

KINGDOM BIBLE STUDIES

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

FROM THE CANDLESTICK TO THE THRONE

Part 171

THE FIRSTFRUITS, THE HARVEST, AND THE VINTAGE

“And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped. And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe. And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the winepress of the wrath (passion) of God” (Rev. 14:14-19).

We speak the truth in saying that it takes little discussion to convince us that the Harvester in the scene above, or at least He who supervises the reaping of the earth, is none other than Jesus Christ our Lord. We are acquainted with the expression, “the Son of man,” or, “one like unto the Son of man,” or, “one like unto a son of man,” as the Greek text reads here. The expression is used again and again throughout the Gospels and it is always used of our Lord. It was the name with which Jesus loved to call Himself. It denotes the all-overshadowing glory of Him who was made flesh, made a man, made like unto His brethren, and who now has been highly exalted to the right hand of the Majesty on high.

It appears from a close examination of our text that it is God Himself who ordains the harvest, that our Lord Jesus acts as the *supervisor*, and that the work of reaping proper is left to the angels, or the messengers, His servants. That is also the impression we receive from other parts of scripture. In Matthew 13:39 Jesus explains, at the close of the parable of the tares among the wheat, “the reapers *are the angels*.” And in Matthew 24:31 we read, “And He shall *send His angels* with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.” So in the scene that the beloved John beholds in holy vision the angels, or messengers, are likewise acting as servants of the one like a son of man. Two of these messengers come out of the temple, out of the most holy place within the body of Christ which is the temple of God; the third messenger in the scene comes from the golden altar, sent forth by the very prayers and worship of the holy priesthood of God. Two of these act as messengers proclaiming that the time is ripe and that it is the exact hour for the harvest of the earth to be gathered in. One of them carries the command directly from God; and he announces to the one like a son of man that it

is time to reap and that the hour is come for harvesting.

These details are of great significance! In the first place, we are given to understand that this is an important hour. The harvest is ready, fully ripe, and it must be gathered! It is a very significant hour indeed! All of God's work in the whole body of Christ, in the entire church of Christ, must be finished, consummated. The second messenger brings a similar message to the messenger who must gather the vintage, the clusters of the vine of the earth. He comes out from the altar and has power over fire. This reveals a mighty *energy* of God at work to reap the vine of the earth and cast it into the winepress of the passion of God! It is impossible to bring the vastness of God's working into the realm of our human understanding. It is infinitely necessary that all who read these lines yield to the spirit of wisdom and revelation from God that the sacred secrets contained in these sublime vistas may unfold deep within our heart and spirit.

ONE SITTING UPON A CLOUD

“And I looked, and behold a *white cloud*, and upon the cloud one sat like unto a son of man...” (Rev. 14:14).

Since the clouds form and float in the physical heavens, in its spiritual meaning the location of this scene is in the invisible heavens of the Spirit of the Lord. Jesus, when on earth, spoke of Himself as “the Son of man.” And since this one “like a son of man” rides upon a singular cloud and wears a singular golden crown on His head, this one pictures our Lord Jesus Christ who is Himself “the Lord of the Harvest” (Lk. 10:2). The book of Revelation is the *revelation of Jesus Christ*. It is a wonderful thing that throughout this book our Lord Jesus appears again and again under many different figures and symbols. Each time He has a habit of disappearing, but always returns. Even in the days of His flesh, He appeared and went away and came again on various occasions. Just a little while after the star had shone and the angels had sung, by divine direction, He fled to Egypt. But ere long, came another message, “Arise and take the young child and His mother and go into the land of Israel. For they are dead which sought the young child's life.” Again, “when Jesus heard that John was cast into prison, He departed into Galilee,” another retreat. But read on: “And leaving Nazareth He came and dwelt in Capernaum.” When John the Baptist was silenced, Jesus left His obscure village and came to the front. In removing John, the adversary snuffed out a candle, and behold, the sun rose!

Next, He went down into a tomb, and that seemed to be the end. But He entered that tomb, not as a captive, but as a conqueror; and after lying there three days like a warrior taking his rest on the field of his triumph, He appeared in the power of resurrection as Lord of heaven and earth. He ascended up to heaven in a cloud and again disappears, and seems to have gone away forever. But in chapter two of the Revelation John sees Him in the midst of the candlesticks having eyes as a flame of fire, with feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and His voice as the sound of many waters. He disappears and appears again as the Lamb in the throne. The Lamb disappears and He reappears as one sitting upon a white horse and He goes forth conquering and to conquer. He appears again as our great high priest ministering on behalf of His elect at the golden altar in the temple of the heavens; and so He disappears and appears again and again as He marches on in triumph accomplishing His great purpose in the earth, in His people, and throughout the eternal heavens!

And now, in our present vision, we stand in spirit with John and behold Him riding upon a cloud! And notice — it is not the dark storm-cloud of judgment, as many suppose, but the *white cloud of glory*. From the dawn of history the way in which God has displayed His glory has been in the form of a cloud. The *glory cloud* of God's presence has taken different shapes and different sizes on various occasions. When it was time for the children of Israel to begin their exodus out of Egypt, the glory of God took the form of a pillar of fire enshrouded within a cloud. “*And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud,*

to lead them in the way; and by night **in a pillar of fire**, to give them light, to go by day and night: He took not away the pillar of cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people” (Ex. 13:21-22).

What did the glory of God signify every time it appeared? The glory cloud of God signified the unique and manifest presence of God! It always told the people of Israel, when it appeared, that Yahweh was uniquely present and manifest in this place, at this time, for a special purpose. When the glory of God as a cloud led the children of Israel out of Egypt, it signified to the people that God was with them in a very real and sovereign way. “*And the Lord went before them in a pillar of a cloud.*” God was **in** the cloud! The almighty God Himself dwelt in that cloud by day and in the fiery pillar by night. That strange pillar of cloud and fire was the visible manifestation of His presence and glory! While Israel walked in the light of His fiery presence, no calamity could harm them, no enemy could attack them, no evil could befall them, nor plague come nigh their dwelling. God was with them in sovereign power in all their marches! “*And the Lord said unto Moses, Speak unto Aaron thy brother, that he come not at all times into the holy place within the veil before the mercy seat, which is upon the ark; that he die not: for I will appear in the cloud upon the mercy seat*” (Lev. 16:2).

When the cloud came down out of heaven and rested on the top of mount Sinai, it signified that God in a unique sense had come out of the realm of invisible spirit to meet with the children of Israel in His manifestation on the earth plane. When they saw the cloud move into the most holy place in the tabernacle and later in the temple, it signified again that God in a special sense was taking up residence within that worship structure within the nation of Israel. The light that shone in the Holiest of all behind the temple curtain of blue and purple and scarlet and fine twined linen, laced with threads of gold and figures of cherubim, was not the beams of the seven-fold candlestick of the holy place, nor even the radiance of the sun in the outer court. It was the glory light of God’s own divine majesty! Through time the Israelites called that glory cloud of God the *Shekinah*. The word *Shekinah* means “to dwell.” And since the glory cloud always signified that God was present at the place where the cloud appeared, to dwell in a special sense, they called it the *Shekinah* or *dwelling glory* of God!

The truth that I would now draw to your attention is the fact that it was this same *Shekinah*, this very same glory cloud, which the eleven disciples beheld in spell-bound astonishment on the crest of the mount of Olives that blessed day when the Lord Jesus ascended into mid-air and suddenly a *bright cloud*, like a chariot of God, bore Him speedily away, concealing Him from mortal gaze. That cloud intrigues me! “*And a cloud received Him out of their sight.*” “Received Him out of” is one word in the Greek meaning “to take under.” It signifies to take up by placing one’s self underneath, in the style of a hiker carrying a backpack, or as a waiter holds a tray. It is one of Luke’s medical terms. Weymouth in his translation puts it thus: the cloud “closing beneath Him, hid Him from sight.” Do you get the picture? Jesus was *riding upon the cloud* and that is why it hid him from their view. He was on top of, or upon the cloud, just as in John’s vision on Patmos! And don’t tell me that was the sort of cloud which spills the rain and from which the lightning flashes. Oh, no! That cloud is the cloud of the glory of God, the *Shekinah*, described in Ezekiel 1:4 as “a great cloud...and brightness.” It was this cloud which Ezekiel saw while he was with the exiles in Babylon by the Chebar Canal. The glory cloud is described as the “chariot” of Yahweh, composed of myriads of celestial beings, the spirits of just men made perfect, the armies which are in heaven, the heavenly hosts of the spiritual world. “Behold,” declares the prophet, “the Lord *rideth up the cloud*, and shall come into Egypt: and the idols of Egypt shall be moved at His presence, and the heart of Egypt shall melt in the midst of it (the cloud)” (Isa. 19:1). The Resident within the shimmering cloud of glory is just the Lord Himself, the source of the dazzling light, for it is HE who causes the celestial host to shine forth, thus forming the cloud and manifesting His glory thereby.

Surely we can see by this that the cloud which hovered over Israel in the wilderness; the cloud which rested upon the glorious tabernacle of old; the cloud which dwelt between the gleaming cherubim in the most holy place; the cloud which filled Solomon’s temple until the ministers could not minister by reason

of the blazing glory; the cloud which came upon and enveloped the virgin girl Mary as the power of the highest “overshadowed” her when she came to be with child; the cloud which enveloped the Son of God and revealed the glory of His sonship on the mount of Transfiguration, and out from which the Father spoke just as He did in the tabernacle of old; that cloud, precious friend of mine, **is the very same cloud** that received the Lord Jesus into its midst and out of the sight of mortal eyes! The cloud that received the firstborn Son of God out of the sight of those startled disciples certainly was no ordinary rain cloud which happened to be blown across a torturous sky. It was the blazing Shekinah cloud which had always revealed the divine majesty of God from time immemorial! It was the cloud of myriads of holy ones from the other side, out of the heavens of God’s Spirit, even the great “cloud of witnesses” by which we too are compassed about. And this is the cloud John beheld in spirit that day on Patmos, and the Lord of glory was *riding the cloud* just as He did in ancient times and from eternity. Contrary to what some believe, I do not see that we, the living saints on earth, are either that cloud or the one like a son of man riding upon the cloud. We clearly have an altogether different role in this enthralling drama, and we will come to that later on.

Now, lest we should miss the deep mystery this unveils, I would emphasize again that the one cloud points unerringly to the singular glory of the Head of the body of sons, even our Lord Jesus Christ. Here I wish to point out a most significant point of scripture which has entirely been overlooked by most Bible students and nearly all preachers and teachers. All the way through the scriptures, from the crossing of the Red Sea by the children of Israel, to the ascension of Jesus from the mount of Olives, God consistently manifested Himself in ONE GLORY CLOUD. There was always just ONE SINGLE CLOUD! The Lord Jesus ascended in **one single cloud** of God’s glory — the very **same** cloud in which He had manifested His presence to His people on earth throughout the long ages of time! Now this cloud was composed of many “droplets” of water, as it were; that is, many celestial beings, but together they composed only one cloud. They all represented only one manifestation of God!

It is when we come to the prophecies concerning the Son of man **coming in His kingdom** that we see a distinct difference! For suddenly in addition to one cloud we are introduced to a **plurality of clouds!** Let us see! Christ departed this earth in *one cloud*. He comes again in *many clouds!* It was the blessed seer of Patmos who announced: “Behold, He cometh with **clouds**: and every eye shall see Him” (Rev. 1:7). Daniel in vision beheld Him thus: “I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like a Son of man **came with the clouds of heaven...and there was given unto Him dominion**” (Dan. 7:13-14). Jesus Himself prophesied, “And they shall see the Son of man **coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory**” (Mat. 24:30). And again, “Hereafter ye shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power, and **coming in the clouds of heaven**” (Mat. 26:64). Finally, the apostle Paul relates this dramatic experience: “Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them **in the clouds...and so shall we ever be with the Lord**” (I Thes. 4:17). In the CLOUDS! More than one cloud. Many clouds. A great company of clouds!

Why are there many clouds attending Christ’s coming in the fullness of His kingdom, and what are these clouds? Let us not forget for one moment that we are dealing with the *cloud of God’s glory, presence, and power* — the Shekinah — the cloud of His “dwelling.” When the firstborn Son of God was in the world John said of Him, “We beheld **His glory**” (Jn. 1:14). Peter reveals to us what is really meant by their beholding the glory of the Son. “For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and **glory**, when there came such a voice to Him **from the excellent glory (out of the glory cloud)**, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, **when we were with Him in the holy mount**” (II Pet. 1:16-18). Ah, it is clear — the glory cloud that enveloped Jesus and His disciples upon the holy mount was the glory of HIS manifest sonship! “This is my beloved SON.”

How very significant that at the end of Jesus’ earthly ministry He said, “Neither pray I for these alone,

but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee, that they also shall be one in us...and **the glory which Thou gavest me (manifest sonship) I have given them...**I in them, and Thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one...that they may be with me **where I am (in His relationship of sonship to the Father)**; that they may behold **my glory which Thou hast given me**” (Jn. 17:20-24). And this is the crux of the whole matter! From the dawn of creation’s light until Jesus stepped upon this planet, God manifested to His creation in a *singular way* His own glory. He, the eternal God, exhibited His presence in the form of one glory cloud! But as Jesus approached the cross, and the glorious events to unfold thereafter, He disclosed the grand truth that God purposed from eternity to **SHARE HIS GLORY WITH A VAST COMPANY OF SONS...**the glorious body which is the fullness of Him that filleth all in all!

“For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the **glory which shall be revealed in us**. For the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the **manifestation of the sons of God**” (Rom. 8:18-19). “But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the **glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord**” (II Cor. 3:18). “When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall **ye also appear with Him in glory**” (Col. 3:4). “That ye would walk worthy of God, **who hath called you unto His kingdom and glory**” (I Thes. 2:12). “For it became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing **many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings**” (Heb. 2:10). “I...also am a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the **glory that shall be revealed**” (I Pet. 5:1). “But the God of all grace, who hath called us **unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus...**make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you” (I Pet. 5:10). Oh, the wonder of it!

What, then, are those clouds with which, and in which, the Christ comes? Why, bless your heart, WE ARE! He comes with and in many clouds! There is only one other group or plurality of objects of which it is stated that Christ come “with” or “in” them, and that is — the SAINTS! The Holy Spirit of inspiration is very careful to tell us that He comes “with” clouds. And He also tells us that He comes “with” His saints! “To the end He may establish your hearts...at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ **W-I-T-H ALL HIS SAINTS**” (I Thes. 3:13). Jude says, “And Enoch also...prophesied...saying, Behold, the Lord cometh **W-I-T-H TEN THOUSANDS OF SAINTS**” (Jude 14). The Amplified Bible is helpful when it reads, “Behold, the Lord comes **W-I-T-H MYRIADS OF HOLY ONES**.” But the interlinear reading from the Emphatic Diaglott gives the clearest of all renderings from the Greek text, “Lo, comes Lord **I-N HOLY MYRIADS OF HIMSELF!**” “Myriads of HIMSELF!” All of them begotten out of His life, all of them partakers of His divine nature, conformed to His image, filled with His mind, matured in His life. **Myriads of Himself**, of His own kind, born of His seed, a many brethren company of *sons of God*. The apostle Paul once expressed the truth in this way, “When He shall come to be glorified **IN HIS SAINTS, and to be admired IN ALL THEM that believe in that day**” (II Thes. 1:10). John the beloved sees this same scene in wonder-filled vision and speaking in prophetic language writes, “Behold, He cometh **WITH CLOUDS; and every eye shall see Him**.” Oh, the mystery of it!

If only I could make men see that our Lord Jesus Christ is *the cloud*, that is, the glory of the Father, and each son of God is *putting on the cloud* which He is. In the Old Testament days God was revealed in the cloud of His people out of the invisible realm of spirit. But now God is raising up His glory upon a people right here on earth! There are, in fact, many callings and various orders of the Lord’s people in both the heavenly and the earthly realms. God has sons, Christ has a glorious bride, and there is a vast household of servants of the Lord on many planes and in different orders. Each and all of these constitute dimensions of the revelation of the Lord! It is a vast kingdom, and just as there is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, another glory of the stars, and the stars themselves differ in glory, so are there many clouds of glory. There are small clouds, large clouds, bright clouds, covering clouds, rain clouds, and many more. And when He comes, on whatever plane He comes in the revelation of Himself, He comes with these clouds!

These things I write and these truths I set before you that your spiritual eyes might be lifted far above the dimness of tradition to behold the realities in the heavens of the Spirit of our God. And may our Father help all who read these lines to understand that though the Lord Jesus has shared His glory with us, His younger brethren, yet He retains a glory of His own just as we each possess a sphere of glory that pertains to us. Oh, child of God, have you not considered that the glory of God is infinite, it is something you can give away, you can share, you can impart, and yet it is not diminished? It is like the loaves and the fishes that Jesus multiplied, five thousand can be fed and there is more at the end than there was in the beginning! Oh, yes! Jesus has given us His glory, He has multiplied His cloud upon us, and yet He is more glorious than before! And there are those times, as with Saul of Tarsus on the Damascus road, when the Lord Jesus appears in His own singular glory and reveals Himself in the majesty of His Headship. He has, on occasion, appeared to me, and spoken to me, out of His own identity and personality, apart from that of my precious brethren. It was just the Lord Jesus Himself! I have known many brethren who have been so visited by, spoken to and ministered to by the Lord Jesus Christ. Is that not what John saw that day so long ago when He beheld one like a son of man upon a white cloud? Not many clouds, this time, but one cloud — His very own person, purpose, and glory!

THE CROWNED ONE

“And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto a son of man, *having on his head a golden crown*” (Rev. 14:14).

The most common term rendered “crown” in the New Testament is the Greek word *stephanos*. Our popular name “Stephen” is derived from this word, and this crown was usually a laurel wreath woven of fragrant branches, or the like. It was granted to winners in the Pan-Hellenic games and also as a token of public honor for distinguished service — especially of military leaders who had been victorious over their enemies on the battlefield. It was also given at marriage feasts, especially in royal families, to celebrate the joy of the bridegroom in having “won” the maiden as his bride. This crown always denotes A VICTOR’S CROWN — the crown of an OVERCOMER! How appropriate that we should read of the chief overcomer, the Lord Jesus, that He has upon His head a *golden stephanos*. A GOLDEN STEPHANOS! A GOLDEN VICTOR’S CROWN! Gold speaks of the divine nature, and how true that both He and we are only able to fully overcome by the life and power of the divine nature! Truly He overcame all things, including the last enemy which is death, and has been highly exalted to the throne of His Father and now offers a place with Him there to all His overcoming brethren!

There is a strange but wonderful statement found in Revelation 4:11. It is the cry of the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders, a heart-cry from the very throne room of God and the Lamb. “*Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power...*” The Lord is here declared to be worthy to RECEIVE POWER — as well as glory and honor. The question follows — How can the Lord, the Creator of all things, who inherently possesses *all power*, who is *the almighty*, the absolute *sovereign of the universe*, the *omnipotent One* — how, I ask, is it possible for such an One to *RECEIVE POWER*? What power could He be given that He does not already possess? The truth is, of course, that although our Lord is the supreme authority and power of the universe He has ceded to His creatures and to His servants and to His sons particular areas of authority and dominion. “*Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion...*” (Gen. 1:26). “*What is man, that Thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that Thou visiteth him? Thou has crowned him with glory and honor. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of Thy hands...*” (Ps. 8:4-6).

So we see that God has given man during these past six millenniums the right to rule his own life and destiny as well as the whole earth and indeed *all* the works of His hands! Collectively, this rule of man constitutes the “kingdoms of men” or “the kingdoms of *this world*” (Rev. 11:15). During the past two

thousand years the world has been influenced, controlled, and ruled first by Rome, and later by the ten kingdoms that have emerged from the Roman Empire as one after another has achieved almost universal military, economic, and political supremacy in the earth.

The expression of the Psalmist wherein he says concerning God's ordination of man, "*Thou crownest him with glory and honor,*" denotes clearly that God gave man **kingly rule** in the natural creation. It is a wonderful day for a believer when he becomes conscious of the fact that God's purpose from the beginning has been that man should exercise that ruling authority as a *vicegerent* — one exercising the powers of another by delegation — *in union with HIM!* And this is what man departed from in the fall. Man set about to "do his own thing" apart from God. He rejected God's authority over him. This luciferian spirit has ever been: "*I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds: I will be like the most High!*" (Isa. 14:13-14). I WILL...I WILL...I WILL! So man rules his own life and destiny apart from the mind, purpose, and will of God, yea, in opposition to God! And the inevitable result of this "independence" is chaos, sin, sorrow, and death. For how certain it is that "*there is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death*" (Prov.14:12). And God has allowed this to be for an appointed time.

This brings us back to our question: If the Lord **HAS ALL POWER**, how is it that He **RECEIVES POWER**? The answer is not far to be found, for we have all prayed it hundreds or perhaps even thousands of times! "*Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.*" What does it mean for God's kingdom to come, and what does it mean for God's will to be done *in earth*, even in *this earth* which I am? I am the king of my life; I am seated upon the throne; I make the decisions; I do according to my own pleasure, purpose, and will. But when Jesus THE LORD comes I must **abdicate my throne** and let Him ascend the throne of my heart! The testimony of all who have received the call to sonship is just this: "Till I met THE LORD I was the commander of my life and my destiny. Since He has entered into my temple HE COMMANDS!" "Thy will be done in earth" is something for now — not tomorrow nor the ages to come. You see, when I abdicate the throne and resign from the dominion I have independently exercised in my life, then that realm of dominion which I had reserved unto myself is given to the Lord. The power which I once held in my own hands, by His concession, is yielded up to Him and He now exercises the **power** and the **authority** that I formerly held. Thus, **HE RECEIVES POWER!** He receives the right to rule over my life and through my life. He never took that right by force — but He receives the right when I yield it up unto Him.

Yet there is a mystery deeper even than this. For when God's sons and God's royal priesthood (the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders) declare, "Thou art worthy to receive power," the record states that they "fall down before Him that sat on the throne, and worship Him...and **cast their crowns before the throne**, saying, *Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive power!*" Even in this new and glorious realm of the kingdom of God, where we reign with Christ over all things, we realize that all of our "crowns" are truly *His work* and not our own! We were created, as they go on to say, for *His pleasure* and *for Him*. To HIM belongs the glory! To HIM belongs the honor! To HIM belongs the power! To HIM belongs the crowns! The worthy One is the Lamb who was slain! It is HE who has earned the crowns, for HE and He alone is our salvation, our life, our righteousness, our wisdom, our power, *our all!* He Himself is our FULL AND TRUE REWARD! The Lord Himself is OUR CROWN!

I think that it is a scene sublime that John beholds in chapter nineteen of the Revelation. "*I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. And His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were MANY CROWNS...and he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS*" (Rev. 19:11-16). Yes, my beloved, this is our Lord, even Jesus the Christ, and He comes wearing MANY CROWNS! Here the Victor who is King of kings and Lord of lords makes His glorious appearance crowned by all those making up His heavenly army. Now, in this present time, it is the

overcomers, those who are called and chosen to reign with Him, who cast their crowns down before Him and yield up all their own will, way, and authority unto Him! Many, even now, are crowning HIM Lord and King. He has my crown, He has yours, and He is receiving more and more glory, honor, power, and crowns as many sons are brought to glory!

And yet, wonder of wonders, in our text we see the one like unto a son of man *having on His head a golden crown*. One crown, not many! What can it mean? It signifies His own glory, the glory that He gives us, but the glory that is uniquely HIS, as the Firstborn among many brethren who in all things *has preeminence*. I know no words, be they many or few, that could be more meaningful than these, for HE IS THE KING ETERNAL, THE ONLY WISE GOD, AND OUR SAVIOUR! He is crowned in His own right long before we cast our crowns before Him!

THE ANGEL OUT OF THE TEMPLE

“And *another angel came out of the temple*, crying with a loud voice unto him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle and reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe” (Rev. 14:15).

Earlier in chapter fourteen we met three angels, each bearing a message to the inhabitants of the earth-realm. *Another angel* now appears, the first of a second series of three, and styled “another,” not by comparison with Him who sits upon the white cloud, but by comparison with the three angels previously spoken of in the sixth, eighth, and ninth verses of the chapter. He is called an “angel” with reference to his *mission*, not with reference to his nature. He is not a shining personage with wings flying through the atmosphere. The symbol stands for the issuing forth of the *word of God*. Each messenger represents the coming forth of a powerful proclamation of the Spirit! This angel, or messenger, is said to come *out from the temple* — that is, out of the *naos*, out of the innermost shrine of the temple, the most holy place; out from the deepest depths of the divine spirit, and out from the manifest presence of the Lord in the temple of His body — and this truth is important, for it shows that this is a message, a word, a revelation, a proclamation coming forth right out of the heart of God in His called and chosen elect. This word is as a prayer, as a prophecy, as a mighty declaration by the Spirit unto the Lord Jesus Himself, just as one might speak by the Spirit on behalf of a sick man and command, “Lord Jesus, *heal him!*” Only this command to the Lord is thus: “*Send forth Thy sickle and reap... for the harvest of the earth is ripe!*” Is not this the very fulfillment of the instructions the Lord Himself has given us — “*The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: PRAY ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that HE would send forth laborers into His harvest*” (Lk. 10:2).

The wise man said that there is a time for everything. The day, the hour, the moment has now arrived; and, as usual in the Revelation, the message of the Spirit is communicated by a messenger. The intimation that the hour is come is grounded upon the fact that the harvest about to be gathered in is *fully ripe*. Some versions render it “overripe,” but the translation, though literal, may suggest a wrong idea. God’s time for working is always right, not wrong; and not late, but right on time. The word points to the issue of *urgency* — the hour has fully come and there can be no delay! The word in the Greek actually means *dry, hard*; the soft juices of the ripening state have been absorbed and the time of its fullness has come. Thus summoned by the Spirit to the work, the Lord Jesus enters upon the reaping without delay. “*He that sat on the cloud cast His sickle into the earth; and the earth was reaped.*”

SEND THY SICKLE

“And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, *Thrust in thy sickle and reap*: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe” (Rev. 14:15).

“*Send Thy sickle and reap,*” are the words of the messenger. This is the literal rendering of the Greek, and the word used is intended by the Spirit to lead our thoughts to the words of the Lord Jesus, “*Pray ye*

therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He would **send forth** laborers into His harvest.” Again, “The Son of man shall **send His messengers**, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend...then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father” (Mat. 13:41-43). So also the matter is stated in a parable peculiar to Mark. “So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately He **sendeth the sickle**, because the harvest is come” (Mk. 4:26-29).

We have failed to understand the word “send” in reference to the sickle because we also failed to understand that the sickle is a **symbol** standing for a people. As diamonds are dug from the depths of the earth, so the truth is dug from the depths of the mind of the Lord. Therefore let us UNDERSTAND! The “One sitting upon the cloud” is our Lord Jesus Christ. “He” also is the reaper. The “angels” with their proclamations signify the utterance of the revelation of the Lord by the Spirit out from the temple of His body. The One like a son of man uses a “sickle” to harvest the “grain” of the earth. He is not the sickle, but He *uses* the sickle. Therefore the elect of God are not the One sitting on the cloud, for the mystic “sickle” signifies the actual instrument of reaping, that is, the laborers, the messengers, the called and chosen elect of God, the new corporate man, the manchild, the 144,000, the manifest sons of God ordained and sent forth to gather the harvest. The symbols change a little from scene to scene, but that is always how it is with the symbols in parables, as you will clearly see upon a study of the parables of our Lord in the four Gospels.

THE HARVEST

“Thrust in thy sickle and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for *the harvest of the earth is ripe*. And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped” (Rev. 14:15-16).

We will understand a great mystery when we understand that every age ends with a harvest. Harvest is the time of maturity and fullness when each seed, having sprouted, releasing its life, and having passed through all the various stages of growth and development, finally **reproduces itself** many fold — a vast harvest! Harvest is a time of reaping rather than sowing — a time of gathering fruit. The harvest of the kingdom of Judah serves as a type of the harvest of this, our age. Our Lord’s words to His disciples as He sent them forth, during His ministry to that church-nation, should be carefully remembered, as giving proof that their special work then was **reaping**, and **not sowing**. He said to them, “*Lift up your eyes and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest: and he that **reapeth** receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal*” (Jn. 4:35-36). As the chief reaper in that harvest (as He also is in this one), the Lord said to the under-reapers, His sickle, “*I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labor; other men (the patriarchs, prophets, priests, and kings) labored, and ye entered into their labors*” — to reap the fruits of those centuries of effort.

In the Israelite harvest, the Lord, rather than to make goats into sheep, sought the blinded and scattered sheep of Israel, calling for all who *already were His sheep*, that they might hear His voice and follow Him. These sheep were the *final product* of all God’s dealings in that age. They constituted the FULLNESS that the revelation and life of that age could produce. They became the *embodiment* and *personification* of all the truth God had planted in men’s hearts from the days of Moses until Christ. They were indeed the **grain**, the **fruit**, the **harvest** at the end of the age!

Another and larger sowing took place at the dawn of our present age. On a certain day some Greeks approached the disciples of Jesus with the request, “Sirs, we would see Jesus.” This request was promptly carried to Jesus by Andrew and Philip, to which our Lord gave this strange and very remarkable reply, “*Except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth **much fruit***” (Jn. 12:24). In this cryptic statement Jesus likened Himself to a seed, the “grain of wheat” that was

sown in the earth to fall into the ground and die. Jesus, the Son of the living God, would be sown as a seed and be raised again. Jesus was the first of a new kind of God-man, and not only was He raised out of the tomb of physical death, but in centuries yet to come THIS SEED would produce a vast harvest of God-men in His exact image and likeness.

No seed is raised from the earth as just a singular seed, there is always an increase, the natural law of progression being “*first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear.*” Only one seed was planted in the earth, and the Christ who came out of that Jewish tomb was **not the harvest** — merely the **blade** breaking the ground. The multitude that will appear in the time of harvest, first the firstfruits, then the full harvest, will be *the seed of the seed*, the increase, everyone bearing the image and likeness of that CHRIST SEED which was planted in death. It is HIS LIFE that sprouted even higher on the day of Pentecost and has been developing in the body of Christ throughout the past twenty centuries. The “much fruit” will be a vast company in the time of harvest in whom the fullness of His life has been perfectly formed. John, his soul aflame with inspiration wrote, “*Beloved, now are we the children of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is*” (I Jn. 3:2). When He shall appear, when He shall be revealed, unveiled, we SHALL BE LIKE HIM! Wonderfully LIKE HIM! EXACTLY like Him! In His image! In His likeness, in the omniscience of His wisdom, in the purity of His truth, in the omnipotence of His power, in the immutability of His love, in the faithfulness of His purpose, full of His grace, His kindness, and His unending mercy! Since Jesus, the Son of God, is the *seed* which was sown, and the *life* that has grown, nothing short of this can be the **harvest!** The corporate body of Christ shall be **like Him** for He shall be perfectly formed in them all! That is the mystery. That is the harvest.

Commenting on this response of Jesus to the Greeks, George Hawtin wrote, “I am certain that the Lord’s reply was an enigma to those men to whom He spoke. The Greeks looking for Jesus could hardly be expected to comprehend a mystery so deep and eternal. They made their earnest request, “Sirs, we would see Jesus,” and He responded with His mysterious dissertation. We are not told whether Jesus ever consented to have those Greeks interview Him, but in answer to their request He gave them the oblique reply about the grain of wheat falling into the earth to die, then to be raised again and bring forth a vast harvest. His message to them was simply this: If they saw Jesus at that time they would see only one seed, one grain in the image of God — the man Christ Jesus. But there would be more, much more to CHRIST than appeared to them that day! A whole universal field of ripened grain was to follow in His likeness, born of that original seed, imbued with the very same life, raised in the same resurrection, who would be “the sons of God” and “the Christ” even as He is a son of God and the Christ of God.”

Jesus testified, “*I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit He taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth (pruneth) it, that it may bring forth more fruit*” (Jn. 15:1-2). The church, the vineyard of God! Surely this truth alone is sufficient to settle it in our hearts that the church’s day **must end in a harvest of many sons brought to glory!** If we are the planting of the Lord, then NOTHING SHALL PREVENT THE GREAT HUSBANDMAN FROM BRINGING HIS CROP TO MATURITY!

If we have considered the matter as we ought, we will surely see that this is not the hour to be looking for doom and gloom and for the devil to take over the world, or for Jesus to come and “evacuate” His saints away to heaven. The devil has run rough shod over the earth for six thousand long years, since that fateful day way back there in Eden. The night has been long and dark. But, thank God! a new day is now dawning in the earth. The night is almost over. The devil’s day is not dawning — the day of the Lord is upon us! The day of the great antichrist is not knocking at the door — it is almost over! How truly the creation groans, and travails in pain together until now, waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God! Oh, the foul lives, the defiled consciences, the troubled minds, the broken hearts, the sick bodies, the crying oppressions, the multiplied miseries of our race! What a world of sin and woe is contained in this one word

— war! What famines and pestilences, storms and earthquakes, floods and fires, revolutions and massacres inflict pain, sorrow, and death upon millions of the inhabitants of the world! The deepest and truest compassion for the sufferings of humanity must prompt the cry, “*How long, O Lord?*” And far away in the depths of my spirit today I hear the glad cry of the messenger from out of the temple, “*Thrust in Thy sickle and reap; for the time is come for Thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe!*” And apart altogether from the joy and glory that is to be brought at the revelation of Jesus Christ, the saints must long for His unveiling THAT CREATION ITSELF MAY BE DELIVERED FROM THE BONDAGE OF CORRUPTION, INTO THE GLORIOUS LIBERTY OF THE SONS OF GOD!

While we thus stand, as it were on Pisgah’s heights, and view the grand prospect just before us, our hearts rejoice in the Lord’s great plan, with unspeakable joy; and while we realize that much of God’s church is still in the wilderness of humiliation and testing, and that the hour of her actual triumph still lies before us, yet, seeing the indications of its rapid approach, and by faith already discerning the dawn of the New Day, we lift up our hearts and rejoice, knowing that the great husbandman is faithfully and assiduously watching over His vineyard and that He fully expects and daily works toward a vast and glorious harvest! Don’t think for one moment, my precious brother, my dear sister, that the harvest pertains exclusively to the manifest sons of God. Oh, no! They are but the FIRSTFRUITS! They are not, in fact, the harvest itself — the harvest is that which *follows* the gleaning of the firstfruits! We must not confuse the two. We will speak more about this in a moment, but suffice it to say, the harvest concerns the church of Jesus Christ. Our wonderful and glorious Head has a marvelous plan for His church, and He *will* sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, and He *shall* present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; for it *shall* yet be holy and without blemish before Him. Oh, what fullness of blessing and cause for joy and thanksgiving this truth contains!

It’s harvest time! “*Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He may send forth laborers into His harvest.*” *Speak* to the Man on the cloud that He *send forth* His sickle into the earth, and reap: for the time is come to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. That is what I am praying for in these days. I am praying for the sons of God. I am praying for the church, the body of Christ. I am praying for all who know Him and love His appearing. I am praying for *you*, my beloved. I am praying for a mighty harvest in these significant days!

FROM FIRSTFRUITS TO HARVEST

What is the harvest? The vast majority of Bible commentators say that it is God’s wrath and judgment upon the nations. Generally they refer to the “blood flowing even unto the horses’ bridles” as the portrayal of horrid war and great massacre. I have no hesitation whatever in telling you that the harvest is *not* a work of judgment! That is proved by its being the same in kind as the firstfruits which have preceded it! Such as the firstfruits are, such is the harvest. Let me explain.

The picture in the first part of chapter fourteen of the Revelation is that of the Lamb upon mount Zion and the one hundred and forty-four thousand with Him. As John beholds the scene, he is told that the 144,000 upon mount Zion are those who follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth, who have the Father’s name written on their foreheads, and they are *redeemed from among men*, being the FIRSTFRUITS unto God and to the Lamb. The term “firstfruits” is drawn from the well-known offering of “firstfruits” under the Old Testament law of Israel, in which the first portion of any harvest was gathered prior to the full harvest and dedicated to God, in token that the whole belonged to Him, and was recognized as His. These firstfruits were chosen because they were the very first of the grain in the field to ripen. Hence it always implies that something of the same kind will follow it. If there was a field of wheat, the firstfruits, the very first of the ripened grain, would be offered up to God, following which the entire field of wheat would eventually come to the same condition of maturity, though not offered up to God in the same special way for His unique purpose. Thus, the 144,000 are the *firstfruits* of God’s redemption, the very first of all the Lord’s people to enter into full and complete redemption in spirit, soul, and body, and into the full likeness,

image, and stature of Jesus Christ as sons of the Father! Many have supposed that the manifest sons of God are to be eternally unique, different from all the rest of God's people. But such cannot be! The firstfruits are not firstfruits because they are *different*, nor because they are *better*; they are firstfruits simply because they are **FIRST!**

They are firstfruits — meaning that following this the full harvest will be brought before God, gathered into His barn (kingdom), for the *harvest* must come as well as the *firstfruits*. It is significant to note here that just before the ministry of the three angels we are shown a wonderful picture of the firstfruits with the Lamb upon mount Zion. So what follows the messages of the three angels? Ah, immediately we see the dramatic picture of the gathering in of the full harvest! “*And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in Thy sickle, and reap: for the time has come for Thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And He that sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth; and the earth (realm) was reaped*” (Rev. 14:15-16). The reaping of the “earth-realm” can mean nothing else but that the Lord's people who have dwelt for ages in the carnal church systems of men have at last shaken off the shackles of religious Babylon, have been dealt with mightily by God, and been purged, cleansed, purified, refined, tested, tried, and transformed into the image of Christ! What a harvest that will be! In our text only the *fact* of this great moving of God is revealed; in chapter sixteen, however, under the outpouring of the “seven last plagues,” we are shown in great detail the precise *processes* of God by which this wonderful work is accomplished! It is indeed wonderful!

Between the firstfruits and the harvest we have the three angels' messages. The Holy Spirit bears witness within my spirit to the truth that the great purpose of the three angels' messages is to **PREPARE THE HARVEST FOR REAPING!** This is the positive side of God's dealing with His people. It is a three-fold word sent to the Lord's church unto all the ends of the earth, breaking up the fallow ground, and preparing the hearts of all to experience the fullness of redemption already revealed within the firstfruits! On the other hand, the “seven last plagues” signify the working of God's left hand, His hand of correction and purging, with consuming fire, by which all the roots, stones, and weeds of the false teachings of man and the ways of the flesh and the world are rooted out of men's lives so that there can be indeed a bountiful harvest!

In this great hour God is calling, separating, dealing with, and consecrating His firstfruits. And soon there will follow the harvest! What can we do in this significant time? All who have received the call to sonship are yielding themselves under the mighty hand of God. How we yearn for the full manifestation of the firstfruits! How we long for the eventual harvest! And yet we cannot *make* any of this happen! But we can rest patiently with the great Husbandman of the vineyard, in full assurance of the mighty working of His life within. As the apostle James has exhorted us, “*Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming (Gr: manifest presence) of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming (manifest presence) of the Lord draweth nigh*” (James 5:7-8).

To be continued...

J. PRESTON EBY

If you would like to receive these studies write to:

J. Preston Eby
P.O. Box 371240
El Paso TX 79937-1240

All writings are distributed on a free-will basis.