

# KINGDOM BIBLE STUDIES

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

## FROM THE CANDLESTICK TO THE THRONE

### Part 129

#### THE SEVENTH ANGEL SOUNDS

*"And the seventh angel sounded..."* (Rev. 11:15).

Our text carries us back to a previous mention of the sounding of the seventh trumpet. Strange to say, there have been numerous individuals throughout church history who have presumed that they, personally, were the seventh angel sounding the seventh trumpet! In Martin Luther's day Michael Stiefel regarded himself as the "seventh angel" of Revelation 11:15. Benjamin Purnell, founder of the communal religious colony known as the House of David, in 1895 claimed a revelation which told him that he was this angel. Charles Taze Russell (1852 — 1916) not only claimed this honor for himself but also held that the first six "angels" were Paul, John, Arias, Waldo, Wycliffe, and Luther. In my lifetime there has been more than one person who has proclaimed himself as this seventh angel, the most notable, perhaps, being William Branham in the mid-1900's. The human heart being what it is, we have probably not yet heard the last of such claims and counterclaims. My soul sings a thousand hallelujahs in thanks and praise to God that the sounding of the seventh trumpet signifies something far transcendent to the word proclaimed by any of these illustrious men!

When the blessed seer of Patmos first introduced the seventh angel, he wrote, "And the angel which I saw...swore by Him that liveth for ever and ever...that...*in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the **mystery of God should be finished***" (Rev. 10:5-7). The words, "***In the days*** of the voice of the seventh angel," and the words, "***when he begins to sound,***" speak volumes to me because the complete sounding of that trumpet involves a process of time and shows us that our change which comes with the sounding of seventh, or last, trumpet is not to find its total consummation in one specific moment. There is the obvious implication of a prolonged sounding extending through various periods and dealings. Yet at the initial sounding, the "mystery" of God's purpose in His elect shall no longer be restrained or hidden!

Ah, methinks I have heard this trumpet, for the mystery of God has been revealed in the midst of the saints in these days! When the seventh trumpet sounds wonderful things take place — the temple of God is opened in heaven, the ark of the covenant is seen in His temple, a great wonder appears 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 cries, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered. And she brings forth a manchild, who is to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child is caught up unto God, and to His throne. None of these things happened as a result of the word or ministry of the men named above who claimed the identity of the seventh angel, yet many thousands of the Lord's people *have heard* the sounding of the seventh angel, not from the lips of any one individual, but in the Spirit and by the Spirit as the Lord has moved in the midst of His elect! By a deep, spiritual work of God the stage is being set for glorious things to come!

In the days when the voice of the seventh angel with his trumpet-message begins to sound, the mystery of God shall be finished. The mystery of God is *God manifest in the flesh!* "Great is the *mystery* of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh" (I Tim. 3:16). This is also the mystery of Christ, that God was in

Christ, and now God in Christ *is in us!* This is the mystery of “godliness” or “God-likeness.” Except God be manifest in our flesh, as He was manifest in the flesh of the firstborn Son, there can be no visible image or expression of God. Paul elaborates upon this mystery in these words: “How that by revelation He made known unto me the *mystery*; which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be *fellow heirs* and of the *same body*, and partakers of His promise *in Christ* by the gospel” (Eph. 3:2-6). When you follow the word “mystery” through the writings of the apostles it is clear that the mystery is the *body of Christ*. In Ephesians 5:31-32 it is the mystery of the *union* of Christ the Head with Christ the body in all the fullness that that means. It is time, my beloved, for the mystery of God to be finished! *Finished* means completed or consummated. In the days of the voice of the seventh angel THE BODY OF CHRIST SHALL BE FINISHED! Not just quantitatively, but qualitatively. That trumpet signifies that the Lord’s elect, the sons of God or the body of Christ, have all been transformed into His image and likeness and grown up unto the measure of the fullness of the stature of Christ! Christ the Head and Christ the body are joined in the blessed union of *fullness*. The great purpose of God revealed in sons has been accomplished. The **mystery** of God manifest in the flesh will be finished!

To me, the greatest evidence that the ministry of the seven angels through the seven trumpets *finishes* our Father’s great work of bringing *many sons to glory* is found in the fact that at the sounding of the seventh trumpet, which is necessarily also the “last trump,” John is explicitly informed that “*in the days of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the **mystery of God should be finished, as He hath declared by His servants the prophets.***” This statement gives the meaning and purpose of the vision of the trumpets, and therefore we know what the work of the trumpets accomplishes, and we have the interpretation of the vision! The “mystery” of God which is “finished” is the mystery of CHRIST IN YOU, THE HOPE OF GLORY! (Col. 1:26-27). Yet here, Christ is ***no longer a hope*** — HE IS BECOME THE GLORY! The mystery is finished, completed, fulfilled, realized, attained, accomplished, perfected, concluded, and consummated! Isn’t it wonderful!

Just as soon as the seventh angel begins to sound his trumpet-message and the mystery of God formed as Christ in His many brethren is finished, the very next scenes are of the temple of God opened in heaven, the ark is seen in His temple, the great wonder of the woman in heaven travailing in birth, and the birth of her remarkable manchild who is to rule all nations with a rod of iron! The seventh trumpet, therefore, signifies that the hour has arrived for the sons of God or the body of Christ to come forth in birth, into full and complete manifestation! This corporate Christ, Head and body, this manchild company, shall rule all nations with a rod of iron. Caught up to God and His throne — into the omnipotence of His authority! No man can rule over the nations *without* until first he has ruled the “nations” *within* — all the inclinations, propensities, and powers of the carnal mind and the flesh nature within each of us which also are the characteristics of all the external “kingdoms” of men of the world system.

Those who have overcome all of the “seven nations” which occupy the “land” of our inward spiritual inheritance in Christ, shall then be caught up unto God and His throne, given a “rod of iron,” or “divine authority” to rule *all nations in all realms* until all have been subdued under the glory and majesty of the kingdom of God! In the days of the voice of the seventh trumpet-message the mystery shall be finished, the Christ body completed, the long and tedious work of preparation of God’s sons shall at last be consummated. The trumpet has begun to sound! There is no doubt that you who now read these lines have heard the sound thereof! I am not referring to hearing my word, my message, or my ministry, or that of any other of God’s ministers and scribes, but to that voice which you have clearly and powerfully heard *by the spirit within yourself*, of which the things we speak serve merely as a confirmation. There is an acceleration of God’s revelatory word in the midst of God’s called and chosen elect, an intensified trumpet-declaration, a clear sound of the revelation of Jesus Christ! Listen, my friend, for the sounding of the trumpet-voice within your spirit!

If you can hear this trumpet sounding above all the hue and cry of rapture, antichrist, mark of the beast, world government, great tribulation, denominationalism, sectarianism, mansions over the hilltop, cabins in the corner of gloryland, pie in the sky, religious programs, rituals, ceremonies, endless meetings, coverings, bishops, set men, cunningly devised fables, grandiose programs and promotions of men, money raising schemes, false prophets, false healers, lying signs and wonders, carnal health and wealth prosperity

doctrines; if you can mount up with wings as eagles and soar high above all this carnal, confused, frustrated clamor of noisy gongs and clanging cymbals, and hear the distinct, plain, unmistakable sound of this last trump, then it can be said to you: Blessed art thou, overcomer, manchild, hundred-fold, firstfruits; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven!

The seventh trumpet is the final redemptive message and when it is finished sounding God will have made a man in His image! What tremendous truths are being blown on this redemptive trumpet! Let not any man rob you of the greatest sound that man has ever been privileged to hear! A sound with such a high and holy pitch, with tones so deep and profound, that no carnal ear can discern them, and only the Spirit can reveal its message to those who hunger and thirst after righteousness. Do not miss what the Spirit is saying; gird up the loins of your mind with the truth that will fully redeem and transform you, in spirit, soul, and body!

### THE KINGDOM OF THE WORLD IS BECOME THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND CHRIST

“And the seventh angel sounded; and there were *great voices* in heaven, saying, *The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ*; and He shall reign for ever and ever” (Rev. 11:15).

When the seventh trumpet sounds great voices are heard in the heavenly realms of the Spirit, and mighty shouts of acclamation and praise to God are lifted. Why here, but not at each of the previous trumpets? Is it not because this seventh trumpet *finishes* the ages-long mystery of Christ being formed in His body, resulting in the birth of the manchild, the manifest sons of God, who are caught up unto God and His throne, given divine authority over all nations to rule them with a rod of iron. O glorious consummation! The Revelation echoes with voices. It rings with shouts of triumph. Singing breaks forth at almost every turn. No other book is quite like it. In the Revelation the song of the Lord swells and sweeps through the sky-streets of the city of God each time the Lord’s people are caught up into a higher realm! Fifty-six times voices are heard, and they are all voices of victory and singing. The voice of the Lamb, angels’ voices, elder’s voices, voices of “living creatures” and of redeemed souls, voices of the 144,000 standing upon mount Zion, twice ten thousand times ten thousand, and the voice of every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, all combine to give such a vision of victory as would assure us that our glorious Father’s redemption reaches unto all creatures in all realms, from the lowest depths to the highest heaven, until the entire universe resonates and vibrates with the songs of deliverance, restoration, and triumph in Christ! It is worth noting that no devils in the drama have singing voices, they are all tone-deaf devils. Beastly passions do not awaken song. Sin and death are not musical. The flesh, the world, and the devil smother the celestial melodizing impulse in the heart and paralyze the vocal chords.

As a result of the sounding of the seventh trumpet John hears somewhere out of the heavenly spheres great voices proclaiming, “*The kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ.*” He hears the ransomed of the Lord singing this glad refrain, “*We give Thee thanks, O Lord God, the Almighty, which art and which wast; because Thou hast taken Thy great power, and didst reign.*” It is important for us to understand what these voices say! The text says that they shout, “The kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever.” In the King James Version we read of *kingdoms*, in the plural. “The *kingdoms* of this world are become the *kingdoms* of our Lord, and of His Christ.” This would leave the impression that the reference is to the various civil nations, kingdoms, and empires in the political sense of the word that exist upon the earth. In that view it would signify the total and complete triumph of the kingdom of God in all realms, so that every diverse tongue, tribe, people, and nation in the whole world would now be subjugated to the reign of God’s Christ, living in peace, righteousness, and harmony unto the ends of the earth. Yet, reading through the rest of the book of Revelation, it is abundantly clear that such is not the case! Many things must yet transpire before such a glorious outcome has been achieved! While it is true that God rules in the kingdoms of men, and shall in His time bring them all under the dominion of His holy saints, the subject in chapter eleven of the Revelation is not that — it is the establishment of Christ’s spiritual rule within His king-priest company!

The great truth that the spirit of truth would impress upon us here is that *everything* in chapter eleven of the Revelation relates to God’s elect — *not the world!* The Greek text reads, “The *kingdom* of the world

is become the *kingdom* of our Lord, and of His Anointed; and He shall reign for the ages of the ages.” Note, it is not the “kingdoms,” plural, of the world, but the “kingdom,” singular, of the world that becomes the “kingdom,” singular, of our Lord, and of His Christ. Our English word “kingdom” conveys the idea of territory or of a political entity. It is true that the Greek term *basileia* also includes the connotation of territory and that it may mean a political entity ruled by a king. But there is another meaning that the Greek word has, and that meaning is “sovereignty” or “rule.” Unfortunately the English word “kingdom” does not carry over this meaning, therefore something vital is lost in many translations where a different word than “kingdom” should be used. That this idea of sovereignty, rule, or dominion is actually the most common meaning of the word in the New Testament, is plainly evident to anyone who will take the time to study its usage. The kingdom of God is the *rule* or *dominion* of God by any agency, especially *by the power of His Spirit!* When Jesus said, “The kingdom of God is within you,” He was telling us that the *rule* of God is within us, in the very life, authority, and power within our spirit!

And what shall we say, then, of the *dominion* God has promised to men in His own image? Did not His lips declare from the very dawn of man’s existence on earth, “Let us *give them* dominion?” Hear the words of the first blessed Son of God, the true man in the image of God, as He in triumph declares, “All power (authority) is *given unto me* in heaven and in earth.” It is gloriously true, the kingdom of God is within you, and God rules within men by His Spirit. But is that the whole truth? I am inclined to think that our heavenly Father not only rules *in* men, but He also rules *through* men. Does He not rule *in* our Lord Jesus Christ, so that the Son says that He does only what He sees His Father do, He speaks only what He hears of the Father, that He does always what pleases the Father, and that it is the Father that *dwelleth in Him* that does the works? Yet — does God rule only *in* Jesus, or does He also rule *through* the firstborn Son? Does the Lord Jesus have no authority to intervene in the events of the external world? Ah, the devils heard His voice and cried out and came out of those whom they possessed! The winds and the waves obeyed His voice! The water turned into wine, and the bread and the fishes multiplied in obedience to His word! Blind eyes were opened, deaf ears unstopped, withered limbs regained form and strength, and dead men arose and stalked out of their tombs in obedience to His command! Judgment came upon Jerusalem and the temple, until not one stone was left upon another, according to His word and at the turn of His mighty hand! Oh, yes! God does not only rule *in* men, but He also rules *through* men!

Now here is the great proclamation that is revealed when the seventh angel sounds his trumpet, “The kingdom (rule, dominion) of this world is become the kingdom (rule, dominion) OF OUR LORD (JESUS THE HEAD), and OF HIS CHRIST (ANOINTED BODY).” Just as the firstborn Son said, “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth,” so now the anointed body of Christ, His many brethren conformed to His image, can say, “All power is now *given unto us* in heaven and in earth!” So many of the Lord’s people are blind to the great truth that God is forming a government, and that the judgment and the dominion under the whole heaven shall *be given* to the saints of the most High! People seem to entertain the notion that either the Lord only rules in the hearts of men, or else they are waiting for Jesus to come crashing down out of the heavens as the great King and single-handedly snap the whole world into obedience. People testify that Jesus is their Saviour, Healer, Baptizer, and *Coming King*. But He is not a coming King! When He comes He does not come as King. He is already King. He has been crowned as King upon the throne. He sits today at the right hand of the Majesty on high. He rules. When He comes He comes as *King of kings*. There is a great difference! Let us put Him where He belongs. Let us not drag Him down to just a king level — for the world has had a bumper crop of kings. He comes as *King of kings*, and *Lord of lords*! This suggests a people who assume the same authority and power He possesses — yet He in all things has preeminence! It indicates that He is forming His elect into a *ruling government* of kings and priests.

It is God’s declared purpose that His *people*, His *holy nation*, His *peculiar treasure*, should be the domain over which He would rule as King, that through them He should ultimately win the allegiance of all the earth and all things and every creature. The Lord’s greatest dominion at this time is in the lives of His elect and chosen ones. We are now becoming ruled and governed by the Lord totally and absolutely. He has extended the dominion of His kingdom to our hearts and lives, and now the Lord will rule us with complete and undisputed dominion. And He will continue to rule and reign in our lives until every enemy within us is made subject to Him. Then we shall be able to rule as He rules, extending His dominion unto all the vast expanses of His creation until God becomes all in all. This is the present truth of the kingdom of God!

Can we not see by this that “kingdom,” that is, rule and dominion, also denotes a *government*. To aid our understanding let us quote our text thus: “The government of this world is *become the government embodied in our Lord, and in His Anointed body*.” Permit me to say it this way — God has formed a **new government** for the world! Jesus spoke of this very truth when He told His disciples, “*I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may...sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel*” (Lk. 22:28-29). These words were spoken by Jesus to the twelve apostles on the night of the last supper, when their commemoration of the Passover had ended. The words assure us that Jesus had the authority to promise His disciples *appointment to positions of rulership in His kingdom*! Jesus was aware that within a matter of only a few hours He would be brutally seized and mocked and beaten and accused and led away to His ignominious crucifixion. These disciples would be very perplexed and distressed, wondering whether there would actually be a kingdom, after all, or whether they had followed a false Messiah. And so, in the last few hours of His earthly time with them, He spoke prophetic words which they would remember after His resurrection and ascension and would comprehend when they had received the Holy Spirit.

Jesus knew that His disciples had been raised to cherish the hope of the long-promised Messianic kingdom, and He knew that they were firmly convinced that they would be associated with Jesus in His kingdom (Mat. 20:21). Yet He also recognized their very limited understanding of what that hope actually embodied, and the weakness of their flesh which made them vulnerable to doubts, fears, and utter dismay when they saw Him crucified, dead, and buried. How could there be a kingdom when the King was gone — arrested, tried, convicted, sentenced, crucified until dead, and buried in a tomb? In the dreadful darkness of that hour Jesus sought to encourage them with this word, “*I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me*.” Yes, our Lord had the assurance that God had appointed unto Him a kingdom! What a great impetus this was to the firstborn Son of God when He fulfilled His ministry on earth! He knew the words of the prophets, and He opened the scriptures to His disciples concerning His mission and coming of the kingdom. And now He states plainly that He has appointed unto them a kingdom, just as His Father has appointed unto Him!

“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the *government* shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the *increase of His government and peace* there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform this!” (Isa. 9:6-7).

The kingdom, the rule, the dominion, the government of God is established in that domain where God’s *saving power* has defeated all opposition, broken down every wall, transformed all that is contrary to God’s nature, mind, and will, and has brought men into willing submission to His authority. Where the nature of God and the mind of Christ have mightily conquered, the state of things is called the *kingdom of God*. What a *government* that is — one that does not rest upon demanding external obedience, but in effectually working internal transformation! Where hearts are changed, where sin and error and darkness have been defeated, where truth and righteousness advance, where the will and ways of God are raised up as reality and life in a people, where the mind of Christ rules out of union with God — *there* the kingdom of God has come and is advancing! What a government this is!

The kingdom of God that John was in, and the kingdom of God that I am proclaiming today, is composed of that company of elect sons of God who have aligned themselves with God; who lean upon His breast, who listen to His voice, who put on His mind, who obey His commands, who walk in His nature, who do His will and carry out His divine purpose in the heavens and on the earth. They are loyal subjects of the King of the kings, for they ever do His bidding. Their King is the Lord God Almighty and He is their Father. They obey without question; for it is their nature to do only and always those things that please the Father. They are true citizens of the kingdom of God, and true members of His divine government, for He has appointed unto them a kingdom, a rulership, a sphere of dominion, power, and authority! They are first under His rule and authority, but they are kings and priests in that divine and heavenly government. They are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ! They are destined to share all His glory and sit with Him upon His throne! They are the members of the heavenly government of God and the kingdom of heaven is expressed

through them and the power and the glory of the kingdom is being committed into their hands for the age and the ages to come, for Christ has appointed unto them a kingdom, as His Father has appointed unto Him!

“The kingdom of this world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ.” It should be observed that such a statement does not rule out the fact that God alone has exercised at all times sovereignty over the world and all mankind. The proclamation affirms that there is a change — the sovereignty over the world is now delegated into the hands of someone other than the eternal Spirit — the sovereignty of the world came to our Lord (Jesus) and to *His Christ*. When the scriptures speak of “Christ,” they do not speak only of our Lord Jesus the Christ, but also of His *anointed body*. “*For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is CHRIST. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one (Christ, anointed) body*” (I Cor. 12:12-13). It is God’s will and purpose to commit the government of the world into the hands of His Anointed, the Christ, Head and body! It is the rule of God through His human instrument, the many-membered Anointed One, the manifest sons of God! My soul has been bathed this day with heaven’s fragrance from this great truth that the *government* of this world *is become* the *government* of our Lord, **and of His Christ!**” That is the mystery. “And He shall reign unto the ages of the ages.” It is indeed wonderful!

The government of the world has not yet passed from the hands of sinful mortals who have been ruling from ancient times until now — all earthly governments from the beginning of the race until now are represented in the scriptures as wild beasts of prey, having no lawful owner nor control, and full of destructive savageness and offensive corruption. But as the two witnesses are caught up into the heavens of the Spirit of the Lord, and as the seventh trumpet sounds in which the mystery of Christ formed in His elect body is finished, or consummated, John hears great voices out of heaven saying, “The government of the world *is (now) become* the government invested in our Lord, and in His anointed ones!” The government *is become* — it has *come to be* — the government is now formed and ready to take the reigns of its dominion and rule! Actually, the verb is in the past tense — “The government of this world *has become* the government of our Lord, and of His Christ” — but the past tense can be used *proleptically* of a certain event in the near future. “Proleptically” — that’s a hundred-dollar word many are not acquainted with, but it denotes something of the nature of an *anticipation*. Webster says that it is an expression by which a thing is represented as *already done*, though in reality it is to *follow as the consequence of the action which is described*. A natural example would be the morning after an election, when a new man has been elected President. Proleptically, we might say, “Last night we got a new administration!” Yet, the administration has not really been put together yet, nor can the President-elect exercise presidential authority yet. In one sense we already have a new administration, whereas the actual rule is still to *follow*. Referring to His impending conflict with the powers of evil involved in His death, Jesus said, proleptically, “Now *is* the judgment of this world, now *shall* the ruler of this world be cast out” (Jn. 12:31).

Thus, our text simply signifies that God *has formed* a government for the world, a ruling body, a kingdom, a company of king-priests, who *are to assume* the governance of the world; this government is here designated as ready to rule, though not yet ruling, for “they *shall* reign unto the ages of the ages.” Is not this what the blessed prophet Daniel spake of when he wrote, “*I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them; until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom (reigns of government)...and the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him*” (Dan. 7:21-22,27).

Immediately following this wonderful declaration of God’s government in chapter eleven of the Revelation, John sees “a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun...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). With what unspeakable joy and sublime anticipation do we await the birth of that wonderful manchild — the *government* of our Lord, and of *His Christ!*

In that day there shall be no more godless, atheistic nations; no more pagan nations whose people bow before false gods; no more radical, Christ-hating Islamic nations; no more affluent, pleasure-mad,

crime-ridden, self-seeking nations who have *forgotten God*; for the word is sure: “Yea, all kings shall fall down before Him: *all nations* shall serve Him” (Ps. 72:11). Again, “Let the people praise Thee, O God; let ALL the people praise Thee. O let the *nations* be glad and sing for joy: for Thou shalt judge the people righteously, and *govern the nations* upon earth. Let the people praise Thee, O God; let ALL the people praise Thee. Then shall the earth yield her increase; and God, even our own God, shall bless us. God shall bless us; and *all the ends of the earth shall fear (reverence) Him*” (Ps. 67:3-7). “And the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord: and *all the kindreds of the nations* shall worship before Thee. For the kingdom is the Lord’s: and He is the *governor* among the nations” (Ps. 22:27-28).

It is a great mystery, but it is a grand fact of truth nevertheless that Christ first reigns *in* us, that He may consequently reign *through* us. “Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, INHERIT THE KINGDOM prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Mat. 25:34). “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not INHERIT THE KINGDOM OF GOD? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall INHERIT THE KINGDOM OF GOD” (I Cor. 6:9-10). I exhort every saint therefore to lay aside every weight and the sin which so easily besets them. The Holy Spirit does not say that a person guilty of one or more of the above mentioned things cannot be *saved*. Salvation is not the issue! The message is just this — those who practice such things *shall not inherit the kingdom of God* — that is, they shall not be part of God’s *government*, such will not be given power over the nations nor shall they rule or reign in the holy administration of God’s Christ!

The word “kingdom” indicates the richness of the heritage of the saints. It is no petty estate, no happy corner in obscurity. I have heard good men say that they would be content with a cabin in the corner of gloryland or a spot just inside the gate. I shall not be! The Lord says we shall inherit a *kingdom*. Jesus said that He has appointed unto us a *kingdom*, as His Father has appointed unto Him. We could not be satisfied to inherit less, because less than that would not suit our character. “Thou hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall *reign on the earth*” (Rev. 5:10). Those blessed ones who have received the call to sonship must reign with Christ, or be as wretched as deposed monarchs. A king without a kingdom is an unhappy and unfulfilled man! If I were a poor servant, a servant’s quarters would be a great thing, for it would correspond with my condition and degree; but if I am made a son of God, an heir of God and joint-heir with Jesus; if I am made a priest and a king, I must have a kingdom, or I shall not have attained to a position equal to my nature and potential. He who makes us kings gives unto us a kingdom to fit the character He has bestowed upon us. Aren’t you glad!

Beloved, strive earnestly after that which the Spirit of God will give you — a *kingly heart*. Do not be among those who are satisfied with the miserable nature of ordinary humanity or the childish hopes of those babes in Christ who throng to the churches which are merely nurseries for the birthing, care, and educating of babes and which then stifle and threaten to suffocate the life out of these little ones with their malnutritional diet of static creeds, lifeless traditions, and infantine programs. Like all little children with vivid imaginations they look for mansions and harps and golden streets and wings and white nightgowns in that glory world above, unable to comprehend that such glittering diadems are only dime-store glitter to God’s true kings; the true riches are ETERNAL SPIRITUAL REALITIES; the true treasury wealth looks down upon the stars! Do not sell yourselves short, ye sons of the most High! Get a kingly heart — ask the King of kings to give it to you, and beg of Him a royal spirit. Act royally on earth towards your Lord, and for His sake towards all men. Go about the world not as mean men in spirit and action, nor yet in false humility as paupers and beggars, but as kings and priests of a race superior to the dirt-scrappers who are on their knees, crawling in the mud after fleeting earthly riches and transitory worldly fame. What incredible loss shall be suffered by those who imagine that *financial prosperity* in this life is a sign of great faith, blessing, and spirituality!

What Christendom in general cannot comprehend is that Jesus does not rule alone but through a many-membered body. Man in God’s image, man in Christ at the right hand of God, is God’s government in the kingdom of God! I have met men who professed that they had no desire, no ambition whatever to rule and reign with Christ. It is enough, say they, to know that we are saved by grace, faithful church members, and shall make heaven at last. In fact, I have been greatly criticized and abused by some for my hope of

inheriting the kingdom of God and sitting with Christ upon the throne of universal dominion. In the eyes of these accusers I am vain, conceited, self-righteous, egotistic, presumptuous, heretical, and power-mad, suffering delusions of grandeur because I cherish the beautiful hope of sonship and rulership in the kingdom of God. But I do not hesitate to tell you that Christ Himself has graciously bidden us to overcome, to sit down with Him in His throne, and to share with Him His authority over the nations and all things. *"Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth!"* (Ps. 2:8-10). Such reward to His faithful followers is merely the tangible expression of the approval and purpose of God, and we may no more deny Him the pleasure of sharing His glory with His footstep followers than we may renounce it once it is conferred. HE WHO DESPISES A THRONE DESPISES HIM WHO CONFERS THE THRONE. It was one of our Lord's rebukes to the Pharisees — "The glory that cometh only from God YE SEEK NOT" (Jn. 4:44).

### THE WORSHIP OF THE ELDERS

*"And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God"* (Rev. 11:16).

The twenty-four elders sitting on twenty-four thrones around the central throne bear a special signification for they are represented as distinct from both the four living creatures "in the midst" of the throne and the great multitude "before" the throne. These elders occupy a unique position described in Revelation 4:4 as "round about" the throne — yet UPON THRONES! In order to fully appreciate the scenery here drawn by the Spirit, we need to refresh our minds concerning one particular of the order established by God among the people of Israel after they came up out of the land of Egypt. It is important that we get a clear idea, not only of the structure of the tabernacle of Moses, but also of the arrangement of both the people and the priesthood in relation to it.

In the second chapter of the book of Numbers we find the order given for the encampment of Israel as they journeyed through the wilderness. The camp of Israel, as it was established in Sinai, formed a hollow square. In the center of the hollow was the tabernacle of Moses. Around the tabernacle Israel was divided into four camps: one camp of three tribes on the east side, another camp of three tribes on the south side, another camp of three tribes on the west side, and the last camp of three tribes on the north side. The tabernacle in the center of these four camps was the dwelling place of God — His throne, His sphere of activity, the center of His goodness, glory, and power. The camp of Israel, the great multitude "before" the throne stands for the whole world of mankind *outside of God*, estranged from His life, yet redeemed, blessed, and brought nigh.

But there is a third company — the CAMP OF THE PRIESTS — situated, as it were, "round about the throne," directly *between* the tabernacle-throne and the great multitude! The Lord said to Moses and Aaron, "The Israelites shall encamp each by his own tribal standard or banner, with the ensign of their fathers' houses, opposite the tent of meeting (tabernacle) and facing it on every side. Then the tent of meeting (tabernacle) shall be set out, with the **CAMP OF THE LEVITES IN THE MIDST OF THE CAMPS**" (Num. 2:2,17). The tribe of Levi was not counted among the tribes of Israel, therefore they were not camped with the other tribes, for they were the Lord's priests, ordained to be camped in the center of the encampment near the tabernacle. Divine infinite purpose lies behind this whole arrangement and the moment the wonderful significance of this dawns upon our spiritual understanding, we see that God has a PRIESTHOOD COMPANY *between Himself and the world of mankind!* Thus, the priesthood of Israel was camped in the open space in the center of all the camps of Israel, *round about the tabernacle-throne*, and *between* the tabernacle and all the other camps of Israel. Can we not see by this that in the book of Revelation the four living creatures "in the midst of the throne" correspond to the tabernacle-throne where Yahwey dwelt in divine majesty, answering to the ministry of *sonship*, God's *kings*. The camp of Israel out "before" the tabernacle-throne answers to the *great multitude* of the redeemed John saw "before" the throne in the heavens of the Spirit. Finally, the camp of the priests, situated *between* the tabernacle-throne and the great multitude of Israelites, answers to the twenty-four elders seated "round about the throne," signifying the ministry of *priesthood*.



A priest or priesthood suggests that there is a reason why such has been raised up by God. It denotes that there has been in the minds of men an estrangement between God and His creatures and the priest ministers to bridge that gulf and bring about peace and at-one-ness. Deep in the heart of every man there is a strong and instinctive demand for a priest, to be a mediator, to lay one hand on man, and the other on God, and standing between both to bring the two together into unification through the power of priesthood. 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 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!

The priest *stands between*. The ministry of the priest is an intermediate or go-between ministry. He reaches forth with one hand and takes hold of God; he reaches out with the other hand and takes hold of humanity; and brings the two together by the power of his priestly ministration. Can we not see that this is the very reason God placed the priesthood of Israel in an encampment directly *between* the tabernacle-throne and the great multitude of the people. That is the picture! Most people miss this great truth, and I don't remember ever seeing a drawing of the tabernacle and the camp of Israel in the wilderness with the tribe of Levi correctly positioned in the open area of the hollow square between the tabernacle and the camps of the tribes. It is abundantly evident that they correspond precisely to the twenty-four elders that John beheld "round about the throne." Isn't it wonderful!

Notice, now, in our text it is the twenty-four elders, God's priesthood company, who, when the seventh angel sounds his trumpet, and the mystery of God in his elect is finished, fall before God on their faces, and worship God. I don't think the scene has ever been more eloquently articulated than it was by Dr. Seiss when he wrote, "When the mighty *Goel* took the book, the elders also fell down before the Lamb, and gave their solemn and adoring vote to His worthiness; but here the prostration is even lowlier. They not only fall into the posture of reverent adoration, but '*upon their faces*,' bury their immortal countenances in the pavement around the throne; by their very emotion hurled from their golden seats, overwhelmed and almost undone. There (in chapter five) they expressed their adoring sense of the Saviour's worthiness, exulting in the prospect of what was to result; but here they celebrate the whole issue reached, the blessed consummation come, the thing of hope for all these ages now translating into fact; and, crowned princes of heaven, and anointed coregents with the great Eternal as they are, they cannot contain themselves. Their glorified limbs sink under the weight of the contemplation; their heads bow down to the place of their feet; their whole being melts into one flux of overwhelming realization of what now is come, and the gush of their adoring soul-dissolving joy breaks like a sea of thankfulness against the throne."

These are not literal scenes in any event, but beautiful symbols which convey to us the great truth that in the lives of God's sons who are called to share Christ's throne there is no spirit of self-importance, no grasping after power for power's sake, no lifting up in pride, no attitude of arrogance toward God or any man, no sense that we have attained to this place by any works that we have done or by any self-effort on our part, but we are keenly aware that He has called us and chosen us *by His own grace and purpose alone*, and HE it is who is worthy, and we have been made kings and priests to show forth the virtues and excellencies of HIM who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light and by His mighty hand exalted us to His throne of glory. What a word!

Oh, how they give God thanks because He has now formed His kingdom in His king-priest company, and in them He is reigning! They greatly rejoice because, though the "nations" within and without were angry, God's passion has been stirred, and He has arisen to reward His faithful servants, great and small, and to defeat with finality all their enemies. All this action is a blessed and triumphant part of His accomplishment in the days when the seventh angel begins to sound! So shall reality surpass our boldest expectation! Now we are children of God. Now we have a revelation of God's great plan and purpose and of things that are to be, of the power of God and His Christ that is to be revealed before the face of all peoples, the glory that is to be revealed in the sons of God! Now we can speak, nay, stammer about these things in imperfection; and joy fills our hearts when we speak of them. And even now as we behold the mighty transforming work of God in those apprehended ones in this significant hour, we fall down in humble

worship and thanks as we obtain a glimpse of the glory of God's grace and power that is to be manifested in us!

To be continued...

J. PRESTON EBY