

KINGDOM BIBLE STUDIES

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

FROM THE CANDLESTICK TO THE THRONE

Part 113

THE SOUNDING OF THE TRUMPETS (continued)

“And there *came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth*: and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power” (Rev. 9:3).

Indeed, John did see locusts coming out of the smoke, however, they are being used as a picture, yes, a very fitting picture! And now it is important that we understand this picture properly. John sees the locusts come forth out of the smoke that escaped from the abyss. They did not themselves actually come out of the abyss; they originate with, or are produced by, the smoke! Nothing is said to come out of the abyss but the smoke which darkens the sun and the air; and out of the *smoke* the locusts come. It may be natural to think that, after all, they cannot be bred of the smoke, and that they must come with the smoke out of the pit; but naturalistic interpretations may easily deceive us, where the spiritual sense is the whole matter, and for the spiritual meaning there is deep significance. The smoke is not, as in other places, the smoke of tormenting fire, but fumes of malign spiritual influences which obscure the enlightenment of the Spirit and our own spiritual understanding. Out of this spiritual darkness, caused by the deceitfulness of the human heart, we can easily understand the locusts to be bred!

The locusts therefore are intimately associated with the smoke. Smoke is more of an ethereal, airy, vaporous, gaseous substance, whereas the locusts have a tangible form. The locusts represent the outward form of the spiritual concept. Arising from the abyss of the deceitfulness of the heart is the smoke of ego, thoughts, imaginations, desires, ambitions, perceptions, attitudes, interpretations, ideas, concepts, opinions, propositions, and divinations. None of these things are tangible, visible, physical things! Yet out of these come other things! The visible, tangible, physical things (locusts) which come out of the smoke represent the men, ministries, movements, organizations, governments, and activities that are spawned by the thoughts, perceptions, ideas, interpretations, and opinions that come from the heart! All the unfettered instincts of the soul have their root and source in the depths of the abyss. And all the outward embodiments and manifestations of these inward soulful instincts have their root and source in the smoke!

The locusts, then, are the *energy-charged* authority, words, and actions of men and systems which carry a very real power capable of wrecking much havoc in the lives of God's people. That these locusts become the personification of the deceitful intents of the heart is confirmed by the words of the prophet where, in reference to the might and power of Nineveh, he states that “Thy *crowned ones* are as the *locusts*” (Nahum 3:17). That which is crowned, of course, is a KING — a ruling one — that which sits on the throne and has authority and power over men! A friend has pointed out that this is, also, the thought which is carried by the Greek word *daimon* translated “devil” in the scriptures but from which we derive our English word “demon.” This word *daimon* means, literally, a DEIFIED SPIRIT! It is, then, a GOD that rules over man — a god-like spirit made so because it sits as a king or a “crowned one” in a man's life. This is naught but the **religious spirit** that rules over the Lord's people through the instrumentality of the movements, organizations, and church systems of man! Oh! What authority and power they exercise over men's lives! The priests and ministers of religion, and the systems they represent, are as *God* to the masses of Christians who blindly accept their words as the very words of God! Can you not see the mystery?

Out from the smoke of the deceitfulness of the heart comes every form of man-made church system, personality cult, kingdom building, organization, creeds and laws, manipulation and control. That which comes out of the smoke of the serpent's deceit only bites, stings, and torments! "And unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power...and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man" (Rev. 9:3-5). The diabolical heresies of man's religion appeal to man's intelligence and are subtle; but when they have clouded the sun of truth and life they are seen to be cruel and relentless, enslaving and exploiting, resulting in anguish and torment. The smoke includes the laws, rules, creeds and commandments of religion and the traditions of men. The locusts represent the actions and practices that the controlling, dominating, and legalistic spirit inflicts upon our lives. These are not pure, satisfying, comforting, assuring, edifying, revealing the heart of God and the mind of Christ; rather, they sting us with guilt, fear, condemnation, exploitation and bondage. They bite and eat away at us even as we endeavor to serve the Lord!

These come out of the darkened mind and ignorance of man, out of the false ideas about God and His word, *locusts* upon the earth! The "earth" signifies the carnal religious realm, and that which is soulical. "Upon the earth" carries the meaning of "to light on top of" as a bug that flies and lands on top of a stalk of corn or wheat. Spiritually, the locust indicates that which forms out of the imagination of carnal minds and lights or lands upon those who are growing in the field or vineyard of the Lord. These are the Lord's people who are meant to grow up unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. When a farmer sees locusts he knows he has a problem. Locusts devour and destroy! They ravage the harvest! These locusts are given the same authority as the scorpions of earth. One thing the called and chosen elect of the Lord have learned in this great kingdom day is that God has given us *power to tread on serpents and scorpions!* Aren't you glad!

Because of the desolations poured out upon God's people the Lord gave a word of assurance with promises of deliverance through the prophet Joel. He prophesied, "Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice: for the Lord will do great things. Be not afraid, ye beasts of the field: for the pastures of the wilderness do spring, for the tree beareth her fruit, the fig tree and the vine do yield their strength. Be glad then, ye *children of Zion*, and rejoice in the Lord your God: for He hath given you the former rain moderately, and He will cause to come down for you the rain, the *former rain*, and the *latter rain* in the first month. And the floors shall be full of *wheat*, and the fats shall overflow with *wine* and *oil*. And I will ***restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm***, my great army which I sent among you. And ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of the Lord your God, and none else: and *my people shall never be ashamed*" (Joel 2:21-26).

The plague that had come upon Israel was without parallel in their history. It consisted of successive devastations by locusts, of which naturalists say there were as many as ninety varieties in the Middle East. In the passage above four different words are used. They are *arbeh*, *gazam*, *yeleq*, and *hasil*, translated respectively as *locust*, *palmerworm*, *cankerworm*, and *caterpillar*. The reality is that these are not four different insects, they are four stages of the same insect! The Amplified Bible reads, "And I will restore or replace for you the years that the ***locust*** hath eaten — the ***hopping locust***, the ***stripping locust***, and the ***crawling locust...***" All these words are different names of the locust, referring to different stages of its development. And the same swarm of locusts, according to the advancing stages of its growth, had done its desolating work in every stage! Four is the number of universality — the ruinous activity of the locusts was full and complete. Nothing had escaped! The whole land had been laid waste.

While this prophecy appears very literal to Israel of old, yet we know that in the New Testament the promised *former rain* and *latter rain* are revealed to be the outpourings of the Holy Spirit upon God's spiritual elect. Thus, the prophecy pertains to SPIRITUAL REALITIES! The "land" is not the old land of Palestine over in the Middle East! The covenant of the old land of Canaan is *our example* to prepare us to enter the new and greater "land" of the kingdom of God on earth. The substance of that land is Christ! These words of Paul Mueller are so very significant for us all at this present time. "The Psalmist said, 'The righteous shall ***inherit the land***, and dwell therein forever' (Ps. 37:29). Not only shall the saints inherit the earth, but they shall inherit the land. This land is a special place reserved for the elect. It is the place that corresponds in type to Mt. Zion in Jerusalem, the place of David's throne. It is the glorious realm of spiritual Zion, the 'land' that corresponds to the Holiest of all in the tabernacle or house of the Lord. That place, or

land, is a land of the incorruptible and immortal glory of the presence of the Lord. From that 'land' the saints shall rule and reign with Christ in incorruptible bodies, with incorruptible minds, the mind of Christ.

"O that the wonderful spirit of revelation would enlighten us to the grandeur of these promises of God! The wisdom and understanding of the Spirit is being given to us. We are growing up to know the hope of our calling, and to see the glories that are reserved for us in the realm of the Spirit. Only as we are enlightened by the spirit of revelation can we possibly comprehend the marvelous truth of *our inheritance in Christ*. When we fully understand that Christ is our inheritance, the things of earth will indeed grow dim. The world and all things of it will lose its attraction, and we will run with patience the race that is set before us. Our glorious, risen Christ has already set down the footprints, the steps, into the glory that is reserved for us. He has pre-destined our walk unto His fullness. He has set aside an inheritance for us that makes the things of this world look like the paltry dust and ashes that they are. Compared to the splendor of the incorruptible and immortal Christ of glory, all else is corruption. He has reserved Himself for us! He has set aside the Holiest of all, the place of His greater presence, for the holy remnant who are now growing up into Him. What an inheritance! The steps to that glory are there. Walk in the Spirit and the way will be made clear" — end quote.

Many saints have no desire to attain experientially to the fullness of Christ Himself. They have no vision of *sonship*! They are more interested in a mansion over the hilltop, or a cabin in the corner of glory-land, or some such foolishness. They want to live next door to Jesus, but they have no yearning to be like Him, to overcome as He overcame, to be filled with the glory of the Father as Jesus was, and to reign with Him on His throne. Their vision has nothing to do with restoring all creation into the glory of God, they will be satisfied with a harp and a robe! But the land of our inheritance is peace, joy, righteousness, incorruptible life, divine wisdom, infinite knowledge, omnipotent power, universal dominion, and eternal glory! All this is ours as sons of God, but only as we *grow up into Christ* and *put on Christ* do we become mature and arrive in the position to assume this responsibility of possessing our possessions. We are talking about the *full stature* of Christ within ourselves, not gold bath tubs in heaven. By a mature understanding and a divine faith we see the way to enter the land and take possession of all the riches and glory of full sonship to God!

The army in Joel chapter two is an army of locusts that devastates the land of God. It represents the adversaries to true spirit life that come into the vineyard or garden of the Lord and lay it waste. They strip the leaves from the vines and cause the fruit to rot. There is a progression in the growth and destructiveness of the locusts that are in the vineyard of God. The most destructive of all is the full-grown consuming locust, more destructive than licking or gnawing. These locusts have gone from crawling to hopping to swarming to consuming! As we look at all the different levels of experience, doctrine, ministry, church life, and control in the church world it is obvious that not every realm is equally destructive to spiritual life! A few nurture that life to a high degree. Yet all the carnal, man-made systems, creeds, organizations, programs, and promotions express *locust mentalities* and *locust ministrations* that rob God's people of their true destiny, vision, purpose, understanding, faith, wisdom, and power. These movements of man, like the locusts, usually begin small and unpretentious, but soon gather strength and become hopping locusts, and before you know it they are airborne and are everywhere in their full-blown destructiveness. The church today is literally filled and totally covered with these devouring locusts!

Ah, how often the voice of the locust speaks the very same things within us! The locust voice says, "Don't talk about being *perfect* — no one can be perfect in this world! Don't talk about the *nature of God* — that is too high for you! Don't talk about *conquering death* — everybody dies, and all who have preached that have likewise died! You will go by way of the grave at last! Don't talk about becoming *exactly like Christ* — nobody can measure up to Him, and you are taking too much upon you, taking away from His glory! Don't talk about being *manifest sons of God* — it is enough to join a good church, support the preacher, give to missions, be a faithful Christian, and make heaven your home! Besides, you are weak, you are now old and feeble; you can't preach or teach the Word; you are beset by physical ailments and disease, silly of you to think of overcoming sin and death; you have already failed so many times to please your heavenly Father; God never answers your prayers anyhow; you have no church or fellowship, no one to encourage and strengthen you, no covering over you; you have too many problems and hang-ups, and you aspire to deliver creation from the bondage of corruption! You are young and inexperienced, others have walked in this truth for years; your own home is out of order, you are bedeviled by an opposing spouse and

rebellious children; and you're wanting to be a *manifest son of God!* It is far beyond your ability, you can never make it! Don't talk about putting on the *mind of Christ* — you'll never get rid of your old carnal mind until you die! Don't talk about *ruling and reigning* with Christ — it might go to your head! Who do you think you are, anyway! Don't talk about being *kings and priests* after the Order of Melchizedek — that's just for Jesus! It is absolutely impossible for you to attain and possess such high and holy things! It's just an ego trip!" Oh, yes! The locusts have so devastated the fields and vineyards of the Lord until there is little mature fruit of Christ anywhere!

All through the body of Christ today I see the destroying army of negative attitudes, static creeds, false images of God, exploitation of the people, childish interpretation of scripture, human control and manipulation, unbelief, spiritual stagnation, stunted growth, Babylonian bondage, entertaining the saints rather than perfecting the saints, carnal programs and promotions, which one and all rob the Lord's people of the glorious and eternal reality of the fullness of Christ, bringing them to powerlessness and reproach in the midst of the earth. Can any doubt that the church is full of locusts! As Lynn Hiles once said, every time I see these man-made programs, carnal concepts, and fleshly methods pawned off as "ministry" I want to get in that vineyard and ***kill some bugs!*** I tell you today, God is cleansing our land of these locusts! The word of the Lord is coming to God's called and chosen elect in this day as it came in that long ago to the spirit of the prophet Joel, proclaiming, ***"I will RESTORE unto you the years that the LOCUST hath eaten!"*** To all who walk in the spirit of truth in this hour, under the mighty hand of God, the Lord is RESTORING WITHIN US all that the locusts have devoured! Praise His wonderful name!

HURT NOT THE TREES...

"And it was commanded them that they should not *hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads*" (Rev. 9:4).

"Power," that is, authority, or the ability to act effectively, was "given" to the locusts, as the scorpions of the earth have power. They could carry out their mission only with God's approval! We must understand that in spite of all the carnality of religion, God is still moving in people's lives and ministries in those realms! So the Lord established their perimeters. The locusts have a limitation on what they can do, a limitation set by God. "Hurt not the grass, the green things, nor any tree." In other words, you are given a sphere of influence among the people, but don't hurt the living things, the little life they have in manifestation, the good things they do in a sincere effort to serve God. The grass speaks of those who are young in the Lord, but live close to the earth, out of the carnal mind. They have not ascended within themselves into the heavens of God's Spirit. Grass is also a covering, an aesthetic, which covers the earth, conceals what lies beneath, veiling the true nature of the flesh. They grow very close to the earth, yet do express some life on that level of immaturity in Christ. The "green thing" is something a little higher, something that would give life like a green vegetable or herb, but still has its roots in the earth, in a carnal realm. These are the works of those who have an anointing of life and the bread of truth from God, they are truly life-givers, but in spite of their anointing and ministry of life they are still bound in the carnal systems of man and think with a Babylonish mind. The world is full of these! Christian television is full of these! Trees are strong things that grow out of an earthly realm, yet have life and express life. These grow higher yet, but still their roots go deep into the earth-realm rather than into the waters of the river of God, where grows the tree of life!

The locusts are commanded not to "hurt" these three levels of experience, life, and works. "Only those *men...*" It is not the realms of experience, life, and works that God is out to destroy, nor is it even the truth of God as expressed on these various levels that God is after, but the *men* themselves. God is dealing with something beyond the measure of life men possess and the level on which they express that life — His concern is with the *mind* — their understanding, perception, and way of thinking! How can we know it is their mind God is dealing with? Simply because the locusts hurt only those *men* who ***have not the seal of God in their FOREHEADS!*** They can touch only those who have not the "Seal of God." Therefore, for those who have the seal of God the locusts cannot bring pain in the "region of their thought...their forehead." It is only the seal of God in our thinking that can stop them! They cannot go against the "mind of Christ." And when we come to the grass, the green things, and the trees, it is not their immaturity, not their imperfect works that are affected — it is the fountainhead, the mainspring of their condition — a ***mind***

unconquered and unreplaced by the *mind of Christ!* These have not been lifted up into the mind of Christ, nor do they know by the Spirit their true identity as sons of God. And lest we should think that these are just those carnal Christians out there in the religious systems of the world, let me tell you something. The locusts will sting any area in God's elect where we are not walking in the mind of Christ! Any man who lacks anything of the mind of Christ is subject to the sting of the locust! In the words of the old song, "It's not my brother, nor my sister, but it's ME, Oh Lord!"

TORMENTED FIVE MONTHS

And to them it was given that they should *not kill them*, but that they should be *tormented five months*: and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man" (Rev. 9:5).

Have you yet seen by revelation of the Spirit of God that you will have torment in your soul — in your mind, in your emotions — until the seal of the living God is placed in your forehead, until you begin to think out of the mind of Christ and live out of the spirit-man which you truly are. The locusts out of the smoke of the pit will torment you *until* you identify with Christ who *is your life* and your *only reality*. If by the grace of God this holy vision can burst upon you, you will stand upon the heights of the mount of God in triumph and victory! Nothing can destroy your true identity or the eternal life you have in Christ! Some who read these lines have passed through some very hard places, trials, temptations, and testings which pressed you beyond measure, and you despaired of life itself. Be of good cheer, for the locusts are under commandment from God — they cannot *kill you!*

We have all experienced those seasons of weakness, failure, discouragement, doubts, oppression, and hopelessness. But in it all the gift of God in our vessel was left untouched, unscathed, and unharmed! The deposit of God was left alone. The life of God in you, the real you, is born of an *incorruptible seed*. It is both incorruptible and indestructible! That which is born of the flesh *is flesh*, and always acts like flesh. That which is born of the Spirit *is spirit*, and always acts like spirit. That is the mystery! Your heavenly Father has so constructed your spiritual life that it is always protected in your earthen vessel and even the locusts in the likeness of horses prepared for battle, with crowns on their heads, their faces as the faces of men, their teeth like the teeth of lions, their wings as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle, and with tails with stings like unto scorpions — even these cannot touch the new creation of God which you truly are! Even God will not and cannot destroy that which is of Him within you, nor will He, nor can He torment it! You are His beloved son, precious in His eyes. He has set His eternal, unconditional love upon you! "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!" When we fail to identify with who we really are we can be *tormented*, and we all have been there! It seems to me that there is no greater torment than the *spirit of condemnation!* Yet, thank God, even that torment has a time limit!

In the Greek, the words used here for "torment" and "tormented" are *basanizo* and *basanismo* which are both derived from the word *basanos*. *Basanos* is what is commonly known in English as the "touchstone." Its proper usage in olden times was to try the genuineness of gold. The pure gold rubbed on the stone would leave a peculiar mark, different to that of other metals or alloys. Therefore it acquired a symbolic significance: *a test or criterion for determining the quality or the genuineness of a thing; to test for purity or truth*. Therefore, you see, when we are "tormented" by the locusts, we are having our genuineness and quality tested — for if we are being tormented by the locusts it should clearly reveal to us that we are NOT WALKING IN THE TRUTH, NOR IN THE MIND OF CHRIST, NOR IN OUR TRUE IDENTITY AS SONS OF OUR HEAVENLY FATHER! That is the test, and the truth of what mind, word, and identity we are walking in is made manifest by the "sting" of the locusts! They cannot sting one who has the seal of God in his forehead!

Their province is to torment those who have not the seal of God in their foreheads, or who are not consciously abiding in the mind of Christ and the truth as it is in Jesus. Is it not true that the false doctrines of the church systems of man are a torment to those over whom they have obtained the mastery? The sting of the locusts often involves the emotions of fear, dread, and terror. Terror is the emotion people feel when facing the unknown or when threatened. It is the emotion we come face to face with when we hear the doctor announce, "You have cancer," or the stock market falls a couple thousand points just when we are

ready to retire. There is also *spiritual terror* inflicted by what one brother calls *terrorist preachers*. When I was a boy, the churches in which I was raised painted such a picture of God as One who is so exacting, demanding, judgmental, and vindictive, that if you went to bed at night with one little unconfessed sin in your life, not under the blood of Jesus, and should the “rapture” take place during the night, you would be left behind! The preachers filled a lot of altars with weeping, wailing, hysterical people with that kind of *terrorism!*

I tell you that in those days I could not truly love God for *being afraid of Him!* The coming of the Lord sent no thrill of glory through my soul; the very thought of His coming struck terror in my heart! God was so high and holy, so awesome and exacting, so stern and demanding that I was sure I could never be quite ready to stand before His fearsome presence. That sting of the scorpion-tailed locust revealed that I was not SEALED WITH THE SEAL OF GOD IN MY FOREHEAD! I did not yet know what it meant to WALK IN THE MIND OF CHRIST! How my ransomed soul exults with joy unspeakable and full of glory that God has driven that false religious locust-spirit out of my land so that I may now KNOW HIM AS HE REALLY IS! Thank God, the allotted *five months of torment* came to an end and I no longer feel the sting of the scorpion tail! Do you think we should be afraid of someone as gracious and merciful as our *heavenly Father?* Should we cringe before Him like a dog that expects a kick? What has God done to us that we should be afraid of Him? God *so loved* the world that He gave His Son for us! And, behold, what *manner of love* the Father hath bestowed upon *us*, that we should be called the *sons of God!* Same love, for God *is Love!*

It is a fact that most fear has its root in the *unknown*. People fear what they cannot see, or what they do not understand, or what they imagine to be. It's no wonder, then, that since religion deals with an unseen world — with spirit beings, the hereafter, eternity, future punishments and rewards, heaven and hell — that people's *fears* play a very important role in most of the world's *religions*. You must admit that fears of pain, suffering, or death; fears of coming judgment, tribulation, or wrath; fears of spiritual punishment and unknown, unnamed torments in hell; all of these fears virtually *dominate* most of the religions on earth — those men who have not the seal of God in their foreheads!

Those who are God's called and chosen elect in this great day of the Lord are now being delivered from all fear and terror, for they understand by the deep inner revelation of the spirit, and the teaching of the mind of Christ, that all things are in our Father's hands and all that happens in our lives is part of His wise purpose for our growth and development in Him. *He is in control*, no matter how dark or hopeless things *seem*, and He will bring us forth triumphantly as we commit our way to the Lord and trust also in Him. Now together we can raise our voices in blessed chorus with the Psalmist and joyfully sing, “I will bless the Lord at *all times*: His praise shall continually be in my mouth. I sought the Lord, and He heard me, and ***delivered me from all my fears!***” (Ps. 34:1,4). The writer to the Hebrews adds, “He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and ***I will not fear what man shall do unto me***” (Heb. 13:5-6).

Even in the “valley of the shadow of death” He has promised to be with us, and even there we shall “fear no evil” (Ps. 23:4). Those in whom the spirit of sonship is revealed fear no evil! We do not fear the wrath of men! We do not fear sickness or tragedy! We do not fear death! We do not fear judgment! We do not fear hell! We do not fear the antichrist! We do not fear world government! We do not fear great tribulation! We do not fear the beast! We have no fear of the “end times”! We have no fear of economic collapse! We have no fear of terrorists! We have no fear of conspiracies! We have no fear of earthquakes! We have no fear of tsunamis! We have sought the Lord, He has heard us, and has ***DELIVERED US FROM A-L-L OUR FEARS*** by the revelation of His mighty power working in us! He has delivered us from all the “stings” of all the scorpion-tailed locusts! By this you can know that you are sealed with the seal of God, that you are a *son indeed!*

No one has written more eloquently of the sting of the locusts than Bob Torango when he penned the following exhortation. “Why, you may ask, doesn't the world follow after the message of the church? The answer is that the message is one of a God who is a dictator instead of a God that is a Father. The message of the church is tainted with words of judgment promising harsh punishment for sins, delivered without a voice of love. This nullifies the true reason for God's judgment, which is to bring to us correction and joy

unspeakable and full of glory. It is the same scenario that is played out every day in an abusive home where the parents lash out at their children in a fit of rage, striking them with physical blows meant to bring them into submission, but accomplishing the direct opposite. There can be no substitute for love! A hug will accomplish more correction than a blow to a child's body.

"I am not suggesting that a child should never be reprimanded, for I realize that any child will continue to mis-behave if given a free rein, but I do believe that the parent is responsible for punishment that exceeds the transgression. This happens more times than we want to think about. The parent has a bad day at work, the car breaks down, the air conditioner goes out, and the frustration over these matters is unleashed upon the children which, by the way, can't do anything right in the eyes of the enraged judge of the house. The result is a beating that is more therapeutic for the parent in venting their frustrations than it is for correction of the child's behavior. Judgment of any kind should never be administered in a spirit of rage or loss of sensibility. The result is much worse than if there were no punishment at all.

"The church, enraged over the continued rejection of their version of the gospel story, becomes more and more abusive toward anyone that does not see things their way. Instead of being the magnet of God's love to creation, the church has become a judge of God's wrath that cannot be approached by anyone except those who have lost all hope of love in their life and commit to the stranglehold of religion just to belong to a group that will give them a sense of security. This, dear ones, is the standard profile of a child that is abused! Some of us that have never been found in an abusive relationship have doubts whether or not the relationship is truly abusive. Why don't the abused children tell someone about their beatings if they are truly abused? Why don't they run away from home? The saddest truth of all in an abusive situation is that the abused individual, especially a child, is convinced that they deserve this treatment! Added to this is the reinforcement that is given to this submissive behavior by our societal mores that continuously drill into our children that their parents are the judges of their life and have the moral and legal authority to administer punishments whenever they see fit. The child is reinforced to never question the judgment of the parents by teachers, which are surrogate judges at school, and by their playmates who are in ordinary relationships with their parents. The abused child is cut off, quite literally, from any hope of escape or explaining the situation to others. The result is a child that grows up to be either withdrawn or extremely low in confidence and self-esteem, or else one that acts out upon society the same acts of senseless violence that were acted out upon them.

"The world mirrors this same stereotypical relationship with the church! They are either scared to death of the church or they are violently opposed to it. What a tragedy to see the church in this shape! Whereas the church has been ordained to be the mother of the world's lost children, opening her arms with grace and love to all that are in need, she has instead been portrayed as an abusive judge in the earth, spitting out statements of eternal damnation and unthinkable horrors on all that do not follow her commands. *No wonder the Lord is preparing another church!* The church that is known as 'mainstream' is a fake, dear ones! She is a wicked stepmother that has no bond of love with the world at all. This wicked church loves the world in word only, and that only because the Bible says she must! The lost children of the world are only her lawful responsibility and, by God, if they don't shape up she is threatening to throw them all into eternal hell fire. Raise up your Jerusalem, O Lord! Raise up the true Mother of us all, bring her to us and let her lay her cool, soft hand upon the wounds that have been given by the abusive, counterfeit church of religious dictators. Let her sweet kisses fall upon our head and let them take away the fear and anguish that has been inflicted upon the world's lost children. Oh, dear friends, can't you just envision the power, the dunamis and exousia, that will be unleashed when the true, nurturing nature of the New Jerusalem, the beautiful Bride of Christ, the loving, compassionate, Mother of us all wraps her arms around us and holds us until the crying stops, and cleans the dirt from us as she takes the filthy rags off of us that religion put upon us, and she covers us in clean, silky linen made up of the righteousness of our Father.

"Even now, as we speak out against the tyranny of an out of control religious mother of Babylon, we see the damage that has been done and the scars that remain in the hearts of the people of God. Some still flinch and pull away when the hand of Christ is stretched out to them. For some, the message of a loving God who asks nothing of us but to believe in His love and come to live with Him in peace and grace, is too good to be true. For them, the abused offspring of a wicked guardian, beaten without reason, locked up in cult-like communities of religious bondage, forbidden to question the teachings and rules of their overseers,

psychologically brainwashed into testifying to the goodness of their tormentors in order to stay in good graces and not be publicly humiliated, for them the message of unconditional love is foreign and suspicious. In their world of abuse, everyone has an angle, an ulterior motive, a con. Nothing is truly free in their relationship with the wicked mother! Yes, they have programs for the adults, a big gymnasium for the children, a beautiful building to gather in, but only if they continue to give their money to the wicked mother. In fact, they have come to the awful truth that mother only loves them if they support her with their money. Take the money away and mother becomes a tyrant accusing them of neglect and warning them of the consequences that come to them that dare to leave off from supporting the prison house. The wicked mother especially enjoys telling her forced child laborers about the tales of what will happen if they think they could ever leave her domain. She goes into great sickening detail in describing the terror that awaits them outside the walls of her prison.

“Instead of the true gospel story of our heavenly Father and His grace and love, and His eternal commitment to our redemption, we are told of God’s eternal wrath against us for something we don’t even remember doing against Him. The fake church, the abusive mother, tells her young children that they are hopelessly evil and that all of their lives they will have to serve her in order to earn their way to heaven. The abused are told that God can’t even look on them, that He never heard their prayers before they came to live with the wicked mother, that God turned away from them in their sorrow. These are the bed time stories that the mainstream church puts her children to rest by. Whereas, the opposite is true! God always hears groaning creation and not one word intended for His ears goes by the wayside. Indeed, God has moved for us even when we were sinners and countless times saved us from destruction, with or without our asking Him. He has moved heaven and earth to keep us in this world and is constantly working on our behalf” — end quote.

The underlying foundation and core of religious Babylon’s theology is designed to activate fear — fear of hell, fear of an angry God, fear of God’s wrath, fear of the great and terrible tribulation God will pour out upon mankind, fear of judgment, fear of God’s curse if they rob Him by not paying their tithe, fear of blessings withheld if somehow they fail to please God sufficiently, fear of separation from God if they don’t obey the church, or observe the proper rituals, ceremonies, and ordinances, fear of any little sin that may keep God from hearing their prayers, fear that God will abandon them if they are not faithful to the church system, fear of pain and loss. You name it, fear works in every realm that touches our daily life! Who can deny that these are the very underpinnings of the popular churches’ theology? But, thank God, “*Perfect love casteth out all fear*” (I Jn. 4:18). What a word that is! When the pure and perfect and all-encompassing *love of God* is revealed in our hearts every fear mentioned above will take wings and fly away! All “fear” of God is incompatible with Infinite Love! The more He is REVEALED TO US IN TRUTH, the more we understand that all of His actions are motivated by love, and in our best interests. His corrections are done in love, to instruct us in righteousness. Thus, while the testings, overcoming processes, might be hard on the flesh, yet we need not fear them, but commit ourselves into the loving hands of our Father, and trust Him for the ultimate victory. Oh, yes! When this mind is in us that was in Christ Jesus, there is no more “sting” of the scorpion-tailed locust of religion!

Let us further pursue this thought of the “fear” of the Lord. The Bible speaks often of the *fear of the Lord* and we are admonished throughout the scriptures to *fear God*. One of the seven spirits of God enumerated in Isaiah 11:1-2 is the *Spirit of the Fear of the Lord*. This is one of the seven spirits that rested upon Jesus, the firstborn Son of God! And it is one of the seven spirits of God that rests upon the elect of the Lord throughout the book of Revelation! This spirit is sent forth into our hearts from the very heart of HIM, the LAMB in the midst of the throne! As with all the seven spirits of God, the spirit of the fear of the Lord shall be a most remarkable thing in the ministry of the manifest sons of God as they arise to bring the kingdom of God to pass in all the earth in that glorious age of the ages!

The very first principle we must understand in this connection is that the fear of the Lord has absolutely and positively nothing to do with being afraid. Jesus does not have the spirit of FRIGHT! Jesus was not, and is not, TERRIFIED of His Father, neither does He impart to men the spirit of terror. No sinner was ever apprehensive, fearful, or terrified in the presence of Jesus! “God hath not given unto us the *spirit of fear* (dread, fright, terror, horror, panic, alarm, apprehension, disquietude); but of *power*, and of *love*, and of a *sound mind*” (II Tim. 1:7). In the scriptures our English word “fear” is translated from the Hebrew word

yirah and the Greek word *phobos*. These words have two principle meanings: first, that apprehension of evil or danger which normally cause one to flee or fight — an expectation of harm or pain which evokes a feeling of alarm or dread; and second, that awe and reverence which a man of sense feels in the presence of that which is high and eminent, such as a king or authority. A child feels the first of these kinds of fear in the presence of a mad dog or a cruel and abusive parent; and the second before a parent who is good and loving, but who must also be just, or before a teacher or trainer of renown who puts him through rigorous exercises which in the end produce wonderful and incredible results.

In the New Testament the Greek word *phobos* is used in both the above senses. On one occasion we read that the disciples of Jesus “cried out for fear” being frightened and terrified because they *thought* they saw a ghost! (Matt. 14:26). But later we read, “Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking *in the fear of the Lord*, and in the *comfort of the Holy Ghost*, were multiplied” (Acts 9:31). Here, the second meaning of fear is clearly indicated, the awesome *reverence* of God!

I once read a story that so clearly illustrates the nature of the fear of the Lord that has been birthed in all who truly know Him and walk with Him. The brother that related this story said, “Several years ago I married a young couple who were, and still are, very much in love with one another. They had met when they were thirteen and fourteen, had never looked at anyone else, and wouldn’t today after all these years. They went away on their honeymoon and after a few weeks came home again. I saw them in the meeting the next Sunday and greeted them with a little pleasantry. I asked the groom if his bride had burned the roast for their first dinner. They laughed, and she said, ‘Oh, I was afraid that I was going to. I had read so much about the bride being unable to cook that I decided that John was going to have the very best meal a bride could prepare for her husband. So I began about three o’clock. I got everything out and started to work. When I finally put things on to cook, I wanted everything to turn out well, and I was afraid they wouldn’t, and, of course, he had to be a little late, and I was afraid things would be spoiled.’ I interrupted her and said, ‘You have said *three times* that you were *afraid*. Did you think that John was going to beat you?’ She pouted and said, ‘Of course not.’ She looked at him with all the love of her heart in her eyes. ‘But,’ I persisted, ‘You said that you were afraid!’ She broke in, ‘You know what I mean.’ And of course I knew what she meant! Her fear was not fright; her fear was A GREAT AND INTENSE DESIRE TO SERVE AND TO PLEASE the one to whom she had given herself entirely, the one whom she respected and esteemed above all others.”

Perhaps this simple story will help us understand what is meant by the fear of the Lord. The fear of the Lord is a godly thing, a wonderful thing, a lovely thing! How many precious believers, influenced by the false doctrines of the church systems, have absolutely no conception of the difference between the pure and holy fear of the Lord and *fright* of the Lord! God is love, and He loved us before the foundation of the world and chose us and picked us out in Christ! He predestinated us and sent Jesus to redeem us! While we were yet sinners in the flesh God commended His love toward us! God said, “O that there were such an heart in them, that they would *fear me*, and keep my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!” (Deut. 5:29). Here the Lord plainly says that He wants His people to have “fear” of Him. But He wants the *same kind* of fear that an obedient son would have toward a loving father! The kind of fear our heavenly Father desires to be a continual emotion within every member of His elect is like an *awesome awareness*; like a full, consuming knowledge of His great *power*, His great *ability*, His great *holiness*, His great *wisdom*, His loving *foreordination*, His wonderful *plan* and *purpose* in our lives, and in the whole creation! The fear of the Lord is *reverence* for the Lord. It is profound respect, mingled with awe, affection, and veneration. It is reverential trust, hope, and expectation!

Another dimension of truth concerning the sting of the locusts has to do with the pain inflicted on the Lord’s people through the *human conscience*. Many people have been led to believe that the human conscience is one of the safest of guides. Some even contend that the masses of people who never truly heard of Jesus deserve to go to everlasting damnation because God spoke to them and revealed sin to them *in their conscience*, therefore they are without excuse. That is a horrible lie! Even if they did know right from wrong through their conscience, that did not reveal Jesus to them, and Jesus is the Saviour, not doing good things because our conscience would bother us if we did evil. That would be salvation by *works*!

The problem with the human conscience is that, first, it is a product of the fall — the knowledge of good and evil! Second, it is a conscience with power to condemn you for wrong-doing, but with no power to compel you to do right. Third, it is totally undependable so far as the life of sonship and the kingdom of God is concerned, being *conditioned* by the external influences of *this world*. To understand the truth of which I now speak you have only to observe the life of a child. In their first bloom of innocence children readily develop a sense of what is right. But as they grow older, deprived of original simplicity, imbibing of the voices, concepts, and influences of the world around them — parents, friends, teachers, television, books, movies, news, etc. — they become affected by the values they learn from these sources and their conscience becomes **CONDITIONED TO JUDGE RIGHT AND WRONG BY THE STANDARD OF WHAT THEY ARE TAUGHT**. Your conscience is like a computer into which data has been fed from childhood on. Your “computer” gives out the information that has been fed into it!

The conscience takes the shape of the things it is fed. The conscience of a Hindu has been conditioned to believe that a cow is an especially sacred animal, to be revered. His conscience would smite him were he to kill and eat a cow! What mental anguish he would suffer if he were required to dine with you at the local Outback Steakhouse! But if one is raised in a Catholic home he knows quite well that a cow is not sacred, and his conscience is not pained by eating beef, yet, if he bends his knee before the idol-image of a saint, his conscience will approve that, because that is how his conscience has been conditioned! Should a good Baptist be required to kneel before the image of a saint and pray to the saint, his conscience conditioned by Baptist values, would torment him and not let him sleep!

This brings us to a most marvelous verse of scripture. “Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, let us draw near with a true heart full of assurance of faith, ***having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience***” (Heb. 10:22). When quickened by the spirit of revelation this passage staggers the imagination with its wonders. Such things are too wonderful for me! In our carnal state while yet our eyes are dim through the ravages of sin and death and the weak and insipid rule of the conscience, we can but see through a glass darkly. But now comes the word: “Having our hearts sprinkled (purified) from an *evil conscience*” — having the “evil conscience” or the “defiled conscience” **REMOVED FROM OUR HEARTS** by the cleansing blood of the Christ!

I have shared the following experience before, but would share it again in this connection. I was raised in a Pentecostal home. So, upon arriving at young manhood I had acquired a **PENTECOSTAL CONSCIENCE!** It was shaped by the doctrines, practices, and traditions of the Pentecostal movement in the area of south Alabama where I lived as a boy. In those churches there were many rules and traditions, some of which have changed through the years. For example, the women were not allowed to wear facial makeup of any kind, and lipstick, especially, was the sin of Jezebel! Short or curled hair was sinful. Women could not wear slacks and their dresses must be long, with long sleeves and high necks. Bright, splashy colors were a sign of worldliness. And then no jewelry of any kind was permitted — not even a wedding band!

I remember when, as a boy preacher, I wanted a tie pin to hold my tie in place. I thought about the tie pin for a long time before getting up enough courage to buy one. I purchased a rather plain, gold colored one. I shall never forget the day I put it on, stood before the mirror, looked at myself, and said proudly, “Preston, you’ve really done it!” Then at once my Pentecostal conscience smote me and I took the thing off. I had to go back to the safety pin! You see, my conscience had been formed in the Pentecostal tradition and I thought that was *God’s standard of righteousness!* Shortly thereafter a fresh and marvelous move of the Holy Spirit swept over my life, quickening, bringing glory and the liberating spirit of revelation from God; there came a new and wonderful *unveiling of Christ* to my heart, and for the first time in my life I clearly saw the bondage of tradition, the commandments of men taught as the doctrine of Christ, for the pitiful thing it is. The blessed Spirit of God turned the searchlight within and I saw that just as the sinner needs his heart cleansed from adultery, lying, drunkenness, cursing, and all the ungodly works of the flesh, so did my heart need to be cleansed from the traditions of religion — **PURGED FROM AN EVIL, DEFILED, CONDITIONED, WARPED, DISTORTED, PERVERTED, RELIGIOUS CONSCIOUS!** How desperately the Lord’s people need this purging; for many the conscience still labors under the hangover of multiplied man-made standards, duty-bound rituals and ceremonies, and dead letter-of-the-word ordinances and observances.

Hear, oh man, oh woman of God, and give earnest heed ye sons of God! “For if...the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the *purifying of the flesh: how much more* shall the blood of Christ...PURGE YOUR CONSCIENCE FROM **DEAD WORKS** to serve the living God” (Heb. 9:13-14). He who writes these lines testifies to those who read them that no one can serve “the *living* God” with “*dead* works.” Dead works are the fruit of spiritual deadness, that have no spiritual life in them, no life of the Spirit of the Living God! Some think “dead” means “sinful” works. Yet here “dead works” are not crimes and immoral conduct, but rather all the formal, empty, false religious observances and self-invented acts of righteousness, and works of the law whereby men would seek to please and serve God. These things are imposed upon the Lord’s people by ministers who are unable to discern spirit from flesh or truth from error!

When I was a young man many of my peers had a heart after God and truly wanted to serve God. Every time we had a “revival” they would run to the altar weeping, repenting, seeking after God. But the church told them they couldn’t go to the movies, couldn’t wear a short-sleeved dress, couldn’t go to ball games, couldn’t wear makeup or jewelry, and laid a hundred other laws and commandments on them which they didn’t have the will power to keep. Therefore, within two weeks after the revival they “backslid,” went back into the world — not because they didn’t desire to walk with God, but the price seemed too high. In their backslidden condition they lived in perpetual fear of hell and damnation, tormented in mind and conscience, ashamed, mortified, and distressed beyond belief. Oh, my brother, my sister, what “stings” of the scorpion-tailed locusts! The preachers talk long and loud about these weird, vicious creatures that are going to crawl up out of the pit of hell one day and torment all the poor souls who missed the rapture — and know not that **THEY THEMSELVES, AMONG OTHERS, ARE THE VERY LOCUSTS JOHN BEHELD COMING OUT OF THE SMOKE FROM THE ABYSS!**

As the living God, He is all, and does all and fills all — the ever-present and ever-working God. Cleansed from our contact with the death of religion **WE KNOW THIS GOD** and have fellowship with Him and serve Him. It has nothing to do with the “touch not, taste not, handle not” commandments of men, such things have nothing to do with life in the spirit. **TO SERVE THE LIVING GOD!** What a word! The glory of the New Creature is to reveal God, to be a vessel into which He can pour His fullness, a channel through which He can show forth His glory, an instrument for working out His purposes. This is what man was created for — in the image of God. The image of God has nothing to do with whether you wear ear rings or sip a glass of wine. Those are carnal, foolish notions of self-righteous legalistic minds! The whole object of redemption is to bring us back to a life in the living reality of God. It is for this that the Holiest of all has been opened and we are bidden to boldly enter in. It is for this that our conscience is cleansed by the blood, purged from dead works. A life in the Holiest of all is a life in which everything is done under the sense of God’s glory and presence, by His indwelling in our spirit, by the outworking of His power, and to His glory; a life that has no object but to live by the life of God within and do His will. That is what the New Creation Man is being formed for today! Praise God, a people is being formed to walk as God in the earth, the change is on and we *are being changed!*

To be continued...

J. PRESTON EBY