

# KINGDOM BIBLE STUDIES

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

## FROM THE CANDLESTICK TO THE THRONE

### Part 72

#### THE FOUR LIVING CREATURES AND THE TWENTY-FOUR ELDERS (continued)

“And *round about* the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw *four and twenty elders* sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold...and *in the midst* of the throne, and *round about* the throne, were *four beasts* full of eyes before and behind” (Rev. 4:4-6).

The word “beasts” is an unfortunate translation, being necessarily associated in our minds with the brute creation and that which is typified thereby. Beasts in this passage is translated from the Greek word *zoon* which signifies simply a “living creature”. It comes from the root *zao* from which also is derived the word *zoe* which is used always in reference to *divine life* or the *life of the ages*. All of these words denote that which is alive or is lively! How significant, then, that these four **creatures of life** are found “*in the midst of the throne*” and “*round about the throne*,” occupying the central position in the throne while emanating in glory and power out from the throne!

In the midst of the throne! The four “Living Creatures” are, then, four manifestations of LIFE — the LIFE OF THE GOD OF THE THRONE! They are four representations of NATURE — the NATURE OF THE GOD OF THE THRONE! The four Living Creatures are four expressions of THE POWER AND DOMINION OF THE THRONE! Not only do they represent the life and nature of the God of the throne; not only do they express within themselves the character of the dominion of the throne — they likewise reveal the very life, nature, character, and dominion of A-L-L WHO SHARE THE THRONE! The throne means **kingship!** The One on the throne **REIGNS!** This is the glory of the *sons of God* who reign with Christ!

The twenty-four Elders in the book of Revelation bear a special signification. These Elders occupy a unique position described as “round about” the throne — yet UPON THRONES! In order to fully appreciate the scenery here drawn by the Spirit, we need to go back and examine the order established among the people of Israel after they came up out of the land of Egypt. 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. Then — in the open area *between* the camp of the tribes of Israel and the tabernacle was camped the tribe of Levi with its priesthood — “round about” the tabernacle. In order to go to the tabernacle from any of the tribes of Israel it was necessary to *pass through* the camp of the priests! This great truth reveals that God placed the camp of the priests directly **between** Himself and the people of Israel. It should be clear to any thinking mind that the priesthood camped “round about” the tabernacle corresponds precisely to the scene of the twenty-four Elders seated “round about” the throne of God! For you see, the Ark of the Covenant in the Most Holy Place of the tabernacle constituted the *throne* of Yahweh in the midst of His people! And “round about” that throne was His *priesthood!*

Further confirmation that the twenty-four Elders represent the ministry of priesthood lies in the fact that in I Chronicles chapter twenty-four we read of how, under king David, in preparation for their future

ministry in the temple, the Levitical priesthood was divided into TWENTY-FOUR COURSES under the headship of TWENTY-FOUR ELDERS! The priesthood had become so numerous that all of those priests could not go into the house of the Lord at one time, so they were divided into courses and assigned to work shifts, each “course” of priests and Levites came on duty for a week at a time. It took *all twenty-four courses* to **MAKE UP THE ENTIRE PRIESTHOOD OF GOD!** The twenty-four Elders represent the whole priesthood of God, of which Jesus is the Head, our great High Priest!

Let us then stand assured of this marvelous truth: the four Living Creatures represent the ministry of *kingship*, for they dwell *in the midst of the throne*. The twenty-four Elders reveal within themselves the ministry of *priesthood*, for they are *round about the throne*, standing *between* the God of the throne and the vast multitude “before” the throne. These are not *two separate companies*; these are rather *two aspects of ministry* that have their source and power in the throne. This is the KING-PRIEST MINISTRY OF THE MANIFEST SONS OF GOD! These are all sons of God in the power and outflow of life, glory, and power from the throne. God is raising up within each of His called and chosen elect the *spirit and nature of sonship*, the *spirit and nature of kingship*, and the *spirit and nature of priesthood*. These are the heavenly realities John beheld in the throne room! Isn’t it wonderful!

The four Living Creatures — KINGS! The twenty-four Elders — PRIESTS! Together they bow low before the great King of kings and the High Priest over the house of priests, intoning this *new song* — “Thou hast *made us* unto our God *kings and priests*: and we shall *reign* over the earth!” (Rev. 5:9-10). Ah, beloved, these are not mere words. God’s meaning of a “song” is “message; revelation; experience.” All songs are meant to convey a message! Man calls *anything* a song, any weird beat, any unnatural accents, any harmonic dissonance, any melodic discord, the ba-ba-bu of the jungle, the raucous racket of rock music, the monotonous drone of hip-hop is merchandised as a song. A “new song” in spiritual language means a NEW REVELATION, a NEW MESSAGE, a NEW EXPERIENCE in God! A new song is born when men experience the inworking of a new message, the message and the messenger so becoming one until the messenger *becomes the message*. I am reminded of Cartwright, the backwoods preacher of a past century, who used to sing a hymn as he went through the woods:

“No foot of land do I possess,  
No cottage in the wilderness;”

and one day a man presented Cartwright with a cottage and a piece of ground, and he went on his way singing:

“No foot of land do I possess,  
No cottage in the wilderness;”

and he stopped and said, “Joseph Cartwright, that is a lie; you have got a cottage and land; *you cannot sing that hymn!*” Every time the Spirit of God unfolds new dimensions of truth to our hearts, effecting further transformations into His image, bringing us into a new place in God and a further appropriating of our inheritance in Christ, a *new song* is born. The old song was good and true for its time, but we can sing the old song no more, for a new day has dawned, a new glory has arisen, a new reality is birthed within, praise His name! While this is not all it means, yet it is true that many songs we sang in church when I was a boy growing up I cannot sing today because they no longer express what God is doing in my life, or the reality, word, and purpose He is bringing forth. Some of them are so far from the truth as I now know it, that I cannot bear even to *listen* to them, much less sing them!

God is even now preparing a people, a royal priesthood, a kingdom of priests, sons of the Most High; and while the church world continues on with its time-honored traditions and childish delusions, singing about flying away to cabins in the corner of gloryland or to mansions over the hill-top, a people is arising in the earth with a new and wonderful vision — to become kings and priests unto God — their hearts vibrating with the melodious strains of a *new song*, the song of a people with a purpose, a company gathered out of the generations, grown up into the fullness of Christ, conquering every enemy within and without, which in due time shall be led forth to be the manifest expression of His image, character, and nature, the revelation

of His glory, power, and dominion, with an outflow of life and light and love sufficient to change the course of history, transform the nations, and restore all men and all things back into the life of God. What a song!

For these manifest sons the whole creation groans, and they are in the process of preparation, *being made*, in the skillful hands of the Great Potter, a KINGDOM OF PRIESTS. God knows every detail of His plan for His kings and priests, and precisely the work to be wrought upon each one to conform them unto His own priestly heart. Ah, those who receive *this call*, those who behold *this vision*, those who cherish *this hope*, indeed sing a ***new song*** which can be learned by none but those apprehended, the firstfruits of His redemption. This is the ineffable, preeminent Song; ineffable because it strikes a chord, the vibration of which cannot be discerned by the carnal man; preeminent because it is the Song of the Lamb who stands in the midst of the throne, the King of kings and the High Priest of *our profession*, who in all things has preeminence!

## PARTAKERS OF THE HEAVENLY CALLING

HE THAT HATH AN EAR, LET HIM HEAR WHAT THE SPIRIT SAYS! Across the land and around the world the Spirit is saying today that He is preparing a people, He is preparing a body, He is preparing sons who shall be conformed to the image of *the Son*, partakers of the divine nature, who shall have the mind of Christ, who shall be brought to glory and who then shall become the very express image of the Father, the very brightness of the Father's glory and the outraying of the Father's person. Even as the first Son, who went into the ground and died as a grain of wheat to produce other sons in His likeness — He was the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of the Father's person — and God sent Him to be the Saviour of the world. God is now preparing sons, God is now preparing a body for that first Son, we are the body of the first Son, the body of the Christ, the body of the King of glory, the body of the great High Priest in the heavens after the order of Melchizedek. We are the body of the Christ, and in and through these sons, when all have been brought to His fullness, His salvation shall be manifested, exhibited, and demonstrated unto the ends of the earth. All peoples and all nations shall at last *see what God is like in the fullness of His love, glory, wisdom, and power!* The Lord is saying to His people in this day, "For this cause I have raised thee up and sent thee to be a light unto the nations and thou shalt BE MY SALVATION to the ends of the earth" (Isa. 9:6; Acts 13:47).

"Wherefore, holy brethren, *partakers of the heavenly calling*, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus" (Heb. 3:1). The subject in the book of Hebrews is Christ's priesthood and the writer says that we, the holy brethren of Christ Jesus, seeing how true it is that the Christ came into man's world and fully shared his weaknesses and sorrow; seeing how true it is that the Christ is now exalted as the High Priest to the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens — as ***partakers with Him in this heavenly calling of priesthood after the order of Melchizedek, let us consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of this order of priesthood to which we are called.*** If you would know the meaning and the glory and the power of that to which you are called — CONSIDER HIM! Don't consider Him any longer merely as Saviour, Healer, Blessor, and Baptizer — consider Him as the Apostle and High Priest of the order of priesthood to which you are called!

An *apostle* is the *first advocate* and *initiator* of a new order. A *high priest* is the *head* and *chief* of an order of priesthood. Jesus is the *apostle* of that order to which we are called. He is the *sign Son*, the *first-begotten Son*, the *pattern Son* for all who are called to be sons of God. He is the *apostle* and the *High Priest* of the Melchizedekian Order of Priesthood! All who are called to sonship and priesthood through the age shall come into that same wonderful image and fullness of Jesus Christ. It is time now, above all times, for us to mightily stress these truths. I see no possibility of any long delay until the hour of the *manifestation of the sons of God* becomes a reality. One does not attain the realities of sonship by thumb twiddling or presumption. Sonship appears as a great vision before our understanding by the quickening of the spirit of revelation and we attain it through surmounting faith, patience, endurance, testing, proving, obedience, and growth into His fullness through eternal vigilance. Men in the church order may have other men as their apostles, but when it comes to sonship, kingship, and priesthood, the apostle of this realm is only Jesus! This realm has only *one Apostle* even as it has only *one High Priest*. As our *Apostle* Jesus Christ proclaims and opens up the way before us, and as our *High Priest* He reconciles us fully to God that we may walk in the calling ordained for us.

The “heavenly calling” is the calling unto the priesthood of Christ. Hebrews is very clear about this! “Now the main point of what we have to say is this: We have such a **High Priest**, One who is seated at the right hand of the majestic God **in heaven**, an officiating **priest**, a **minister in the holy places** and in the true tabernacle which is erected not by man but by the Lord” (Heb. 8:1-2, Amplified). Hear it, O ye sons of God — Christ is the great High Priest **of the heavens** and we are called to be **partakers with Him in that heavenly calling!**

## THE HIGH PRIEST AND THE PRIESTS

The notion, held by the vast majority of evangelical Christians, that the priesthood of the Christ is an *individual, singular priesthood* exercised by Himself alone in some far-off heaven, is an absurdity. The term “high priest” is a relative term, “high” being translated from the Greek word *archiereus*, meaning “chief” in order or rank. It is the same word translated “chief priest” or “chief priests” in numerous passages. It is a title denoting the CHIEF OR HEAD OF AN ORDER such as the terms “Chairman of the Board,” “Archangel,” “Chief of Police,” “Speaker of the House,” “King of Kings,” etc. It should be clear to every thinking mind that you cannot have a High Priest without a priesthood any more than you can have a Chairman of the Board without a board for the Chairman of the Board to be chairman over. You cannot have a High Priest without a priesthood any more than you can have an Arch-angel without an order of angels for the Arch-angel to be leader of. You cannot have a High Priest without a priesthood any more than you can have a Chief of Police without a police force for the Chief of Police to be chief of. You cannot have a High Priest without a priesthood any more than you can have a Speaker of the House of Representatives without a House of Representatives for the Speaker of the House to be speaker for. You cannot have a High Priest without a priesthood any more than you can have Jesus as King of Kings and Lord of Lords without any kings or any lords for Him to be King and Lord over.

High Priest! The High Priest in the heavenlies! Ah, yes, we are holy brethren, **partakers of the heavenly calling**, receiving the vision to become **one in Him**, to share in this heavenly priesthood, and as we follow on to know Him in all His glorious fullness we shall see a ministry unfold before us which leads to deliverance and restoration for all God’s creation. Our task will not be left undone, for we shall have the ages before us to carry it through to victory, praise His name!

The priesthood of Aaron foreshadows that of Christ in a very striking way. The honor of being a High Priest is not open to man’s ambition. No man can claim it for himself (Heb. 5:4). The High Priest ministers in such high and holy matters that only God can appoint him! Thus it was that Aaron was called of God to this task. He did not take it to himself; nor did Moses make him High Priest. God called him to do this work, and no one else could have done so. In the same way, “Christ glorified not Himself to be made an High Priest” (Heb. 5:5). He is High Priest because God made Him so! He was “called of God” (Heb. 5:10) to this office.

It is inspiring to meditate upon the thought given us in Exodus 28:1 wherein we read, “And take thou unto thee *Aaron thy brother, and his sons with him* from among the children of Israel, that HE may minister unto me in the priest’s office, even Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron’s sons.” God chose five men, Aaron and his four sons, and then referred to them in the singular pronoun, “That HE may minister.” The ministries of these five men were inseparably wrapped up in each other, so that God saw them as one. Aaron did not minister without the priests (except on the day of Atonement), and the priests could not minister apart from the High Priest. This is all very wonderful, for Christ does not minister alone! God has called us to be priests that we might share in the ministry of reconciliation. We, too, like the priests of old, cannot minister apart from our great High Priest upon whom we depend at all times. We have understood what priesthood is only in a very limited way and have fulfilled this ministry feebly in a measure. But these are days of restoration! God is about to bring forth the full power and glory of Christ’s priesthood after the order of Melchizedek in this earth so that all creation may be delivered from the bondage of corruption and set free to *know and serve the Lord!*

The Father has called us unto sonship that we might stand with Him and cry, “*Our very own Father!*” He is apprehending a people for the authority of kingship that He might be “King of kings,” a many-membered kingship. He is raising up a people to be priests after the order of Melchizedek that He and they

may stand in *one ministry* unto the Father — satisfying the heart of the Father for the fellowship of sons, the rulership of kings, and the outflow of priests through whom He may reveal His person unto the whole creation. And even now, all creation is standing on tiptoe to behold the glorious sight of God's sons, God's kings, and God's priests *coming into their own!* Because of the wise and gracious council of God from eternity, Christ now has no identity *apart from us*, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all. The Father looks at His Son and His sons, His King and His kings, His High Priest and His priests, and says, "That HE may minister unto me!"

In my meditations upon the order of Melchizedek, I find it impossible to separate between the High Priest and the priests. Under the Aaronic order the HIGH PRIEST was the one, and the only one, who went into the Holy of holies. He passed through the veil and entered into the place of God's blazing fullness unseen by all others. The PRIESTHOOD did not do this. But, precious friend of mine, if you think that Jesus is keeping all the glory of that realm to Himself, then you just haven't read these inspired words: "Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the *forerunner* is *for us* entered, even Jesus, made an High Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek" (Heb. 6:19-20). Let me repeat — the only person permitted an entrance *beyond the veil* was the High Priest!

While manifested on this earth plane, Jesus Christ left us His personal example that we might follow in His footsteps. It is a way that leads *beyond the veil* into the glories of the Father. It was necessary that He tread all the course that we might be able to follow all the way into divine fullness. HE IS THE WAY unto the Father, and in our union with Him we find it is first a way of humiliation before it becomes a way of exaltation. Thus we humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, assured that in due time HE will lift us up, and we shall live in His sight.

A *forerunner* is one who goes ahead of others. He goes ahead as a sample of those who are to follow. Jesus is our *forerunner*, which clearly indicates that others are expected to follow on into the same realms of glory. Christ, a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek, is our *forerunner*, He went first, and where He went, we are to go. The Forerunner blazed the trail all the way, and we rejoice in this fact, but then He also came back, in and by the Spirit, to escort us all the way into the glory beyond the veil, the glory of a PRIESTHOOD FOREVER AFTER THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK. Full well He knows the route, for He has traveled it all the way through to victory, and now is able to guide us down the same path into the glorious victory which He obtained. It is HIS daily enabling that gives us strength to carry on until the consummation is reached.

WE HAVE A HOPE! That hope is the anchor of the soul. Our hope in the Christ is the anchor of that life both sure and firm, and it has entered into the veil, taken there by our *forerunner*, even Jesus. He ran ahead of, or before us! Thus it is evident that WE ARE GOING TO RUN ALSO! What He entered into we also will come into. He simply has opened the way for us and He is the anchor or the hope of that life which is behind the veil.

Let us remember — in the Old Testament order it was only the High Priest who could enter into the Most Holy Place. None else could enter, and even the High Priest would enter in with fear and trembling and only after much preparation and vested with special garments. But how glorious the word that now comes to us! "And having an High Priest over the house of God, *let us* draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water" (Heb. 10:21-22). And then we read, "Having therefore brethren *boldness to enter into the Holiest* by the blood of Jesus." We, the Royal Priesthood, *do have boldness to enter in!* We do not wait, and we do not have to go to some far-off heaven somewhere. This thing is taking place *within us* right at this time, blessed be the name of the Lord!

For those who understand with a spiritual mind it is a glorious privilege to enter in because Jesus Christ, our High Priest and Forerunner, has opened the way and bids us enter. Christians have generally entertained the idea that entering in beyond the veil means simply that every believer now has access to enter into the presence of God and offer up his prayers with no human mediator in between. It is much more than that! Multitudes know Jesus as their Saviour, Baptizer, Healer, Sanctifier, and Blessor, but do you

know Jesus as your *forerunner*? Do you know Him as the forerunner of the MELCHIZEDEKIAN PRIESTHOOD? Do you know what it means to *be* a priest after the order of Melchizedek? Now we hear the word of the Lord to us and it is that we are to come in with *boldness*. Come right in to the Holy of holies! Come right in to the presence of God! Come right in to the full glory of God! Come right into that high and holy realm that only HIGH PRIESTS enter! We need not be afraid that we can enter as a priest after the order of Melchizedek, for we have a High Priest of that order who is now appearing in the blazing fullness of God's glory *for us*, not *in our place*, but *on our behalf*, for that is the true sense of the words "for us." This wonderful High Priest *abides* in the power of His priesthood and we are to come right in to reign as priests!

You may stand without. Many believers today dwell in the Outer Court of salvation while others tarry in the Holy Place of the baptism and gifts of the Holy Spirit. How obvious it should be that all believers, while children of God, are *not part* of the elect company of the Melchizedek Priesthood. All the tribes of Israel, while God's people, we not *priests*! And not all priests had access to the Holy of Holies! True, the veil has been rent, but also true to the type, the vast majority of believers throughout the church age have dwelt and do now dwell in the *Outer Court* of spiritual experience. In spite of all their noisy profession, and constant flurry of religious activities, they inhabit that realm where the natural man understandeth not the things of the Spirit of God. They never plumb the depths of Jesus Christ! Deep spiritual things are foolishness unto them; neither can they know them, for they are spiritually discerned. These are comfortably at home with the lifeless forms, static creeds, empty ceremonies, entertaining programs, and repetitious works of Outer Court religion, and have not the foggiest notion of what the **Royal Priesthood** is about! The harlot system has sapped and sucked away their spiritual life and left them in spiritual poverty, void of understanding of the high and holy purposes of God, and like little children they wait expectantly for the thrills that await them in that far-away Disney World in the sky with its golden streets, mansions, harps, and wings!

God has a people today who are not ordinary people. They are not people of this earth, earthly minded, but citizens of the Celestial Kingdom. They are God's dwelling place and they dwell in God. The great High Priest of that Heavenly Kingdom, the One after the order of Melchizedek, HAS ENTERED THE HOLY PLACE NOT MADE WITH HANDS. He reigns there as a priest! The great invitation to God's elect now is, "COME ON IN." After such an awesome revelation as this we find it impossible to return to the old way. The old-order church systems and methods, the old preaching of man-made creeds and petty religious traditions has become a stifling boredom. We can have nothing to do with such things. The ways of Babylon are the ways of death to us. WE HAVE A HIGH PRIEST OVER THE HOUSE OF GOD! HE IS EXALTED IN THE HEAVENS! THERE IS STILL ROOM UPON THE TWENTY-FOUR THRONES AROUND THE THRONE! THE VOICE SAYS, "COME UP HITHER!" WE HASTEN TO ENTER IN, TO BECOME **ALL** THAT GOD HAS APPREHENDED US TO BE!

### CROWNS OF GOLD

"And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty *elders* sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads *crowns of gold*" (Rev. 4:4)

It is instructive to notice the characteristics of the twenty-four Elders. Throughout the scriptures *only men* are "elders." *Only men* sit on thrones. *Only men* wear white raiment. And *only men* wear crowns! This is fitting because the Greek word means a "victorious crown" won in an athletic contest or on the field of battle. It bespeaks of one who has gone through the battle of life on earth, in obedience to the will of the heavenly Father, with all the testings, trials, tribulations, provings, and triumphs in order to earn the victor's crown! In Bible days it was *men* who won and wore such crowns.

We are not, however, speaking naturally, but *spiritually*! "Men" represent spiritually those persons who, irrespective of their gender in the flesh, have developed within themselves the *spiritually masculine qualities* of divine life — strength, authority, discernment, wisdom, dominion, and power! These are *mature ones*! There are many different spiritual states of being, planes of development and levels of growth, revealed in the Word of God. Some are called "babes" in Christ, others "little children," others "young

men,” others “mature men,” others “women,” some are called “sons of God,” others “daughters of God,” and there is a class identified as “the bride” of Christ.

Children are children. Children are not “sons” in the scriptural sense, for the word for a child is the Greek word *teknon*, whereas the word for a grown son is *huios*. When the scripture speaks of the manifestation of the *sons* of God it refers to those who spiritually have grown up into the nature, stature, and authority of the Father! On the other hand, a girl, as long as she is a child, is neither prepared for, nor capable of, fulfilling the role of a *wife*. In order to enter into marriage a young girl must pass through years of physical, mental, and emotional development. Finally, upon becoming mature in these areas, she is fitted for marriage and her role as a wife. And so is it in God’s Family! The term “child” describes the believer in his walk of immaturity in God. But as one begins to grow up into *spiritual maturity*, it is then that the truly feminine and masculine aspects of divine life take form and become manifest. “Vive la difference!” someone once said. And starting from early childhood we all begin to notice there is indeed a difference! We become increasingly aware of it as we grow up. It is only as fully developed adults that the real power, potential, and purpose of the feminine and masculine attributes find their fulfillment.

The following words by Ray Prinzing are freighted with spiritual wisdom and godly instruction. “There are many relationships that are spoken of in the scriptures, and for years all we heard taught was on ‘the bride of Christ.’ Then came the unfolding of the precious truths of sonship. And soon the one was pitted against the other with emphasis on the position to be obtained, this greater than that, etc. But we are coming to see that all these relationships are allegorical — we can draw from them all some needed instruction, but we must not reduce them to physical, carnal realms, and hold them there. All these allegories serve to bring out the characteristics desired. ONENESS WITH CHRIST in its full reality goes beyond being a bride, or a son, or male, or female.. So regardless of the symbol at which we are looking, it is the deeper meaning and truth which we desire, and may the Lord quicken to us this vital instruction for our up-building in Him. To be perfect in Christ, complete, mature, *one in Him*, this sums up all the facets used to illustrate our growth and development, characteristics, attributes, etc. Dare we settle for anything less? Can any parabolic example reveal such glory? Each part reveals something unique and wonderful, but they all fall far short of expressing the *whole* which is *summed up in Christ*. He is ALL IN ALL, the fullness that filleth everything with Himself” — end quote.

As God becomes so many things to us, even Mother, so must we become many things to Him. When God created man male and female in His image, He revealed that He is Himself male and female within the attributes of His nature. In spiritual maturity we enter into relationship with God in all the facets of His nature. We may truly become the bride of Christ and the sons of the Father and many other things as well! The bride relationship bears the feminine nature whereas the sonship relationship bears the characteristics of the masculine nature. Aggressiveness, boldness, strength, valor, authority, power, and dominion are among the dominant traits of the masculine sex. Hence, the Lord says to the overcomer, “He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my *son*. To him will I give *power* over the nations: and he shall *rule* them with a rod of iron. To him that overcometh will I grant to *sit with me in my throne*, even as I also overcame, and am set down with *my Father* in His throne.”

Modesty, gentleness, tenderness, love, sensitiveness, nurturing, and dependence are attributes of the feminine sex. Can we not see by this that *brideship* bespeaks of the spiritually feminine relationship of intimate love and reverent submission to Christ, whereas *sonship* embodies the spiritually masculine characteristics of strength and dominion to rule over all things. Ah, beloved, let us not become so over-balanced in our zeal to become *sons of God* that we circumvent the marvelous reality of *brideship*! The simple yet sublime truth is that THE WAY TO SONSHIP IS BRIDESHIP! This is why the Spirit has given us in Revelation chapter twelve the beautiful example of a glorious sun-clad woman giving birth to a remarkable man-child who is to rule all nations with a rod of iron. It is the inworking of brideship that *births* the realm of sonship! Jesus said, “I am the *way*...no man *cometh unto the Father* but by me.” Our relationship to Christ as a bride foreruns our relationship to the Father as a son! Brideship is the harbinger of sonship! It is through the intense love, intimacy of fellowship, and vital union with Christ, made *one in Him in love*, that we are initiated into that illustrious glory of strength and dominion over all things as sons of God. The manchild comes out of the woman. These are both realities *within each of us*! Until one falls

madly in love with Christ, and submits to Him in all things as the Head of the body, he will never go on to become a son of the Father. That is the mystery!

The twenty-four “elders” are *mature men*, those who have grown up into Christ, putting on His wonderful mind, strengthened with His might, filled with His wisdom, knowledge, and understanding, equipped and enabled to minister the blessings and benefits and powers of the kingdom of God! These are the sons of God who are the kings and priests of the Most High! The twenty-four Elders are clothed in white raiment, which means they have glorified bodies made pure by His indwelling Spirit and the righteousness of Christ, and on their heads are ***crowns of gold*** which means they have divine authority to rule and reign with Christ as priests because they have faithfully followed the leading of the Spirit and have overcome all things.

The crowns of gold are upon their *heads*. Though this appears a very natural statement, yet it is freighted with deep significance! The Greek word for “head” is *kephale* which comes from the root *kapto* meaning “to seize.” Is it not the head, the mind, that the adversary most wants to captivate and take hold of? The mind is the gateway to the whole being! It is in the *mind* of man that he is alienated from the life that is in God (Eph. 4:18), and it is by the renewing of the *mind* that we are transformed into the image of Christ! It is the head or mind that the Spirit of God is today “seizing” or “laying hold” upon in every one who has received the call to sonship, that HE may be fully manifest therein. What a battle has been waged by the serpent-inspired philosophies of men, political ideologies, educational agendas, advertising, entertainment, and religion to keep the mind in subjection to the bondage and darkness and ignorance of the *world system*. But contrariwise, there is also a battle whereby liberty comes to the mind to bring it enlightenment and renewal. It is thus upon a *renewed mind* that the crown of gold rests!

It is also interesting to note that the Greek word *kephale* is in the feminine gender! Although the ones crowned are men (spiritually), yet the head upon which the crown rests possesses the spiritually feminine qualities of gentleness, kindness, mercy, love, goodness, grace, nurturing, sensitiveness, compassion, etc. These are, one and all, necessary characteristics in the nature of a PRIEST! Kings rule, but from a priestly heart flows forth love, mercy, kindness, grace, gentleness, forgiveness — the very spirit and word of RECONCILIATION! What a beautiful blending of the masculine-feminine nature of God!

These crowns are not the coronets worn by the sovereigns of this present world. The feeble kings and rulers of this dark world system represent in their weakness the transient glory of earth’s passing kingdoms, but the golden crowns on the heads of God’s Royal Priesthood are not like one of these. The most common term rendered “crown” in the New Testament is the Greek word *stephanos*. This crown was usually a laurel wreath woven of fragrant branches, or the like. It was granted to winners in the Panhellenic games and also as a token of public honor for distinguished service — especially of military leaders who had been victorious over their enemies on the battlefield. It was also given at marriage feasts, especially in royal families, to celebrate the joy of the bridegroom in having “won” the maiden for his bride. This crown always denotes a VICTOR’S CROWN — the crown of an OVERCOMER!

How appropriate that we should read of the Royal Priesthood: “And round about the throne were...four and twenty elders sitting...and they had on their heads ***crowns (stephanos) of gold.***” Golden Stephanos! Golden Victor’s Crowns! Gold is a symbol for the divine nature. And how true that we are only able to fully overcome by being made partakers of *His divine nature*! To be “crowned” means to be given kingly authority. As the kingly authority and dominion of God’s divine nature now ascends the throne of our lives to rule within us — we are CROWNED, RULED OVER by our Father, but more than this, *made rulers*, not after the carnal concepts of the flesh, but in the love, justice, and glory of God’s own character!

Of course the crowns of fragrant branches won by the Greeks in their athletic contests were short lived, for they soon wilted and became dead and brittle. In contrast to this, *our stephanos* are incorruptible crowns which will never fade away — for the Royal Priesthood is of the Melchizedekian Order — after the power of an endless life! In the Theater of Ephesus there was found an inscription which read: “He fought three bouts, and was crowned two times.” In like manner the sons of God will soon be rewarded for their bouts with the flesh, the world, and the principalities and powers which have their rule in the darkness of the



carnal mind. God is even now bringing forth an *incorruptible* people, overcomers, who are overcoming all things. And of them, finally, it shall be said: “They fought many, many bouts, and were crowned *every time!*” No more weakness and failure. No more flunking two tests and winning one. Overcoming *all things!* Oh, no, we have not always overcome all things, but those who are called and chosen in this hour are being strengthened by experience and by the power of the spirit of life within and are becoming strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. God is teaching us to reign in our lives and in every situation! He is making us a Royal Priesthood! Priests reigning in the Father’s own nature, love, and power! Reconciling the world. Subduing all things. As kings these are seated *in the throne*; as priests they sit *around the throne*. Their rule is rooted in authority as kings, but as priests they become the bond between the God of the throne and the creation so desperately needing *His life*. Isn’t it wonderful!

### THUNDERINGS, LIGHTNINGS, AND VOICES

“And out of the throne proceeded *lightnings and thunderings and voices...*” (Rev. 4:5).

The scene is drawn from the time when God came down in the midst of Israel to *speak* to His called and chosen nation. The Hebrews had come up out of Egypt, and were standing in front of mount Sinai. The mountain was full of fire and smoke. Thunderings and voices were bursting from its mysterious awfulness. Great trumpet-blasts came piercing through the frightened air. Everything bore witness to the awesome presence of God! The Hebrews were appalled and terrified. We can see them cowering and trembling. They turn to Moses and beg him to stand between them and God. “Speak thou with us, and we will hear,” said they, “but let not God speak to us, lest we die.”

At first it seems as if their feeling were a strange one. This is their God who is speaking to them, their God who by a mighty hand brought them “out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.” Would it not seem as if they would be glad to have Him come to them directly, to have Him almost look on them with eyes that they could see, and make unnecessary the interposition of His servant Moses, bringing them messages from Him? Will they not feel their whole history of rescue coming to its consummation when at last they find themselves actually in the presence of the God who has delivered them, and hear His voice?

Ah, they would not *hear for themselves* the words of God, and they never did hear, for they rebelled in unbelief, they broke His laws, they went after other gods, then they imprisoned, stoned, and killed the prophets sent to them, and crucified the very Lord of glory. They hid themselves from the glory of His presence and refused to hear His voice! But now, praise God, He is speaking again out of His throne in the midst of His people, out of our innermost being, in and by the Spirit, and there is a people who *hear for themselves* the word of the Lord! Many believers are like the Hebrews in the wilderness, they have neither desire nor capacity to hear from God themselves, so they seek an apostle, a prophet, a pastor, a teacher, a church order, someone to hear from God *for them* and communicate His message *to them*. God certainly does use ministries and fellow members of the body of Christ to *confirm* to us the revelation of the Spirit. Thank God for it! But we who do know our God now hear His voice speaking out from His throne right within our spirit, and out of those who are one in Him. Oh, yes! He speaks in the *power of thunder*, with flashes of light, *sudden bursts of brilliant illumination as of lightning*, and with the clarity and manifoldness of the *many voices* of a corporate unfolding. The ones who so hear His voice are those who have become related to His throne, for only in the throne-room does one see the lightnings and hear the thunderings and voices. It is indeed wonderful!

### THE SEVEN SPIRITS OF GOD

“And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the *seven spirits of God*” (Rev. 4:5).

For many years we did not know that God has seven spirits! Although we were raised in church, and had read the Bible through, we had never understood the mystery of the seven spirits. We all knew that “there is one body, and *one Spirit*” (Eph. 4:4). We all thought that when we were baptized in the Holy Spirit, receiving the one Spirit, that was the beginning and the finish of it! We spoke in tongues and

prophesied, did a few miracles, danced in the Spirit and rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory, and that was it! That is all we knew God had for us this side of heaven.

The question follows — are there seven spirits of God? If you say that God has seven spirits, to some that makes you a heretic! If, on the other hand, you say that the Spirit of God is not seven spirits, you are disagreeing with the heavenly revelation given to John! Is the Spirit of God, then, seven or one? If God says there is one Spirit, then there is one Spirit; and if God says there are seven spirits, then there are seven spirits. That is the mystery of it!

One of the keys to this mystery is found in the passage quoted above, “And there were seven *lamps of fire* burning before the throne, *which are* the seven spirits of God.” In the Old Testament, the structure of the lampstand or candlestick was quite unique: below was one lampstand, above there were seven branches, and in each branch there was a lamp (Ex. 25:31-37). It was one lampstand, yet it had seven lamps; there were seven lamps, yet it was but one lampstand. The same picture is presented in Zechariah 4:2. Therefore, it is correct to say that there is one lampstand, yet it is not wrong to say there are seven lamps! So also is the Spirit of God. Without question, He is one Spirit; but He is also called “the seven spirits,” that is, the *sevenfold, intensified spirit of God!*

Seven, in the scriptures, is the most sacred number of the Hebrews. This number is used more often than all other numbers, save the number one. It is the number denoting *spiritual perfection and completeness*. In this connection it is instructive to note that in the title “Holy Spirit” the word “holy,” according to Webster, comes from a root meaning “whole.” Hence, the Holy Spirit is the **WHOLE SPIRIT!** The seven spirits of God, seven denoting spiritual perfection and completeness, are likewise a figure of the “holy” or the “whole” or “complete” Spirit. When we understand that the number seven conveys the idea of unity and completeness, rather than diversity, then we can see with unclouded vision that the seven Spirits of God are the *sevenfold, intensified Spirit of the Lord* — the absolute **FULLNESS OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD!**

Great is the mystery and the wonder of it, for there is one Spirit and yet there are seven spirits! This can easily be understood from the natural creation. Have you drunk a glass of water today? How many things is water? To us water is one thing, one item, one substance. But no — water is actually two things! Two parts of a gas called hydrogen and one part of a gas called oxygen are fused, and they make water. But water is *not gas!* When the two gases are mixed they produce an effect. You have something new, something different, something of a another quality — *liquid*. I didn’t get up this morning and tell myself that I needed a glass of H<sub>2</sub>O. It was unnecessary to bother with the chemical formula. I just knew I needed a glass of water. If I never knew anything about hydrogen or oxygen it would make no difference. Water is water! God knows how He made it. Scientists discovered God’s formula, but God invented it!

The almighty Creator has used that same principle of compounding to make everything that appears in the material creation. In the whole universe, the heaven, the earth, all the stars and suns and planets and moons, there are exactly ninety-six different things which are called *elements*. Everything we see everywhere is composed of some combination of some of those ninety-six elements. We think of salt as one thing. Yet salt is not one thing; salt is two things. Somebody has taken a piece of metal called sodium and a piece of a gas called chlorine, and mixed the two things together. The result is what chemists call *sodium chloride* and we common folk call it *salt*. How about air? Isn’t that one thing? Wrong again! Air is always three things. Seventy-nine parts of a gas called nitrogen mixed with twenty-one parts of a gas called oxygen, and a tiny, tiny portion of carbonic acid gas, make up the simplest kind of air. Air is not one thing. It might be as many as twelve or fourteen things, depending on how close you live to a glue factory or a garbage dump!

God has used that simple principle of *compounding* to make everything that appears in the vast expanses of the universe! And the physical creation is simply the mirror of the spiritual world! In just this way it is no longer necessary to see the Spirit of God as just one thing — for God Himself is not just one thing. God is *light*. God is *love*. God is *life*. God is *spirit*. Those are four things and we haven’t even begun! In like manner, contained in the Spirit of God are all the attributes, characteristics, faculties, and powers of God that *are spirit*. It is the complete or whole Spirit, the sevenfold intensified Spirit of the Lord!

The seven spirits are seen by John shining in the brightness and light of the seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, its glory radiating the sevenfold splendor as of a rainbow which is seen in beauty like unto an emerald. These seven lamps of fire represent THE SEVEN SPIRITS OF SONSHIP. All that is connected to the throne reveals the mystery and the glory of *sonship* to God, for it is the Son who has been exalted to the throne. God's sons are His kings and priests who reign over the earth! The Lord Jesus Himself is the *firstborn* among many brethren, the proto-type of what sonship is. Isaiah prophesied of this sevenfold anointing of the spirit of sonship, saying, "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots. And the *spirit of the Lord* shall rest upon Him, the *spirit of wisdom* and *understanding*, the *spirit of counsel* and *might*, the *spirit of knowledge* and of the *fear of the Lord*. And shall make Him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord: and He shall not judge after the sight of His eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of His ears: but with righteousness shall He judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and He shall smite the earth with the rod of His mouth...and righteousness shall be the girdle of His loins, and faithfulness the girdle of His reins" (Isa. 11:1-5).

This is the sevenfold sonship anointing that rested and does rest upon the firstborn Son of God! And this mighty and glorious anointing shall come also upon all the manifest sons of God to enable God's kings and priests to inaugurate the wonderful and blessed age of the kingdom of God upon all the nations of mankind, and shall endue them with power and all the attributes of Him who is the Head of the body. They shall not judge after the sight of their eyes, nor reprove after the hearing of their ears, but with righteousness shall they judge the nations. This anointed company of sons of God shall be girded with the righteousness of Christ and the faithfulness of Him who loved them and lifted them from the pit of sin, sorrow, and death, and exalted them to the glorious heights of the throne. Then the wolf nature in the carnal man will be tamed and will lie down with the nature of the lamb in the throne, the fierce leopard nature shall lie down with the innocence of the kid, the calf and the young lion together, with a little child (for of such is the kingdom of heaven!) leading them. In that blessed day of glory, "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain." Oh, the wonder of it!

Think of it! A world governed by the sevenfold intensified spirit of God! What a different spirit that is! It is the spirit of love, grace, mercy, peace, joy, righteousness, pardon, reconciliation and transformation! It is sometimes difficult for those kings-and-priests-to-be who have come out of the church system with a heavy hangover of condemnation and charging every man with guilt and shame. It was a sin to do this, it was a sin to do that, and we were so sin-conscious that we were not able to kindle any consciousness of the awesome power of HIS UNCONDITIONAL LOVE.

How we have ranted and raved and stormed at men about their sins and judgment! But it has been well said that there is no difficulty that enough love will not conquer; no disease that enough love will not heal; no door that enough love will not open; no gulf that enough love will not bridge; no wall that enough love will not throw down; no sin that enough love will not redeem. It makes no difference how deeply seated may be the problem, how hopeless the outlook, how muddled the tangles, how great the error or mistake — *love never fails* — and God is about to bathe the world in redemptive love through the government of the sons of God and by the power of the sevenfold spirit of God radiating from His throne!

To be continued...

J. PRESTON EBY