep Canaan clean of its inhabitants before He brought Israel in to inhabit it. No! He brought Israel in among the Canaanites, He poured the “plague” right out into their midst, that by conflict with the Canaanites Israel might become strong, and gain a footing in the land. So does He act in the individual life! He does not first cleanse the heart of its demon inhabitants, that the virtues of Christ may find a house swept and garnished and already fit for their abode. The heart’s new guests have to take the heart as they find it, and turn out the demon inhabitants, and sweep and garnish it for themselves. God kindles the flame of grace in the heart, and sends its rays out to overcome the darkness, and to penetrate into every corner and dislodge the shadows. And that is what God has done with the world! He did not sweep the corruption of the pagan world away and make a clear space for the new kingdom of God. He brought in the new kingdom, weak and feeble as a new-born child, which to all appearance might easily be crushed, and raised up the Christ in the midst of the darkness of that day in a glorious body of many-members, which in due time crushed and brought to naught all the pomp and power of Rome and all the gods of the nations! That is what we see when the

angel “pours out his plague into the earth.” God pours out His passion right into the midst of the people of God, a mighty activity of God, which in due time will purge and purify them all unto His purpose! Aren’t you glad!

### THE PLAGUE UPON THE “MEN”

There is a very important truth in these words, “And the first went, and poured out his bowl into the *earth*, and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the *men* which had the mark of the beast” (Rev. 16:2). How very meaningful is the divine signification as to *upon whom* the plague falls — “upon the *men* which had the mark of the beast.” How tremendously important, how vitally significant is EVERY WORD OF GOD! We need to pay attention and give earnest heed to the precise terminology of the Holy Spirit for He never speaks *carelessly* nor apart from *divine purpose*. It is instructive to note that in every case the collective noun “men,” throughout the entire Revelation, refers to men other than the overcoming company of firstfruits — the spiritual elect of the Lord. The singular word “man” is used of both overcomers and men in general, but “men” is never so used, in every case applying only to unbelievers or to those carnal religious folk who bear the mark of the beast and who pay homage to his image — the worldly church systems of man. The chosen and separated elect are “redeemed from *among men*, being the *firstfruits unto God and the Lamb*”(Rev. 14:4). The message here is clear and unmistakable — “men” signifies the natural man, the carnal man, the *Adamic man* — indeed, the FLESH! Does that not reveal to us clearly and unquestionably *who it is* that God is dealing with by the seven last plagues! He is dealing with the earth-realm of carnal Christians who are walking *after the flesh!* God is laying His hand of dealing upon the flesh within His people and within His church!

After forty years in the wilderness God was ready to bring Israel into their land of promise — their full inheritance. Joshua and Caleb were the only ones who had been circumcised — the rest of the men of Israel who had been born and raised up in the wilderness had never been circumcised. But now the order is changing, Israel has just crossed over the Jordan under the leadership of Joshua, and there will now be an entering in to a new experience and place in God — possessing all that God has prepared for them and called them to. There on the west side of Jordan Joshua brings out the flint knives to circumcise this new generation before they enter into their inheritance. They cannot enter in by the strength of the flesh! Those born in the wilderness had never been taught about circumcision, there had been no cutting away of the flesh, and the reproach of Egypt was still on them. Their flesh had never been dealt with — all they ever knew was the mighty miracle hand of God — water out of the rock, manna from heaven, clothes that never wore out, freedom from sickness and disease, and the Shekinah glory in their midst. They knew God in the *blessing realm* where every material thing your carnal heart could desire would be bestowed purely by *His grace*. Indeed, none of the blessings they had received were obtained by either their righteousness or their faith — they were in very fact *miracles of mercy* — for they were full of unbelief, murmurers, complainers, disobedient, rebellious, whoremongers, idolaters — the carnal, yet *blessed*, people of Yahweh! If God had not preserved them by His mercy, they would have all perished. Oh, how the world is full of them today! But now the word comes — God is going to bring you into a new place, a new experience, a new glory — your full inheritance! And the word of the Lord is to *circumcise them all!* Before they can possess their possession *the flesh must be cut away — removed!*

Ah, Joshua and Caleb, those mighty men of faith and power with God, were the only ones who had been circumcised. There was no flesh left in them! Joshua and Caleb are beautiful types of God’s firstfruit company, His chosen and separated elect. There are those who have come under the knife of circumcision and they have been in the wilderness and watched as a generation is born that has not been circumcised. Only *they* understand the way of the Lord, only *they* know what is required to enter on in to God’s fullness! They are the firstfruits! The work has already been wrought in them and it is at *their word* and at *their hand* that the carnal, fleshly people of God shall now at last be brought under the flint knives. They are as the seven angels out of the temple bearing the seven last plagues to be poured out upon all the *men* who have the mark of the beast — for the purging and purification of all God’s immature, carnal, flesh-oriented children!

In this connection Ricky Evans once wrote, “Circumcision is no fun, especially if you are older, but it is a necessary part of God’s working in our lives. Israel was told to circumcise their male children on the eighth day (Lev. 12:3). In the natural it is better to circumcise a child of eight days rather than waiting until one is grown.

A child will not have the problems in healing as an adult will. The older one gets the harder it will be to cut away the flesh. It is much more painful for a grown man to go through circumcision than a baby. How true this is in the spirit! The longer we hold on to the flesh the harder it is to deal with it. The pain is greater and the memories of that pain seem to be magnified beyond measure.

“The eighth day speaks to us of a new beginning. Circumcision is meant to be the start of a new beginning. They had just crossed over into the Promised Land and what is the first thing they do? Cut away the flesh. Now don’t you know they thought this was a carry over from the wilderness? The wilderness was a constant dealing with the children of Israel to get Egypt out of them. They had come out of Egypt but there was still a lot of the ways of Egypt in them. Now they have crossed over into the border of the Promised Land and it seems things haven’t really changed. They are still dealing with the flesh! They are still struggling with their carnality!

“True circumcision is of the *heart* and not of the outward flesh (Rom. 2:29). It is out of the heart that such things as evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness and blasphemies come (Mat. 15:19). It is the heart that needs to be dealt with, not just outward actions. The law will force us to change our outer actions and yet not touch the inner man of the heart. Joshua and Caleb were men of *another spirit* than the rest of the children of Israel (Num. 14:24; 32:12). They had a heart that had been circumcised and not just their flesh. Circumcision was meant to be a sign of something that had taken place in the heart (Rom. 4:11). Of all those who came out of Egypt only two had the true circumcision, Joshua and Caleb. They were of a *different spirit*. Something had been done in their heart!” — end quote.

The scriptures set forth two men who represent two humanities. The mind and nature of each of these men is very different. One is an outer man of flesh, subject to mortality, being totally concerned with self-preservation, physical provisions, comforts, and blessings, always minding the natural fleshly things. Although it longs to live forever, it cannot attain to, nor realize immortality. The other man is an inward man, a spiritual man, who minds the things of the spirit, concerning himself with spiritual blessings of the mind of Christ, of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, and all the fruits and abilities of the spirit. The first man is Adam. Adam is a kind of humanity! The second man is Christ. Christ is the new humanity! The scripture states that Adam is a *figure* of one to come. We know that a figure has its end when the fulfillment has come. Some people believe that man is to be restored to what Adam possessed before he fell. But Adam is just a type, a figure of *one to come*. Not a figure of God, but of another man. Jesus was not in any way an offspring of Adam. He was not the first Adam come again. He was the *second man*, and the *last Adam*. He is the *new man*, the *new humanity*! The Son of man came down from heaven, not out of Adam. Every one of us walks in the consciousness, nature, and power of one of these humanities. Adam is the uncircumcised man of flesh. Christ is the circumcised man of spirit! Adam has not changed from evil to good. He has not been cleansed and made holy. He is deaf, and can never hear the spirit. He is blind, and can never see reality. He is dead, and can never express life. The Son of God’s love is rejected by this man, Adam! If one has the new man birthed within him but continues to walk after the mind and nature of the old man, then that one MUST BE CIRCUMCISED! It is impossible to enter on in to our inheritance in God until the flesh is cut away!

You will understand a great mystery when you see clearly that God is judging and bringing to an end the earth man, the flesh man within each of us. And He will also execute this work in all of His redeemed children everywhere! The seven last plagues are destructive — not destroying God’s people, but destroying, removing once and for all and completely the old man of sin who sits in the temple of God ruling over all the thoughts, ways, and religious actions of the Lord’s carnally-minded people — showing himself that HE is god! I believe that God is giving us the true understanding, the correct perception, that the purpose of the plagues is to *strip away* that man of flesh, that man of sin from the temple of God! As you follow through the book of Revelation you see that it is all a *removal*. It is the *unveiling* of Jesus Christ. The unveiling signifies an *uncovering*, the *removal* of the covering that has concealed His life within the vessel. All through the book everything is being shaken! The seals are *loosed* — removed from the scroll. When the trumpets sound, a third part of the trees and all green grass is *burnt up*; a third part of the creatures in the sea *die*; a third part of the ships is *destroyed*; a third part of the sun, moon, and stars *disappear*; and a third part of men is *killed*.

And now, under the seven last plagues, ALL THESE THINGS AND MANY MORE COMPLETELY PASS AWAY! *All* the trees are burnt up, *every* mountain and *every* island flee away, *all* the heavens are rolled up as a scroll, for the first heaven and the first earth *pass away*, and in the end there is *no more sea*. Babylon the Great falls and is burned with fire — nothing is left but the new heaven and the new earth, the glorious city of God with the Lamb upon the throne, and the glory of God radiating throughout the whole earth. And brother, none of this is happening literally in the outer world! Every bit of it is taking place *within* God's people! Isn't it wonderful!

The goal of our spiritual journey on this earth is to be shaped into the likeness of our Master, Jesus Christ. Little by little, God chips away at the outer, the parts of our personalities that interfere with the revelation of the character of Christ. Like the sculptor who chips away the pieces of stone until the image he sees within is revealed, the Lord removes from us the image of the earthy until HIS IMAGE WITHIN US becomes clearer and more complete.

I was deeply moved by the following words sent to us in a letter from a dear sister in Christ. “This mundane whirling earth that we call home is so far removed from the reality of freedom in the realm of our quickened spirits. Indeed we have been *‘fenced with bones and sinews and clothed with skin and flesh.’* We wallow in this earthly personality ascribed to us at birth. Our very genes have descended from someone else's bidding. Our character traits and patterns sift through us from a sieve which was held by another's hand. Our environment holds us captive until we cry out — Who am I? Ah, blessed question! The answer is clear to those who can receive it. My true identity is SPIRIT, and until I have been quickened from above, *I am Adam* — ruddy clay, sensuous, rebellious, limited, groping, grasping for something beyond my reach. But after that quickening, *I am Christ*, for there are only two corporate men in the world — Adam, who is of the earth realm consisting of time, and Christ, who is of the eternal realm consisting of timelessness.

“So, I am *truly* at home when I am in the eternal realm, and I am loath to be *‘fenced with bones and sinews and clothed with skin and flesh,’* this body of humiliation, gravitated to this earth. The Psalmist prayed, *‘O that I had wings like a dove — then would I fly away and be at rest.’* My prayer is, Father, enlarge my spirit; enlarge my capacity to envelope You and to be enveloped. You can inhabit only my spirit. You cannot and will not inhabit my personality, my talents, my weaknesses, my strengths, my intellect or my dullness. They all must go and be replaced with You — let me lay aside my burial shroud woven from the fibers of this earth so that I may arise and shine in a transfigured glistening garment of YOUR RIGHTEOUSNESS AND LIFE! When that manifestation is reality, will You then say, *‘These are my beloved sons in whom I am well pleased, hear ye them!’* Ah, Father, I fall prostrate at your feet!”

Some years ago a dear brother set forth this principle so beautifully in a little writing that came into my hands. He wrote, “I received a letter from New York while sojourning in Florida which contained the following: *‘The report has gone around that you died last week. Of course we know it is not true, but how do these things get started?’* I had to reply to this letter somewhat after the following manner, *‘In the language of Mark Twain I must say that the report of my death is greatly exaggerated — and yet somehow or other the same report is true.’* The offices of death are many. According to the apostle Paul, death is one of the most helpful and necessary things that can be performed. He advised the habit of *‘dying daily,’* and this prefaced the glorious possibility of being born daily also! There is something back of the ‘idea’ of death which is replete with substance for meditation.

“When you die to anything you are through with it. Just as in the relative sense of the word when a man dies he is immediately separated from all his possessions; good, bad, or indifferent. His debts are cancelled so far as *he* is concerned. His estate is disintegrated almost immediately, and no longer is attached to him. Like a cloud of dust in a hurricane, his entire affairs are scattered in all directions. Not understanding *Life*, the greatest enemy is death. It deprives *Life* of its manifestation. When Jesus became conscious of *Life*, He could pass in and out of the shadow called death almost as if passing through a purifying fire. When He arose from physical death, even His disciples did not recognize Him until He allowed Himself to take on enough of the former form, to which He had died, for them to do so. All along the way to Emmaus, they could not distinguish the man with whom they

had been for three years. ‘I have power to lay down my life, and I have power to take it up again.’ And He took it up *on a higher plane!*

“When the eagle is born or hatched, it means death to a thing or state of things called ‘egg’ — and in this new process it is impossible to carry any of the old estate with you. Many are seeking the *new birth*, but they do not want to go through death to get it. In other words, they want to hold on to old stages of development, and at the same time try to express new capacities. It is quite as impossible for a caterpillar to fly as it is for an egg; both must perform the *death* upon the thing of which they want to be rid, and re-embodiment themselves with the new reality, before they can attain the expression they are seeking. When you learn the proper interpretation of the word ‘death’ you will see that it becomes a friend (O death, where is thy *sting?*), for it is a cleansing, liberating process. It is a letting go completely and ascending to a place where the former things cannot enter in, and have nothing whatsoever to do with the present manifestation. Instead of getting rid of things temporarily, man *dies completely* to the idea of its manifestation. In the new place he finds himself as incapable of experiencing his former limitations as an eagle flying over the abyss would have in experiencing the cramped quarters of the eggshell from which it evolved.

“A tiny plant starts from its cell and the seed dies. It pushes forth a bud, the flower comes, and the scales or outer leaves die, and the flower is born. The fruit pushes out into manifestation and the flower dies, and so it goes ever onward and upward into the more glorious manifestation of Life here and now. The never-ending merging into new and lovelier states takes place when what you have been and have obtained is ready to die, and when the ‘last enemy’ has become a friend and thus the ‘sting’ has been taken from it. The offices of death are oblivion to that which is outgrown and of no further use. If you have not already died to much of the *conscious thinking* of yester-years, you are suffering from arrested or retarded mental development. If you have not died to many of your previous stages of development and former states-of-being, then your growth is indeed stunted and you are a spiritual dwarf. And so death, when properly understood, becomes the friendly enemy. It is that which throws a veil of oblivion to outgrown states and cast-off limitations and causes the Magdalene to look about and see that she has no accusers. Suddenly she is dead to the thing called *harlot* and all that has gone with it, and she is born at the same instant to something that cannot experience or even understand the former state of things. The friendly enemy has released her!” — end quote.

The same wonderful truth is uniquely expressed in a dream a sister shared with us in one of her letters. She said, “In the dream I saw an old lady — tall and skinny and rather bony — quite frail, too, and she looked as old as the hills. She was stiff and shaky, could hardly walk, but she kept tottering along. In desperation she was grimly and tenaciously holding on to the little crevices in the wall against which she leaned as she continued down a long hallway. She held her head high, almost arrogant in manner, as though to say, ‘I’ll never give up, I’m not going to fall,’ while it was obvious she was already collapsing. As I watched, feeling sorry for her, gradually, she slid to the floor — and suddenly I saw her and the wall no more.

“At the time this dream came I prayed earnestly that the Lord would let me come across this poor old lady who needed so much for someone to help her — but of course I never found her — and soon forgot all about the matter. When the Lord brought it back to me, He let me know that **I** was the old lady! The old lady is the nature that doesn’t want to die, and fights desperately to have its way, because that is its nature. No wonder she looked as old as the hills — she’s been around since Adam! She has traveled a long, long corridor down to this day, and while nothing in her wanted to die, at last she sensed that she would, or she wouldn’t have been holding on for dear life. How glorious that we have discovered that God had already decreed that He would have a people in the beauty of the life of Jesus Christ, because He Himself would totally overcome the limitations of sin and the power of death to become the resurrection and the life for all creation! I don’t know how to explain it, but somehow I feel that I’m not hanging on the cross any longer — yet the cross is still working in me. I am dead, and my new life is hid with Christ in God!

“In my time I’ve been through deep waters alright, and through the fires — and I know not what lies ahead. Yes, dying is painful in many ways, but I’ve discovered that after every dying episode, our blessed Lord comes with a baptism of holy Love that literally lets us drink in His very substance — a healing balm that

comforts, strengthens, enlightens, transforms, and raises us up into perfect wholeness in an altogether new and higher dimension of life, victory, and glory! When the old lady totally collapses the wall disappears, too — for the old lady *is indeed herself the very wall that separates us* from the fullness of the indwelling Christ! What a death! What a life!” — end quote.

Men would not fear the plagues if they understood that they are sent just because THE OLD IS TO BE REMOVED SO THAT THE NEW CAN BE SEEN. God has greater things prepared for His people than they have ever dared to imagine, but the old to which they cling has to be removed. The plagues are the divine *storm* that sweeps it all away! The new order is the kingdom of God. It isn't destruction that is occurring, but a *creative birthing*. Ah, what pain there is in childbirth! Is it not like the pangs of death itself? Yet it brings forth a new and wonderful life! The old is removed, so that when the dust settles, the new and greater glory can be seen by all. It is not an ending, but a beginning!

The late George Wylie once explained the truth this way. “No creature has the power to lift itself above what it is by nature, nor act above what its nature allows it to. When you see a bird floating around on the water of a pond, and you hear it go ‘Quack, quack’ you know it is a duck. It was created a duck, it was hatched a duck, and a duck it will remain, all it can ever do is what the nature of a duck demands of it. It will spend most of its life on the water, for it is in its nature to do so. On the farm we had one female duck. She laid 18 eggs one year, and mother thought that was too much for her to handle, so she took half of them and set them under a broody hen. They all hatched at the same time. The mother duck took her little flock out on the pond which was close to the barn. The hen with her little ducks wandered down by the pond when the little ducks were just a day old. That was her undoing... As soon as the little ducks saw the water they were in it, and away they went out into the middle of the pond and the poor old hen stood on the shore frantically calling them to come back, but they paid no attention to her, nor did they understand her language. It wasn't long until they met up with the mother duck and her little flock, and that was the last the poor old hen ever saw of her little brood. She couldn't follow them for it was not her nature to be on the water, nor could she be, for she was not physically endowed with the equipment to live on water.

“The ducks were perfectly at home on the water for God had designed them for that kind of life. They loved it, and God had given them the physical equipment for it. Though they can also fly when necessary to move from one place to another, they can never soar up into the heavens as the eagle does. You will never find a duck up in the lofty crags of the mountains where the eagle makes it home, nor soaring away into the heavens until it is a mere speck in the blue sky, as the eagle does. The duck cannot do this, nor has it any desire to do so, for it is not in its nature. All it can ever be is a duck, and it can only act according to what its nature demands. This is also true concerning the natural man, the outer carnal part of man. He cannot, by his own efforts, change himself, nor lift himself any higher than what he is by nature. He will remain what he is in his carnal state, unable to find life and reality, nor with any desire to do so, until the Spirit of God begins to work in his life. Let us not think that it was by any act of our own human will that we came to God, or sought any higher relationship with Him, for as Jesus said, ‘NO MAN CAN come unto me, except the Father draw him.’ The natural man by nature has no desire for God nor spiritual life until the Spirit of God reaches down into his depths and touches the strings of his spirit and begins to woo and stir that hidden, unknown inner man.

“Let us not think that after Christ has quickened our spirit and come to live within us, that our old nature has been transformed. It hasn't! It is as it always was, contrary to God and His ways, and there is no way that this old nature can be spiritual or fulfill the will of God. Even when it takes a religious bent working in the church, working so hard *for* the Lord, it is impossible for it to do the will of God. Like Cain of old, it will always do childish, carnal things and offer them up upon the altar before the Lord. This is why it must be put off, crucified, dead, buried, swept away, and the new nature, the divine nature take its place. The old man and all his works, even his good religious works, must die, and the new man be raised up to live within our beings, for it is God's will to reveal His Son in us” — end quote.

As I mentioned earlier, when Israel entered into their land of inheritance they possessed the land, not by bringing things in, but by kicking things out. In like manner, the book of Revelation portrays for us *our*

*inheritance*, and the entrance of all God's people into our promised land — the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. The possession of our inheritance in Christ is not obtained by adding anything to Christ in us, but by what God **removes from us** so that Christ can be fully revealed in His saints. This principle is so easy to see throughout the book. Someone has said that the book of Revelation is so easy to understand that we must have someone's help to misunderstand it. My, my, my, methinks we have had LOTS of help in misunderstanding it!

In the spirit of this precious truth I now share a word brother Carl Schwing has written, "John of the Cross wrote of the 'dark night of the soul.' I, like the rest of you, have experienced many such nights; they continue to come to us, and we often wonder why. There are times when our Beloved must come to us as a thief in the night. However, He does not come to rob us...He arrests us...making us prisoners of love and obedience. He takes from us the things we cannot give. He takes from us the stumbling blocks, the cravings of the flesh...and, in time, He will take all that would hinder us from being wholly His. If need be, our Beloved gently wounds us with love...for He alone can destroy our man of sin by the brightness of His appearing. It is through Him that we are made to overcome! That all the praise and glory might be given to the Lover of our soul. Knowing this, our 'dark night' becomes a time of rejoicing for our inner man, because he knows his hour of freedom draws near. And, if one dark night our Beloved would come and slay us...we will reign with Him forevermore. What a glorious inheritance is ours in Christ Jesus!" What a word that is!

"And the first went, and poured out his bowl *into the earth*; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image" (Rev. 16:2).

When the first of the seven angels pours out his bowl upon the earth-realm, the soulical religious realm of man, he pours it specifically upon those who have turned their backs on the pure walk in the Spirit of God and have chosen to take the mark of the beast and worship his image. Ah, yes, to follow after the spirit of the world and the carnal church systems of man, and take **their mark** upon one's life, indeed leads into a treacherous territory!

The vast majority of Christians have been led to believe that the mark of the beast is some kind of literal mark, brand, tattoo, or chip placed upon or in the forehead or in the right hand. The only verse in the entire Bible that mentions the number (666) of the mark is Revelation 13:18, wherein we read, "Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is *Six hundred threescore and six*." We do well to remember that the chapter divisions and verse numbers have been added by the translators and are not found in the original manuscripts. The ancient Greek texts do not contain chapters, verses, or punctuation marks; there are no spaces between the words, and all the letters are written in capitals. Punctuations, small letters, paragraphs, and chapters were added hundreds of years later.

You may wonder why this is of importance. The verse quoted above is the very last verse of chapter thirteen of the Revelation. Following the phrase, '*Six hundred threescore and six*,' the very next words are the first verse of chapter fourteen. Verse one begins a new chapter in our modern translations, which usually indicates to the reader *the end of one thought, and the beginning of a new thought*. Therefore, the modern reader is prone to suppose that when you leave Revelation 13:18 and move to Revelation 14:1 John has somehow **changed the subject** or **shifted gears!** The truth is, of course, that John did not write a verse eighteen and a verse one. There was no chapter division and the context reveals a **continuity of thought**. Without the chapter break, you can more easily keep the train of thought in this passage, especially in relation to THE WRITINGS IN THE FOREHEADS OF PEOPLE.

So let us now do away with the chapter break and see what has always been there, but unnoticed by most! "*And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: and that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six. And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on mount Zion, and with Him an hundred forty and four thousand, HAVING HIS FATHER'S NAME WRITTEN IN THEIR FOREHEADS*" (Rev. 13:16-18; 14:1).

Can you not see the continuity of thought, the clear and unmistakable *connection* between the **mark in the foreheads** of all the natural men of the world, and the **father's name in the foreheads** of God's chosen and separated elect? Is the Father's name — Yahweh — written, engraved, or in some way applied visibly and literally upon the foreheads of the elect? Do we suppose that in John's vision of the Lamb on mount Zion he saw Jesus setting up a little tattoo parlor at the foot of the mount, and before those following Him can ascend the mount with Him, they are required to visit the tattoo parlor and receive the name YAHWEH indelibly printed in blazing characters of blue and red upon their foreheads? Even a child knows better than that! Even the babes in Christ understand that the Father's name written in the forehead is a *spiritual reality* — bespeaking having the *mind of Christ*, the *spirit of Christ*, and the *nature of Christ*, as obedient sons transformed into His image and likeness. Could it be any different with the **mark of the beast**? Is it not the mark of the beast's mind, the beast's spirit, and the beast's nature impressed upon the *thoughts* (forehead) and *actions* (right hand) of those men who walk after the bestial order of *this world system*?

The folly of the common interpretation of the Revelation is that it lacks consistency. It makes the first part of the verses quoted above to be speaking of outward, physical, literal things, while the latter part is speaking of inward, spiritual realities. But even common sense would lead one to the conclusion that if one is literal the other must be as well, and if one is spiritual the other must be also. If the mark of the beast is an inscription of some sort on the skin of sweaty foreheads, then so is the Father's name a literal name written upon the foreheads of the followers of the Lamb. By the same token, **if the Father's name is a spiritual state of being, then the mark or number of the name of the beast is also a revelation of character.** You simply can't have it both ways!

The sons of God are marked — they have put on the blessed mind of Christ! The people of the world are also marked — they walk in the beastly mind of the flesh, they carry in all their thinking and actions, even when they are religious, every aspect of the carnal, worldly, beastly nature. The number **six** represents man, for man was lowered into this world of flesh and blood on the **sixth day** of creation. All through the scriptures six is the number of **MAN**. Even the passage we have quoted tells us this, plainly in the Greek text. The King James Bible says of this number (mark) of the beast, "*...it is the number of a man.*" The seemingly insignificant article, "**a**," is not in the Greek manuscripts. And while it is generally assumed, it should not in every case be assumed, for the Greek text would not in any way be changed if you were to omit the "a" and say simply, "**it is the number OF MAN; and his number (man's number) is Six hundred and sixty-six.**" Six is simply **MAN'S NUMBER** and to have it raised to six hundred and sixty six simply shouts aloud — **FLESH, FLESH, F-L-E-S-H!** It says of those men who bear the mark that every imagination of their hearts, all their actions and activities, and the methods they employ in their worship and service to God, are not of the spirit of Christ but of the natural understanding and carnal efforts of the flesh man. That is why all the religious works of carnal men are designated as *hay*, *wood*, and *stubble*. Their deeds are not the fine gold and precious stones of Christ's incorruptible life, but those of worthless hay, wood, and stubble that burn. Therefore does God send forth His seven-angel ministry with the seven last plagues! For this very reason the first angel pours out his first plague upon the men who *have the mark of the beast, and upon them which pay homage to his image*. The plague strikes the carnal efforts and works of the flesh — and sweeps them all away! Can you not see the mystery?

At this point I am impressed to share the following words from the pen of Paul Mueller. "When the seven angels begin to pour out their vials upon the earth and the various areas of the beast, this signals the beginning of the Lord's judgments upon the flesh and the ways of old Adam, the man of carnality. When the first angel poured out his vial, *'there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image.'* According to Strong's Concordance, a noisome and grievous sore is an injurious, hurtful, diseased, ulcer-like sore. In this case, it is not a literal disease or sore, but it describes a spiritual condition resulting from having the mark of the beast. The mark of the beast is not a literal mark, but it is a spiritual defect identifying the person who worships and obeys old Adam and his image rather than Christ and the Father. It is the identifying characteristic of those who have surrendered the headship and control of their spiritual lives to a man or men, and not to Christ alone. And may God grant that that old, Babylonish headship idea shall never be tolerated among God's called-out ones. The Lord set us free of that, and by his grace, we shall remain free indeed!"

“...and there came an evil and noxious sore,” signifies interior evils and errors which break forth in external manifestations of corruption, like the boils that sometimes erupt on men’s bodies. This is the *result* of apostasy, of disobedience to the Lord and departure from the growth of life in the Lord. The Old Testament type for this plague is found in the plagues the Lord sent upon Egypt by the hand of Moses. “And the Lord said unto Moses and unto Aaron, Take to you handfuls of ashes of the furnace, and let Moses sprinkle it toward the heaven in the sight of Pharaoh. And it shall become small dust in all the land of Egypt, and shall be a *boil breaking forth with blains upon man*, and upon beast, throughout all the land of Egypt. And they took ashes of the furnace, and stood before Pharaoh; and Moses sprinkled it up toward heaven; and it *became a boil breaking forth with blains upon man*, and upon beast. And the magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils; for the boil was upon the magicians, and upon all the Egyptians. And the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and he harkened not unto them; as the Lord had spoken unto Moses” (Ex. 9:8-12).

This plague affected both man and animal, typifying the whole bestial kingdom. Moses followed God’s exact orders, and the magicians and all the Egyptians suffered from boils, or painful sores that caused inflammation of the skin, which covered their bodies and their animals. God had said that He would bring judgment “upon all the *gods* of the Egyptians” and this plague was an affront to several of the Egyptian gods. The plague of boils showed the Egyptians that their god of medicine, Imhotep, was helpless against the mighty hand of Yahweh. Likewise, Sekhmet, the lion-headed goddess with healing power, could not heal the Egyptians of their terrible sores. Other gods who could not help include Isis, a goddess of healing, and Sunu, a pestilence god.

That was Egypt — but now consider the curses and punishments that were to come upon GOD’S PEOPLE if *they* were disobedient to the heavenly vision! “It shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe to do all His commandments and His statutes which I command thee this day; that all *these curses (plagues) shall come upon thee, and overtake thee...* the Lord will smite thee with the *boil of Egypt*, and with the emerods, and with the scab, and with the itch, whereof thou canst not be healed...” (Deut. 28:15,27).

The “boil” of Egypt is not an ordinary sore, but is abscessed, ulcerated, and malignant. Job’s “boils” (Job 2:7) were probably ulcerated sores of an infectious nature. They not only itched and hurt, but had a terrible odor, darkened his skin, and so disfigured him that his friends hardly recognized him. The same word used of the sores caused by the outpouring of the first plague in the Revelation is used in the Septuagint translation of Exodus, of the plague of boils “breaking forth with blains (blisters full of corrupt matter)” in the plagues of Egypt. Thus the literal plague of Egypt is the clear type of the spiritual plague, revealing the extreme depths of God’s dealing upon His people! The message is clear — the “noisome and grievous sore” represents an *inward uncleanness* which erupts in *outward purulence*. It points to the inward uncleanness of carnal and impure thoughts, ideas, desires, plans, motives, and ways which erupt into the outward purulence of a life disgraced by unholy actions.

Departing from the life of the spirit and the inner reality of Christ weakens one’s spiritual immune system, breaks down the spiritual defenses, and leaves one vulnerable to the outbreak of fleshly corruption. How often we have seen this in the lives of believers, and most markedly in the lives of well-known ministries! So busy were they in their “works” for God, in their multiplied programs, promotions, and schemes to evangelize the world and accomplish great things for the kingdom of God, that their prayer life suffered, no time to wait in holy brokenness before God, no time to sit at the feet of Jesus in intimacy of fellowship, just a constant busi-ness with their man-centered endeavors, until one day in the leanness of their soul the flesh broke out in terrible corruption. As their inward corruption was openly revealed it was indeed a revolting scene to look upon — the angry, ulcerated, running, infectious sores of sin, pride, ego, power, manipulation, deceit, crookedness, lust, excess, shame, and disgrace, open for the whole world to gaze upon. This is the divine warning of this plague — taking the mark of the beast and paying homage to his image LEADS TO THIS!

Many well-known ministries have gone down the tubes during the last several decades, not to mention the sex scandals that have literally rocked the Catholic Church, because the *righteousness of the kingdom* was never established in their deepest hearts. They were great preachers, gifted orators, dynamic pulpiteers, talented musicians, polished television personalities, skilled organizers and promoters, with powerful gifts of God

operating in their lives, and charisma dripping off their fingertips. Hundreds and thousands would come to hear them when they showed up, and millions of adoring followers watched their every move on the television screen, sending in untold millions of dollars to support their grandiose programs and projects. But their word wasn't trustworthy; you couldn't depend on their integrity. They would not live within their means, nor pay their honest debts. They glibly asked their followers for thousands of dollars in donations and willingly resorted to every sordid trick and sob-story to persuade people to give more and more money while they themselves lived the high life, flying their own personal jets around the world, eating in the most expensive restaurants, and living in fabulous homes costing millions of dollars. They bilked widows of their life-savings, and then left behind a disgraceful trail of unpaid bills and questionable dealings.

Some were caught in bed with another man's wife, or ran off with the organist, deserting their own wife and children. Some divorced and remarried again and again. Others were discovered in hotel rooms consorting with prostitutes, while others were caught in homosexual acts. Some sank into the filth of free love, wife-swapping, and group sex — even committing such acts in the name of the Lord! One died in a hotel room of acute alcoholism. Another became obsessed with weird and strange doctrines and delusions of grandeur. He founded a cult and built a tabernacle with a golden throne surrounded by the twenty-four elders. And, of course, the whole world knew about Jimmy Jones and the Jonestown tragedy! Others had violent tempers, lying tongues, deceptive methods, kingdom-building spirit, and egos inflated with pride. Ah — “running and festering sores” — what an apt description of men whose hearts are filled with all filthiness and unrighteousness, “having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children: which have forsaken the right ways, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness” (II Pet. 2:14-15). What shame and reproach these bring on the kingdom of God by their unholy actions!

There are men who profess to be sons of God who have this problem. They have a good knowledge of truth, eloquent delivery, and power to move audiences and influence people, but their lives are oozing with festering pus that stinks to all who come near. Ah, the problem has been that throughout long ages men have sought the *power* of the kingdom of God apart from the *righteousness* of the kingdom. Men have asked for, and have graciously received, an anointing of kingdom power, and they have gone forth to do exploits in His name, but in the great majority of cases they neither asked nor sought for, nor did they receive, the corresponding righteousness of the kingdom. To possess power without righteousness is a blueprint for tragedy. It means that men will do the works of God, but cannot live the life of God. They possess authority without character. Such will honor God for a season with their mighty works, but just as surely as the pig will return to his wallowing, and the dog to his vomit, just that certain is it that these will ultimately bring shame and reproach upon the name of the Lord by their unrighteous conduct. **THE WAY TO GET RID OF THE EXTERNAL PURULENCE IS TO CLEAN UP THE INTERNAL CORRUPTION.** “A new heart also will I put within you.”

The truth, however, runs deeper than this. It is not just the gross sins of the flesh that the Lord exposes through the first bowl and its plague. Oh, no! Today, as God moves in a spiritual way among His people, bringing the spiritual plagues into the midst of those who dwell in the spiritual Egypt, He is also stretching out His hand against all the “gods” of man's religion, the gods of personality, denominationalism, creeds, programs, methods, promotions, power, cathedrals and church buildings, and religious icons and kingdoms of all sorts. He will judge all those things that men trust in which usurp the pure life and power and moving of the Spirit of the Lord! Men are molded in character into the likeness of the god that they worship. **IT MEANS DISCOVERING THE ROTTENNESS WITHIN THE RELIGIOUS SYSTEMS OF MAN BECAUSE THAT ROTTENNESS HAS COME TO THE SURFACE AND BEEN MANIFESTED FOR ALL TO DISCERN!** Millions of the Lord's people are worshipping daily at the polluted altars of the false gods of man-made religious systems and their erroneous creeds and carnal disciplines. In this day the Lord will move to draw such eruptions of corruption out of the carnal religious systems of man, that it will evoke among all the Lord's people absolute consternation, disappointment, embarrassment, disconcertion, disillusionment, and *pain* beyond comprehension — and try as they may, there will be no answers, no solutions, no *remedy* to be found!

We know the corruption is there because men in their religious life bear upon their minds and actions the mark of the bestial system, a system in which men *think* like the world, *plan* like the world, and *act* like the world! Who can deny that in the religious realm the church system's whole vision, method, and attitude is in accordance with the world's system? Their whole planning and program is all in harmony with the "spirit of the age" as they constantly adapt themselves to WHATEVER THE WORLD IS DOING, be it rock music, hip-hop, concerts, talk shows, coffee houses, showmanship, fund-raising schemes, and the list can go on ad infinitum. Are they not "incorporated" like the corporations of the world? Are they not controlled by a "board" like the world's corporations? Are they not "chartered" under the ungodly authority of human government just like all worldly institutions? Thus the "mark of the beast" is clearly stamped upon all her works! And the masses of the world's inhabitants live out their daily lives bearing in mind and character the MARK of that beastly system!

As the first "messenger" pours out his "bowl" into this carnal religious "earth," all the uncleanness within that system will break out in a putridness that will become a revelation to every redeemed soul within her that something is terribly wrong! That is the first step toward the fall of Babylon! Most of those who now read these lines have already experienced this, for it happens *first* in God's *firstfruits company*! Oh, yes, my beloved, *you* above all people in the world understand exactly what I am talking about! One blessed day the horrible corruption of the religious systems came as a mighty, divine, shocking *revelation* to each member of God's elect! Our eyes were opened, and suddenly we saw Babylon for just what she is — we beheld her riding upon the scarlet colored beast, full of names of blasphemy, with a golden cup in her hand full of the abominations and filthiness of her fornication, drunken with the blood of the saints and the martyrs of Jesus, and clearly we could read the inscription written upon her forehead: MYSTERY BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. We saw! And with loathing we beheld the festering, running sores of her uncleanness! And thus began the journey by which we *fled* from her and found refuge in the living, loving arms of Jesus!

Oh, the mystery of it! Oh, the wonder of it!

To be continued...

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