

KINGDOM BIBLE STUDIES

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

FROM THE CANDLESTICK TO THE THRONE

Part 127

THE TWO WITNESSES

(continued)

"These have power to *shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy...*" (Rev. 11:6).

There has been a general misunderstanding of the word of God throughout Christendom concerning the truth of the coming of the Lord; for it is clear as we consider all the scriptures on the subject that the Lord's coming is first and foremost a *spiritual visitation* in the midst of His people. James therefore associates the bestowal of the "latter rain" with the "coming" of the Lord: "*Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the **coming** of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he (it) receive the **early and latter rain**. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the **coming** (Greek: *parousia* — **manifest presence**) of the Lord draweth nigh*" (James 5:7-8). Can we not see by these inspired words of the apostle that in a very real sense the coming of the "former and latter rain" IS THE COMING OF THE LORD into the midst of His people. The rain is really the LORD HIMSELF, in His MANIFEST PRESENCE, coming upon us!

It is our deep conviction that Christ has appeared to His people as both the "early rain" and the "latter rain," and scattered "showers of refreshing" betwixt and between, throughout this age. There have also been those dry times when the heavens were shut and there was no rain from the heavens of God's Spirit. Multitudinous and glorious beyond description have been the appearances of Christ as the rain! When Peter preached on the day of Pentecost, he clearly established the fact that the outpouring of the Spirit (the Lord is that Spirit) at that time was the early rain (Acts 2:16; Joel 2:21-32). During the mighty outpouring of the Spirit in those glory-filled years following 1948, the Lord often spoke in prophecy, telling the saints that that visitation of the Spirit was *Christ coming to His people* as the latter rain. All major denominations, including the Pentecostal denominations who were closest to that outpouring of the Spirit, rejected that wonderful move of God. And when they rejected that deluge from heaven *they also rejected Christ*, for it was none other than HE who came to His thirsting people at that time as latter rain!

*"Then shall we know, if we **follow on** to know the Lord: His going forth is prepared as the morning; and **He shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth**" (Hos. 6:3). He comes TO US as the rain! Rain brings the manifest presence of the Lord! The presence of the Lord gives times of refreshing. Rain brings times that cause the water to soak the ground to mature the crops for the harvest. But notice! There is an "if" in there. We will know His coming as the rain *if* we "*follow on to **know** the Lord.*" His coming is prepared as the morning,*

that is, it is as sure as the sunrise; we will know it if we follow on to know Him; and He will come unto us as the rain! These have been days of the coming of the Lord! He has come to us in times and seasons of refreshing!

Seasons — if we are going to fulfill the purposes of God in our lives in our day we must walk in God's "seasons." All farmers know the importance of observing seasons. You don't expect to harvest apples in May or watermelons in December. Why? Because it's the wrong season! You always cooperate with the seasons and if you do you bring in a bountiful harvest. Now if I went out and started plowing and planting corn in September I would be in trouble. Why? Because I am not cooperating with the seasons! As that seed germinates and begins to grow, it's going to come up at the wrong time and, ere long, the first freeze will kill it. I must plant my corn in the spring and expect a harvest in the fall; thus I am flowing with the seasons. A good farmer will always understand that rain coming at the wrong time will only spoil his crop, for the rain will beat down the grain, making it impossible to harvest. Can we not see by this how infinitely important it is to observe God's *spiritual seasons* — God's times. If we know these seasons and flow with them, there will be great fruit in our lives!

Centuries ago the prophet Zechariah wrote a message that I feel certain applies to our day above all other days. First he said, "*Ask ye of the Lord rain **in the time** of the latter rain; so the Lord shall make bright clouds, and give them showers of rain, to everyone grass in the field*" (Zech. 10:1). And then he said, "*And it shall come to pass, that everyone that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the **feast of tabernacles**. And it shall be, that whoso shall not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, **even upon them shall be no rain**. And if the family of Egypt go not up, and...**have no rain**; there (that) shall be the plague, wherewith the Lord will smite the nations that come not up to **keep the feast of tabernacles***" (Zech. 14:16-18).

Here, keeping the feast of tabernacles is associated with receiving the rain of God. There is a mystery about the feast of tabernacles. As George Warnock has pointed out in his book *The Feast of Tabernacles*, it is the only one of the three major feasts of Israel that as yet has not had a New Testament fulfillment. Therefore it has not been celebrated in a parallel feast by Christians the world over as has been the other two festivals, those of Passover and Pentecost. Truly we can say — Passover *has* come, Pentecost *has* come, and Tabernacles *must* come, for each is a part of God's great plan for His people. We have had the feasts of Passover and Pentecost and both of these feasts have been fulfilled *in this age in the church* in a spiritual way in the body of Christ, and right here on earth. For some strange reason people seek to totally change the order for the last feast, postponing it to some future age, or giving it to the Jews, or relegating it to some beautiful "Isle of Somewhere," and consequently the real spiritual meaning and import of the feast of tabernacles is completely obscured and lost. The grand truth is that like the others, it will be fulfilled dispensationally, it will be fulfilled in us individually, and it will be fulfilled in us as the Corporate Man. The grand truth of this has been wonderfully quickened by the Spirit of God to multiplied thousands of saints around the world in these last years.

There were seasonal rains in Palestine that pertained to this feast. The feast of tabernacles was the "feast of ingathering" at the end of the agricultural year. At Tabernacles there was plenty of corn, oil, and wine! This feast, like the first two, was associated with the harvest. Whereas Passover was held at the time of the firstfruits of the barley harvest, and Pentecost was held at the time of the firstfruits of the wheat harvest, Tabernacles came at the close of the cycle, when with the ripening of the grapes, olives, corn, figs, etc. the harvest was complete. Therefore, we see that the feasts were associated with a *progression in harvest*, and speak of the ongoing process of the

growth and development of spiritual life, the maturing of *His life* within the experience of His people!

Thus, this feast speaks to us of the FULLNESS OF GOD, and therein lies the challenge to move on “unto the measure of the stature of the FULLNESS OF CHRIST” (Eph. 4:13). It speaks of the full appropriation of the life, mind, wisdom, nature, glory, and power of Christ! It speaks of Christ being perfectly formed in us! It speaks of being fully conformed to the image of the firstborn Son of God! It speaks of the manifestation of the fullest measure of His sonship power and dominion! Ah, whereas Passover gets us started in our spiritual life as babes in Christ, and Pentecost adds a further measure of His Spirit with gifts of glory, the feast of tabernacles speaks to us of a completed harvest, full growth and maturity in Him, the fullest measure and manifestation of ALL THAT HE HAS AND IS! Oh, what a grand and glorious realm lies before us in the feast of ingathering! The time of full and complete redemption, in spirit, soul, *and* body! The full and complete experiencing of HIMSELF, abounding in life and immortality! The fullness of strength to go forth and do great and mighty things in the kingdom of our Father! The feast of feasts! It is God in His great love and goodness inviting His people to enter on in to their full inheritance! We have breakfasted at Passover, we have lunched at Pentecost, and now the table is spread with the great feast of fullness that comes at the close of the day!

It is obvious from the passage quoted earlier that when the Lord comes in the majesty and power of the feast of tabernacles there will be many of the Lord’s people who will refuse to move on, to come to the feast! Just as the historic denominations rejected the Pentecostal outpouring of the Spirit in the early 1900’s, and just as the Pentecostal denominations rejected the more glorious Latter Rain outpouring of the mid 1900’s, so will many refuse to enter on in to the glory of this new kingdom day. Paul Mueller once expressed it so well when he wrote, “The church system and the religious denominations of man have a history of rejecting every true visitation or outpouring of the Spirit! And, with the passing of time, they have not gotten any better; they have only gotten worse! The religious systems of man and of this world, because of their anti-Christ spirit and nature, will also reject every future outpouring of the Spirit of the Lord that Father sends to the earth. The mind of man that governs the church system is directly opposed to any new revelation, as well as any new truth that is given by the Spirit. Their numerous false doctrines will prevent them from accepting and receiving Christ when He appears!”

Is that not what is meant when the prophet Zechariah says that any of the peoples of earth who refuse to come up to the feast of tabernacles, *upon them shall be no rain!* And is that not what is meant when the angel tells John that the two witnesses have power to *shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy!* It signifies to withhold the blessing and power even of the realms the Lord’s people have been moving in up until that time! By their word, because of the rejection of the Lord’s moving, the curse of spiritual dearth and death comes upon them! Their anointing lifts, their glory fades, their power departs, and they are left with only the dead, empty shell of outward religious observances. The heavens of God’s Spirit are shut to them! There is no heavenly rain upon them, not even the intermittent showers of blessing! Their land is desolated by spiritual drought, and the once fruitful field becomes a dry, thirsty, hot, lifeless desert! As the scripture says, “*Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not (does not come to the feast), from him shall be taken even that which he hath*” (Mat. 13:11-12).

Shut the heavens, that it rain not — shut the previous existing heavens, the old order that used to minister life, bringing it to an end by a declaration of the word of the Lord! This is the power of the witnesses! Rain signifies the Spirit, water signifies the Word — the Lord withholds

the anointing and revelation of a passing order. What used to work doesn't work anymore! Jesus did just this with Israel when He lamented over Jerusalem, "*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate...there shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down*" (Mat. 23:37-38; 24:2). Within thirty-five years after our Lord uttered these fateful words, both the temple and the city were razed to the ground, the Jewish nation ceased to exist, the Jewish priesthood ended, and the Jewish people were dispersed and scattered into every nation under heaven. They wouldn't come to the feast! So the Lord shut their existing heavens and from that day to this **THERE HAS BEEN NO MORE RAIN UPON THEM!**

WATER TO BLOOD

"These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and *have power over waters to turn them to blood*" (Rev. 11:6).

The waters that the witnesses turn to blood are not, of course, the literal waters of the rivers, lakes, and oceans of the world, but the rivers of man's fallible word, the ideas, concepts, philosophies, teachings, precepts, creeds, doctrines, traditions, ideologies, observances, customs, and laws of the carnal church systems of man which are the sources from which the religious draw their life, their enjoyment and refreshment, their ways of thinking, their view of themselves, their understanding of the world and of God's purposes both now and in the hereafter.

Long centuries before Elijah, the prophet Moses was raised up by the Lord to strike oppressive Egypt with ten plagues in order to force Pharaoh to let God's people go. The first plague with which Moses struck Egypt was the turning of all its waters into blood, so that the fish all died and the Egyptians could not drink water from the Nile or from any of their usual sources. As shed, coagulated blood is the symbol of death, the two witnesses, by their anointed word of revelation and power, show God's people that the spiritual waters from which they have been drinking in the church systems of man, in the form of religious teachings, creeds, traditions, and doctrines, are really death-dealing, like blood, and therefore not to be drunk by those elect saints who follow on to know the Lord in all His glorious fullness.

Water symbolizes life and blood signifies death. "*For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth the bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater; so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth*" (Isa. 55:10-11). "*Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat*" (Isa. 55:1). "*For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water*" (Jer. 2:13). "*In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink*" (Jn. 7:37). "*For with Thee is the fountain of life: in Thy light we shall see light*" (Ps. 36:9).

The turning of the waters into blood can only indicate the prophetic ministry by the Spirit and the Word that declares the word (doctrines and teachings) of the carnal, worldly church systems to be false so that that which was once life to them is now turned to death for all who have eyes to see, ears to hear, and hearts to understand. How well I remember when the Lord sent His prophetic spirit into our midst and suddenly, by the quickening power of divine moving and revelation, the blinding scales of man's religious interpretations fell from our eyes as in one blessed moment we saw in the light of the Spirit how the cherished church doctrines we were raised on were but the inventions of carnal minds! Hell-fire and eternal damnation, legalism,

condemnation, a powerful devil that was always thwarting God's purposes, a rapture to escape the wrath of God, a far-off heaven with golden streets and wonderful mansions in the sky, a boogey-man antichrist who was going to take over the world, and a whole host of other notions that we took as "gospel truth" and which before enthralled us, motivated us, and dominated our lives, suddenly became a terrible abhorrence to our spirits! We saw it all for the error, the *spiritual death* that it is! ***Our waters were turned to blood!*** That which had been life to us was now only putridness and death. It was the powerful, liberating, transforming prophetic ministry of the Spirit and the Word that did this!

WHEN THEIR TESTIMONY IS FINISHED

"And when they shall have *finished their testimony*, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them" (Rev. 11:7).

Everything in nature has a beginning and an ending. Summer, winter, spring, fall, nations, empires, men's lives in the flesh, day, night, weeks, months, years, centuries, millenniums, wars, peace, famines, plenty, prosperity, poverty, sickness, health, inflation, depression, apostasy, revivals, civilizations, and on and on. All the cycles of nature and spiritual life have been ordained by God (Gen. 1:14-18; 8:22). Our Lord Jesus Christ, the mighty Creator, is Himself the *beginning* (source) and the *end* (disposer, consummator) of everything in creation! There are in God's spiritual order "*seasons* of refreshing from the presence of the Lord." "Seasons" signifies that which has a beginning and an end. The purpose of God is progressive, on-going, ever *from glory to glory*. Each stage of Father's revelation and inworking, His discipline and transformation, has both a beginning and an end. This great principle is seen clearly throughout church history. Today we stand at the hour of another great move of God which will effect a mighty change as the feast of Tabernacles brings to an end the former religious orders that have come to us from the feasts of Passover and Pentecost. The feast of Tabernacles is establishing in God's elect a *new order* of spirit and life that has been covered by the veil of religious tradition that makes the Word of God of none effect. Yet all that has gone before has been orchestrated by the same One — He who *is* the beginning and the end!

Those saints of God who are seeing and hearing by the Spirit in this hour understand that we have even now come to the end of a cycle which brings the conclusion of the passing order of the church age, in order to inaugurate the new order of the kingdom of God! This speaks to us of the fading glory of a past move of God, of an old order that is passing off the scene. You cannot carry a first day or a second day agenda into the third day of greater glory! You cannot carry a Passover or a Pentecost experience into the greater reality of Tabernacles! This principle has worked again and again on different levels, generation after generation, dispensation after dispensation, revival after revival, throughout the long history of God's dealings with mankind. How unspeakably marvelous was the glory that enveloped Moses on the misty heights of mount Sinai as Yahwey committed to him the administration of His law for Israel. And what a glorious covenant it was! Yet, the apostle Paul revealed the great truth that the glory of that old covenant was not permanent but merely transitory — it was ordained for a wonderful purpose but in time that purpose was *accomplished*, the covenant *waxed old*, and was ready, with all its glory, to *pass away* (II Cor. 3:6-18).

When we look back through the history of the church we see how God sent various visitations of His Spirit, unveilings of His glory, revelations of His word, and manifestations of His power. Each time the Spirit moved on a higher plane it brought to an end a former order and way of thinking and acting, establishing a new and more perfect order, ministry, and understanding of Father's plan and purpose. As each new moving of God begins people are either vomited out of the

old order, as Jonah was vomited by the whale, or they are constrained by the Spirit to come out of the old order of church life, and embrace the new, fresh, deeper, higher, greater, and more glorious revelation of the Lord, until that becomes the established order. And is it not true that once the new order is established, when it has in turn accomplished its purpose in the earth, it eventually becomes a tradition, a form, a structure, from which the glory begins to fade! Yet — can we not see that this is all the *Lord's doing* — and when we do see, it is marvelous in our eyes!

Let us now notice just what truth is stated here. “*When they shall have **finished their testimony.***” The Lord had previously said, “*And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy **a thousand two hundred and threescore days.***” These “thousand two hundred and threescore days” set a definite limit on the exercise of the witnesses power and prophesying. Notice that the witnesses *finish* their testimony! When their testimony is *finished*, when God is through with that order of ministry, when it has accomplished all that God raised it up to do, then their invulnerability ends. The witnesses are *not* cut short! They *fail* in nothing! God’s plan, work, and purpose are not in one iota thwarted when the beast rises up against them and *overcomes them*! Oh, no! There *is* an eternal order in God, but no “in-part” ministry is either eternal or invincible. It is invincible only until its work is done, its purpose finished, accomplished, and consummated. Then the anointing lifts, the glory departs, and the order falls into ruin and forever passes away. This is a great mystery understood only by those enlightened souls that know the *ways of the Lord*!

THE BEAST OVERCOMES THEM

“And when they shall have finished their testimony, *the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them*” (Rev. 11:7).

If the above words are plainly understood, we shall have no difficulty in understanding the rest of the scene. It is perfectly plain, in the first place, why the beast which rises up out of the abyss comes against these witnesses. It is because they have *finished their testimony*! As the Lord removed the hedge from around Job, so He lifts His protecting hand from the two witnesses. You may notice that although the beast has never been mentioned before in the book of Revelation, yet the plain presupposition is that he is well-known by those who read with understanding. It is *the* beast. And while the beast has not been mentioned before, the bottomless pit from whence he rises is mentioned in chapter nine. There, it is a “great smoke as of a furnace” that is ascending out of the pit! It is my conviction that the beast is the bestial nature right within man, the carnal mind, the fleshly nature, which ever seeks to usurp the place of the Spirit and the Word and thwart the purpose of God.

Here, the Lord uncovers within us that man of sin who arises out of the abyss of the carnality of the old Adamic heart and effectively makes war against the word, the anointing, the ministry, and the hope and expectation of the witnesses, overcoming the Word and the work of the Spirit, symbolically, yet actually “killing” that ministry. This bestial nature not only lurks in the hearts of all mankind but is also the controlling principle in all of man’s religion! Yet, we should not be dismayed by this! How true are the words of the Lord wherein He instructs the wise, “*For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater; so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it SHALL ACCOMPLISH that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it*” (Isa. 55:9-11). Oh, yes! No word of the Lord will ever return unto Him void — without producing any effect, useless, a failure — but it always accomplishes *everything* that He pleases and purposes, and it prospers, is successful, in the very thing for which He sends it.

The great visitation of the Lord in 1948, like all previous moves of God, was not a failure — it accomplished precisely what the Lord purposed and ordained, establishing in the earth the word of reconciliation, the great truth of sonship, and the living reality of the kingdom of God, which has continued to bring forth a harvest unto all the ends of the earth. God never purposed to propagate and preserve the “order” of that move, only to plant a “seed” in the field of the world which would grow, change, and increase, in due time producing a vast harvest of sons of the kingdom. Oh, the wonder of it! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! And now, some seventy years later, who can deny that His word has accomplished *all* that He sent it to do!

What, then, is portrayed by the slaying of the two witnesses? Is it a past event? Or is it yet future? Is it a physical martyrdom, or spiritual? It is evident that the blessed spirit of truth is setting before us a divine principle which has been manifested in the earth again and again through the ages and is likewise finding a specific fulfillment before our very eyes in this new day of the kingdom of God! Every move of God in the earth is sent for the specific purpose of planting a “seed” in the hearts of men. Contained within that seed is the hidden germ of life for the *next* move of God! Yet the mystery is just this: Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and *die*, it abideth alone; but if it *die*, it springeth up and bringeth forth *much fruit*! When the seed dies the outer *form* passes away, but the life is preserved and becomes manifest on a higher plane and in a greater measure in the eventual harvest produced. Man’s inclination is always to *preserve the outer form*, but the divine intention is for it to fall into the ground and *die*! When the outer form is preserved, there can be no harvest. Seeds have been found in the tombs of the Pharaohs in Egypt that have lain there for thirty-five hundred years, and during those long centuries there was never a harvest from any of them. They were preserved for the wondering eyes of men in this, our day. If the farmer does not cast his seed into the earth, permitting the outer shell to decompose, there can be no increase. Can you not see the mystery? Does this not explain why, when our great Father-husbandman is through with an order and ready to bring forth a new thing, a new move, a new day, He always allows the old order to *die*. We view the death as a great tragedy, but our all-wise heavenly Father sees it as one of the greatest wonders of His creation!

What a flood of heavenly light fell upon the world in the ministry of the apostles of our Lord and the early church! The gift of the Holy Ghost, with its attending gifts of power, knowledge, and utterance, followed on the ascension of our risen Saviour. The church, the body of Christ, was birthed and gathered from Jew and Gentile alike, a vast multitude into its bosom. The shadows of the old law were replaced by the glorious and eternal reality of the living, indwelling Christ. In those few holy years Christ was the only Head of the church and unity and harmony flowed like a river and the body of Christ was one. There was no government but the government of the Spirit. Love and wisdom shone like the sun from the mind of God. What glorious days those were! One only has to read the book of Acts to see how much God blessed His people in those days. Mighty signs and wonders were performed as God confirmed His word with signs following. The Word of God, anointed by the Spirit, swept the world like a prairie fire. It encircled the mountains and crossed the oceans. It made kings to tremble and tyrants to fear. It was said of those early believers that they turned the world upside down! — so powerful was their message and spirit. In spite of persecution it grew and multiplied, for God dwelt mightily in the midst of His people. The knowledge of the glory of the Lord covered the earth as the waters cover the sea.

In the midst of such a precious walk in the Spirit the apostles Paul and John, filled with divine wisdom and keen in spiritual discernment, foresaw that the church would spread over the world, and that, becoming popular, many would arise within its ranks who would appreciate its *form* without having been transformed by its *spirit*. Grace had wrought a wondrous work, but alas! with many the *inner nature* remained unchanged. The natural man with his carnal mind was still at

enmity with God, and the cloak of Christianity would not long conceal his corruption. The beautiful infant virgin church was not very old before the seeds of *rebellion* against Christ began to appear. The very moment the love of God and the power of His indwelling life begin to wane from our spirits and fly out the windows of our soul, then external forms, creeds, rituals, and observances with all their emptiness and foolishness stalk boldly through the door. Then men begin to cry for *something other than Christ*, or for something *in addition to Christ*, saying, “I am of Paul, I am of Apollos, I am of Cephas” (I Cor. 1:12).

I do not believe there is any way to explain, imagine, or understand the many ways in which the beast ascends out of the bottomless pit and overcomes the ministry of the Spirit and the Word. Even before the apostles had passed from this life, a spirit and system had set in among the saints of the Lord and many people were wearing the Babylonish garment. They were instituting rules and regulations, formulating creeds, observing days, establishing sacraments and ordinances, and elevating human government. The babble had begun and the mysterious beast from the abyss was raising his ugly head! Soon the glory and power, the presence of God in the morning-time church began to be eclipsed, and the power of carnal-minded men gradually took the place of the awesome presence of Christ and His living Word. Consequently, man’s carnal understanding was put upon the scriptures, and as the spirit of Christ fled from their midst, men established a vast and elaborate system of *substitutes* to take the place of reality. As the blind led the blind and the visions of the people were in error and darkness, the pure vision and experience of the life of the Spirit and the power of the Word was lost to them. The beast had ascended out of the abyss and had overcome them, and *killed* them!

Can we not see how the witness of the Spirit and the Word had now been effectively *slain*, *killed* in the street of the great city of *religion*? Ah, but never forget, precious friend of mine, the *seed* of Christ was still lying in the earth, awaiting the blessed day when the Father would send “showers” from heaven — and that seed would germinate and rise again! There would be a great field of grain and a vast harvest! The impact of the next move of God would be greater than any previous work of the Lord! The resurrection of our Lord from death and the grave is the keystone of the Christian faith. And the *spiritual resurrection* of the Spirit and the Word from the grave of carnality is likewise imperative! When great reformers, set aflame with Holy Spirit power, declared truth at the peril of their lives, Rome’s walls of bondage burst like a tomb in an earthquake. The Word, which had long been chained in static creeds and lifeless rituals, became alive in the power of the Spirit! O glorious day of the blessed Reformation! Rome’s tyranny was conquered. The gospel was again preached to the poor. Prisoners were loosed and chains of sin and religious slavery were broken. Vast areas and nations and empires of the world were impacted by the glorious gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ as the Spirit and the Word ascended up into the new heavens of the Spirit in the midst of God’s people!

But this happy state of affairs did not long continue. Within a few years the followers of the reformers were divided into hostile sects and began to oppose and persecute each other. Luther denounced Zwingli as a heretic, and the Calvinists would have no dealings with the Lutherans. The first Protestant creed was the Augsburg Confession (A.D. 1530). This date marks an important epoch. From this time the people began to lose sight of the Word of God and the Spirit of God as their life and to turn to the disciplines of their sects, which they upheld by every means possible. Thus we find Calvin at Geneva consenting to the burning at the stake of Servetus, because of a difference of religious views, and Luther ordering the extermination of my own forefathers, the Anabaptists, as heretics. In the years following, great wars arose between the various factions as armies were placed in the field to fight for their creeds! A great darkness and a somber death settled over the old historic churches and once again the two witnesses — the ministry of the Spirit and the Word — lay dead in the street of the great city of religion.

Dreadful as all this is, let us never lose sight of the fact that in the midst of man's disconcerting confusion the Lord of the universe is progressing unhindered with His purpose of the ages to bring many sons unto glory, His anointed Christ-body which shall bring the blessings and benefits of the kingdom of God to every kindred, tongue, people, and nation and shall govern the earth and the whole vast universe in righteousness, peace, joy, and life forevermore. History confirms the guiding hand of our omnipotent Father as out of the ashes of Protestantism came new and greater moves of God in England, Wales, Scotland, Russia, America, and throughout many other nations of the world. Finally, in the early 1900's the great Pentecostal revivals out of which came in mid-century the glorious outpouring of the Spirit and coming of the Lord as Latter Rain unto His seeking, thirsting people. None of these were isolated moves of God, but quickly spread around the world impacting the Lord's people unto the uttermost parts of the earth. What a mighty God!

The gifts and callings of God have always been a source of joy and wonder to me. It gives me great joy to behold the work of God in His called and chosen elect in this significant hour! Far away in the depths of my spirit the perfumed breezes of spiritual discernment cry in the street of my city that there has never been a day like this day! The blessed sons of God have been in preparation throughout this long church age and today our heavenly Father is perfecting the final members of this *inChristed body* with accelerating intensity and thoroughness. We are rapidly approaching the joyful moment soon to come when together we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, and this corruptible shall put on incorruption and this mortal shall be wondrously clothed with immortality. The holy sons of God shall be manifest in resurrection power and in great glory! But today, as the vehicle of this preparation, the ministry of the two witnesses has stood up in the earth again and are now prophesying of the one who is coming, the manchild, the many-membered Son of God who shall deliver creation from the bondage of corruption and restore all things into the harmony of God again. Just as John the Baptist was the forerunner and announcer of the firstborn among many brethren, so the two-witness prophetic ministry has appeared right on schedule in this weary hour of sham and shame, abounding in false prophets, worldliness, religiosity, and universal turmoil, to call all of God's sons to walk only and fully in the light of the Lord.

God has raised up again His witness in the earth! The Spirit and the Word are testifying by the power of God right in the street of the great city of religion! As one has written, "The spirit of Moses is blowing over the face of the earth as it did over the face of Egypt in that long ago. The cry has gone out through the land, Let my people go, that they may worship me! The plagues are hitting the systems of the Pharaohs who are the rulers of this world system, and their kingdoms are crumbling from within and cannot put themselves together again. This is the result of the prophetic spirit of Moses which has been released in the world!

"The spirit of Elijah is blowing as well! Elijah came against king Ahab when he made affinity with Jezebel and introduced the worship of false gods in Israel. Jezebel, with deadly hatred in her heart, came against God's prophets and determined to kill as many of them as she could. Elijah hid in a cave and prayed unto the Lord. He asked Him if he was the only prophet left in the land, to which God replied, 'Nay, I have seven thousand more like you who have not bowed their knee to Baal.' The rulers of the worldly church have espoused the ways of the world's systems. Like Ahab, they have made themselves one with the spirit of Jezebel who is determined to put an end to the Word of God proclaimed by God's true prophets in this hour. The people are languishing under their ministries, not able to discern any more that which is holy from that which is profane. But the spirit of Elijah is blowing in their land!

“The day came when Elijah called all the prophets of Baal to mount Carmel. He gathered all of Israel and spoke unto them in that place. ‘And Elijah came to all the people, and said, How long will you falter between two opinions? If Yahweh is God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him. But the people answered him not a word’ (I Kings 18:21). The same spirit of Elijah is blowing over the people of God today that they might awaken to the Light and recognize the bondage which the systems of religion have kept them in. We witness the uncovering of the works of darkness which have been hid behind pious facades. Men of God which had been admired and adored in the land are falling from their pedestals. Elijah gave the prophets of Baal the whole day to prove their god. They carried on from morning until noon calling out to Baal... ‘O Baal, hear us!’ but there was no voice; no one answered. They leaped upon the altar which they had made. And Elijah said, ‘Cry aloud for he is a god...so they cried and cut themselves, as was their custom, with knives and lances until the blood gushed out on them’ (I Kings 18:26-28). This ceremony continued until the time of the evening sacrifice, all day long. Then Elijah took over...he repaired the altar and put in order the proper sacrifice. The prophets of Baal had exhausted all their tricks and gimmicks to move the hand of their god, but Elijah only needed the last hour to show forth the glory of the one true God.

“The false prophets in our land have had the whole day to bring out all their tricks that are up their sleeves...they have sought the admiration and substance of God’s people...they have worked by intimidation, but beloved, it will take ‘Elijah’ only the last hour to restore the true worship and open the eyes of the people to know the one true God! Indeed, Mystery Babylon is crumbling before our very eyes! It is a great hour we live in! God by His own hand is leading His sons, whom He is carefully preparing as His great army, that they might go forth and fulfill His mighty plan of the ages, to deliver creation from the bondage of corruption once and for all, forever and ever, Amen! The Lord Jesus is meticulously preparing His body for this glorious day. He has not left His remnant nor has He forsaken His elect. He has made visitations upon them and upon each member in particular” — end quote.

This brings us to an important question. Just what is it that “slays” the two witnesses and causes such a spiritual sense of death to fall upon them? In my heart I know this does not speak of the world system literally and physically martyring the witnesses! Nor do I believe they are by outward laws, legislation, pressure, coercion, imprisonment, police action, or any other external force suppressed and silenced. This is a spiritual thing! They are killed by the beast that arises out of the *bottomless pit* or the *abyss*. It will help us to understand that this is not the same beast that in chapter thirteen arises out of the *sea*. The sea is not the abyss, the abyss is a realm deeper even than the sea!

Now, what do we mean by a *bottomless pit*? The Greek word for bottomless is *abussos* which is derived from a root word meaning “depthless.” In Greek it is called the “pit of the *abussos*” from which we derive our English word *abyss*! Perhaps it would be better translated as the “pit of the *abyss*” or the “pit of the *unfathomable depth*.” “Bottomless” is a good translation of this word, for the thought of the Greek is that it is that whose depths are unmeasurable. As soon as one attempts to suppose a physical or literal reality corresponding to this picture-image, he falls into endless difficulty. My impression is that we have here a *spiritual picture* of a character and nature. It is true that righteousness and truth are related not only with *light*, but also with *height*, and evil and error are associated not only with *darkness*, but also with *depth*. Tracing backward to the root word *abussos*, it is interesting to note that *abussos* is a variation of *buthos* which means “profundity.” It becomes, then, a *profundity* which in its spiritual meaning signifies a *thought* or a *nature* — *so deep* as to be beyond the comprehension of the natural mind!

Armed with these meanings of “bottomless,” “depthless,” unfathomable depths,” and “profundity” it is revealed as a pit which has no bottom! Therefore, there is no substance, no foundation, no ground to stand upon. What that really says to us is that it has no *reality* — that is, no basis in fact. Now, it *appears* to have a bottom, a foundation, for does not every pit have a bottom? Yet it does not. Therefore the pit represents a *lie*!

The next thing we need to remember in order to understand this great mystery is that Satan is a liar and the father of lies. Jesus said it so plainly and powerfully, “Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and *abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it*” (Jn. 8:44). What is a lie? It is error. It is an untruth. It is an *unreality*. It is that which appears to have substance, but in fact is an illusion or imagination. It’s a mirage. It looks like something, but it is actually nothing. That’s a *lie*!

A study of the scripture passages in which the *abyss* is mentioned will reveal to us that it is always associated with the waters of the earth. At the dawn of God’s creation darkness was upon the face of the *abyss*. Then the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the *waters* (Gen. 1:2). The deep springs of the abyss were broken up in the great flood (Gen. 7:11; 8:2). Again we read of the *waters* of the great deep, or abyss (Isa. 51:10). The abyss is portrayed as the farthest extreme from heaven and the heights of the mountains (Gen. 49:25; Deut. 33:13; Ps. 36:6). In other passages it is used as a reference to the deepest parts of the sea (Job 28:14; 38:16; Ps. 33:7). In other places it is pictured as subterranean rivers and vaults of water (Deut. 8:7; Job 36:16). The crossing of Israel through the depths of the Red Sea is repeatedly likened to a passage through the abyss (Ps. 77:16; 106:9; Isa. 44:27; 51:10; 63:13). Looking at the natural *shadow* or *type* of the higher spiritual truth, we find that the ocean covers seventy-two percent of earth’s surface. Its average measurable depth is 11,500 feet. Its greatest measured depths are the *Nares Deep*, 28,200 feet in the Atlantic and the *Nero Deep*, 36,614 feet in the Pacific. Off the coast of Japan, there is a spot so deep...they just gave up, marked how much line they had dropped and logged it “deeper than that.” That, my beloved, is a truer picture of the abyss!

Bear with me as I repeat again the great truth that the book of Revelation is a *spiritual book*, and like everything else in the book the scenes John beheld in chapter eleven are all *symbols* standing for spiritual realities, both positive and negative. That the “bottomless pit” or the “abyss” in the symbolisms of scripture portrays the *human heart* is beautifully expressed by the prophet David. David, in describing the wickedness of man, says, “Hide me from the *secret counsel* of the wicked; from the insurrection of the workers of iniquity...they encourage themselves in an evil matter: they commune of laying snares privily; they say, Who shall see them? They *search out* iniquities; they accomplish a diligent *search* (plumbing the depths): both the *inward thought* of every one of them, and *the heart IS DEEP*” (Ps. 64:2-6). The *heart* is a *deep*! The Hebrew word used here means not only something deep, but “deeper than” other things. The heart of the natural man is his deepest and innermost sense of being. The heart is the root of all human expression and identity. It is also the well-spring of what is called “human nature.” Of that nature Jesus said, “For from within, *out of the heart of men*, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come (arise) *from (deep) within, and defile the man*” (Mk. 7:18-23). We must conclude, then, that the heart of man is the very lowest realm of man’s being! Sometimes the Lord’s elect fail to see that our natural heart is just like anyone else’s Adamic heart, and every son of God must clearly see, understand, and overcome the very basest things and powers that lie hidden, concealed, and buried in the unseen depths of the old, natural heart. And just as these evil things come from deep within and rise up out of the heart to manifest in the flesh, so does the beast that overcomes the witnesses rise up out of the abyss within them to “kill” them!

Now, what could it be that would arise out of the very heart of *God's witnesses* to *slay them* and *silence their testimony*? I am not of the persuasion that this could be the gross sins of the flesh. I do not for one moment think that the witnesses are overcome by lust, fornication, pornography, lying, deceiving, robbing, going back into the worldly systems of man, or defrauding God's people! I cannot prove what I now say, and you, dear reader of these lines, may yourself be given further light upon this subject; but I have been impressed that the beast will arise in the form of discouragement, hesitation, questionings, doubts, fears, and dejection. After boldly prophesying for the symbolic 1260 days, as the vision tarries, the weary years drag on into decades, precious brethren who treasured the beautiful hope of sonship, who were the very apostles and pioneers of it, and hopefully embraced our final change from mortal to immortal, at last pass from the scene, going by way of the grave, their intense conviction that they would live to see the manifestation of the sons of God and be blessed participators in it, dashed to the ground.

It is clear in my mind that the day will come when the brethren begin to question just as John the Baptist was disturbed and plagued by questionings in his heart when he sent his disciples to inquire of Jesus, "*Art thou He that should come, or do we look for another?*" What a question is that! Was it not John who, when he saw Jesus coming to the waters of the Jordan, cried out by the Spirit, "*Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!*" John was a prophet, the called and chosen forerunner of the Messiah, himself a type of the two witness company, and he recognized Jesus by the Spirit! John was standing right there in the water beside Jesus when the heavens opened, the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus in the form of a dove, and he himself heard the voice that came from heaven declaring, "*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased!*" But the years dragged on. Jesus had no army, no political clout, no acceptance by the establishment, and appeared uninterested in overthrowing Rome and assuming kingship. Following the greatest prophetic ministry ever to grace this earth, John now muses within his heart, wondering to himself within himself, whether he was really right, did he truly hear from God, was Jesus indeed the Messiah he had so boldly announced?

How can one so blessed and enlightened by God *question* whether the thing he has believed in, hoped for, and prophesied by the spirit of revelation from God, will actually come to pass? Ah, the prophet David also *questioned* many times in the Psalms! And he was a man after God's own heart! The two faithful disciples, Cleopas and his friend, walking the road to Emmaus, hearts heavy with sorrow and brokenness because of the crucifixion and death of Jesus, sadly lamented to the stranger who joined them in the way, "*But we trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, today is the third day since these things were done*" (Lk. 24:21). The third day signified to them the point of no return — all hope lost!

No darker hour ever came to any of God's people than the disappointment and despair that hung like a pall over the twelve disciples of Jesus, the men who had walked with Him for three and a half years, had witnessed all His wonderful works, had communed with Him most intimately, had heard every gracious word that fell from His divine lips, and themselves shared in that ministry, performing mighty signs and wonders in His name. This little flock followed Jesus out of the city and ascended mount Calvary. They beheld their Lord and Master hanging naked upon a Roman cross, crucified as a common criminal between two thieves, and they followed His dead body to its resting place in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea. These disciples did not understand! This was a shocking blow to the inborn hope which still held a prominent place in the hearts of these men. "*Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God!*" Peter had stoutly affirmed.

They had believed that their Messiah was to come and restore Israel to her lost heritage of world dominion. And just at the moment it appeared the multitudes were ready to crown Him and make Him their King, He is humiliated, reproached, dishonored, and disgraced before the eyes of

all men. He who had raised the dead now lay still in the dark, dank tomb, Himself bound in grave clothes. Though Jesus had tried to warn and prepare them, they still were incapable of comprehending that other events must transpire first: that the King whom they had truly found and followed was not to reign immediately, but must die for the sins of the world. In their disillusionment and dejection Peter finally blurted out, "I am going fishing!" All seemed hopeless and lost. Their cherished expectations were every one dashed to the ground. The great drama was over. It was all over! They must have been mistaken. Things weren't supposed to end this way. Why, by now, they should be reigning with Him in His kingdom! In heart-rending sorrow and in cold, stark fear of the Jewish leaders who had killed their Master, the disciples quickly scattered and went into hiding. I do not hesitate to tell you that better men than I, have *questioned, wondered, doubted* — greater men than I, have *deserted!*

When the vision tarries — will we persevere through the dark night of testing to lay hold upon the glory that shall be revealed? No matter, when the vale of unfulfilled expectations has been crossed, the witnesses shall rise again! They will stand upon their feet! Their enemies will behold them! They will ascend into heaven in a cloud! And immediately after their ascension into heaven the blessed Seer of Patmos beholds a "*great wonder in heaven!*" "*And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars: and she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered...and she brought forth a manchild, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to His throne*" (Rev. 12:1-2,5). Ah, can you not see the mystery? Only the symbols have changed. For you see, my beloved, we are not shown several different things in these visions, only ONE GREAT TRUTH. The temple that is measured is *a people*. That *temple people* in turn *become* the prophetic ministry of the two witnesses! The two witnesses caught up into the heavens of God's Spirit then *become* the great wonder in heaven, the woman who is with child. The woman then *brings forth out of herself THE MANCHILD!* Oh, the mystery of it! Oh, the wonder of it!

It has well been said that "the darkest night is just before the dawn." With what eternal gladness and everlasting astonishment and wonder the disciples of Jesus greeted the dawn of the resurrection morning! And so shall it be with God's elect in this great hour. The symbolic "death" of the witnesses will appear no less disappointing and heartbreaking than was the death of Jesus for those twelve men in the long ago. But, thank God, there is another resurrection morning! Hope rekindled, faith reborn, and the glory of manifest sonship shall burst forth out of the tomb of disillusionment and despair. Aren't you glad!

To be continued... J. PRESTON EBY