

# KINGDOM BIBLE STUDIES

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

## FROM THE CANDLESTICK TO THE THRONE

### Part 124

#### MEASURING THE TEMPLE (continued)

"And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and *measure the temple of God, and the altar...*" (Rev. 11:1).

Armed with the understanding that the "*naos*" or "temple" is in fact the *inner sanctuary*, comprising both the holy place and the most holy place, it is clear that the "altar" here is not the brazen altar of burnt sacrifice, for that stood in the outer court and the outer court was not to be measured. It is, therefore, the golden altar of incense which stood in the "holy place" of the "*naos*."

The book of Revelation is itself like unto the innermost sanctuary, it is the "holy place" and "most holy place" of the Bible! In the rest of the Bible we read instruction on how to draw near to God. In the book of Revelation God sets open the door to His secret dwelling-place, and He shows us how His elect people come to Him, speak with Him, enjoy intimacy of fellowship with Him, and enter into vital union with Him. There we see the throne of grace and power and set before it the golden altar of incense — the *ministry* of worship, thanksgiving, praise, prayer, fellowship, and communion! The altar is a place of meeting God. It is a place right on the inside of us, the secret sanctum where dwells our mysterious essence of being. It is there that we touch God in our inward being, and He touches us and draws us into the Holiest of all. In that meeting He energizes and illumines us, and we minister unto Him and He ministers unto us, and in and through us, by the Spirit. It is indeed wonderful!

By inspiration of the Spirit the prophet David mused, "Let my *prayer be set before Thee as incense*, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice" (Ps. 141:2). The offering up of incense was a great part of the worship of the Aaronic priesthood, instituted by the Lord Himself. The altar of incense was one of the three articles which were placed within the holy place and priests were assigned to care for the burning of the incense. The golden altar was the piece of furniture closest to the veil — the way into the Holiest of all. It represented the worship, prayers, fellowship, and communion of the saints with its sweet odors and aromas ascending up to God. The incense was a hard, cold, material substance which by the action of fire was changed into a smoky, sweet-smelling fragrance that rose and wafted its way *through the veil* into the very presence of Yahweh, there to commingle with the very Shekinah over the mercy seat! The blood and the incense were the only two things that ever made their way right in to the mercy seat and God's presence from the holy place of the tabernacle. What ignites real worship and praise that ascend before the presence of the Lord is the *fire* of God upon the altar of our hearts!

There was unspeakable glory manifest in the spirit of worship that was released within the Lord's people at the time of the great Latter Rain outpouring of the Spirit in the late 1940's and 1950's. There was the living stream of the *song of the Lord* as the people stood at the golden altar of incense and worshipped the Father in the spirit and by the spirit for untold hours at a time. What glory rested upon the people of the Lord! What power flashed forth from the Holiest of all! There was the *fire of God* that ignited, energized, and empowered the worship, it came from the altar of God out of the holy fire, and there was a divine

fragrance that ascended with it! There is still a residue of that glory adhering to the Lord's elect today, though much *strange fire* has since been offered in its place.

The golden altar is not any natural, physical place where we meet God, commune with Him, and worship before Him. Oh, no! The golden altar is a place *in the spirit*. Let me quote from an article in the Sharon Star, January 1975. "At the time my wife and I had been traveling in Europe and visited a number of cathedrals and places of worship that were very ornate and beautiful to behold, and as I meditated on their beauty I realized that I did not experience that wonderful presence of God that I have experienced many times in grass huts and under the trees in India and the Philippines. I saw works of art by the finest of artists depicting the works of God. I saw and heard tremendous pipe organs which sounded forth swelling praise to the God of all creation. Statues depicting the images of God, adorned with gold, were all around, yet as I meditated the following words came to me: *The abiding place of God is not among the domes and spires that pierce the sky. Nor is His grandeur amid the gilded arches and gothic domes of cathedrals. His acts cannot be shown by artists' craft upon the canvasses of walls and ceilings. Yet man, in his fruitless search for God, has given way to his feeble wisdom and tried to capture God in such as these. Man has often in his search for God missed the way because he tried to enclose God in an object, which at best was only a small part of God's creation. Because he did not heed the urges that **surged within his breast**, and worshipped the creation instead of the Creator, God caused his base nature to guide his search. Gods of wood and stone became a substitute for Him whose footstool is the earth; for Him whose presence filleth all in all, yet has desired to dwell, not in temples made with hands, but in a structure made with living stones and **hearts that beat in harmony with the will of Him who fills the universe...***" — end quote.

In this hour the glory of the Lord is filling HIS TEMPLE! In sons there is coming expression of the true ministry of priesthood before God and unto God. God is raising up within His chosen ones an establishment of worship in the Spirit and by the Spirit. Men have done all sorts of things and called it worship! Rituals, ceremonies, liturgies, singing, lifting up the hands, loud praises, shouting, and dancing have all been accepted as worship unto the Lord. I do not mean to say that those things are not of God. But God is doing a new thing! The command has gone forth, "Rise, and *measure the altar!*" God would have us *examine* all our religious concepts of worship, lay the plum-line upon them, take the reed like unto a rod and assess the very essence of them, and learn by the Spirit what true worship is! No longer shall it be contingent upon a gathering of people, no longer shall it be an outward show, a response to the command of men to stand, sing, raise the hands, clap, dance, speak in tongues, and praise the Lord, but it shall be worship that springs and flows from the inner sanctum of our inner son, ignited and energized by the fire of God upon the altars of our own hearts. It shall never draw attention to the worshipper, or to worship itself, or be dictated by man, for if man must coax and coach and manipulate then it is not true worship, not *in the spirit* and not *by the spirit*. Oh, yes, there is a worship that glorifies the Lord in the heavenly places of the Spirit. How our hearts yearn for this! Many have found themselves cut off and devoid of everything they once *thought* was worship, and this has led to some questionings about what their spiritual status is, but fear not, my beloved. What you thought was worship probably was not true worship at all; do not lust after the leeks and garlic of Egypt! They are pleasant and taste good, but they are the food of the house of bondage. The Lord is cutting off all former realms, everything we thought to be worship, and leaving us void that we might finally recognize by the "measure of the altar" the true worship that is born of the very spirit of sonship! All the former heavens we have dwelt in are rolling up as a scroll, and we are even now being ushered into a new heaven with a brand new atmosphere of HIS presence and glory. Aren't you glad!

Well did Ray Prinzing set forth some of the principles of this "measuring of the altar" when he wrote, "For sure, the church realm moves on a soulish level, be it a charismatic realm, or more fundamental. All their worship appeals to the ascetic sense of the soul, stimulating the intellect, or stirring up the emotions, enhanced by the will of the leader manipulating the will of the congregation to sing, shout, dance, or whatever they propose for them to do. This does not necessarily mean that the soul realm is sinful or wrong, but it does signify that we need to be FULLY JOINED TO THE HOLY SPIRIT, if we are to bring forth fruit to His honor and praise.

"True discernment can keep us from becoming involved with just a 'form of godliness' which is devoid of the power of God. If it is only a soulish emotion that is stirred, there will be no power in it. For example, the repeated singing of a chorus — does it sing its way into your spirit, until you become lost in

adoration and worship to God? Or, does it only stir your emotions to become a soulish song and dance which satisfies the flesh? We do not criticize soulish manifestations, if they are used to lead on into a deeper realm, but they must not be substituted for the pure moving of the holy Spirit. There is no good substitute for the *anointing*! An understanding heart is also vitally needed to discern between what is 'will worship' and that which is truly the outflow of the spirit within. Colossians 2:23 speaks of 'a show of wisdom in will worship.' Far too many of our religious expressions are only a form of WILL WORSHIP. By that we mean, either someone else *willed you* to do it, or else you set your own will in that direction as a means of obtaining favor with God, hoping to become more spiritual, or for some other reason.

"Whenever a form, ritual, or ceremony is devoid of His life, will-worship takes over — a manipulative control with rigid regulations. We become a performer, according to the will of man, rather than a worshipper of God. Thus, as one man well stated, 'Much of our worship time is nothing more than a 'happy hour' in which the participants can enjoy a good time.' A contrived plan is brought out, who will lead, what songs will be sung, how the tempo will be increased, and we are on our way — programmed according to the will of man! We can sing all our favorite songs or choruses, clap our hands, dance, shout, and have an emotional spree that is carefully orchestrated by the will of the leader, so that we laugh or weep or worship according to their psychological design, and the flow of the music. But where, in all of this will-worship have we really *worshipped in spirit and in truth* Him who is King of kings and Lord of Lords? The will of man must be surrendered to the will of God!

"It has been well stated that you can praise the Lord from your memory circuits, as you recall His wonderful works, but you can only *worship* Him when you are conscious of His *presence*. Worship demands the *presence* of the one being worshipped! And there is that recognizing that He is with us in every hour of our day, so that at any given moment there might rise from our spirit a flow of adoration and worship to Him. 'In Him we live and move and have our being.' Therefore we can worship Him right where we are! It does not require a formal arrangement, cathedral, stained glass windows, padded pews, soft organ music so that we begin to create an atmosphere which we *think* lends itself to a form of worship" — end quote.

To sit at *His* feet means to be a worshipper. It is much more than drawing nigh to God with our mouth and pouring forth beautiful expressions of praise or impassioned petitions. "The hour cometh, and now is, when the *true worshippers* shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father *seeketh such* to worship Him" (Jn. 4:23). The emphasis in this passage is not on worship, but on TRUE WORSHIPPERS. I do not hesitate to tell you that much of the so-called spiritual worship in this hour is in fact idolatrous, for many have made an idol of worship, they worship the beauty and glory and thrill of worship, rather than worshipping the Father. But *true worshippers* are true worshippers because they do not worship for the ecstasy that comes to them, but in spirit and in truth it is all directed UNTO HIM ALONE. To worship "in spirit and in *truth*" means to worship out of our spirit in *reality*. What we do or say is not of prime importance. What we ARE is the thing that matters, for out of a state of being comes our doing. The Holy Spirit cried through the prophet, "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth and honoreth me with their lips: but their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship me..."

It is not sufficient to worship God as an act. If you are not in your state of being a *true worshipper*, your worship is vanity, matters not one whit how beautiful or spiritual it may appear or sound; it is not in spirit and in truth because it is not originating out of your spirit and is not proceeding out of a state of being. "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, hypocrites" (Mat. 15:7). A hypocrite cannot worship God, matters not how high he raises his hands, how loudly he claps, or how expressive the words, it takes a *worshipper* to worship God! God is looking for those who have *become* true worshippers. "This people shall **be** unto me for a praise, a name, and a glory." The man born blind whom Jesus healed, with wisdom and understanding declared, "If any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth His will, him He heareth" (Jn. 9:31). He did not say, "If any man worships God," but, "If any man **be a worshipper**." What a word that is! God heareth not sinners, he said, but if any man BE A WORSHIPPER OF GOD AND DOETH HIS WILL, HE HEARETH HIM. Multitudes of people daily "worship" God, but only a few ARE WORSHIPPERS! The simple truth is, it is impossible to worship God externally! Oh, yes, one may go through the physical motions of singing, shouting, prostrating the body, and many other physical actions, but that does not mean he is *worshipping*. God is a spirit, Jesus said, and they that worship Him *must* worship Him *in spirit and in truth*. Those are the only two "places" where the Father may be worshipped!

Abraham is a classic example of a true worshipper. There arrived for the faithful patriarch that most solemn of days in which the voice of the Almighty fell upon his attentive ear, commanding, "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of" (Gen. 22:2). Though this command filled Abraham's heart with pain, yet he would not be as surprised to receive it as a father would in our day; for such offerings were very common among all those people in the land where Abraham sojourned. Abraham, being strong in faith, never for one moment doubted or disobeyed God's word. He knew that Isaac was the child whom God had promised, and that God had promised, too, that Isaac should have children, and that those coming from Isaac should become a great nation and a company of nations. He did not see how God could fulfill His promise with regard to Isaac, if Isaac should be slain as an offering: unless, indeed, God should raise him up from the dead afterward, a thought which Abraham's unwavering faith did not discount. But Abraham undertook at once to obey God's command! He took two young men with him and an ass laden with wood for the fire; and he went toward the mountain in the north, little Isaac his son walking by his side. For two days they journeyed, sleeping under the trees at night in the open country. And on the third day, Abraham saw the mountain far away. As they drew near to the mountain, Abraham said to the young men, "Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and *worship*, and come again to you" (Gen. 22:5).

Ah! He did not say, "I and the lad will go yonder and offer up a sacrifice," but "we will go yonder and WORSHIP." So great was His faith in God's promise that Abraham declared, "and WE (Isaac and I) will come again to you." He took the wood from the ass and placed it on Isaac, and the two walked up the mountain together. As they were walking, Isaac said, "Father, here is the wood, but where is the lamb for the offering?" And Abraham replied, "My son, God will provide Himself a lamb." And they came to the place on top of the mountain. There Abraham built an altar of stones and earth heaped up, and on it he placed the wood. Then he took Isaac and tied his hands and feet, and laid him on the wood on the altar. And Abraham lifted up his hand, holding a knife to kill his son. A moment longer, and Isaac would be slain by his own father's hand. But just at that moment the angel of the Lord out of heaven called to Abraham, and said, "Abraham! Abraham!" And Abraham answered, "Here I am, Lord." Then the angel of the Lord said, "Do not lay your hand upon your son. Now I know that you love God more than you love your only son, since you are ready to give up your son, your only son, to God."

The message is clear — Abraham WORSHIPPED GOD in the offering up of Isaac! The "measuring rod" applied to Abraham's action reveals that he was indeed a *true worshipper*! When called on to offer up his son, he did it as an act of worship. He prostrated himself, not physically, but in his spirit he bowed low before the will of the Lord. He worshipped! He never raised his hands, sang, clapped, shouted praises, or danced, but his offering up of Isaac was an act of true worship in the presence of God!

Worship is from the Hebrew word *shahah* meaning "to bow down, to prostrate," and from the Greek *proskyneo* meaning "to prostrate, do obeisance to." Worship is the honor, reverence, and homage paid to superior beings and powers, and to God. It is not words at all, but an attitude, a state of being, a reverent and submissive bending to God's will. It is not what you are doing that matters most, but the spirit behind your action. You can pray for something and it can be just a selfish, proud, egotistical thing. Or it can be an act of worship to God. It is worship when it is GOD'S WILL you seek, that His kingdom might be brought to pass in the earth!

When David brought the ark to Jerusalem according to the word of the Lord, he worshipped the Lord in the beauty of holiness (I Chron. 16:29). Why did David have to go back for the ark twice? Because the first time it was not an act of worship. It was an act of triumph: he was somewhat arrogant because they were conquering their enemies! If it was worship they would have brought the ark according to God's way, but they thought, If the Philistines can haul it on a cart, we can do the same. They were carelessly and thoughtlessly doing it *their way*, and so God smote them. But later David worshipped the Lord in the beauty of holiness, because he reverently brought the ark back according to the Lord's command: on the shoulders of the Levites and rejoicing in the presence of the Lord!

When Job, that mighty man of the East, received the evil tidings that his sons and daughters were dead, and all his possessions lost, “Then Job arose and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and **worshipped**” (Job 1:20). I’m sure this wasn’t that beautiful, melodious high-sounding worshipful praise we hear in church meetings today, which we call worship! But Job bowed submissively and reverently before the will of God — and he worshipped. If Job had been a complainer, he would have complained. If Job had been a backbiter, he would have backbitten. If Job had been a curser, he would have cursed. If Job was rebellious, he would have rebelled. But Job was a worshipper, therefore he worshipped! He was a man, perfect and upright, one that feared (reverenced) God, and hated evil. That was the testimony of his state of being, which was a state of worship. We may be very congenial and lovable people, with an aura of spirituality surrounding our every movement, when you catch us in the right mood and under the proper circumstances; but when things start to happen as they did to Job, then whatever your state of being is, it will come out! Job fell on his face, and what he was was manifested: he was a worshipper, so he worshipped God! Ah, what would have been our first expression had we been in Job’s place? May God make us true worshippers! Anyone can draw nigh with their mouth and praise God, but it is vanity, a religious pretense if it is not proceeding from a state of being. God wants worship to be in spirit and in truth, which comes out of a worshipful nature: true worshippers worshipping the Father! Truly God is “measuring the altar” of worship this very hour in the life of every man and woman who has received the call to sonship!

If there is no complete committal to God, then the offering up of our possessions will not be worship. “Though I give my body to be burnt,” says Paul, “if it is not an expression of my state of being as a worshipper, filled with divine love, it profits me nothing.” Our Father wants what comes out of every one of His sons to be an expression of what He is doing and of what He has wrought in us. True worship is an expression of our relationship with God, where everything within us is done for the glory and praise and honor of God. That is why it made no difference to God whether Jesus did carpentry work for a number of years, or healed the sick for three and a half years. Jesus was a worshipper! He came only to do the will of His Father whether that meant working or waiting, or winning or losing, or living or dying. The Father said, “This is my beloved Son, in whom *I am* well pleased,” when all He had done was carpentry work for about thirty years! When the Father said that He was well pleased with His firstborn Son that Son had never preached a sermon, never taught a multitude, never performed a miracle, never healed a sick person, never raised any dead. Think of it! Can we not see by this that it is only in the spirit of worship that one can sit at the feet of the Father and receive from His great mind and heart the instruction and counsel of His will. May God make us such *true worshippers* that our walk will be worship!

Take the shoes from off your feet, O saint of God, for the ground on which we stand is holy. The spiritual “temple mount” is the holy mount of God! The temple of God is a people. We miss so much vital truth by our careless thinking about the scriptures. Every stone in that temple is a living person, a son of God. We will understand a great mystery when we understand that every item in the temple of God is composed of people. The Holy of holies is a people. The ark of the covenant is a people. The holy place is a people. And now I want to say that the altar is a people! God has an altar people. The altar is the place of worship, and worship is not merely something we do, it is something we *are*. God is making us *true worshippers*. These true worshippers are the altar! And now God is measuring the altar. By His Spirit He is examining, investigating, inspecting, and assessing the spiritual condition and quality of His altar people. He is not measuring how melodiously, harmoniously, and sweet-soundingly we can “sing in the Spirit,” or how loud we can shout praises, or how long or articulately we can pray. We can go through all the forms of what we consider worship and never touch the essence of worship. So the Lord says, “Measure the altar, the altar is a people, it is not what they do, but what they are that must be measured!” Oh, yes!

Now, my beloved, this brings us to an important thought. If you would measure the altar, don’t attempt to do so in a church meeting on Sunday morning! I don’t think anyone would deny that should you measure the altar in a meeting on Sunday morning you might get a false reading. A better time to measure the altar would be after the meeting, on the way home, when the kids are screaming in the car, the spouse is nagging, and the radiator overheats on the congested freeway. Don’t you think that would be a good time to measure the altar? You see, I find that even many “kingdom people” still go into a meeting and turn God on and turn God off. When the meeting starts they put on what Lynn Hiles has called their “precious Jesus face” and pour forth praises and worship, sing, speak in tongues, prophesy, exhort, and appear so very

spiritual, but the moment the last “Amen” is said it is all promptly *turned off* and they become as another person.

A church magazine contained a beautiful picture of a congregation at worship. The children wore smiles. All the mothers and fathers were singing as if they had been made for nothing else. All the grandfathers looked like saints. All the grandmothers beamed, as if it was Mother’s Day. Meanwhile, all the young women looked as if they never had a worldly thought or care. All the young men looked as if they had just made a vow to enter seminary. The choir members wore robes and angelic expressions. The picture, sad to say, was *posed*. No congregation looks like that! Even so, none of us should have to be told to smile because we are on God’s candid camera. The truth is, however, that oft times the way we appear among the Lord’s people is but a facade. God is measuring His altar, and He is tearing away all our masks; but, thank God, He is also bringing forth in us the true image of His Son. There is light appearing in the face of God’s Christ!

You see, dear saint of God, the true character of any person is revealed by the opposing character of another person or circumstance. Not one of us knows what is in us, until someone comes and says or does something to us, that will bring out that hidden characteristic within. It makes no difference what people say about themselves or how spiritual they appear to be. It matters not how loudly they may affirm that natural things do not bother them; if there is carnality or evil lurking within their nature, an opposing character will immediately bring it to the surface. So we can never know the real, true nature of any man until something comes along to oppose him.

When everything goes according to one’s desire or will, then everyone around that person sees only their “better side.” Nothing ever ruffles them or disturbs them, because they are constantly having their own way, getting what they want. But just let something cross them and the trouble begins! When you see the brother or sister in the church service, you see only the best part of them. Everyone is only sweetness and goodness. The ministers are so gracious and kind, the husbands and wives are so nice to each other and to the children. But just walk unexpectedly into the home on Monday morning, or come into the breakfast circle and you will find out how things are going. Or let someone abuse them, swindle them, cheat them, sell them a car that is a lemon, take advantage of them, steal from them, insult them, falsely accuse them, misuse them — ah, it is time to *measure the altar*!

### MEASURE THE WORSHIPPERS

“Rise, and *measure the temple of God*, and the altar, and *them that worship therein*” (Rev. 11:1).

We wrote at some length above about the measuring of the altar. This was the golden altar, for there was no other altar in the holy place. What John saw measured was not the literal altar in the literal temple of old, for what John saw measured was a heavenly altar, and it was in the inner shrine of the heavenly sanctuary in the realm of the spirit. This is the golden altar at which we saw the angel stand with the golden censer in his hand, the altar on which the prayers of the saints were offered, and the altar from the four blood-tipped horns of which there came a mighty voice saying, “Loose the four angels which are bound.” The altar, when used as a figure, is always a type and symbol of the ministry of prayer, intercession, giving of thanks, praise and worship unto God. The altar signifies the company of God’s saints who fulfill this spiritual ministry as unto the Father and on behalf of creation. The measuring of the golden altar with the reed is a picture of the holy mind of Christ given to discern and determine the true spiritual quality of that wonderful ministry.

And now comes the word, “and measure...*them that worship therein*.” The emphasis in this verse is not on *worship*, but on *worshippers*. Those who “worship therein” are the priests of God! All the assembly of Israel was permitted entrance into the outer court, but only the priesthood of Aaron was admitted into the holy place there to minister unto the Lord. From out of the masses of the redeemed our Father in heaven is even now calling and preparing kings and priests, or a “royal priesthood,” to minister before the Lord, unto the Lord, and on behalf of all creation, to bring the blessings and benefits of the kingdom of God to all men everywhere upon earth. This is the spiritual ministry of priesthood!

In the Bible there are a great number of words, phrases, and expressions that are especially significant in the creative and redemptive plan of God. One we want to consider in these pages is the proclamation of the Lord to His people in Exodus 19:5-6: “And ye shall be unto me a *kingdom of priests*.” The full text reads, “Now, therefore, if ye shall obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for *all the earth is mine*: and ye shall be unto me a *kingdom of priests*, and an holy nation.” The subject of the royal priesthood, like many of the themes of scripture, is inexhaustible. It sparkles as the twinkling stars of the heavens with glories which many have not yet beheld. Let us put our eye to the telescope of the Holy Spirit, and allow this grand subject to be brought nearer to our spiritual vision for, in so doing, we shall behold more of the grandeur and ineffableness of the “High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus,” and of the purpose and majesty of OUR ONENESS IN HIM. This makes it mandatory upon us to remove the shoes from off our feet and tread carefully upon this holy and mysterious ground.

And just what is God’s purpose? “Ye shall be unto me a *kingdom of priests*.” Notice the connection between “kingdom” and “priests.” Since kingship was virtually the only type of government or state known in the ancient world, “kingdom” could well be translated today as a “government” or “state.” A GOVERNMENT OF PRIESTS! A PRIESTLY STATE! A HOLY NATION OF PRIESTS! God offered to Israel this glory of being a “kingdom of priests.” ALL the tribes were to be priests. Because of their failure to believe God and enter the land at Kadesh-barnea and because they made and worshipped a golden calf while Moses was on the mountain receiving God’s law, only one tribe was chosen to be a priestly tribe — and that not on behalf of the world, but on behalf of the unbelieving, rebellious people of Israel! God’s purpose remains, however, to have an entire nation of priests in the fullness of what priesthood means. Israel collectively was to be a royal and priestly race, a dynasty of kings and priests, each member uniting in himself the attributes of king and priest. Every man a king! Every man a priest! Every man as a Melchizedek! A kingdom of priests!

The Greek Old Testament (Septuagint) states that they were to be “a priesthood of kings.” It was intended to be the way of life, the office, the nature, the ministry of all Israel, not just a selected few. Israel’s would be a priestly way of life, with priestly dignity, priestly power and authority, priestly holiness and priestly character. God’s kingdom people were to be a priesthood set at the crossroads of the world to minister to all tribes and nations the things of God. They would become the holy people, the mediating and blessing nation for all the other nations. Ah, beloved, there is a realm of living and ministry that goes beyond just being a Christian, or attending church meetings, or going through the motions of so many religious activities. God has always wanted a kingdom of priests! Priests and kings — just like Jesus! One of the chief reasons for the weakness and immaturity of the popular church is the mistaken idea that the saint’s blessing here and happiness in heaven is the main object of God’s grace. A fatal error! God’s aim is far holier and far higher. He chooses out of the nations a people, inworks into them all the triumph of HIS REDEMPTION, all the victory and power of HIS LIFE, that they in turn shall carry out His redemptive purposes on behalf of the whole creation. A Royal Priesthood! Ah, that is God’s aim, His purpose of the ages.

Our blessed Lord Jesus Christ is the high priest of *our profession*, and therefore the example, pattern, and proto-type of all that priesthood means. “Wherefore in all things it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people” (Heb. 2:17). “For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb. 4:15-16). There are two things every man needs — reconciliation to God — and grace to help, strengthen, and give overcoming victory in time of need that we may continue to journey, pressing forward into the fullness of our redemption in Him. These instinctive cravings of the soul are as mighty and irrepressible as the craving of the body for sleep or food; and they are as evident amid our luxury and refinement as in primeval forests, or beside the historic rivers of antiquity.

As someone has pointed out, to meet these two needs — reconciliation and grace to help — men have appointed one of their number a *priest*. That word has an ominous sound to our ears, because it has been associated with immoralities and cruelty. The world has never seen more unscrupulous scoundrels than

its priests, whether of Baal or Moloch, of Judaism or the Papacy. All through the ages it has seemed impossible for men to receive power in the spiritual realm without abusing it to the injury of those who sought their help. Study the history of the priesthood, which murdered the Christ because He threw too strong a light upon their hypocrisies and villainies; and you have the history of every priestcraft which has darkened the world with deception, fraud, crime, and saturated its soil with the blood of its prophets and the saintliest of men.

AND YET THE IDEA OF A PRIEST IS A NATURAL AND A BEAUTIFUL AND A SCRIPTURAL ONE! There is great beauty and blessing and power in the work and ministry of a true priest, as God has ordained. In the Levitical priesthood of the Old Testament the priest who had a true priest's heart was not always engaged in the bloody work of sacrificing flocks of fleecy sheep, by which alone, in those rude days, the cost of sin could be computed. The true priest would have other, and, perhaps, more touching work. He would be the shepherd of the timid souls around him; listening to confessions whispered over the heads of dumb victims; feeling compassion for erring, helpless, and wayward ones; comforting those who were passing through seasons of sorrow, till faces, washed with tears, began to gleam with holy light, bringing peace and deliverance. Never possessed of self-interest; never looking for ease, or pleasure, or gain; never resting while one poor wanderer was away in the snowdrift or on the desert floor. Yes, and more! He would be the spokesman of souls, praying for those who did not pray for themselves; praying with those who knew not what or how to ask; interceding for the whole wretched race of man! Ah, such was the ministry of the true priest, beautifully typifying, yet only a poor faint shadow of, the greater priesthood to come, the chosen race born from above, the holy company and nation conformed to the image of God's Son, the royal priesthood, the people prepared to restore all creation back into God again!

Webster's dictionary defines priest as: a mediatory agent between God and man. In the Old Testament the word priest is translated from the Hebrew word *cohen*, the root meaning of which is "one who stands up and draws nigh for another." The Greek word, in its root, means "to minister." Thus, a priest is one who "draws near and ministers on behalf of another." And the priest always draws nigh and ministers in *two directions* — drawing nigh to God on behalf of the people and drawing nigh to the people on behalf of God. On the one hand, the priest stands and ministers unto the Lord on behalf of the people while, on the other hand, he ministers unto the people on behalf of the Lord. So it was with Aaron in the Old Testament. It is said of him and the priests of Israel, "they shall stand in my presence to minister," and, "they shall go out and bless in my name." The ministry of the priest is an intermediate or go-between ministry. He reaches out with one hand and takes hold of God; he reaches out with the other hand and takes hold of humanity; and he ***brings the two together in the power of his priestly ministration!*** This is the ministry of the sons of God, God's kingdom of priests. There shall flow from the Father to the sons, in whom He delights, a stream of blessing and life to impart to every man of Adam's benighted race. As the sunlight streams from the sun, there shall flow forth unobstructed and unceasingly the stream of life and light and love and grace and power and glory until there shall not be one soul left in outer darkness. It is flowing even now! It is flowing unto all who believe, yet the hour is wonderfully nigh at hand when it shall flow into all the deserts and prison houses and hell-holes of the whole world. It is indeed wonderful!

God has always wanted a priesthood. The priesthood is foundational to the outworking of His redemption and central to His plan of the ages. Oh, beloved, come, let us now open our hearts wide to Him! Come, and as we gaze upon this glorious ministry and its life-flow to all the families of the earth, let us yield ourselves unto God that He may work His wondrous work in our lives, bringing us into such union with Jesus, the High Priest of our profession, that we become in nature and power His ROYAL PRIESTHOOD in the earth! The manifestation of the sons of God, for which all creation is in travail, is nothing more nor less than the full manifestation of God's fully developed and empowered body of KING-PRIESTS AFTER THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK! You may feel very weak, insufficient, unworthy, and helpless in the light of such a high calling, my beloved; but those apprehended to this ministry are still in the process of preparation. That is precisely why the call goes forth in this hour, "Rise, and *measure the temple...and them that worship therein!*" Does it bother you, this being *measured*? It is necessary that the Lord reveal to our hearts just how we measure up to the nature of priesthood, and just where we lack in that gracious spirit. There must be an inspection! Do we have a priestly heart? Do we have a compassionate heart? Do we have a merciful heart? Do we yearn to be a vessel for His purpose more than life itself? Are we willing to be



dealt with, chastened, corrected, purged, purified, changed, and transformed? Do we welcome the man with the measuring rod?

There can be no priesthood without first a thorough change. Sin, self, ego, greed, prejudice, hatred, bigotry, criticism, retaliation, unconcern, insensitivity, immaturity, pettiness, unrighteousness, all must be dealt with. Thus, we are not seeking just a salvation experience, sins forgiven, covering over the past, and hoping for the best in the future, but we desire that the Holy Spirit of God, working mightily within, shall bring a thorough change in us, until every word, will, attitude, desire, emotion, action, and reaction shall flow from HIS HEART to all about us. You can be a believer and die and go to heaven without such a thorough change, but you can never ***be a priest without it!*** You can speak in tongues, prophesy, see visions, fall out under the power, and be a deacon or even an apostle without such a thorough change, but you can never ***be a priest without it!***

Ah — there are no arm-chair priests in the kingdom of God! There are no country-club-elite priests. There are no playboy priests. There are no honorary priests. There are no theoretical, self-appointed priests. Many of us want to deliver creation from a distance, delivering eloquent discourses in our gatherings, uttering lofty platitudes, issuing spiritual-sounding decrees in the atmosphere of praise and worship, while our hands are still clean and there is no mud or blood or guts on our garments! We view the priests of old arrayed in their garments of glory and beauty and think how noble and prestigious their office! But the priesthood is a dirty, sweaty, bloody business with cattle stomping about filling the air with clouds of choking desert dust full of poop and pee, throats cut, blood splattering, carcasses butchered, the stench of burning flesh insulting the nostrils. How do we *measure up*?

This statement — *measure...them that worship therein* — is much too important to be passed over lightly. It means the MEASURING OF THE PRIESTHOOD, ascertaining whether one possesses a priestly heart, a priestly hope, a priestly character and nature. I must emphasize with all solemnity that when God chooses men to be priests He means for them to BE PRIESTS. “Ye shall BE unto me a kingdom of priests.” Priesthood is not an honorary title, not a gift of grace, not a reward, nor some emotional, sensational blessing to be worn like a merit badge for show. Priesthood is real. Priesthood is ministry, to God and to men. Priesthood is work. Priesthood is caring, loving, touching, interceding, forgiving, healing, teaching, changing, transforming, and doing all necessary to bring lost and dying, sick and sorrowing, tormented, hostile, perverted, and murderous men back to God. Priesthood is praise and worship and consecration and holiness unto the Lord. The priesthood of Aaron was set apart, sanctified unto the Lord, that they might serve in holy things. There was to be no life of luxurious idleness, of worldly ease and comfort. They were, it is true, to lack nothing, for we find that full provision was made for all their needs; but their life was to be a *life of service*, and that service in the very presence and glory of God! Oh, the wonder of it!

Priesthood is the spirit of the high priest. Jesus lives, and Jesus has loved us, and He is with us and in us, attentatively listening at every hour to our supplication, watching in each and every moment of the day and night for our need, His hand of blessing, guidance, and direction upon us without interruption. He bestows upon us the disposition of priesthood by His indwelling. His indwelling is but the first step, then follows the INWORKING by which we BECOME that which first has entered into us as an embryonic life. The spirit of priesthood is love. Love is the queen of all the graces of the Christ-life. Love is the passion of self-giving. It never stops to ask what it can afford, or what it may expect to receive in return; but it is ever shedding its heart's blood. The love of Christ, which went out so tenderly to those who walked and talked with Him when He was upon earth, is no less far-reaching and eternal to man today. It is this fathomless love of Christ which conquers; and His all-conquering, boundless love, is the banner unfurled in the lives of His kingdom of priests. Oh, precious love divine, higher than the heavens, deeper than the abyss, broader than all the ages of time! Oh, mighty love that reached through countless ages and brought Christ down from the bosom of the Father to redeem creation; which brought Him to the tomb; which brought Him back to the right hand of God, as the high priest of the heavens who ever liveth to make intercession for us; which is now shed abroad in ***our hearts*** by the Holy Ghost! That is what makes us priests. **THAT IS THE MEASURE!** Our high priest *Himself* is the measure!

To be continued...

J. PRESTON EBY