

KINGDOM BIBLE STUDIES

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

FROM THE CANDLESTICK TO THE THRONE

Part 87

BREAKING THE SEALS (continued)

“And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, Come! And I beheld, and lo a *black horse*; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four living creatures say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine” (Rev. 6:5-6).

And now we come to the third horse — the black horse. Horses, as we have noted previously, are symbols of overcoming strength and power — whatever lies before these horses is overcome by them. Color in scripture denotes the presence and operation of God by the Spirit. The color reveals what the horse is doing *to* you or producing *in* you. In the process there is both life and death, death to the Adam man and the apprehension of life in the Christ man. The first horse was white — the expression of life, illumination, and revelation. When light comes forth you see your first beginning. In the beginning God said, “Let there be light!”

Prior to this pronouncement the “earth” was “without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep.” This is a perfect description of the *earth man* before God’s redemptive, reconstructive, and restorative work begins upon him. Before God’s word is heard, before His light of truth and revelation shines, the natural man, who is of the earth earthy, is spiritually void and formless, an unknown deep within. Upon this deep all is darkness; yet, praise God, God’s Spirit is brooding there! The natural man is alienated in his mind from the life of God, shut out from the spiritual world, blind to reality and truth — yet God is very near. In relation to spiritual life this man begins nothing, continues nothing, perfects nothing. The wondrous change is wrought by the *power of the word of God!* Life and power are in the Word. “God said” — this is the means — just as God formed the first creation in that long ago, so He now fashions the new creation. In both the initiative is on God’s part!

When all was void and formless and shrouded in darkness and hopelessness and nothing moved, “the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.” God speaks and light breaks forth upon the void. The first step in the new creation is the awakening of man to spiritual consciousness, the dawning of light in his mind and heart, his perception of Truth through the quickening of his spirit. Light is understanding, and just as the first creative day brought light to the darkened world, so the first horse, the white horse of illumination and revelation, brings the light of understanding to our hearts. Light represents intelligence and life — darkness represents ignorance and death. Symbolically these are “day” and “night.” Understanding and illumination quicken and enlighten the mind, heart, and soul, and man comes face to face with God to be transformed by His glory. Those in whom this work goes on, know that each succeeding step is *entirely the work of God!*

The second horse was red — and when Christ enters into our land as the red horse, He takes peace from our earth, that is, He *disturbs our comfort zone*. Once we are quickened by the Spirit of God, once we are awakened to our true identity, once we stand up as a new creation, we are no longer comfortable with the things of the old creation. Within us have been awakened new longings, new potentialities, new hopes, new ways of thinking, new perceptions of reality, new understanding — a *new nature, a new mind, a new heart*.

Now we are not comfortable with the things we were comfortable with before. In the old creation we were at home with worldly atmospheres, carnal understandings, and fleshly activities; but now that the mind of Christ has been awakened in us peace has fled from our earth, from our soul. What it means is that all the peace, pleasure, and joy of the earthly, natural, carnal life is taken away! The more we are awakened to the beauty and glory of life in the spirit, the more our *earthly state of being* is perceived as a vile abomination compared to it. The red horse brings a sword causing division between soul and spirit, between the natural life and the heavenly life. He also ignites within us a burning, purging fire to begin to cleanse our land from every contemptible, fleshly thing. Oh, what a wonder this is!

When the black horse invades our land, great darkness falls upon our *earth*, on the natural man, the carnal mind, the fleshly nature. Black is the absence of light and color. It denotes a condition of no light, no understanding, no expression, no perceptible substance. The anointing of the black horse is a revelation of darkness — the knowledge of just what is in the natural man, the carnal mind, and the fleshly nature — the clear and perfect understanding of what they are, how they work, their utter futility and worthlessness in the light of Reality and Truth that the Spirit brings. We will never let go of the valueless things of the earth realm until once we see them for what they really are, and the true riches.

There is a beautiful portrait of this truth in the Song of Solomon. It is called “The Song of Songs, which is Solomon’s.” Just as the “Holy of holies” was the holiest of all holy places, just as the “Heaven of heavens” is the highest heaven of all the heavens, so the “Song of songs” is above and beyond all the songs that have ever poured from the human heart and human lips. This is the Song that is above all other songs; a Song sent down from the courts of heaven, from the throne of God; a strain from the celestial choir. “Song” in the symbology of scripture means “a message.” So the Song of songs is the Message of messages, indeed, the Revelation of revelations!

There are two principle characters in the drama. First you have “my Beloved” who is representative of HIM, the Lord Jesus Christ who dwells *in our spirit*. Then you have “my Love” which represents a woman — the soul. This is the ineffable, pre-eminent Song; ineffable because it is a celebration of true marriage, a portrait of our personal relationship with Christ, as well as a picture of the love relationship between Christ and the church. Ultimately it is also a representation of the relationship between the corporate man, the manchild, or the manifest sons of God, with the bride of Christ. On the personal level *she*, the soul, becomes awakened to *Him*, the inner son which is our spirit. These are internal realities! The Christ to whom our soul awakens, and whom our soul seeks and loves, is not the Christ in some far-off heaven somewhere, but Christ in our spirit, and as our spirit, for he that is *joined to the Lord is one spirit*.

Some of the thoughts in the next several paragraphs are gleaned in part from C. H. MacIlravy’s excellent book CHRIST AND HIS BRIDE.

When the soul awakens to the glory of the Christ within, when she once beholds HIS beauty, HIS majesty, HIS riches, and smells HIS oils, she is filled with great desire and she cries, “*Draw me* and we will run after Thee!” (S. of S. 1:4). Her heart goes out that she may rise up and run after Him. She feels she is helpless in herself, but that He has power to draw her, and He alone can do this. She longs for the kisses of His mouth (S. of S. 1:2), those tender, intimate moments of fellowship and communion in which His love is revealed. When God pours into us a love for our Beloved, and begins to reveal more clearly our potential in Him, we rejoice with great joy and gratitude to God! If He did not put into our hearts the longing to know Him in deeper measures and have His very best, we would be satisfied with the least we could have and still be saved, and become spiritual paupers in the kingdom of God. How wondrous are the workings and drawings of God upon a human soul! How little do we behold or know that which He is doing as day by day He works down in the depths of our being. The most favored place a child of God can be in, is to continually feel the drawing of God urging and constraining him to greater desire and to greater abandonment to Him.

In the moments of ecstasy in His presence she (the soul) catches a glimpse of the inner sanctum of the spirit, the most holy place of His brilliance and glory, and she cries, “I want more!” But in His presence she also receives a startling revelation — “*I am black but comely*, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar...” (S. of S. 1:5). She receives the understanding of how carnal she is! You can never become

spiritual, precious friend of mine, until the Spirit has shown you your carnality! It is not the sinner who says, "I am black." Oh, no! It is not when the heart is untouched by the grace of God, that the stain and blackness, which carnality has wrought upon the soul, can be seen by the unquickened one. It is when the power of the Spirit strikes the *believing soul*, that the soul perceives her blackness; it is when she gets a vision of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ that she sees herself as black as the black goat-hair tents of the Bedouin — the tents of Kedar. When Lorain and I were in Israel a number of years ago, from our vehicle window we could see the black goat-hair tents of the Bedouin still dotting the landscape after all these thousands of years since Solomon penned these words!

When the soul has commenced to enter into a closer and deeper walk with the spirit, the beauty which she thought she had, she sees wither up and drop off. The natural attractions in which she had rejoiced — the wisdom of this world, the empty religious exercises, the pleasures and pursuits of the flesh — disappear under the searching light of His holy presence. With clearer vision than ever before she now sees the emptiness, the vanity, the futility and frustration of all earthly things. It's a revealing — "I am **black** — but **comely**!" You see, beloved, when the red horse came into our land there was **warfare** — the flesh exerted itself against the new life of the spirit and hostilities broke out! What struggles we experienced as the flesh warred against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh! But now, when the black horse gallops through our mind and heart we begin to see the flesh for just what it is — and we are able to confess its weakness and worthlessness.

It is here that we get a revelation of the carnal mind, not just that it exists, but *how it works*. We begin to discern that the wisdom of men is truly *foolishness with God*. We understand that the flesh is concerned only with the perishable things of the *physical realm*, which things lead only to death and corruption because there is no lasting value and no life in them. We also receive the perception of the incredible darkness of the *religious realm* where the children of God are so occupied with soulish zeal and carnal efforts! They are running here and there, busily initiating flesh-appeal religious activities of all kinds, as though the Lord could not get along without their officious help. One would think that the Lord is not as interested in His own vineyard as they are. They are organizing and bringing together all kinds of machinery to run the Lord's business; they are inventing intricate and clever systems to get men saved, and to entertain them so they will stay saved. Everybody feels they should be doing something **for** God. But when the black horse comes with his penetrating revelation, for the first time we actually *see* the thoughts, schemes, ideas, plans, purposes, promotions, empty rituals, lifeless ceremonies, vain traditions, worldly programs, and religious zeal of the *carnal mind* for what it really is!

This is when we begin to leave everything that we can leave, and we get still before *the spirit*, waiting upon God in earnest, sitting at His feet in holy submission and sweet communion, learning of Him, that He may speak to us and work in us, and for us, and through us, to His glory. Then we begin to go forth with the presence and power of God upon us! And while we shall now be used of Him with those around us, we have learned to watch for His movings and dealings upon our souls, and to always yield to Him to work in us first. Thus shall our hearts become truly pure, unmixed with fleshly zeal and scheming of the carnal mind.

The black horse reveals the *black* — the substance of all carnality. One can never be an overcomer until he deals with the subtleties of the carnal nature! The carnal mind is the consciousness, reasoning, ethics, philosophy, religion, and character of the natural man. But God doesn't only reveal that to us — He reveals our *comeliness* at the same time! "I am **black** — but **comely**!" What a word that is! What beautiful balance there is in the wisdom of the Lord! I am black — fleshly, carnal in my outer natural man; but comely — with the nature of God in my inner spiritual man! It is this balance between the negative and the positive in God's dealings that accounts for the black horse having a pair of *balances* in his hand. The comeliness of those pressing on into God's fullness is revealed in the further ministry of the Rider upon the black horse. All is not negative, for there is great spiritual wealth and heavenly glory revealed there! There is an unmistakable sequence in every unfolding of divine activity at the opening of each of the seven seals. Yet the carnal mind never sees it, for it can be perceived only by the spiritual mind of the Christ within!

BARLEY AND WHEAT

“And I heard a voice *in the midst of the four living creatures* say, *a measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine*” (Rev. 6:6).

A voice spoke, and the location of the voice was *in the midst of the four living creatures*, showing that it is not the voice of the Rider on the black horse. Neither is it the voice of one of the living creatures. As we have seen in chapter five, there is One *in the midst of the living creatures* and He is the Lamb that was slain. Thus it is the Lamb who makes the announcement of the wheat, and the barley, and the oil and the wine! The slain Lamb bespeaks a *poured out life*, His life given to us and raised up within us. Wheat, barley, oil, and wine are likewise symbols of that which gives us life. These are aspects of the life of the Lamb communicated to us from experience to experience as we grow up into measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ!

Before we consider these commodities let us look at the background behind them. There are many types of the kingdom of God in the Old Testament. The broadest and most all-inclusive type is the land of Canaan. The land is frequently referred to as the good land. The Lord called it “a good land” and “an exceeding good land.” What a beautiful description that is of the spiritual territory of the kingdom of God! What is the goodness of this spiritual “land” of the kingdom of God? The land is good in many aspects. There is neither time nor space to explore the manifold characteristics of the land — for that would make a book in itself. Briefly we will consider the aspect that relates to our subject at hand — the unsearchable riches of the land.

The land is good in its unsearchable abundance. First of all it is rich in water. “For the Lord thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills” (Deut. 8:7). These waters are types of various kinds of supply of the Christ-life out of the inner sanctum of our spirit. Jesus said that He would give us water to drink that we never thirst again, and that this water would be in us an artesian *well of water springing up* unto eternal life. On another occasion the Lord tells us that this *living water* would *flow out of our innermost being* as the rushing of mighty rivers. This is the supply of the Christ-life, the spirit within as living water! Early in our experience we realize we are thirsty, not thirsty in our body for natural water, but thirsty in our soul for the water of life! When we are thirsty it means that our soul is dry, there is a lack of quality of life. But when we come athirst to the spirit and contact the spiritual life of God in the spirit, we are refreshed and quickened — we are watered! The deep and terrible thirst in our soul is quenched! We are refreshed by the life of the spirit more than by any cold water or beverage on earth!

As we drink of the life-giving spirit there is released a stream that flows forth from us — an emanation, the overflow of His life unto creation. We *become* a fountain of water, a mighty river of living water! In this land there is not only one stream, but many springs, fountains, streams, and rivers. What a rich land it is! The spring (spirit) is the source; the fountain (soul) is the reservoir; and the stream (ministry) is the overflow. Within the kingdom people there are many streams, streams of wisdom, streams of peace, streams of joy, streams of righteousness, streams of power, streams of revelation, streams of glory and many more. How many streams are there within you, my beloved? As sons of God we are called to love and bless all of creation as a living stream of divine life flowing forth!

“Stretch forth your hands, and heal the nations;
Speak forth the Word, and give them life.
This is the day, that God has chosen;
And as He is, so are we, in this world!”

What a wonderful source we have! What a good land this is! The sons of God are the people of the kingdom of the most High, the joy of the whole earth, the hope of all creation — they *are the good land* of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills. What richness there is in this land!

Not only is the spirit of Christ within us the living water of this land, but He is also the bread of the land, the bread of life. Something to drink always accompanies food. Water is refreshing and quickening; food is strength and sustenance giving health and growth. So in chapter eight of Deuteronomy the very next

verse says, “A land of *wheat*, and *barley*, and *vines (grapes, wine)*, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of *olive oil*, and honey” (Deut. 8:8). There are seven food items in all — the perfect, eternal food! There are two kinds of grain mentioned — *wheat* and *barley*. Two other items in the list are *oil* and *wine*! What is the meaning of all these things?

These words — barley, wheat, oil, and wine are *code words*. They refer to the produce of the land of Canaan, but more specifically to the three feasts of Israel. The seasonal observance of the feasts is a perfect allegorical type of God’s redemptive processes. And these three feasts serve as the background for the work of Christ as the Rider upon the black horse! Most commentators have missed this beautiful truth altogether. Notice the spiritual sequence: after the initial revelation of Christ riding into our earth upon the white horse, beginning His conquest of our land (life) for God, the red horse gallops in bringing the awareness of our duality, the duality of flesh and spirit; and in the struggle that ensues between these two natures peace is taken from our earth. Following this it is time for the springing forth of the Christ-life within so that Christ may begin to be raised up in our experience as life, power, and victory. This is accomplished through the celebration of the three spiritual feasts of Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles!

The three feasts of Israel are spoken of as “appointed times of the Lord” and as “set feasts or appointed seasons of the Lord” in both the New American Standard and the Amplified translations of the Bible. Under the Old Testament economy of God, these appointed times, or set feasts, or appointed seasons of the Lord were prescribed by Yahweh to take place on specific dates that corresponded to the phases of the moon and the agricultural seasons of the year. At those times the people gathered before the Lord in the city where Yahweh had placed His name, and celebrated His feasts there in His presence. But in the New Testament economy of God, those set times and appointed seasons of the Lord have been raised up to the new and higher sphere of the Spirit! This reveals the great truth that those times and seasons of the Lord are now experienced *spiritually* in our lives, as we partake of Him as our life, and bespeak stages of our growth and experience in God, rather than our natural progression through the literal seasons of the year.

How precious the knowledge that we have a God who hungers, thirsts, deeply desires, to feast with His people — a God who from the beginning has tried to show us that His greatest delight is not in showing His authority, but in enjoying intimate and close fellowship with His own. He set a feast of fruits before Adam and Eve, the likes of which man has never been able to reproduce, and then He walked with them in the Garden in the spirit of the day and communed with them face to face. He ate with Abraham in his tent at noonday. He spread a table in the wilderness for the entire nation of His chosen, and He gave them the very bread of heaven.

Jesus performed His first miracle at a wedding feast. He fed five thousand on a hillside. He did not hesitate to attend feasts of all kinds, and ate and drank with men until He was called a glutton and a wine-bibber. He went up to Jerusalem to celebrate the feasts of Yahweh. And He has established the new covenant with a feast, a great spiritual feast, wherein He has given the redeemed His own body (word) for their meat and His own blood (spirit) for their drink, that death might be swallowed up of life. He has promised through the prophet Isaiah that in the latter days He will make a great feast of spiritual blessings and benefits for ***all nations*** and ***all mankind*** upon His holy Mount (Isa. 25:6). And the greatest feast of all — the marriage supper of the Lamb — ushers a people into the most intimate and eternal relationship with their Lord! It is not in meetings, preachings, teachings, prophesyings, singing, or any outward exercise that we enjoy the marriage supper of the Lamb; it is at the marriage union of our “soul bride” with our “spirit bridegroom” that we discover *within ourselves* the glorious marriage feast provided by our Father!

Israel’s economy revolved around agriculture. The primary feasts of Israel were agricultural festivities. Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles, were each formal announcements of distinct phases of the harvest season. That agricultural symbol is a picture of you and me — the earth that we are, receiving the incorruptible seed of the word of God planted in our field. In type, Israel harvested that planting in three phases in relationship to their spiritual calendar. Israel had two calendars, the civil and the spiritual. The spiritual calendar began with the month in which the feast of Passover was celebrated. The grain fields had been planted in the fall, in late October. With the arrival of spring in April, the grain was not yet fully ripe. At that time the people of Israel celebrated the feast of Passover. Passover was celebrated in two stages —

Passover itself, with the slain lamb; then the feast of Unleavened Bread which commenced the day after the Passover and lasted for seven days; and in connection with this, the feast of the Firstfruits.

Passover was observed on the 14th day of Nisan. The following day, the 15th of Nisan, which is the first day of the feast of Unleavened Bread, was declared a Sabbath. Then we read, "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a *sheaf of the firstfruits* of your harvest unto the priest: and he shall *wave the sheaf* before the Lord, to be accepted *for (as) you*: on the morrow after the sabbath the priest shall wave it" (Lev. 23:9-11). In Bible times barley was the principle crop and it was sown in October. Because of the many fall rains and the early spring rains, the barley grew very rapidly. Sometime around the first of April, grain fields around Jerusalem would begin to have ripened barley. So it was "on the day after the sabbath," or on the 16th day of the first month of the spiritual calendar, that a sheaf of the *first ripened grain* of the *barley harvest* was collected out of the field and brought to the priest. Only barley could be used, because the wheat and other crops had not yet ripened at the time of Passover. Even the barley crop had not fully ripened — only a small portion from which this "firstfruits" was selected and brought to the priest. The priest then waved the sheaf of firstfruits before the Lord and it was *accepted by Him*. The field of barley represented the redeemed people of the Lord! This was a symbol of *their acceptance* by the Lord — but the acceptance first of only a sample, a firstfruits, indicating that the remainder of the grain was also accepted by God, but would ripen and be harvested afterwards *in its own time*.

This is very interesting! Jesus is the *first of the firstfruits*. He is the *firstborn among many brethren* (Rom. 8:29). He is the *firstborn from the dead* (Col. 1:18). He is the *firstfruits of them that slept* (I Cor. 15:20,23). Therefore our Lord Jesus Christ is the *sheaf of the firstfruits of the barley harvest* that was gathered and waved before the Father! We know that our Lord died on the Passover, for "*Christ our passover* is sacrificed for us" (I Cor. 5:7). He died on the afternoon of the Passover as the sacrificed Lamb of God. He remained dead and buried in the grave until the day after the Sabbath, the 16th of Nisan, when suddenly He arose from the dead as the firstfruits of the new creation! He ascended to the Father that same day (Jn. 20:17) to be, as it were, waved before the Father as the *first sample of full redemption* — and the waving of the sheaf was fulfilled!

The waving of the barley sheaf pictured the resurrection of Jesus from the dead! It portrayed the acceptance by God of the offering of the firstfruit! And the firstfruit is accepted on behalf of the whole creation! And how beautifully this grain from the first harvest pictured our Lord Jesus, and also pictured *all men when redemption is complete*! The barley sheaf was free and unpossessed — not from any one man's field. It was pure, untainted in any way by man's arrangement of things — just loosely put into a sheaf. It was representative of all the fields which would, in due time, ripen into the same image of the firstfruits. Oh, the beauty of it!

What then, does barley represent? **THE RESURRECTED CHRIST!** When the harvest time came the firstfruits of the harvest must be offered to the Lord, and the firstfruit was clearly the barley. And so it is written, "But now hath Christ been *raised from the dead*, the *firstfruits* of them that slept" (I Cor. 15:20). The firstfruits of the harvest typify Christ as the firstfruits of the resurrection. How clearly this shows that *barley* represents **THE RESURRECTED CHRIST!** Yet, the soul-gripping truth is just this — it is not merely Christ raised out of the tomb two thousand years ago — it is Christ resurrected and *raised up in us*, the body of Christ! The barley represents the *beginning* of the resurrected Christ rising up within the body of Christ to show forth the beauty and glory and power of *His life within*. As this work is completed first in God's called and chosen elect, we also become a part of Christ the firstfruits in all the glory of His resurrection! That is exactly what the apostle James had in mind when he wrote, "Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth, that *we should be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures*" (James 1:18). The beloved John beheld this many-membered firstfruit company standing with the Lamb upon the heavenly mount Zion, and he heard a voice out of the heavenlies as the voice of many waters, saying, "These are they which were *redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb*" (Rev. 14:1-4). And that is what the *three measures of barley* speak to us, for barley is resurrection life and *three* is the number of **RESURRECTION!** The black horse reveals to us the darkness and carnality of the flesh man within each of us. But the Rider on that horse has a pair of balances in his hand, and the cry goes forth,

“Three measures of barley for a penny!” What an offer! Ah, there is the answer for the carnal mind and the flesh man, there is the power to fully and completely redeem us “from among men” — the living reality of resurrection life raised up within us by the power of the spirit! Can you not see the mystery?

Regardless of the problems and pressures that hedge you in and shut you up, irrespective of the circumstances and conditions that appear to confine and limit and prevent you from the fulfillment of God’s purpose in your life, let me assure you — a barley sheaf is within you! It is the sheaf of the resurrected Christ who has overcome *all things*! Apply HIM to the situation. He can never be exhausted! With the life of the resurrected Christ within you, you can live out the life of the unlimited God and gain the victory over every limitation of the flesh. You can do all things through Him who strengthens you, because He is resurrected in you and He is rising up out of your innermost being in almighty power. The experiencing of Christ as barley is the beginning of our journey into the depths of the almighty Christ. He is unlimited and all-powerful, yet we do not know Him in that measure at first.

Barley was eaten only by the poorest. It was considered a cheaper grade of food than wheat. The Greek word translated “measure” denoted the allowance of food for a common soldier or a working man for one day. It was actually about one and a half pints. A *denarius* (penny) was the ordinary wages for a full day’s labor. And when three “measures” of barley costs a denarius, it is as much as a man can do to earn the bread he and his family consumes, leaving nothing for clothing or any of their other daily needs. The message is just this — to eat the bread of God, to eat the flesh of Christ which is life eternal, to put on the mind of Christ, to truly experience the spiritual life of resurrection glory and power, will COST YOU EVERYTHING YOU HAVE AND HOLD DEAR! Oh, yes! It will cost you your past, it will cost you your associations, it will cost you your friends, it will cost you your carnal ways, your fleshly will, your natural way of thinking, your earthly manner of living, your worldly hopes and ambitions, your religious traditions, and a whole world more!

Many have seen in this passage (Rev. 6:5-6) nothing but *famine*. The vast majority of expositors interpret the black horse and its rider as a symbol of famine. This interpretation is based on the balances, or scales, the rider has in his hand and the high cost of wheat and barley. They claim that the scales for weighing, carried in the hand, and the announcement of the extreme costliness of the grain, shows that the rider of the black horse personifies famine. But, of course, these expositors are interpreting on a natural level by the carnal mind, and they fail to see the *deep spiritual truth* revealed in the scene. Their interpretation is, I believe, a mistake — rather it points to a principle of inflation — the high price of commodities, so that just the food one eats costs his whole living. Of course, the meaning is *spiritual*! This is the word of the Lord to His elect! It has nothing to do whatsoever with natural famine, inflation, money, grain, or the food supply!

Buying and selling in the spiritual sense has naught to do with the principles of commercial trade. The prophet Isaiah faithfully exhorted God’s people, “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, **buy**, and eat; yea, come, **buy** wine and milk without money and without price” (Isa. 55:1). The prophet made it plain that he was not talking about worldly commerce, but about “paying the price” for the “milk” of God’s word and the “wine” of His unspeakable joy and abounding life. The wise man counseled: “**Buy the truth**, and **sell** it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding” (Prov. 23:23). To “buy” the truth means to PAY THE PRICE to embrace and walk in the truth, and I have learned through many years of experience that the “price” of truth is oft times to simply be willing to “give up” or “sell” an error! To the church at Laodicea, that prided herself that she was rich and increased with goods and had need of nothing, but knew not that she was wretched, poor, blind, and naked the Lord admonished, “I counsel thee to **buy of me** gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich...” (Rev. 3:18). To “buy” gold tried in the fire means simply to *pay the price* to forsake the mind and ways of the flesh and *walk out the divine nature of God* in our lives!

There is a beautiful story in the second book of Samuel, chapter twenty-four, which graphically illustrates the price we are called upon to pay for the work of God in our lives. In the later years of king David’s life he ruled in peace over Israel. His kingdom stretched from the river Euphrates to the border of Egypt, and from the Great Sea on the west to the great desert on the east. But even then, David again did something that was displeasing to God. He gave orders to Joab, the commander of his army, to send officers throughout all the tribes of Israel and to count all the men who could go forth to battle. It may be that

David's purpose was to gather a great army for some new war. But even Joab, the general, knew that it was not right to do this, for God had commanded His people to *trust Him* and to *hear from Him* in all things, and not to trust in numbers nor lean upon the arm of the flesh. So Joab said to David, "May the Lord God make His people an hundred times as great as they are; but are they not all the servants of my lord the king? Why does the king command this to be done? Surely it will bring sin upon the king and upon the people."

But David was firm in his purpose, and Joab obeyed him, but not willingly. He sent men through all the twelve tribes to take the number of those in every city and town who were fit for war. They went throughout the land, until they had written down the number of eight hundred thousand men in ten of the tribes, and of nearly five hundred thousand men in the tribe of Judah, who could be called out to fight. The tribe of Benjamin on the border was not counted, because the numbering was never finished. It was left unfinished because God was angry with David and with the people on account of this disobedience and lack of trust. David saw that he had done wickedly, in ordering the census of the people. He prayed to the Lord, and said, "O Lord, I have sinned greatly in doing this. Now, O Lord, forgive this sin, for I have done very foolishly."

Then the Lord sent the prophet Gad to visit David. Gad came to David and said to him, "Thus saith the Lord, You have sinned in this thing, and now you and your land must suffer for your sin. I will give you the choice of three troubles to come upon the land. Shall I send seven years of famine, in which there shall be no harvest? Or shall your enemies overcome you and win victories over you for three months? Or shall there be three days when pestilence shall fall upon the land, and people shall die everywhere?" And David said to the prophet Gad, "This is a hard choice of evils to come upon the land; but *let me fall into the hand of the Lord* and not into the hands of men; for God's mercies are great and many. If we must suffer, let three days of pestilence and death come upon the land."

Then the Lord's angel of death passed through the land, and in three days seventy thousand men died. And when the angel of the Lord stretched out his hand over the city of Jerusalem, the Lord had pity upon the people, and said, "It is enough; now hold back your hand, and cause no more of the people to die." Then the Lord opened David's eyes and he saw the angel standing on mount Moriah, with a drawn sword in his hand, held out toward the city. David prayed to the Lord and said, "O Lord, I alone have sinned and have done this wickedness before Thee. These people are like sheep; they have done nothing. Lord, let Thy hand fall on me and not on these poor people."

The Lord then sent the prophet Gad back to David and said to him, "Go, and build an altar to the Lord upon the place where the angel was standing." So David and the men of his court went out from mount Zion, where the city was standing, and walked up the side of mount Moriah. They found the man who owned the rock on the top of the mountain threshing wheat upon it, with his sons; for the smooth rock was used as a threshing floor, upon which oxen walked over the heads of grain, beating out the kernels with their feet. This man was not an Israelite, but a Jebusite, of the race that had lived on those mountains before the children of Israel came. His name was Araunah.

When Araunah saw David and his nobles coming toward him, he bowed down with his face toward the ground and said, "For what purpose does my Lord the king come to his servant?" "I have come," said David, "to buy your threshing floor, and to build upon it an altar to the Lord, that I may pray to God to stop the plague which is destroying the people." Araunah said to David, "Let my Lord the king *take it freely as a gift*, and with it these oxen for a burnt offering and the threshing tools and the yokes of the oxen for the wood on the altar. All this, O king, Araunah *gives to the king*."

"No," replied David, "*I cannot take it as a gift; but I will pay you the price for it. For I will not make an offering to the Lord my God of that which costs me nothing.*" So David gave Araunah the *full price* for the land and for the oxen and for the wood. And there, on the rock, he built an altar to the Lord God, and on it he offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. The Lord heard David's prayer and took away the plague from the land. And on that same rock stood the altar of the temple of the Lord which Solomon built on mount Moriah. (Adapted from Hurlbut's Story of the Bible).

I love the integrity of David and my heart overflows with admiration for him as well as with thanksgiving that God is raising up a people in this day possessing the same heart as king David. Though he was king, and could have commanded anything by a word, he still did not wrest ownership from the Jebusite, but offers him the FULL PRICE. It is on that threshing floor of our commitment to God and His great purpose that the FULL PRICE must be paid as well! There are many beautiful promises to “him that *believeth*,” but manifest sonship is not one of them! He who *believes* shall be saved, the *gift* of the Holy Spirit is received *by faith*, and the list goes on and on of those things which are *freely given to us* by God. Yet, mystery of mysteries — sonship, the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, kingship and priesthood upon His throne — none of these are *gifts* and none of them are possessed only *by faith*! We must “apprehend,” that is, *lay hold upon* that for which Christ Jesus has apprehended us! It is not to him that *believeth*, but to him that *overcometh* that the Lord gives power over the nations to rule them with a rod of iron. It is not to him that *believeth*, but to him that *overcometh* that the Lord grants to sit with Him upon His throne, even as He overcame, and is set down with His Father in His throne. If we *suffer* with Him, we shall also *reign* with Him, is the clear word of the Lord to all who are called to sonship. Sonship, together with kingship and priesthood, is not a gift, but an *attainment*. And there is a *price* to be paid!

You see, the place where the price is paid is *at the threshing floor*. That is where the altar is built in our hearts, and that is where the temple of God is raised up in us! Whenever God “gives us a good threshing” that becomes the place where *we die* to all that is not of God, and allow Him to resurrect or re-erect us as the temple of the living God. If there is no threshing, there can be no altar and no temple. Nor can the plague of sin and death be stopped! If there is no suffering, there is no glory. If there is no sacrifice, there will be no fire of God. If there is no death, there can be no life. If there is no overcoming, there can be no throne. The sons of God shall come into the possession of the mount of the Lord, of the temple of God from whence flows the pure river of the water of life out from the throne of God, when the *price is paid* and it *costs us something* — the *full price* — yea, ALL THAT WE HAVE AND ALL THAT WE ARE! The old adage is wonderfully true, even in the kingdom of God — **YOU GET WHAT YOU PAY FOR!** The Lord has brought His sons in this hour to the place where we will not sacrifice that which has cost us nothing, nor will we accept the high and holy place of God, and the ministry which flows from it, *as a gift*. Oh, no! David was a man after God’s own heart, and every son of God is also a man after God’s own heart, and we will *pay the price*, yea, even the FULL PRICE!

In the physical world, many attempt to dodge this issue, seeking to get something for nothing. Therefore, the bargain counters of life are always crowded. But, however successful we may be in our natural lives, we cannot ignore this significant truth and get very far in our spiritual growth and development. Those who seek only the gifts of God remain babes in Christ, for it is children who seek gifts. Gifts will not carry one to maturity! Strange, isn’t it, that many of the things that cost us the most in time, in energy, and even in pain are the things that turn out to be what is most profitable to us? There seems to be a price to be paid for every step we take in the realm of achievement — be it physical, intellectual, or spiritual. All carry its price tag! At every step of the road, then, or at least at every crossroads, we must ever “count the cost” and ask ourselves, “How badly do I really want what I am pursuing?”

We send our children to school year after year that they may learn just the rudiments of life and be partially prepared to face the realities of this world. It takes many years of consistent study, effort, and hard work for them to thus improve their minds in order to be prepared to meet life’s challenges. But there is a lot of nonsense and foolishness which they absorb outside of school without study, just as naturally as a sponge absorbs water. Even so it is in the *spirit realm*! True wisdom, knowledge, and accomplishment are attained only at a price, a very high price. And not one in a million among professed believers is willing to pay that price! Therefore they drift hither, thither, and yon, carried about with every wind of doctrine that blows, by the sleight of men and their cunning craftiness and deceptions. Satan’s lies and the imaginings of the flesh come to one naturally and without effort. But one who has *paid the price* for a higher walk and place in God, who comes to the popular church in her shame with the truth which has been purchased at so great a price, will soon discover that this is not wanted, not even possible of either comprehension or attainment by the masses of believers, *because they have not and will not pay the price*; they refuse to attend God’s school! The foolishness of shallow thinking, darkened minds, and superficial experience is much more preferable; for it comes without effort.

All who desire to be prepared for the coming manifestation of the sons of God must realize that such preparation is costly and expensive! We must accept the fact that the “temple mount” and the “throne room” ARE NOT CHEAP. Seeking God is expensive because He is the most valuable thing in the universe! In the end it will cost you every thing you have. And all that you are. “Three measures of barley for a penny, and one measure of wheat for a penny.” Oh, that I may KNOW HIM! Not just in a measure, but in His fullness. That, O Lord, is the cry of my heart! Have you counted the cost to so know Him, dear one? The price we might pay to so know Him is nothing compared to the glory to be revealed in us when we are filled with His fullness! It is as we seek Him and tarry long in His presence, doing all His bidding as He deals with us, that He pours the flask of oil of sonship anointing upon our heads in abundance, and all the character, wisdom, love, power, and glory we need to change our world and deliver creation. It is as we gaze into His face in the light that the Spirit brings, that His presence comes to rest upon us in fullest measure, so that all about can see His glory. Is there any price too great to pay to seek and find the riches of the glory and power hidden in His presence? Dare we not spend all that we have to buy this treasure? All who truly seek to be prepared for the next great move of God — the manifestation of the sons of God — are now putting aside every other interest and every other desire that would try to lure us away from undistracted devotion to HIM.

There is a further truth in this. As I mentioned, barley was a cheaper grade of food than wheat, just as wheat was less valuable than oil and wine. Our first experience of Christ raised up in our life is not as rich and full and glorious as the higher and deeper experiences that take place in our lives as we follow on to know the Lord. Our first experience of life in the spirit is like the cheaper barley, and then as we press on into God we experience Him in a greater way as wheat. Finally we come to know His life within in greater and greater measures, even as the oil and the wine! That is the progression. In the beginning of our walk our understanding of the ways and will of our Father was very limited, and we could receive only the smallest amount and lowest level of the truth of God. We appropriated the word of God on a carnal plane and understood spiritual things in naturalistic and external terms of doctrines, traditions, rituals, ceremonies, ordinances, baptisms, communions, programs, outreaches, and flesh-appeal blessings, promotions, and activities of the old-order church systems of man.

Thank God, there are *three feasts!* Thank God, there is barley, and wheat, *and* oil and wine! The price is high, but what an unveiling they bring!

To be continued...

J. PRESTON EBY