

KINGDOM BIBLE STUDIES

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

FROM THE CANDLESTICK TO THE THRONE

Part 84

BREAKING THE SEALS (continued)

“Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah...hath prevailed to *open the book, and to loose the seals thereof*. And He came and took the book out of the right hand of Him that sat upon the throne...and I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals...and behold a *white horse*...and when He had opened the second seal, there went out *another horse that was red*...and when He had opened the third seal, I beheld, and lo a *black horse*...and when He had opened the fourth seal, I looked, and behold a *pale horse*...” (Rev. 5:5,7; 6:1-8).

The legendary Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse are, to most minds, one of the Bible’s greatest riddles. Nearly two thousand years ago the apostle John recorded the details of their grim ride, and ever since scholars and ordinary believers alike have wondered what they represent. Much has been written concerning the Four Horsemen, much of it misapplied to struggles between nations and would-be world conquerors, or to the horrors of tribulation under the antichrist. Actually, however, the book of Revelation is not concerned with worldly kingdoms and empires, or outward wars, strife, famines, and pestilence, except as they become linked with the affairs of God’s people. The book of Revelation, as we have repeatedly pointed out, is a *spiritual revelation*, even the revelation of Jesus Christ. Thus, the Four Horsemen and the Four Horses represent, like the figures in the rest of the book, aspects of the on-going revelation or unveiling of Jesus Christ in and through His body. These are spiritual realities, touched and known only “in the spirit” and “by the spirit.”

The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse are among the most significant of the great symbols in the word of God because they give the key to the processings of God within us. When we have grasped their full significance, by understanding how the scriptures speak of horses, in order to teach spiritual truth, we then have gained an appreciation of Bible symbolism. The Bible is not written in the style of an ordinary book. It has a method all its own of conveying spiritual realities through picturesque symbols, which is the language of *spirit* communicated to the mind of man, wisdom expressed in terms comprehensible by people in all ages and in different parts of the world and of different degrees of spiritual development.

The symbol of horsemen is a strange one to the Western mind. We associate horses with useful labor and sport, but the Eastern mind associated the horse and his rider with war. The horse is without equal for beauty in the animal kingdom. His body is alive with rippling muscles. His mane and tail are items of extreme beauty. The horse is among the most intelligent of animals and few creatures can equal his strength and swiftness. No animal is of greater service to mankind. For pleasure, for work, and for war the horse exceeds them all. In Bible days the strength of armies was often reckoned by the number and greatness of their horses and chariots. In his prophetic account of the spiritual army of the Lord, Joel declares, “the appearance of them is as the appearance of *horses; and as horsemen*, so shall they run” (Joel 2:4). “The horse is prepared against the day of battle” (Prov. 21:31). It is significant that in the scriptures you do not find horses mentioned in connection with agricultural purposes, but for riding or drawing chariots, and for use in battle.

It is significant to note that the term “redemption” means in the Greek “loosing.” Can we doubt that the “loosing” of the seven seals is related to God’s great work of redemption? We are now entering the day of loosing (redemption) and our spirit joined to the Lord’s spirit is beginning to express more of His life than ever before. The only hindrance is the dominion of the soul and body — *our* will, mind, emotions and desires. In order for Christ to be fully revealed in us, these negative attributes of the carnal nature and human consciousness must be effectively dealt with. Before the One who has purchased us for the base of His operation can take full possession of His inheritance in us there must be the dispossession of all that *hinders* the expression of the spirit. Just as the children of Israel were commanded to utterly destroy the inhabitants of Canaan — those occupying the land belonging to another — so must the giants that possess *our land* be conquered and driven out! This, dear ones, IS THE MINISTRY OF THE FOUR HORSEMEN! The events surrounding these four horsemen all portray conflict, war and destruction. The Four Horses are war horses — and are sent forth into *our earth* to dispossess the usurper — the carnal mind, the will of the flesh, the desires of the flesh, the emotions of the flesh, and the works of the flesh. It is the taking possession of our earth by the life of the Christ within! There is an application to the outer world, and universally, but all that transpires out there must first take place *within us*, His firstfruits. That is the mystery.

The Four Horses and their Riders present a picture of God’s dealings, strippings, purgings, prunings, processings, impartations, and transformations by which we are reduced to God. Swift, powerful, irresistible ruin is visited upon our outer world of human consciousness and identity, and our inner heart of deceit. As the seals of the revelation of Himself are opened, we note that what comes forth represents that which is within us — the power of life symbolized as horses. These are figures of great strength, power, and overcoming (Zech. 10:3; Joel 2:1-6; Rev. 19:11-14). “This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.” These things begin to happen when we discover the book within, when we lay hold upon the Spirit realm; then there follows a breaking of those seals that have been closed so long, and as the seals are broken there is an unfoldment of the triumphant nature of the Christ within. As the outer dimensions of our life are stripped away, the inner vitality of the Christ emerges into view. HE becomes revealed! This is God’s intention — not to rapture us away to some far-off heaven somewhere, but to unseal the book of life within us, for we have this treasure in an earthen vessel and this earthen vessel has veiled the reality, beauty, glory, and power of what lies within — the fullness of God in Christ within us!

As the Father opens His Book of Life — which Book *we are* — He is actually sending forth the Spirit of His Word in a triumphant overflowing which will not cease until every valley has been filled and every hill has been made level, till our heavens and our earth have been purged from every stain of pollution and every heart beats in unison with the heart of God. This is CHRIST THE CONQUEROR!

Let us then stand assured of this significant fact: there are *seven seals* to be broken, and the seven seals denote a *process*. If there were no *process* then one seal would be sufficient! From the very heart of events from the morning of creation there can be observed a *gradual development* of everything that came from the hands of the omnipotent Creator. From the lips of the almighty Elohim came that irresistible command of the word of God, “Let there be!” And there was. But it was not a single command, the heavens and the earth were not formed in an instant nor fashioned in one day, by one divine word. Oh, no! It was by the word proclaimed through *seven days* that the mighty creative work of God was accomplished. Again and again there issued forth the majestic proclamation, “*Let.*” “*Let there be light.*” “*Let there be a firmament.*” “*Let the waters be gathered.*” “*Let there be lights in the firmament.*” “*Let the waters bring forth.*” “*Let the earth bring forth.*” “*Let us make man.*”

Dispensations had come and gone with their Cain and Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, and the prophets before our Lord Jesus explained to the Greeks who came to investigate His glory, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, *it abideth alone*: but if it die, it *bringeth forth much fruit*” (Jn. 12:24). And now through the dreary years of every century since Jesus died, was buried, resurrected, ascended, and came back into His waiting disciples in the power of His glorious life, birthing His anointed body in the earth, the blessed Holy Spirit has been planting within believing hearts the incorruptible seed of the word of God, and wonder of wonders, yet true to God’s *progressive purpose of the ages*, that incorruptible seed is ready to bring forth a company of *sons of God* in the fullness of the nature, power, and glory of that firstborn Son and Christ!

It cannot be otherwise! All things have a beginning, followed by various stages of development, formation, growth, and increase until ultimately comes the fullness and perfection. Space travel did not begin by sending a man to the moon. Men first jumped off cliffs, trying to fly with crude, homemade wings. Then men flew in balloons. The Wright brothers invented the first airplane, and other types of aircraft followed until the Russians startled the world by sending their Sputnik into orbit around the earth, inaugurating the space age. Today we are sending space probes throughout our solar system, and it is only a matter of time, if God permits, until Star Trek will move from science fiction to living reality. Can we not clearly see by this how it is that each and every step was *required* in the grand and epochal work of creation and redemption. For six thousand years the race has witnessed the natural evolution of civilization, human government, science, economics, medicine, and technology. Nothing ever happens overnight! Everything unfolds by a *process*! And all things move inexorably *forward*.

Remember — it takes nine months to grow a baby. It takes four months to grow corn. It takes one month for the moon to circle the earth. ***It takes SEVEN SEALS to bring about the unveiling of Jesus Christ!***

When you uncover a thing you don't have to bring it from some other place, you only need to remove the cover, because what is under it is already present. The book of Revelation reveals to our wondering spirits that Jesus Christ doesn't have to come crashing down through the clouds from outer space in order to be revealed on earth! He is here — covered up, His glory concealed in this world by a fleshly, religious mind; His grace and mercy are concealed by a harsh, legalistic mindset that thunders right out of mount Sinai, and is full of death; His love is concealed by the false church doctrines of divine vindictiveness, judgment, damnation and eternal torture for billions in hell fire; His righteousness is concealed by human good works, self effort, and outward laws and traditions of men; His truth and purpose are concealed by natural, carnal understanding; His power is concealed by soulish religious exercises, rituals, ceremonies, programs, and promotions; His holiness is concealed by the corruption of the human heart which is the man of sin. To be *carnally minded* is death, but to be *spiritually minded* is life! The Lord is the Spirit! The Lord, the Spirit, dwells within us! To uncover the real Christ has nothing to do with Christ coming from heaven, or us going to heaven — He must be UNCOVERED WITHIN US! “But...it pleased God, who *separated me* from my mother's womb (the old-order religious system), and called me by His grace, *to reveal* (unveil) *His Son in me...*” (Gal. 1:15-16).

The veil that hides Him is upon the mind and the heart. It is not something apart from us or away from us. The veil must be removed from where the Christ is concealed from us within ourselves, for we are the body of Christ, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all. The Lord is not hidden in some far-off heaven somewhere! Those who are walking with the Lord in the light of this new Day know that the unveiling is the uncovering of the full reality within ourselves of Him who *is our life*. The veil has been upon our minds, when we saw Him we looked through all the distorted trappings of religion and concepts of men who know Him only after the flesh. The veil is also the flesh itself, the outer man with all his carnal-mindedness, worldly wisdom, and fleshly desires, ambitions, actions, and propensities for corruption and evil.

The mystery of Christ is the greatest mystery of all the ages, this mystery which is “Christ in you, the hope of glory.” HIS LIFE, which is *our life*, shall not forever be concealed within, for I testify to you that we are soon to see it unfold! “When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in the splendor of His glory” (Col. 3:4, Amplified). Ah — there shall be ***a revelation, an unveiling*** of His life, His glory, His people, and because we have long been hidden ***in Him***, we shall also share in that revelation — partakers of the divine glory. When all the mixture of flesh and spirit which would manifest through us in gross confusion, carnality, and religiosity has been sifted, purged, separated and brought to death because we share the awesome “fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death,” then shall HIS LIFE be finally unfettered, unhindered, unobstructed, and HE SHALL APPEAR in all the fullness of Himself and WE SHALL APPEAR WITH HIM in the splendor of His full-orbed glory! Our life shall not always be hid. He who is our life shall be manifested! Our Father has an appointed hour, and when His hour strikes, then our time will have come — and He will not be glorified apart from us!

Just as gold is purified by fire, so are we purified by the fiery trials the Lord sends into our lives. Like the intense heat that causes the impurities to rise to the top of the molten gold, so the many tribulations

we face in life, and the blazing fire of God's dealings that accompany them, draw from us those things that pollute the pure nature of God within our spirit. One pass through the furnace is never sufficient to remove all the impurities in gold, neither can we become pure in one season of testing. God ordains that we be tested and tried by the Holy Ghost and fire for however long it takes because He wants us to be pure vessels to manifest His glory. Those who hunger and thirst for Him will not be devastated by this fire, but purified. They are those who heed the apostle Paul's warning to examine the materials with which we are building as the temple of God is raised up within us, for "every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be *revealed by fire*; for the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is" (I Cor. 3:13).

Gold fully tried in the fire is *pure gold*. The gold of the tabernacle in the wilderness was required by the Lord to be *pure gold*. The gold in Solomon's temple was also *pure gold*. The gold of the New Jerusalem is likewise described as *pure gold* (Rev. 21:18,21). That is what God is after! That is why the horses are galloping through our land! To be "pure" means to be "unmixed, single, free of anything that adulterates or taints; containing nothing but its own reality." *Pure* water is water without any contaminants; *pure* air is free from any pollutants; *pure* silver is refined until it contains no tinge of alloy, no trace of impurities, no residue of dross. The Lord has promised to purge, refine, and remove *all mixture* from the lives of those who become His kings and priests, called and chosen to restore creation unto God. The word is sure, "The Lord...shall suddenly come to His temple...and He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and He shall purify the sons of Levi (His priesthood), and purge them as gold and silver..." (Mal. 3:1-3).

The Lord, when He comes to His temple of living stones and purges the sons of Levi, or His kingdom of priests, He first of all purges out *one man* — old Adam! He comes to cleanse us from the carnal, Adamic mind, nature, and ways. He comes as a consuming fire to burn out of us all that is contrary to the righteousness and wisdom and purposes of the Lord. He is coming to each one of us, His elect, in this new day of the kingdom of God and is purging the old fleshly nature and worldly ways out of us! On a corporate level He is also coming to those who have received the call to sonship and is separating out all who *talk* the kingdom but do not *walk* the kingdom! Only the ones who have truly surrendered to His will, have walked in His ways, obeying each sound of His voice, who have clean hands and pure hearts, will reign with Him in the kingdom.

How can anyone be placed in a position of authority and power in the kingdom who has not come to the place of exhibiting only His nature? He will purge the sons of Levi, the kings and priests of His kingdom, disqualifying those who cannot be trusted to do the will of the Father and cooperate fully in the administration of His grace and glory. In this important hour the ways of Babylon and all the flesh-centered appeals of the carnal church systems is being thoroughly purged, the attributes of the carnal mind are being cleansed, all self-hood is being burned out, and all desire to make a name for ourselves or to gather men around ourselves rather than unto the Christ is being consumed. Thank God, HE IS DOING IT! The Horsemen are riding through our land!

God is unveiling — *taking the cover off!* Some say there is nothing to remove, to get rid of, because the old man is dead and all that is necessary is to know, believe, and confess the truth that the old man *is dead*. Yet I have heard all the excuses people make for why they are still the way they are, why they still do all the carnal and even sinful things they do, even though their old man is dead. The favorite cop-out seems to be that they just don't *know* the old man is dead so they continue to act the way the old man used to act! It must be something like *phantom pain* — even though the old man is dead and gone they still *feel* carnal and fleshly, and unrighteous patterns of behavior are so ingrained and habitual that they must be re-programmed to act out of the spirit. I've got news for you — dead men don't continue to act the way they used to act just because they don't *realize* they're dead! Dead men don't continue to act the way they acted when alive because it has become a "habit" they can't easily break! And it is futile to try to re-program dead men!

Let's suppose that uncle Joe just died. He was an irresponsible, hot-tempered, ungodly scoundrel. You walk up to the coffin and stand there and "cuss him out," ridicule him, slap his face and remind him of what a dog and a devil he was, how many people suffered because of him, and how much you hate him and hope that he burns in hell. Uncle Joe will not strike back! He will not turn red with rage. He will not jump out of that casket and grab you by the throat, because He *is dead!* Dead men don't *do anything!* You can try

the opposite approach and flatter uncle Joe, rehearsing all the nice things he ever did and enumerate all his wonderful ways. You can eulogize him right into heaven. And while you speak all these good things poor old uncle Joe doesn't puff up with pride. He gets no smile on his face, no sparkle in his eyes. His ear doesn't begin to twitch. Oh, no! Uncle Joe *is dead*, unconscious of the world around him and unresponsive to anything at all.

So — if our old man is dead, what's our problem? Paul talks about it at length in chapters six through eight of Romans. He says that there is a condition where we do the things we don't want to do, even the things we hate, and then find ourselves unable to do the things we want to do. He says that in this state it is no more "I" that do it, but "sin that dwells in my members." Now if I do what I would not, it is no more "I" that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me (Rom. 7:15-23). You see, my beloved, "I" am dead, the old me that *delighted in sin is dead*. "For I *delight* in the law of God after the *inward man*: but I see *another law in my members*, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the *law of sin which is in my members*" (Rom. 7:22-23). Now LET US UNDERSTAND! My old man is dead — but I still have a physical body (my members) which has the *law of sin within it*.

What is this physical, flesh body? Paul speaks of it and cries out, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the *body of this death*?" The "body of this death" is simply a "dead body." So your old man is dead — where is his body? The body you are carrying around is his *dead body*! Let me show you what Paul is really saying. Near Tarsus, where Paul was born, there was a tribe of people who inflicted a most terrible penalty upon a murderer. They fastened the body of the victim to that of the killer, tying shoulder to shoulder, back to back, thigh to thigh, arm to arm, and then drove the murderer from the community. So tight were the bonds that the criminal could not free himself from this corpse that was tied to him, and after a few days the death in the body communicated itself into the living flesh of the murderer. The stench filled his nostrils, the bodily fluids ran down his garments, and he stalked the land with "the body of this death" or this "dead body" attached, and there was none to help. He had only the frightful prospect of gangrenous death. He well could cry in horror in the natural, in the same way Paul cried out spiritually, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

Oh, yes! Your old man is dead. How wonderful it would be if that was the end of the story! None of us would have any problem. We simply would not have the capability for any lust, anger, cursing, malice, pride, ungodly habits, fleshly attitudes, sinful actions, self-righteousness, or any other thing — **IF the old man being dead was the end of the story!** All that Paul describes in chapter six and seven of Romans is the corruption of that old dead body we are carrying around! Sometimes methinks this is worse than the old man being alive! So we cry out with Paul, "O unhappy and pitiable and wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the shackles of this body of death?" Then comes the answer echoing through the corridors of the soul, "O thank God! **HE WILL through Jesus Christ our Lord!**" (Rom. 7:25).

The breaking of the seals is the *disposing of the dead body of old Adam*! Who breaks the shackles of the body of death? JESUS CHRIST THE LORD! Who looses the seals of the book? JESUS CHRIST THE LORD! He is the One who conquered both sin and death, He has prevailed, and He alone is worthy to open the book and to loose the seals thereof! Isn't it wonderful!

REVELATION — INITIATION — CONSUMMATION

The central portion of the book of Revelation, to which we now come, may be likened to a drama in three acts — the Seals, the Trumpets, and the Vials. Each act of the drama brings us to a view of the same landscape, but every time we come afresh to it the view is widened by the fact that we regard it from a greater height and further stage of development. With the breaking of the *seventh seal* we expect the *end*, for now the book of Life within us is fully open and all the seals are broken! We would suppose the work of God is now fully accomplished, yet the end does not come. John pauses but for a moment before launching on a new series of visions introduced by the *seven trumpets*, which in turn are followed by the pouring out of the *seven vials* and the events which follow. We must pause, too, and ask what we are to make of this unique scheme of things!

We would deprive ourselves of infinite treasure should we refrain from investigating the deep meaning of the three series of visions — the seven Seals, the seven Trumpets, and the seven Vials. Does series follow series merely for emphasis, or can some difference be discerned between them? There is a remarkable difference! The breaking of the seals is an *unveiling*, thus denoting **revelation**. It should be observed that with the breaking of the respective seals, nothing is said about *reading* anything from the book. The events which accompany the breaking of the seals one after another are not represented as read — they are dramatic scenes vividly enacted before the Seer's vision opening to his mind and spirit the *revelation* of how, the *revelation* of the process by which, the Christ is brought forth into full manifestation in and through each member of God's called and chosen elect. The Lamb in proceeding to break the seals begins His work as a **revealer**!

Thus the seals are the *revelation* of how the Lamb brings forth the manifestation of the Christ life in the experience of each member of the body of Christ. Actually, as I see it, nothing really *happens* when the seals are loosed except the dawning of *spiritual understanding* within ourselves. Here the revelation, the blueprint, of God's great and glorious purpose in us is made known to us! This is purely *revelation*! The seals then give us the introduction to the Lord's work in us, rather than the completed work. Beyond the seals lie the trumpets, contrasted with the seals in their nature; and beyond the trumpets lie the vials which also may be contrasted with the seals and the trumpets. The opening of the seals is the key to the book, for when they are opened, the book is. Yet we have merely seen by revelation what God is **going to do**! They only set us upon the threshold of great and mighty events which must transpire in each of our lives to bring us to the complete work of God, conforming us to the full stature of manifest sonship. The seals break to us the *revelation*; the trumpets then usher in the *initiation* or *inauguration* of the work within to raise up in our lives the reality we have so clearly seen by revelation; the vials then bring us to the *consummation* or the *completion* of the work, producing the FINISHED PRODUCT! Therefore we may say that John beheld the seals of *revelation* opened, he heard the trumpets of *initiation* sounding their herald, and the vials of *consummation* bringing an end to all that opposes the kingdom and establishing within the nature, glory, and power of manifest sonship. What a mighty God we serve!

You see, my beloved, no man can appropriate experientially anything of which he has received no revelation or understanding. No man can come to Christ and trust Him as Saviour until first he has received *by revelation* the awareness of his need and God's gracious provision of Jesus as his Saviour. Very few have received healing, miracles, answers to prayer, the baptism in the Holy Spirit, gifts, or any other blessing or benefit until first the *revelation* was quickened within their spirit of the availability of these provisions. All things are received by faith, and faith comes only by *hearing the word* of God. The principle is clear — the man who has received no *revelation* of sonship will never *become* a son of God! God has a beautiful plan for everything. *Revelation* is the prerequisite for *initiation*, as *initiation* is the harbinger of *consummation*!

What awesome **power** there is in revelation! It is the power revealed in the scroll with the seven seals. It is the power that comes out of the seals in the form of the seven trumpets. It is the power that comes out of the seven trumpets in the form of the seven vials. The seals of the scroll are the *revelation* by which the *initiation* (seven trumpets) of the work of God in us takes place, which in turn gives birth to the *completion*, *perfection*, and *consummation* (seven vials) of Christ formed in us.

Having said that the seven trumpets denote the initiation or beginning of Father's work in each of us, let us consider how this is so. A contractor preparing to build a house first secures an architectural drawing, a blueprint. Everything that will go into that house is in the blueprint! The carpenters will use the blueprint, the plumbers will use the blueprint, the brick masons will use the blueprint, the electricians will use the blueprint, the finishers will use the blueprint. When every worker has fulfilled the message in the blueprint the house is finished. The blueprint represents *revelation* — it encodes all that the house will be! Yet we know that a blueprint is not enough, it is not the house! So the next step is *initiation*. The land is cleared, the slab poured, the framing erected, and the roof is put on. Now you have the *form* of the house, the work has begun, but it is still not ready for occupation. This second step is merely the initiation of the work. How much more remains to be done! Eventually, after the electrical and heating has been installed, tile laid, cabinets built, painting done, and all the other minute details, you have *consummation* — the FINISHED PRODUCT. God is building a spiritual house of sons! I do not hesitate to tell you that **spiritually He builds**

in the same way! The seals of revelation, the trumpets of initiation, and the vials of consummation raise up in the earth the living temple of God! Oh, the mystery of it!

Comparing the trumpets with the vials it is enlightening to observe the parallelism between the two. The first trumpet affects the earth; so does the first vial. The second trumpet affects the sea; so does the second vial. The third trumpet affects the rivers and fountains; so does the third vial. The fourth trumpet affects the heavenly bodies; so does the fourth vial. The fifth trumpet brings darkness and torment, so does the fifth vial. The sixth trumpet concerns the great river Euphrates; so does the sixth vial. The seventh trumpet brings great warfare and victory for the sons of God; so does the seventh vial.

Yet — it is significant to note that under the trumpets *nothing is complete, whole, or brought to fullness*. In fact, everything is affected in only *one-third* of its existence! Under the first trumpet hail and fire mingled with blood are cast into the earth and *one-third* of the trees are burnt up (Rev. 8:7). Under the second trumpet a great mountain burning with fire is cast into the sea and *one-third* of the sea becomes blood (Rev. 8:8). Under the third trumpet a great burning star falls upon *one-third* of the rivers and fountains of water, making them bitter (Rev. 8:10-11). Under the fourth trumpet *one-third* of the sun, moon, and stars is smitten and turned to darkness (Rev. 8:12). Under the fifth trumpet mighty powers are released from the pit, but they do not complete their work (Rev. 9:1-12). Under the sixth trumpet a mighty army is prepared and released, killing *one-third* of men (Rev. 9:13-21). Under the seventh trumpet the great dragon is cast out of heaven, but not out of the earth or the sea. It is not my purpose at this time to expound the meaning of all these wonderful symbols, that is reserved for another time; I only seek to point out that ONE-THIRD does not denote a ***finished work!*** It is but the ***initiation*** of the unfolding work of God for the spiritual transformation and perfection of His king-priest company!

The next and final phase of God's dealings in our lives is through the *pouring out of the seven vials*. The vials sound truly threatening and ominous, but they are menacing only to the natural man, the carnal mind, and the fleshly nature! The vials are no friend of old Adam and his nature or his aspirations, plans, and activities. They are only the friend of the Christ within! When the vials have finished their work the entire human identity, the man of flesh with all his carnality, limitation, darkness, and death is forever swept away! The seven vials are the picture of ***swift, uninterrupted, and complete execution***.

Let me cite only a few examples. When the second vial is poured out upon the sea, the *entire sea* becomes as the blood of a dead man, and *every living soul* in the sea dies (Rev. 16:3). When the fourth vial is poured out the *entire sun* is affected to scorch men with fire (Rev. 16:8). When the fifth vial is poured out it is upon the *seat of the beast* so that the ax is laid to the *root of the tree*, dealing completely and permanently with the bestial nature of man (Rev. 16:10). When the sixth vial is poured out the great river Euphrates is *completely dried up* (Rev. 16:12). When the seventh vial is poured out great Babylon *falls*, *every island* flees away, *every mountain* disappears, and there comes a great voice out of the temple in heaven, from the throne, saying, ***"It is finished!"*** Can you not see the mystery?

LITERAL OR SPIRITUAL?

There is great truth in the words of a preacher from the 19th century who wrote: "Suppose the book of Revelation to be a great palace, with its royalty, royal children, servants, and subjects. You desire to go through it and view it intelligently, and to understand all about its inhabitants and laws of government; now to do so you must have keys, and you must learn who is who, their place, authority, and work. If not so qualified, you could not pass from room to room, and you might confound the King with some servant and visitors might be mistaken for the children of the household. Thus your ideas would be considerably mixed; you would be guilty of talking about the King when you really meant some servant, and of prophesying for the royal children in the name of the visitors. The years would come and go, but events would not happen as you had prophesied, only confusion and disappointment would ensue."

God is giving understanding of the things written in the Revelation in this hour. While we have read this Revelation scores or even hundreds of times, yet today we are approaching this book with a fresh, open view towards allowing its words to speak to our minds and hearts without the inhibitions of Babylonian superstition, legend, folklore, myth, or tradition. The Revelation deals with the appearing of Christ. And

that is something every person called to sonship is involved with! There is no doubt that there are sincere and earnest-hearted people in churches everywhere awaiting the appearing or return of the Lord Jesus Christ. The book of Revelation is written specifically for that end — to bring about *apocalypse*, to bring about metamorphosis, to bring about transformation, to bring about the unveiling of Jesus Christ! It is our lot in this significant hour to be involved, by the work of the Spirit, in the unveiling of Jesus Christ in all His fullness within His people.

The message of the book of Revelation does not reveal doctrine; it reveals essence, nature, substance, purpose, dealings, energy, and generation. It reveals not just a word about God, but it yields the experiencing of Him. The book of Revelation shows us the only thing that is going to be revealed, and that is the person of Jesus Christ! It is not the teaching of a doctrine, but the unveiling of a Person! This can only be done by the Spirit! Christ is a spiritual reality, therefore the book of Revelation is a SPIRITUAL BOOK!

A tough store manager was walking through the packing room one day when he saw a young man lounging on a shipping crate, whistling and relaxing. He asked the young man how much he was paid. The young man answered, "\$200 a week." At that, the manager took out his wallet, grabbed some bills, and said, "Here's a week's pay. Get out!" The manager immediately found the department head and demanded to know who hired the young man. He replied, "We didn't hire him. He was just here to pick up a package." The lesson is just this: *Assumptions can be costly*. We'd better find out what's going on before we jump into the fray!

Those who do not understand this as the revelation of Jesus Christ, *assuming* the interpretations and speculations of carnal-minded theologians and Bible teachers, view the white horse of chapter six of the Revelation as the antichrist, the red horse as war, the black horse as famine, and the pale horse as pestilence, poverty, and death. But how can that be when this book is to make us *blessed*, when the message and events of this book are given to make us *happy*! If this is the unveiling of Jesus Christ — are antichrists, tyranny, wars, bloodshed, torment, famines, pestilence, poverty, and death what Jesus Christ is all about? Is that the *revelation* of *Him*? There is no way this book can be interpreted according to current events or what is happening out there in the world that doesn't even know Jesus Christ!

World events, and men's speculative interpretations about "the antichrist," are always changing. The so-called "antichrist" is not the same person they said he was when I was a child and first heard sermons on the book of Revelation. The beast has changed, the ten horns have changed, the false prophet has changed, the mark of the beast has changed numerous times through my brief life time! If you try to interpret these things in the light of external, literalistic world events, you are going to be kept very busy! And in the end you will be proven *wrong*.

It is easy to anticipate, call for, and predict the manifestation of divine wrath upon men and nations. Most Christians certainly believe they *deserve* the outpouring of divine judgments! And it plays perfectly into our fears, as well as our vindictiveness against the wickedness of men. But it is not the spirit of the Lamb of God — Jesus Christ the *Saviour*! Once we adjust our perception to expect doom and gloom, religious zeal conjures up all sorts of apocalyptic visions of the "end times." I have heard hundreds of "doom and destruction" prophecies over the past sixty years. *None* of them has come to pass! Why? Simply because those who said, "Thus saith the Lord" had not heard from the Lord. They were only parroting the theories of the carnal church systems and speaking out of their own imaginations and fears. They predicted all sorts of horrors to come upon mankind, and completely *missed* the great work God is doing today by His Spirit as He deals with His elect to bring *many sons to glory*!

The reason we have so many men that go around preaching doom and gloom is because they are not listening to what God is saying. They do not hear God by the Spirit! Our message transcends what men say. For example. Economists put out reports that the economy is going bad. Gold does not back our dollar anymore, the national debt is too high, the trade balance is out of kilter, we are headed for economic collapse. A carnal-minded economist dispenses this information. Then a carnal-minded *preacher* takes it up and tries to show how this is fulfilling some prophecy in the Bible. Carnal-minded men that produce carnal-minded reports give these carnal-minded thoughts to carnal-minded preachers, who pass them on to carnal-minded Christians! Some of these carnal-minded preachers have told the people to sell their property, get out of debt, get their money out of the banks, move to some "safe area" and become self-sufficient, living off

the land. And people get scared and do it! Why? Because they are listening to carnal-minded reports of carnal-minded men! Of course, some day it *could* happen. Economic collapse has happened to many nations throughout history. But who cares? People say, "But will you be prepared?" Listen! True preparation is *only in the spirit!* We'd better get hold of God in the spirit — not for burying our treasure in the earth someplace. The government is going to find you out there in your little "safe place" anyway! Only as we are led by the Spirit are we able to know the times and ways and will of our Father!

If the events of the book of Revelation are *literal* then it follows that there are blacksmiths in heaven! In Revelation 19:11-16 we read that heaven is opened and the Lord Jesus comes out of heaven riding upon a white horse. Then there are the armies from heaven which follow Him, all riding upon white horses. Many years ago I visited a church in Florida and the pastor was teaching from this passage. He said, "The book of Revelation is to be taken literally. God means what He says! If it says horses, then it means horses! If Jesus wants to come riding on a horse He certainly has the ability to do so!" But you see, my friend, if this is *truly literal* then the horses are not spiritual horses or some sort of celestial horses — they are just ordinary horses! And if they are really horses then someone in heaven must have a blacksmith shop somewhere along Hallelujah Boulevard for shoeing the horses in heaven. In that blacksmith shop there would need to be a forge, an anvil, a hammer, nails, and a blacksmith shoeing the horses in heaven, getting ready for the great battle of God Almighty.

David Ebaugh once related the story about a meeting he attended where the minister was teaching on the Revelation. Someone asked the preacher about the horses, and just like the preacher I heard, he replied, "It's literal horses. Does it say horses? Then it means horses. That settles it!" One lady in the congregation began to cry, with uncontrolled weeping and trembling. In any group like that if someone begins to cry and sob and cause a disturbance, the speaker will stop to see what the problem is. So the preacher looked at the woman and asked, "Sister, what's wrong?" She answered, "Oh, my little dog." Then she cried and sobbed and shook some more. He said, "What's wrong with your little dog?" She said, "Well, it tells us in the Bible that outside the gates of the City are the whoremongers and the *dogs* and the sorcerers!" She figured that meant that outside the City was hell, so all the dogs had to go to hell. If it *said* dogs, then it *meant* dogs. "Oh, my little dog!" Can you not see the folly of such a literal interpretation of the book of Revelation?

There is a world of difference in the outcome whether the book of Revelation is understood *literally* by the carnal mind or *spiritually* with the mind of Christ. It reminds me of a story I read once which pointed out the importance of being careful about details. A wealthy woman who was traveling overseas saw a bracelet she thought was irresistible, so she sent her husband this e-mail: "I have found a wonderful bracelet. The price is \$75,000.00 May I buy it?" Her husband promptly e-mailed back his response which he intended to be, "No, price too high." But in typing the message he failed to put in the comma, making the message read, "No price too high." Elated, she purchased the bracelet. Needless to say, at her return her husband was dismayed. It was just a little thing — a comma — but what a difference it made! What a little difference there may seem to be between the words *literal* and *spiritual*. But believe me when I say that the result of whether the events of the Revelation are literal or spiritual is of far greater import and serious consequences than the \$75,000.00 spent for a bracelet!

Take, for example, a man in West Africa. He had heard about the importance of building his home on the solid foundation of the word of God. And so, when he started to build his house, he rounded up some Bibles and placed them squarely among the mud bricks in the foundation of his home. Then he finished the house. Now this man built his house on the Bible, but it didn't help him any. He totally missed the point of Jesus' words! All who interpret the book of Revelation literally make the same mistake this poor brother in Africa made! It's just as simple as that.

Never think that the book of Revelation is merely a book of prophecy. It does say in Revelation 19:10 that "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." There is no doubt that the book of Revelation is a book of prophecy, but we must not merely seek for the prophecy and miss the *spirit!* I would rather miss the prophecy and touch the spirit! When you come to this book, don't try to analyze and understand it. Just say Amen with your spirit to every word; then you will be endued with the *spirit* of the prophecy. That's what the Lord is talking about! The testimony of Jesus is not a prophecy, it is the *spirit of* the prophecy. That is why the prophecy is *spiritual*, not *literal!* On the other hand we could say that the *spirit of* the

prophecy is the *testimony of Jesus*; that is, the spirit testifies of Jesus, or Jesus testifies in and by the spirit. To be concerned with the prophecies is one thing; to find the spirit of the prophecies is another thing! And if you miss the spirit of the prophecy, you miss Jesus!

Now let us return to the thought of the Four Horses. As I have pointed out, the symbol of horses and horsemen is a strange one to Western minds. We associate horses with labor and transportation, but the Eastern mind associates the horse and his rider with *war*. For this we have the special term “cavalry.” Any one who knows even a little bit about the Old Testament can readily understand these horses. The wise man says, “The horse is prepared against the day of battle” (Prov. 21:31). In the inventory of Job’s wealth horses are not included, and the same is true, I believe, of Abraham, for they were not men of war. Horses meant not wealth and happiness and blessing, but chariots, soldiers, and the aggression of empires such as Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, and Rome. Pharaoh had horses. Many were drowned in the Red Sea at the Exodus. But the kings of Israel were warned not to amass horses (Deut. 17:16). The ox and the ass did the useful labor in Israel, but the horses were held for destruction and devastation, for the conflict and carnage of opposing hosts. When Jehu led a rebellion, he gathered horsemen, mounted a chariot and drove furiously. Look at your equestrian statues — in nine cases out of ten, it is a soldier who sits in the saddle.

Translated into spiritual language, the four horses and their riders present a picture of Christ riding out of our spirit into the earth *which we are* to make war with the flesh, the carnal mind, and the natural man! The four horsemen portray the warfare, calamities, destruction, and death visited upon man’s fleshly ways. These four horses are *war horses of God* — manifestations of Him “who is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He doth judge and make war” (Rev. 19:11). They are sent into our personal earths to destroy every enemy of the rule of God within us. They destroy the usurper, the serpent of the carnal mind, the will of the flesh, the lusts of the flesh, the emotions of the flesh, the works of the flesh, and the religious pretense of the flesh. Simply speaking, these horsemen conquer and destroy everything that finds its strength and activity in the flesh!

Even so, come Lord Jesus!

To be continued...

J. PRESTON EBY