

KINGDOM BIBLE STUDIES

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

FROM THE CANDLESTICK TO THE THRONE

Part 95

BREAKING THE SEALS (continued)

“And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the *wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of His wrath is come*; and who shall be able to stand?” (Rev. 6:15-17).

There are some good people who have conceived of the idea that the God of this universe is a Person of ALL LOVE expressed only through GOODNESS and MERCY. They do not want to think of Him as One who would punish or correct with the rod both believers and unbelievers. They resist thinking of Him as a God of fiery indignation and judgment! They prefer not to think of Him as One who is capable of administering harsh and unrelenting discipline to those who trample under foot His holy laws and abuse His spirit of grace. To these people God is a one-sided Being — a God of pure love and goodness, but not a God of wrath. Now, just think for a moment — if He were such a Person, He would be a God *without character!* Our God is a righteous God who hates the wicked ways, abominable actions, and malevolent rebellion of evil men. He is a God of justice, whose very nature demands that He do whatever is necessary to correct what is wrong and establish righteous order in the earth!

It must be quite convenient, soothing to one's conscience, to have a God who will always wink at wickedness and overlook sin, and who will never correct the erring. But such a God would only exist in the figment of the imagination of a deluded soul! Such a God could never be a reality; and a God who is truly holy and altogether righteous would never eternally condone that which is so totally antagonistic to His nature and character. In order for God's righteous kingdom to be fully manifest there must be corrective judgment administered against all that is evil and incorrigibly rebellious in God's universe.

We have met some brethren in this walk of sonship and the kingdom of God who have exaggerated the bright side of God's love out of all proportion to its other aspects. The love of God has been presented in such a way that it is a weakness rather than a strength. It has been presented on the sunny side of the street with nothing on the other side ever mentioned. There is a “love” of God preached that has become such a one-sided, mushy, gooey, sugar-sweet thing that it contains nothing of the vital and vigorous concern of a Father for the best interests of a son — it would never love enough to chasten, scourge, and correct that son! They have perverted love, making it sickening rather than stimulating, causing it to slop over on every side like a sentimental feeling rather than expressing an abiding concern for the object of love.

All those who make God's nature and activity only gentleness have taken one side of the truth and allowed it to get out of balance. Gentleness without austerity becomes soft and characterless! Mothers who dote on their children in this way often raise criminals. The kind of person who is all sweetness with no steel in him is not inspiring. He has the same effect as eating too many chocolates! And the off-spring of this false doctrine is one of the most unlovely by-products of its error — the “spoiled brat” Christian! He is the man who thinks God has given him a privileged claim on life. Nothing bad should ever happen to him now,

he should never be sick, never have to suffer or do without, he should have the shiniest car, the finest home, the best job, the most elegant clothes, the biggest bank account, and every desire of his carnal heart after *earthly things* with never a care in the world nor a cross to bear.

The kind of God we have revealed in the scriptures is a God of both mercy and judgment. He is not a nebulous nonentity of sentimentalism. He is a God of character! How I thank God today that He is a God of love and mercy — and there would not be one of us alive today to breathe His fresh air, if it were not for His amazing love toward us! But those who do not want to believe that God will administer a sufficient amount of corrective judgment upon the disobedient and rebellious, should be reminded that God is exactly that kind of Being. In the very cradle of human history, we find God pronouncing a punishment upon our first parents on account of their transgression. He even pronounced a curse upon the earth itself on account of their sin!

Let every man and woman of God who treasures the beautiful hope of sonship know that there is the DARK SIDE OF GOD'S LOVE! If a person refuses to surrender to the will and way of God the Great Physician will put His child on the operating table. He will use the surgeon's knife when He sees a tumor of self-will or a deadly virus of wrong thinking and carnality sapping our spiritual lives, or when He sees the cancerous growth of sin. The two-edged sword *cuts deep*! It is a sharp sword and leaves the soul wounded when it cuts, as Jacob was wounded while wrestling with the Lord. He rebukes and chastises whom He loves, and if necessary He will proceed to the most desperate actions — indeed, HE WILL KILL YOU TO SAVE YOU! (I Sam. 2:6-10; I Cor. 5:5).

There is going to be a unique and different unfolding of this One we call Jesus Christ! For He is about to go forth bringing His judgments to the whole earth, to the entire bestial order that the carnal mind of man has erected. In the book of Revelation we see the Christ riding forth on a white horse with the armies of the sons of God following in His path, “judging and making war.” In our present text this action of judging and making war is called “the *wrath* of the *Lamb*.” What an amazing divine paradox! Few phrases in the scriptures seem more contradictory than this: “the *wrath* of the *Lamb*.” How could it be possible for a lamb to evidence wrath? The “Lamb” of God who “*takes away* the sin of the *world*” on the one hand, and the “wrath” of the Lamb on the other hand. The Lamb — precious embodiment of meekness, mildness, lowliness, gentleness, patience, and sacrifice — coming upon the world for which He died in the hot fury of wrath, until men are found fleeing, hiding in the mountains and the rocks, seeking refuge from the face of Him that sits upon the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!

I have heard many explanations, but I have most often heard that God's wrath is *righteous indignation* or *holy vengeance*. Many people believe that if God gets angry with sin and pours out judgment, death, and destruction on evil men, it is *just*. But if a Christian gets angry with a wrong-doer and retaliates and takes out vengeance upon his fellow-man, it is *evil*. It troubled me deeply, and disturbed my spirit, when I heard these explanations and tried to embrace them! I could not reconcile within my heart how a God that loves His enemies, who sends His rain on the just and the unjust, and *so loved* the world that He gave His only begotten Son to redeem it, could be less than pure, loving, forgiving, perfect, and holy. How could He say to His followers, “Do as I *say*, not as I *do*!”

The wrath of the Lamb! Can this be the same Jesus? Can these be the same sons of God unto whom is committed the *ministry of reconciliation*? The very thought seems incongruous! The two ideas appear completely incompatible and hopelessly unreconcilable! And they are until we understand the great *purpose* and *nature* of the Lamb's wrath. While the two concepts seem contradictory to natural, human reasoning, they are held within perfect balance within the divine nature — passion and gentleness, holiness and love, justice and mercy. The Lamb does not suddenly undergo some fundamental change, laying aside His Lambhood, transformed like the proverbial werewolf into something altogether contradictory, now Himself an Executioner instead of a Saviour. Oh, no! It is not the wrath of One who has transmuted His Lamb nature, for it is the very **W-R-A-T-H** of the **L-A-M-B**! This wrath, therefore, is strikingly unique — not unappeasable rage or beastly savagery inflicting unreparable destruction and damnation upon mankind — but instead, *corrective, redemptive judgment* to break the rebellion of men, to bring them to repentance, and RESTORE ALL INTO HIMSELF AGAIN. That, my beloved, is the Divine Passion of Love — the wrath of the Lamb!

From a previous century come these beautiful words of confirmation of this most sublime and mysterious truth. George Matheson, a minister of the Parish of Saint Bernard's in Edinburgh, Scotland, wrote: "There is nothing so dramatic, in my opinion, as the sight of an emotion contrary to nature. When a man who has always hid his griefs bursts into tears, when a man who has always veiled his anger, gives way for once to passion, we are impressed with something like a sense of tragedy; it is a bitter day in summer; it is a storm upon a lake. Some such impression, in an intensified degree, rises here. 'The wrath of the Lamb!' It is a conjunction of the greatest possible contrasts, a meeting of two points not only the farthest removed in nature, but the farthest removed in human imagination.

"The Lamb is the type of the sacrificial Divine Love. Being divine, it is infinite. How can there be a limit to infinite love? How can we think of the love of God as interrupted even for a moment by a thing called wrath? Can we any more conceive a limit to the *love* of God than we can conceive a limit to the *power* of God? If you were told that there was a moment in the life of the Eternal in which He lost consciousness, you would say, 'Impossible!' You would feel it to be a contradiction in terms that the Eternal should lose a moment. Is it any less a contradiction that Infinite Love should lose a moment? Is it any less a contradiction to suppose that there should pass over the boundless heart of God the obscuring power of a cloud of wrath, by which the movements of that heart are restrained and bounded?

"Now, strange to say, the answer comes, not from the outside, but from the expression itself. 'The wrath of the Lamb' — the phrase is as peculiar as it is dramatic. Why does John not say, 'The wrath of the Lion'? Remember that, in John's view, Christ has two aspects — a Lamb and a Lion. Why does he not simply say that Christ has here put off His lamb-like appearance and put on the appearance of a lion? Because he does not mean that! He is not speaking of the wrath of a lion, and therefore he will not depict it. The state of mind he is describing is the wrath of a lamb — a particular kind of wrath! He is considering a mode of anger which is not an interruption of love, but itself a *phase* of love. The wrath of the Lamb is the wrath of love itself! Instead of being a barrier to the heart, it is one of the wings by which the heart flies. The discipline which comes from love is the very thing that makes a *boy* into a *man*! There is an anger which is incompatible with the absence of love, which could not exist unless love existed before it. The man who loves his friend will speak hard things to his friend who is walking into the wrong path; he will speak so harshly as to endanger the friendship; but the hard words bear the peaceable fruit of righteousness. There is a wrath which belongs distinctively to the *redeeming Lamb*, which can only have its home in the sacrificial spirit. That is the wrath which the man of Patmos sees!" — end quote.

This dual nature — the meekness and wrath of the Lamb — makes Him what He is, both the SAVIOUR and the JUDGE of all mankind! In His redemptive, reconstructive, and restorative activity His face is set against the dreadful realm of sin and death. Nothing will ever alter that! He will go to all lengths to turn men from evil, and restore them into harmony with the mind and heart of God. The sheer simplicity and sincerity of His passion is enough to melt and win the most sophisticated or the hardest of men. The wrath of the Lamb is beyond our understanding! Yet we are being brought to understand, for all those holy ones called to sonship to God are ordained as the instruments of His passion to redeem and restore all things! The blessed Seer of Patmos was shown in the Spirit the unveiling of the wrath of the Lamb. I want to declare that God is coming forth in this new kingdom Day in a revelation of Jesus Christ as both the Saviour and the Judge of the world! He is coming in and through His sons with a shaking and purging that will affect the very church of the living God! All of the Lord's people, on whatever spiritual plane they dwell, whatever their stage of development in Christ, and in whichever religious system of man they are imprisoned, will encounter in this new kingdom Day the fierce passion of the Lamb! The hour is come when judgment must begin at the house of God, but the whole earth will also reel violently under the overflow! What a Day!

Many people are afraid of the word *wrath*. I'm not afraid to use it because it is not a mean or vindictive word! What is wrath? It has always been taught by the carnal church systems in a negative way and it should not be. What is the *biblical* meaning of wrath? The Greek word is *orge* meaning "to reach out with *passionate desire* and take hold of." It is quite clear that the *orge of the Lamb* has nothing to do with uncontrolled anger or vindictive vengeance! The very simplest definition of the Greek word *orge* is "passion." The *passion* of the Lamb! What a word that is! That rendering certainly reconciles the apparent contradiction inherent in the King James Bible: "The *wrath* of the *Lamb*." Who has ever seen a wrathful

lamb? Show me one and I might consider the remote possibility of Christ coming in wrath upon mankind, in the way it is taught in the church systems of man. But there are no wrathful lambs!

Our children certainly experienced our wrath on a number of occasions while they were growing up. It happened this way. When they were cooperative and obedient we loved them, honored them, blessed them, and did all we could to help them fulfill their desires, hopes, and dreams. But when they were disobedient or rebellious they experienced our love on another plane. It was love in the form of wrath! Out of our *passion* to help them learn what life is really about and how they should conduct themselves in it, they received from our hand *rebuke, correction, and chastisement*. When their insolence reached a certain point we were *stirred to passionate action* and usually it was not very pleasant! But one thing is for sure. Whatever form the punishment took, it was out of a *passionate heart of love and concern* for their welfare. It was never administered out of rage, fury, unbridled anger, hate, or violent and vindictive vengeance. Oh, no! The judgment was redemptive in purpose and carried out as purposeful, meaningful correction. It was never designed to mutilate or destroy, rather to remedy, make right, set straight, adjust, mend, improve, cure, and mature. That is the wrath of a father! Is it not the picture of our heavenly Father's wrath?

The *passion* behind the correction is the correct meaning of the word for *wrath* in the Greek text. Passion — ardor, zeal, fervor, emotion, intense action, earnestness, strong desire, fire, irresistible urge, overflowing love — ALL THIS IS THE “WRATH” OF THE LAMB! When the Lamb is stirred to intense action in our lives to change and make things right we then experience His wrath! Why has there been such misunderstanding on the part of believers as to the true nature and attitude of God in respect to His wrath? I submit that it is because our interpretation of His heart, His judgment, and His intentions has been made in accordance with man's own carnal and vengeful nature! The Adamic mind ever seeks retaliation, retribution, and destruction upon those who commit wrongful, sinful, or criminal acts. It takes a heart after God's own heart to say with our Lord, “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.” It also takes a heart after God's own heart to then set about precise measures for correcting, changing, redeeming, restoring, and transforming the sinner!

When we come to the book of Revelation we find that it is a *goodness* book! “Behold, I make all things new.” That's good! “A new heaven and a new earth.” That's good! “The tabernacle of God is with men.” That's good! “And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.” How unspeakably *good* that is! The book of Revelation has a wonderful ending! And the end is the fruit of all that went before. It is the blessed *result* of the *wrath of the Lamb*! The book reveals that God is not out to “get us” in a negative, destructive way. Rather, the wrath of God is out to “get us” in a loving and constructive way! Have you considered the truth that when the book of Revelation portrays judgments they are not judgments that are against you? They are against evil, they are against the Adamic mind-set, they are against the flesh, they are against traditions, errors, fairy tales, folklore, and superstitions, against carnal systems of man-made religion, against self-will, selfhood, and selfishness — but God's judgments are never against YOU! The Lord has left no room for doubt that the great *purpose* — indeed, the *only purpose* — of judgment is to RIGHT WHAT IS WRONG. That's why the book of Revelation ends so gloriously! That marvelous end is the final result of all God's righteous judgments! Note the expectation in the prophet Isaiah's spirit as he announces: “Yea, in the way of THY JUDGMENTS, O Lord, *have we waited for Thee*...with my soul have I desired Thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek Thee early: for when THY JUDGMENTS ARE IN THE EARTH, **THE INHABITANTS OF THE WORLD WILL LEARN RIGHTEOUSNESS!**” (Isa. 26:8-9). Oh, the wonder of it!

CHAPTER SEVEN

Some expositors hold that the events of chapter seven are an *interlude* or a *parenthesis* between the breaking of the sixth and seventh seals, which causes a break in the vision, as though these events are something added. But John does not intimate that there is a break in the vision! There is no break in

thought, nothing that is different or out of place. John introduces two groups, the 144,000 sealed ones and the great multitude that no man could number, but these two groups are essential parts of the vision. In my view, rather than the events of chapter seven being parenthetical (something inserted, incidental, secondary, inconsequential, or nonessential to the opening of the seals) they are rather the *result* of the six seals that have been opened! The deep and mighty work of God wrought in each of His elect through the opening of the seals has now set the stage for the sealing of God's sons with the fullness of the Father's nature and the mind of Christ! All this has been preparation for the righteous judgments of God to be administered through the chosen elect in the power and demonstration of the Holy Spirit!

When the first seal was opened Christ the Lord rode into our earth conquering and to conquer. Under the second seal peace was taken from our earth through the conflict between flesh and spirit; the process of dethroning the natural man with the Adamic mind and nature commenced within us. At the opening of the third seal we experienced within the power of Passover and Pentecost as we began to feast on the life of the Lord and the richness of the Living Word in the power of the Holy Spirit. Through the activity of the fourth seal the old mind and nature were brought to death within our consciousness and experience through the many dealings, strippings, trials, testings, processings, and provings the Lord ordained for us. When the fifth seal is loosed we see our souls, or our soulical life, slain by the word of God and our testimony, under the altar of sacrifice, crying out for vindication and validation — travailing for the manifestation of our sonship unto creation. Then the sixth seal is broken and every outward thing we have trusted in, been associated with, and participated in is violently shaken and completely removed from our experience — our old heavens and our old earth with all they represent once and for all and forever pass away! Aren't you glad! The hour of glory and honor is now at hand!

It should not be necessary for me to endeavor to convince any mind possessing spiritual understanding that the stage is now set for the *sealing of God's sons*, now to be raised up to the heights of glory, power, and dominion upon the pinnacle of the spiritual and heavenly mount Zion! This is but the natural RESULT of all that has gone before! So, my beloved, chapter seven is not by any means parenthetical — it is the expected *effect, consequence, outcome, harvest, conclusion, and consummation* of the breaking of the seals within ourselves, bringing forth the *revelation of Jesus Christ!*

This precise pattern may be observed throughout the Revelation, in the breaking of the seals, the sounding of the trumpets, and the pouring out of the vials. Each time you see what is called a "parenthesis" or an "interlude" in the Revelation, you should think instead of an *outcome, consequence, or result*. As you observe the events preceding the so-called parenthesis you will be able to see clearly how the events following are indeed the *result or product* of all that God has wrought! This is indeed a wonderful *key* to understanding the beautiful unfolding of God's glorious plan and purpose in and through His called and chosen elect! How unspeakably marvelous this is!

LET NOT THE WINDS BLOW!

"And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, *holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree*. And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying, *Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees*, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads" (Rev. 7:1-3).

So many truths come pouring into the soul from this passage, but I am sure the reader can discern in the action of the four angels the ministry of *judgment*. Four is the number of that which is world-wide or universal, and winds which blow with devastating force are the symbol of judgment. Everywhere in scripture the winds are revealed as divine agents and used either for blessings or for judgments. Here, the four winds are significant of judgments which for the time, the four angels are holding back in order to permit the Seer to have a vision of something that must be brought forth and established *before* the winds are permitted to blow! Judgment is ready to come forth upon the whole world of the sea and the earth, which represent the multitudes of humanity that dwell in the *sea*, the *lowest realms* of wickedness and degradation, and those who dwell in the *earth*, that realm which is lower than *heaven*, but higher than the *sea*, the realm of the carnal mind which finds expression in the institutions of a moral society — religious systems, education,

politics, law, government, judicial systems, economic and social orders of *this world*. Individually the sea represents our *body realm* with all its fleshly passions, lusts, and evil. The earth is our soul, where we live an acceptable life out of our own mind, will, emotion, and desire.

Some of us have surely noticed that in the book of Revelation there are two kinds of trees — one kind that grows out of the earth, and another that grows in the paradise of God, out of the river that flows from the throne of God. In our present passage the trees are those that grow out of the earth, for the four winds are the winds of the earth, that blow upon the earth. These trees indeed have life, but it is life that expresses on a carnal level and brings forth the fruit of that realm. In its spiritual meaning these trees speak of those deeply rooted things that grow out of our earthly nature, those expressions, manifestations, activities, movements, institutions, philosophies, religious systems, traditions, culture, and all workings of mankind which are the fruit of the earth or the soulical powers of the natural man. The trees also represent the life of God expressed through the carnal realm of man-made religion. It is the life of God used to empower and propel the soulical programs, creeds, organizations, promotions, ceremonies, rituals, and flesh-appeal activities of the old order church systems of man. Green trees growing out of the *earth*! They have received a measure of life, but it is manifested on a low, earthly plane.

Furthermore, just as the tree of life growing out of the river of God, which is the life of Christ, feeds men's spirits with the incorruptible life of God, and the tea made from its leaves brings healing to the nations, so the fruit of the trees growing out of the earth feeds the soulish life of the Adamic man of flesh — it is truly "soul-food"! It is that which feeds, nourishes, and energizes the soulish appetites of man, including "*the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life,*" all of which passes away, along with the world, as we now know it. God will bring judgment upon all the carnal works and creations of man, but the command of the angel is, "Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, *till we have sealed the servants of God in their foreheads.*" The Greek word for "hurt" means "to be unjust" or by extension "to deal with, injure, wound, batter, pound, thrash, mutilate, mangle, maim, debilitate, cripple, spoil, impair, devastate, lay waste, make desolate, or destroy." If you have seen pictures of the devastation wrought by hurricanes, typhoons, and tsunamis, then you have a picture of what it means for the winds to *hurt* the earth, the sea, and the trees!

God is not unjust! Oh, no; He is altogether righteous — He does only what is good for us! When our Father brings judgment — correction, discipline — into our lives it *seems* unjust; that is the perception of the natural man. Often when my earthly father corrected me when I was a child, I thought he was being unjust. Sometimes when he put his belt to me I would fall down on the floor, screaming, "You're killing me! You're killing me!" That was my childish effort to try and get him to cut the discipline short. It didn't work! Today I understand that it was for my good. As our heavenly Father chastens us, even when we are crying, angry, blaming God, asking why, He will see that we go through it! The sons of God will not minister the strong word of judgment to the nations until they have themselves been thoroughly judged and sealed with the seal of the living God! In order that we may be true ministers of God's redemptive purpose unto creation, we are being formed in God's nature and trained in His ways. Our Father has a wise and wonderful plan! His sons will not become administrators of the earth realm until they are fully prepared and ready. Therefore He has sent forth His authoritative word of command that the judgments of God, that is, the dealings of God upon mankind and the nations of the world, should be held back *until* the sons of God have been perfected and matured into the mind and nature of the Father! That is the mystery!

Let not the winds blow — *until*! Hold the winds back — hold everything in restraint for a season — endure the corruption, UNTIL THE SONS OF GOD ARE SEALED IN THEIR FOREHEADS! Bring no judgment upon the earth realm, the sea realm, or those activities and institutions of men which are produced out of the flesh — the works of the flesh and the systems of the world — let there be no judgment upon any of these things *until* the sons of God have put on the mind of Christ! As I write these things and meditate upon them it becomes crystal clear within my spirit that there can be no *righteous judgment* out from God's elect until we all have been endued with the *mind of Christ*. Any man, apart from the mind of Christ, is unqualified to render any kind of judgment — and he will never be able to judge even his own soul, or his body, or the trees that grow out of his earth, apart from the understanding and wisdom of the mind of Christ. Much less is he prepared to administer righteous judgments to those realms outside himself — the world of mankind. Righteous judgment comes only out of the heavens of the spirit of the Lord! It must come out of

the mind of Christ, for *all judgment* is committed unto the Son (Jn. 5:22). Thus the divine fiat is issued by the word of the Lord that the four winds be restrained from blowing upon the earth, the sea, or any tree, until the mind of Christ has been fully formed in God's kings and priests! If only the world could understand this word, oh, how glad they would be!

The beautiful revelation that John received on Patmos, in the spirit, on the Lord's day, many of our religious teachers have taken that revelation and turned God into some kind of a monster, saying God is so angry with mankind that in the end He will come in the fiery heat of wrath and vindictive vengeance and pour out unspeakable judgments, torments, and horrors upon the world, and just do terrible things to the people of the earth. I heard of one preacher who stated it crudely, and I trust none will be offended that I quote it just as he said it, for that is the way people talk today, and what he said describes precisely the attitude and mindset of millions of believers and thousands of preachers and Bible teachers across the land — this preacher said, "Jesus is coming soon — and man, is *He pissed!*" **What a terrible, blasphemous concept concerning THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST!**

It is a truth not comprehended by most Christians, but the truth is that the judgment of God can only be understood in the shining light of God's nature — and God IS LOVE! Love has been described as AN ETERNAL WILL TO ALL GOODNESS. This is THE ONE ETERNAL, IMMUTABLE GOD that, from eternity to eternity, changeth not, that can be neither more nor less, but an ETERNAL WILL TO ALL GOODNESS that is in Himself and comes from Him, so that as certainly as He is Creator, so certainly is He the blesser of every created thing, and can give nothing but blessings, goodness, and holiness from Himself, because He has in Himself nothing else to give. The judgments of God can never be rightly understood apart from His nature of love. If God's judgments spring not from His love then they come not from God at all, for He IS LOVE. What ought this to teach us about His judgments! The pen of inspiration wrote, "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him: for whom the Lord *loveth* He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth...for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness" (Heb. 12:5-10). God doesn't go around purposelessly punishing or vindictively torturing any of His creatures. But He does go about precise paths of bringing forth correction *unto righteousness*, as the prophet says, "When Thy *judgments* are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world *will learn righteousness*" (Isa. 26:9). God's judgments, whether upon saints, nations, or the wicked in general are all corrective in nature, to make right what is wrong, accomplished by the motivation of His nature which is LOVE.

IS GOD JUDGING NATIONS UNDER THE LAW OF RETRIBUTION?

Multitudes of believers hold to the notion that every time there is some great disaster — a devastating earthquake, destructive hurricane or tornado, a ravaging flood, bloody war, terrorist attack (the falling of the twin towers), or ruinous tsunami such as struck southeast Asia, snuffing out hundreds of thousands of lives in but moments of time — that God is using these FORCES OF NATURE AS THE INSTRUMENT OF HIS JUDGMENTS. They imagine that by these things God is destroying man's corrupt order. Often they quote the scripture I quoted above, "When Thy *judgments* are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world *will learn righteousness*." That passage is wonderfully true! But are either man-made or natural catastrophes the "judgments" of God *by which the world learns righteousness*? That is the question! From ancient times mankind has experienced great wars that killed millions of people, bloodshed, riots, cruelty, tyranny, destruction of entire cities by volcanic explosions, droughts, famines, floods, earthquakes, ravaging fires, pestilence, and a hundred more fearful desolations — **but have any of these, even one of them, in the history of the world, ever caused the world to LEARN RIGHTEOUSNESS?** That is the question!

Let us consider the above concept more closely. Several years ago, we saw our nation chastened — smitten! The greatest terrorist act in American history, and the history of the world, took place September 11, 2001. Since then we have been placed in a position of insecurity — about anthrax, bomb threats, war, and fear of possible nuclear, biological or chemical attack. America experienced a brief period of time when the Congress was supposedly united, even singing together on the steps of the U.S. Capitol! The churches were filled with people praying, seeking divine help to cope with the mental and emotional trauma. But soon those same politicians returned to political fighting and struggling. The churches emptied out again, and the country returned to some semblance of normal. Did the falling of the towers cause America to *learn*

righteousness? Methinks that it did indeed momentarily wake a few people up, but as soon as the dust settled they quietly slipped right back into their slumber.

People throughout the entire church age have been taught to believe that the disasters, which they term “judgments,” that strike various nations, are due to their denial of the living God, their rejection of Christ, their worship of idols and false gods, their persecution of the saints, their spiritual darkness, materialism, corruption, trafficking of sex slaves, or their gross sins of immorality. But let’s think *spiritual sense* about these things! Do you suppose the people who died in the twin towers were greater sinners than the rest of the people in America? The truth is, there are thousands of places in America where there is more sin, evil, and licentiousness than at the twin towers! When God “judged” southeast Asia with the tsunami, do you suppose it was only the people in the coastal areas that were wicked, and deserving of God’s wrath? What about the *leaders* of those nations who were safe in their mansions miles away; and multiplied thousands involved in sex-slave trafficking, prostitution, drug running, and a hundred more abominations, who were safe in their cities far away from the coast; and untold millions who worship in their heathen temples, bowing down to idols and false gods, with hundreds of millions more who support radical Islam, yet suffered nothing from the judgment. And remember — many good people, and many of the Lord’s people, wonderful Christians, died right along with the sinners! Were the people who died that dreadful day worse sinners than all the rest? **Did the tsunami teach those people righteousness?** If it did not, then it *cannot* be the judgment that the Spirit of the Lord has declared *will* cause the world to learn righteousness!

We do such shallow thinking about these things, my beloved. Was God in control when these disasters struck? Certainly He was! Did He see and care for those unfortunate people just as He takes note of every sparrow that falls to the ground? Absolutely He did! But was He really out to “teach them righteousness” through these terrible events? Is Thailand now a righteous nation? Have they abandoned their false gods and stopped the filthy sex industry? Is Sri Lanka now a godly country? Has Indonesia ceased to harass and persecute believers, and now become a sweet Christian nation? Has anything changed in India since the disaster? **DID EVEN ONE OF THOSE NATIONS, OR EVEN ONE CITY IN ONE OF THOSE NATIONS, LEARN RIGHTEOUSNESS BY THE “JUDGMENT”?** Answer that question correctly and you will know a great mystery concerning the ways and purposes of God!

I have no hesitation in telling you that there is a great error abroad in the land concerning God’s judgments upon the nations. The vast majority of believers, including some in this message of sonship and the kingdom, still entertain the notion that God actively judges the nations of the earth for their sins. I once embraced that conviction too, before the Lord graciously shed greater light upon my pathway! The idea is that God is, in this age of grace, the gospel, and the new covenant, still holding the physical nations of the world responsible and accountable for their sins, therefore bringing judgment upon them under the **law of retribution**. Let us consider some synonyms of this word “retribution.” It means to punish, to give just deserts, to give out what is coming to one — what he *deserves* — retaliation, revenge, reprisal, an eye for an eye, measure for measure, tit for tat, counterstroke.” Is that not quite an interesting array of attributes to ascribe to our Lord!

Yet — the only way God could be punishing *nations*, giving them what they *deserve*, paying them back for their sins, and pouring out wrath, vengeance, and destruction upon them, would be if the nations are **under the law**. Law demands retribution; grace does not! You see, my beloved, it was under the law that God ordained “an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.” In His nation Israel, under the law, the adulterer, the murderer, and even a child who cursed his parents, was put to death. Before grace and truth came by Jesus Christ, the nations whose iniquity was filled up were to be wiped off the face of the earth, even the women, children, and cattle were to be destroyed — nothing left alive! God dealt with Israel *and the nations* by the **law of retribution**. The antediluvian world perished in the flood. Sodom and Gomorrah were consumed by fire and brimstone from heaven. The seven nations of Canaan were ordered to be exterminated. Israel was driven out from her land, the land and the temple devastated, and the people given to the sword and captivity. In those days God did hold nations responsible and accountable for their sins, and God did judge nations!

The good news is that God brought that age of law to an end! He established His new covenant of grace and salvation! Do you think the new covenant covers only the Lord’s called and chosen people, those who by faith in Jesus Christ have been forgiven, cleansed by the blood, and regenerated by the Spirit? That

is *not* the testimony of scripture! Under the new covenant “God was in Christ, reconciling **the world** unto Himself, **NOT IMPUTING THEIR TRESPASSES UNTO THEM**; and hath committed unto us the *word of reconciliation*” (I Cor. 5:19). The law came by Moses, but *grace* and *truth* came by Jesus Christ! Now — instead of punishment, vengeance, and retribution upon the nations, the word is, “Go ye therefore and preach the *gospel* (good news) to every creature” (Mk. 16:15). “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore and **disciple the nations**...teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you” (Mat. 28:18-20). Oh, yes! God **has reconciled** the whole world and all nations of mankind unto Himself in Jesus Christ, He is not imputing their trespasses unto them, and to His called and chosen elect He has given — not the word of judgment and retribution — but the **WORD OF THAT RECONCILIATION**! Truly Jesus is our Lord and Saviour, but He is also the **SAVIOUR OF THE W-O-R-L-D**! “Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of **THE WORLD**” (Jn. 1:29). “This is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of **THE WORLD**” (Jn. 4:42). This is indeed the “good tidings of great joy which shall be to **ALL PEOPLE**; for unto you is born this day a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord” (Lk. 2:11).

God is now dealing with the nations by that man whom He hath ordained, who is the **SAVIOUR OF THE WORLD**. So what would be the attitude of the reconciler and saviour of the world toward the nations today? Would it not be the same as when He came into the world to become its Saviour? “For God sent not His Son into the world to **condemn the world**; but that **the world through Him might be saved**” (Jn. 3:17). **THAT**, my friend, is the kingdom message and I fail to see any other message as representing either God’s Christ, His new covenant, or His kingdom! That is why Jesus said to the woman caught in the act of adultery, “Neither do I **condemn thee** — go and sin no more.” The message of the Son of God and the message of the sons of God is not: “Repent, for the *wrath of God* is at hand,” but, “Repent, for the *kingdom of God* is at hand!” Oh, my! What a world of difference there is between those two views!

The apostle Paul’s attitude toward the nations is expressed in these words: “*Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel (good news) of God, which He had promised afore by His prophets in the holy scriptures, concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead: by whom we have received grace and apostleship, **FOR OBEDIENCE TO THE FAITH AMONG ALL NATIONS, FOR HIS NAME***” (Rom. 1:1-5). “*Now unto Him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, **MADE KNOWN TO ALL NATIONS FOR THE OBEDIENCE OF FAITH***” (Rom. 16:25-26).

Is there a judgment to come upon the nations? Absolutely! But — that judgment has not been manifest yet, for the winds of that judgment are still held in the fists of the four angels standing upon the four corners of the earth and cannot be released **UNTIL THE SONS OF GOD HAVE PUT ON THE MIND OF CHRIST**! It will not be a devastating earthquake or a ruinous tsunami, dear ones, for through the glorious ministry of the manifest sons of God there will be the kind of judgment that will transform all men, change the world, and sweep all the nations into the peace, joy, and righteousness of the kingdom of God! Mighty **DELIVERANCE** is about to come to misled, misruled, and misjudged mankind! Hold those winds, angels — we’re on our way to perfection! It is indeed wonderful!

To be continued...

J. PRESTON EBY