

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

FROM THE CANDLESTICK TO THE THRONE

Part 29

THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF ASIA

(continued)

“What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the *seven churches* which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyratira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea...the *seven candlesticks* which thou sawest are the *seven churches*” (Rev. 1:11,20).

The book of Revelation is clearly addressed to “the seven churches which are in Asia.” Considering the *purpose* of the book of Revelation, why is the book addressed and delivered to *seven specific churches only*? Only by the revelation of the mind of the Lord can we understand this! An important key is found in the repeated use of the number seven. Numerology has always been a subject of special interest to students of the scriptures. There are two major errors people fall into when considering the mystical significance of numbers in the Bible. On the one hand numbers are looked upon as a sort of “*talisman*.” That is to say, numbers are viewed as having power to influence events. This concept underlies the idea of so-called “*lucky numbers*.” The theory is that certain numbers are likely to favor you more than other people or more than other numbers. Implicit in this is the notion that the numbers have some kind of *magical power* — thus they are a *talisman*, *charm*, or *fetish*.

The other error is in the use of numbers for *validation*. By this we mean the concept that the occurrence of certain numbers may show divine approval of some action you are undertaking or about to undertake. The fact that your new address, for example, is 777, 888, or some multiple of seven or twelve may be taken as an indication that God has led you to this place. But in the scriptures there is *no use* of numbers as talismans or for validation of human actions. Numbers *are* used two ways in the Bible. They may refer to a literal number or they may be used as symbols or codes to convey a *spiritual, metaphorical, or allegorical* meaning. While several numbers have some sort of mystical significance in the Bible, the ones of primary importance are three, four, seven, and twelve. Interestingly enough, *all* of the numbers convey some aspect of completion, wholeness, totality, perfection, or power.

In the book of Revelation numbers do not actually define amounts at all, but they represent *concepts*. The number twenty-four, for example, is meaningless as an amount — there are not exactly twenty-four elders sitting on twenty-four thrones up in some far-off heaven somewhere; but what the number signifies, the *priesthood of God*, is vital. The number 144,000 mentioned in the Revelation is relatively unimportant as a number; but when we understand that it is a multiple of twelve, and that twelve is the number of *divine government*, then twelve squared by itself times a thousand (the number representing the *day of the Lord*) represents the absolute fullness and perfection of *divine government* within a people in the *day of the Lord*!

Seven is very significant in the economy of God. It is the most frequently used number in the Bible! The Hebrew word for seven is *sheba*. From it is *shaba*, meaning “to be complete...to seven oneself, i.e. swear by repeating a declaration seven times.” That is how the ancients swore, by repeating the oath seven times instead of placing their hand upon a Bible or merely invoking the name of God. Seven speaks of completion, fullness, perfection. Nothing can be added to or taken from it without it becoming marred. Being a prime number makes it divisible only by itself. The week is complete, full, and perfect in seven days. Seven completes the colors of the spectrum. There are seven notes in the musical scale. The cells of the human body completely replace themselves every seven years. Jesus said that when the unclean spirit is cast out of a man, but the man’s house (body) is not filled with God, the spirit returns with seven others more vile than itself and the end of that man is worse than before. Mary Magdalene had seven devils cast out of her. Armed with the knowledge of the significance of the number seven in scripture it becomes clear that in both of these cases the Lord was speaking *metaphorically*. Rather than seven devils, there was *total* or *complete* possession by sin and demonic power! Thank God, in the midst of that unfathomable depth into which Mary Magdalene had fallen, she was forgiven, delivered, and lifted into life by Jesus!

This magnificent number seven is used for the grouping of many things which John saw in his visions on the isle of Patmos. In chapter one we find seven golden candlesticks which are the seven churches, seven stars and seven angels which are the messengers of the seven churches. In chapter four there are seven lamps of fire burning before the throne which are the seven spirits of God. In chapter five we see a scroll sealed with seven seals, and a Lamb with seven horns and seven eyes which again are the seven spirits of God. Also there are listed seven things that the Lamb receives — power, riches, wisdom, strength, honor, glory, and blessing. In chapter six the Lamb opens the seven seals, one at a time. In chapter eight John saw seven angels with seven trumpets. In chapter ten we find the mysterious seven thunders, which John was not allowed to describe. In chapter twelve there is seen in heaven a great red dragon having seven heads and seven crowns on his heads. In chapter thirteen a beast rises up out of the sea having seven heads. In chapter fifteen we see seven angels carrying seven vials (bowls) which contain seven plagues, which are the “wrath of God.” In chapter seventeen we find a woman riding a beast which has seven heads. These seven heads are described as seven mountains (kingdoms) which have seven kings. In chapter twenty-one we again see one of the same seven angels who had the bowls which had contained the seven plagues and thereafter in the book of Revelation there are no more sevens. Everything from that point onward is counted in groups of twelve!

SEVEN CHURCHES — THE WHOLE CHURCH

The seven churches are in Asia, which is actually Asia Minor, and were located on the western end of Asia bordering on the Aegean and Mediterranean seas. It is a small area now in Turkey, about the size of Oregon. The seven cities mentioned in our text form an irregular loop or circle. The order in which the cities are named is that in which a messenger naturally might be sent, as he followed the great circular road that bound together the most populous and influential part of the province. Ephesus, the chief city and capital, naturally is mentioned first; then Smyrna, located about forty miles to the north; then Pergamos, some fifty miles further northeast. From there, continuing clockwise around the loop, your next city will be Thyatira, some forty miles

southeast; then Sardis, thirty miles farther south; and Philadelphia and Laodicea, about thirty and seventy miles to the southeast of Sardis.

It is also interesting to note that this circle of churches lay in the very territory where the apostle Paul had labored as an apostle, founding many of the churches. Without doubt the epistle of Paul to the Ephesians was circulated around this same circle of churches, for it was the custom in those days for letters to one church to be shared with all the others. As we read the messages of the Lord Jesus to the seven churches we are made painfully aware of the fact that the anointing, glory, holiness, and power of the early days had already lost much of their freshness and potency, as the second generation of believers came along. We shall find that the same conditions which prevail in the church systems today were already manifest in the primitive church of John's day!

The churches are seven in number because seven in the Bible is always the number of *completeness*. Remember! There were *many other* local congregations existing contemporaneously with the seven mentioned in Revelation. The seven churches to whom John wrote were not even the most important! The churches in Corinth, in Rome, in Iconium, in Lystra, in Derbe, in Miletus, in Antioch, in Heliopolis, in Colossae, in Thessalonica, in Babylon, or even Jerusalem itself, *are not mentioned*. Instead these seven are singled out! Their selection, however, is deeply significant. These cities where the churches existed lay along the Imperial Post Road. This Roman highway was built about 133 B.C. It is because God knew *these seven* were facing patterns of trials, tribulations, errors, dealings, faith, steadfastness, victories, and triumphs that would be common to all the Lord's people down through the entire church age. The spiritual instructions are, "He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churchES" — PLURAL! Thus the Spirit tells us that every believer should *hear* what the Spirit says to ALL the churches! That is another positive evidence that the seven churches *do not* represent *seven church ages*. If we are currently living in the Laodicean church age, as many assert, then we would need to hear *only* the word sent to the church at Laodicea! But every overcomer is admonished to hear **ALL THAT THE LORD SPEAKS TO ALL THE CHURCHES!**

Therefore, however much there may be in the seven messages to the seven churches having applicability to the seven churches existing in John's day, or the church in previous times and generations, the messages must be considered in relation to the **complete church** throughout the age. The messages are **prophetic!** They are to the whole church realm of yesterday, today, and tomorrow! The seven churches represent not only the conditions existing at the time John wrote, but conditions which may be expected to reveal themselves in the midst of the Lord's people throughout the entire age. That is precisely why that, out of all the churches existing in John's day, exactly *seven* were chosen for this Revelation — the number of *totality* and *completeness*!

The key to all the mysteries of the book of Revelation is found in the very first chapter, where the occasion of the writing of the book, by whom it was dictated, and for whom it is intended, is made crystal clear. It was given to John by the angel of Jesus Christ — by the Holy Spirit — to be sent to the *seven churches*. The seven churches represent the *complete church*. The key to all the mysteries of the book of Revelation is — THE CHURCH! The church is — THE CALLED-OUT! The book of Revelation is therefore the unveiling of Christ's wonderful, marvelous, awesome dealings with every saint of God whom He is *calling out!* If God is calling

you out of any realm of the world, or the religious, my brother, my sister, you may expect to experience within yourself all the things written in this book!

“He that hath an ear, let him *hear* what the Spirit saith unto the *churches*” (Rev. 2:7). “Blessed are your eyes for they *see*, and your ears, for they *hear*” (Mat. 13:16). “Blessed is he that readeth, and they that *hear* the words of this prophecy” (Rev. 1:3). When the Lord Jesus wanted His disciples to realize they could understand His words only because God had *opened their ears*, He used this expression. Our Lord uses this phrase *seven times* in the book of Revelation! The seven churches with all their virtues and problems represent different *spiritual states* or *conditions* in the whole church realm. What these churches did right before the Lord we are called to do, and what they did wrong we must abandon, asking God to purge and purify us from it. These churches represent for us the progressive way to the throne of God; for the final promise to the overcomer in these churches is that to him it will be given to reign with Christ upon HIS THRONE. As each of us overcomes spiritually within ourselves all that these churches faced, we receive the greatest reward of all — His mind, likeness, nature, glory, and power!

The meaning of the names of the cities in which the seven churches were located have a special and prophetic significance. Asia itself, for instance, means *slime* or *mire*, an apt type of the world, of sin and death, of the carnal mind and Adamic nature, and the false religious realms out of which we have been called! Ephesus means *desired* or *desirable*, a term applied by a lover to the woman of his choice. Smyrna means *myrrh*, a symbol of sorrow, suffering, and death, an apt picture of the trials, troubles, and tribulations through which we are passing on our journey into perfection. Pergamos means *marriage*, *elevation*, or *firm union*, and truly each of us is married to, and in firm union with, either the flesh or the spirit! The meaning of Thyatira is *incense*, bespeaking of the outflow of grace, praise, and worship through our lives. Sardis means *remnant* or *escaping ones*, signifying that God is always bringing out a remnant unto His purposes. Philadelphia means *brotherly love*. Laodicea conveys the idea of the *people's right*, the *people's judgment*, or the *people's choice*, expressing the negative aspect of the *rule of the flesh and the carnal mind* of which the Lord says, “I am about to *spew you out of my mouth*.” Those who overcome in *this realm* are qualified to REIGN WITH CHRIST ON HIS THRONE! None of these names are irrelevant, for they were chosen by divine wisdom to speak to us of the great works of God in the lives of His elect! The church **at** this city or that indicates the Lord's people who are **at** that particular stage in their growth, development, and overcoming in Christ! One may be **at** the stage of suffering, another **at** the stage of the offering up of spiritual *incense*, while others are **at** the stage of *brotherly love*, and many are **at** the place of choosing between *their rights*, *their ways*, *their will* — and HIS!

The spiritual condition in these churches and their standing with God varied greatly. We may be sure that the messages sent by Jesus to these churches applied to each of them personally, yet we may be equally certain that the messages were prophetic and were intended to portray the spiritual condition of the church throughout the age, and indeed *our very own* circumstances and experiences! If the things written therein were simply literal and intended to address actual events and conditions in the churches of that day, then it would be difficult to see how they could serve as “signs” and “symbols” (Rev. 1:1). Ingenuously seven actual Asiatic churches were selected by the Holy Spirit in which were found the traits which have been used by the Lord to prophetically set

forth His dealings with the church as a whole and within each of the Lord's called out elect individually. Oh, the wonder of it! Oh, the mystery of it!

Thus we see Christ, the very spirit of Christ within each of us, walking in the midst of the churches as *Judge*, with eyes as a flame of fire, searching the thoughts and intents of the hearts of all the called out ones, inquiring how far each of us has answered to, or departed from, our heavenly privileges and potentialities. The Lord passes sentence on what He finds, approving what is right and condemning all that is contrary to His nature; warning as regards the evil, and giving encouragement and strength to the overcomer! It is *within* that the Christ is walking, and it is *within* that the judgment is taking place!

Let me illustrate. God dwells in our spirit. Our spirit is the Most Holy Place typified by the Most Holy Place in the tabernacle of Moses. God in His glory dwelt in the Most Holy Place of old, over the mercy seat, between the Cherubim. Now, "He that is joined to the Lord **is one spirit**." There is the fullness of God in the Most Holy Place of our spirit! In the words of the Lord to the Laodicean church, we see a remarkable picture of God coming out of the Most Holy Place to fill all realms. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock," says the Lord. "If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me" (Rev. 3:20). This has traditionally been understood in the light of the pictures men have painted of Jesus standing at the outside of a door, knocking, to gain admittance. The preachers have preached that Jesus is on the outside of the Laodicean church, standing at the door, knocking, *trying to get inside the church!*

Christ, however, is **not** outside the church, not even the lukewarm Laodicean church! If He were on the outside, it would not *be* His church! The church is the very house of God and the temple of the Holy Ghost! (II Cor. 6:16). The body of Christ is the *residence* of the spirit of Christ, else it ceases to *be* His body! Nothing can be simpler than that. Matters not how weak, how sick, how carnal, Christ is *never* on the outside of any child of God! I do not doubt that many who read these lines are convinced that He is outside some of the churches you know — and He indeed IS outside the **systems** of man. But the church is composed of **people**, not the systems of Babylon they are held captive in. Ah, Christ is **in your spirit**, in the deepest and innermost part of your being, knocking to gain admittance into the outer departments of your life, into your **soul** and into your **body**. He longs to enter into your soul and into your body in the fullness of Himself that He may fill and transform your whole being with the glory of His presence and the power of His life!

John was one of the "three mighties" who walked with the Lord in the days of His flesh; he was with Him in the Mount, he lay in His bosom and, above all others, has received the distinctive title as "that disciple whom the Lord loved." It was fitting that the man who had leaned upon the breast of God's Son and heard the inmost beating of His heart, should become the depository of His most intimate thought in respect to the course of the church in this age. And such is the case! This is the picture we see in the book of Revelation. The seven churches of Asia are saluted by John. He was shown the seven candlesticks "which ARE the seven churches." God raised up a prophet that could see and foretell in detail the entire church age before it could transpire. This is what the messages to the seven churches are all about! John beheld the good and the evil of the church age. He declared the blessings and the curses of this age. He saw the strength and the

weakness of the church, and indeed of each one of us. He saw the church in its beginnings and in its consummation. He beheld the true church of the Lord Jesus Christ and he exposed the false church systems, the swaggering harlot of this age with her unholy spirit, her false doctrines, her man-made organizations, and her carnal methods and programs. John shows forth the full revelation of all the fullness of Christ and His church during the age and the glory that should follow!

A tremendous revelation was given to the beloved John on Patmos! The seven churches that he saw in the Spirit represent THE WHOLE CHURCH REALM THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE CHURCH AGE. If you want to know what the church is like, look at the seven churches! There you have the divinely inspired portrait of the church realm painted by the brush strokes of the Holy Spirit. Were they not imperfect, carnal, childish, idolatrous, heretical, rebuked — a realm of mixture and duality? The Lord commends and praises them on one hand, while warning and rebuking them on the other hand! Some of the saints are praised for their works, labor, faith and love, while others are warned of impending judgment if they fail to repent. These seven churches reveal the true state and condition of the whole church throughout the age, and both history and personal experience testify conclusively that John was shown aright! Who can dispute it? The early church was a church of mixture and duality — flesh and spirit, truth and error, law and grace, spirituality and carnality. Even a casual perusal of the New Testament reveals this! And from that day to this, make no mistake about it — ALL CHURCHES HAVE BEEN THE SAME! They are today!

There is a church in El Paso, Texas. There is only *one* church in El Paso. I belong to that church. I have not joined any of the denominations or movements of men, but I belong to the church in El Paso because I live in El Paso and Christ *has a church* in this city. I cannot escape it! I could deny that I belong to it, but that would not change anything. People tell me they have come out of the church. It is *impossible* to come out of the church unless you are severed from Christ, for the church *is His body*! And if you have come out of the systems of men *you are still the church because that is what the church is* — THE CALLED OUT! Now let me tell you something about the church in El Paso. *It is a carnal church*! Oh, it has some *spiritual people* in it, alright, but the church in El Paso is a carnal church. How do I know? Whereas one says, “We are of Luther,” and another says, “We are Baptist,” and another says, “We are Pentecostal,” and yet another says, “We are of Christ,” are they not carnal and walk as men? (I Cor. 3:1-4). And should the church age continue for another thousand years the church would not have changed — the revelation of the seven candlesticks immutably declares it! The seven candlesticks **are** the seven churches! The seven churches **are** the whole, complete church! And the condition of the seven churches **is** the condition of the church throughout the age! Only the *overcomer* changes. And only the *overcomer* receives the promises! Very little is promised to the churches. The great, heavenly, and eternal promises are made to the overcomer *alone*!

GOLDEN CANDLESTICKS

It was once a mystery to me why the Lord would symbolize the church in its condition of weakness, immaturity, and carnality by seven “golden” candlesticks. Gold is the symbol of *deity* or the *divine nature*. How could gold serve as the figure for a realm of mixture, for the gold of the candlestick was *pure* gold — unmixed! This was a deep mystery in my mind. Then one day the Spirit of the Lord spoke within me and it came with such clarity and with great power! The church is not composed of so many bodies sitting on pews. We do not have a church simply because a number of saved people have gathered together. Oh, no! The church is a thing of the *spirit*. It is the “city of the living God, the *heavenly* Jerusalem” and the “general assembly and church of the firstborn which are written in *heaven*” and the “*spirits* of just men made perfect” (Heb. 12:22-23). It is God *in my spirit* that makes me the body of Christ! I may have mixture in my life, but my *regenerated spirit* is pure! My spirit is the very offspring of God! (Heb. 12:9). He that is joined to the Lord *is one spirit*! (I Cor. 6:17). Christ dwells in my spirit, and my spirit is the seed of God within me! (I Jn. 3:9). I need no processing in my spirit, although I do need processing in my soul and body realms.

Let me give you an illustration. In the world there is a lot of wealth, an incomprehensible amount of wealth. The natural resources of this earth are mind-boggling. And yet, is it not a fact that in the midst of all the riches of this marvelous planet we’re living on there are literally billions of people living in poverty! In most of the countries of the world millions of people live in squalor, ignorance, disease, limitation, and servitude — yet the earth is abundant in wealth. There’s gold in the vast oceans of the earth, but it’s so diluted that it’s unusable to the normal person. There are treasures that are buried in the sea, but there have been only a few of earth’s inhabitants that have been able to bring up those stout Spanish galleons with their marvelous treasures, and recover them. There is gold on strange planets in distant galaxies, but nature is too intractable, the distances are too vast, and the human lifespan so short that men are unable to go and secure it.

How different things would be if only we had gold mines that were very close to us, that were near at hand, that were accessible to us, and convenient! How different things would be for some of us if we knew we had a gold mine in our backyard, perhaps concealed behind the rose bushes, unknown to our neighbors, and unknown to the government. How secure we would feel if on a summer evening we could chat with our neighbors over the fence, water our lawn, and play ball with our children knowing that when the sun sank below the horizon we could sneak out under the cover of night and mine a little bit of the gold out of our private gold mine at the edge of our house, behind the rose bushes. Wouldn’t it be wonderful when income tax time came, if we didn’t have to worry about anything? Just slip out in our mine and get a few nuggets the size of walnuts! Or when there was a tragedy, a hospital bill, an unexpected expense, or whatever might come we could just get a few bags of gold dust out of our gold mine and pay those bills. Or perhaps we want to travel to far away places with strange-sounding names, but we don’t have a rich uncle and we haven’t won the lottery, so we sneak out again and get some gold out of our gold mine, and we’re able to fly away and go wherever we want to go — travel the earth, see the sights, live like a king, with no lack or limitations whatsoever. Oh, how delightful that would be!

I’m here to tell you that you *have* a gold mine! It’s not beside your house. It’s not concealed behind the rose bushes. **IT’S IN YOUR SPIRIT!** Yes, my friend, *you* have a gold mine. Each person who now reads these lines has a gold mine and it’s closer to you than the air

that you breathe, closer even than the blood that courses through your veins. The gold mine that you possess is GOD in your spirit! The infinite resources of divinity dwell within your spirit! All the power of the omnipotent Creator is in your spirit! The omniscient mind that framed the galaxies abides in your spirit! All the riches of the glory, wisdom, knowledge, righteousness, joy, and peace of the almighty Father are rooted in your spirit! God is incorruptible, immortal life; indestructible light, and infinite love — and God is **in your spirit!**

You are the sons and daughters of the Most High God. The very life of God is within you today as your very own life. In that life which *you are* there is no limitation whatever. Now I am aware that even in “kingdom” circles we often find very little difference in where people are living experientially than we find anywhere else in the world. Many of us have been struggling in our spiritual life, and we have been struggling because we have not understood the work and reality of God, the way of God in our lives. Our struggle has been with the earth realm, with the carnal mind, the flesh nature. We have contended with our apparent weakness and limitation. We have wrestled with pressures from the world around us. We have felt condemned by our mistakes, failures, and errors, and have tried to climb up out of the pit that we perceive ourselves in, endeavoring to extricate ourselves by self-effort, to somehow overcome and evolve out of that world we have been held captive in, to ascend into the realm God has apprehended us for.

All the time of our spiritual poverty *we have had a gold mine hidden within us!* We have the full power of overcoming life right within our spirit! Paul put it this way: “And if Christ be *in you*, the body is dead because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell *in you*, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies *by His Spirit that dwelleth in you*” (Rom. 8:10-11). Your spirit is much deeper than your mind, your emotion, or your will. Deep down on the inside of you, where your true life dwells, you are a spiritual being, a divine being, a truly God-being. That is where you are alive! “The *spirit is life*.” That is where you are pure and righteous! That is where you *do not* sin, neither *can* you sin! (I Jn. 3:9). That is where Christ in you is your hope of glory! Your body (outer man) is dead because of sin, but your spirit is alive because of Christ’s righteousness within it. Once you know where life really is, you have discovered the gold mine within! LIFE IS IN YOUR SPIRIT! What is true in your spirit is who and what “you” truly are!

When you get beyond the flesh, to the gold mine deep behind the rose bushes, you begin to draw your resources out of the vast, limitless gold mine of the life, power, and victory within your spirit. You begin to function out of your spirit instead of out of your mind, emotions, and passions. Soul and body can then be brought to line up with the life that is deep on the inside of you; you will find that your body which has been dead in trespasses and sins of the flesh *will begin to change*. “He shall also *quicken* your mortal bodies *by His Spirit that dwelleth in you*.” How true that is! That is the *way of life*! Where your soul once demanded its own way and its own rights of selfhood and self-expression, it now cries out for righteousness and reality. Your body and soul will control you unless your spirit quickens them. You can be a Christian for a hundred years, but if you have not learned to live out of the gold mine of your spirit, soul and body will still manifest themselves through you, setting themselves up as lord. Do we really know what is on the inside of us? We have within us, within our spirit, the uncreated, indestructible, immortal, omnipotent life of God! Soul and body will con you, they will delude, deceive, mislead, bamboozle, hoodwink, cheat, and swindle you! They will trick you into living a natural, carnal,

deficient or ungodly life, until you have a revelation and realization of the riches of the heavenly life down on the inside of you. Once you get down beneath the surface, under the house, behind the rose bushes, to live out of the secret springs of life in the spirit — you will discover life, and that more abundantly!

Most believers live this dual life, this split personality existence. Sometimes they think and act out of the spirit, while at other times they function out of their outward natural life. Does that mean they are not the Lord's people or the body of Christ? Not at all! Christ lives in every regenerated spirit! We are His by redemption and Christ dwells in our hearts by faith. This explains why the "golden" candlesticks had so many problems and were chastened by the Lord! Because He has bought us by His blood and quickened us by His life in our spirit, we are His people, His body, His church, His out-called ones. Therefore we are called "golden" candlesticks although we are not yet righteous or perfect in all of our thoughts, attitudes, or actions in our outer man.

Truly we are the Lord's "holy" people even though we may not yet be perfectly conformed to the image of the Son. Let me explain! To be holy means to be sanctified. To sanctify means TO SET APART or TO SEPARATE. The word is applied to people, places, and things — as Sinai among the mountains; the Sabbath among the days of the week; the Temple among all buildings; the city of Jerusalem among the cities of Israel; the Priesthood of Levi among all the tribes of Israel; and Israel among all the nations of the earth. For example, the Lord Jesus shows us that gold, if used for the Temple, as a gift, when placed on the altar, becomes sanctified or holy (Mat. 23:17-19). All the gold in this world is for human use and is therefore common; however, if a portion is separated and placed in the Temple for God's use, it becomes classified as holy, set apart. Again, if an ox or a sheep is among the herd, they are for human use and are common. When chosen and placed upon the altar, however, they become an offering unto God, being separated unto holiness. It is altogether a matter of whether they are for ordinary use or whether they are separated and belong to God. Before they are separated, they are common; after they are separated, they become holy. Therefore holiness means all that pertains to God, and all that is of God, unto God, and for God!

But beyond this there is a deeper thought. Why were people, places, and things set apart? Was it not because GOD WAS THERE? He came down in might and glory on mount Sinai; *therefore* they needed to set the bounds around its base, and it is known as "the holy mount of God." It was His presence that made it holy! He selected Israel to be His peculiar people, and the house of Aaron to be His priests, and the royal line of Judah to be His kings; *therefore* they were isolated from all others. He appeared to Moses in the bush, glowing with the light of the Shekinah; *therefore* the spot was holy ground, and the shepherd needed to bare his feet. In other words, it is the presence of God that makes holy! There is only one Being in all the universe who is intrinsically holy. Holiness is the attribute of His nature, and of His nature only. He is by nature, wisdom, power and being set apart from all beside. So we can never be holy apart from God; but when God enters the spirit of man, He brings the quality of holiness with Him. Thus the presence of God in man IS HOLINESS. HE is our only hope of righteousness!

We cannot reform our carnal mind or Adamic nature. It doesn't work! Only by the overwhelming presence of God in our lives can body and soul be brought into union with the nature of God in our spirit. Laws, rules, regulations, condemnation don't change anything. That is why we say to every man, to every person who has a *sin consciousness* or a *sin problem* — **EXPOSE YOURSELF TO THE PRESENCE OF GOD!** We could try to get them to do better, we could lay laws upon them and tell them they can't be a follower of Jesus and do the things they do, we could cast them out of our fellowship until they straighten up and do right, but that would not help them at all. We must help them find their gold mine! The gold mine is *the presence of God in their spirit*. That is where *life* is! People don't need condemnation — they need *help*! "GOD is our help." The help of God is within the gold mine of God's presence and life within the spirit of every man! Only the presence of God can make us holy! Salvation is wholly of God. The High Calling is wholly of God. Sonship is wholly of God. Priesthood is wholly of God. Immortality and eternal life are wholly of God. Perfection is wholly of God. "Ye shall therefore be holy for I AM HOLY" (Lev. 11:45) is a statement of fact, rather than a call to become a "good" person in word and deed. We are separated unto God by His life in our spirit, and only by yielding to His life within does holiness become revealed through the totality of our being!

This brings us to a truth that is at the same time both wonderful and dreadful. The seven churches in the book of Revelation had all kinds of problems, yet they were "golden" candlesticks and Christ walked "in the midst" of them in terrible glory! You see, we are prone to look back on the *early church* through "rose-colored glasses," seeing only the ideal, the positive, and the good. Many preachers are trying to build up a "New Testament Church," to reproduce the exact order they see in the churches in the days of the first apostles. Some even tell us that we can't make it into sonship unless we are *submitted* under the ministry of a "New Testament Church." They haven't thought this through! Do they *really* want to reproduce the New Testament Church? When you do that, here is what you get! By the mid-50's AD, the Galatian churches were steeped in doctrinal error. The Ephesians struggled with the bondage of the law. Even the Philippians, the fruit of Paul's most successful labors, were marred by selfish ambition and disunity. The Colossian church was overrun with heresies and legalism. The Thessalonians, as stunning as their conversions were, yet were beset by outbreaks of immorality and apocalyptic fanaticism. The Corinthians had experienced the most dramatic manifestation of the power and gifts of the Spirit, yet notwithstanding this, they had profound problems with sexual perversion and moral misconduct, false doctrines, drunkenness from an excess of wine right in the meetings at communion, and total confusion and chaos in the manifestations of the gifts! Wouldn't that be a wonderful "New Testament Church" to reproduce! The fact is, **ALL churches ARE already New Testament Churches *without trying to reproduce anything!*** The portrait of *all churches* is graphically drawn by the pencil strokes of the Holy Spirit in *the seven churches of Asia!*

Can we not see by this that the work of the Holy Spirit is always *perfect* in its origins, however the vessels through whom and upon whom the Spirit moves are often *flawed* and *broken*, and capable of the most grievous of sins and errors and extremes. **THIS IS THE PICTURE OF THE SEVEN CHURCHES!** Let us **UNDERSTAND!** The church has not been a perfect realm, just as none of us have been perfect. The *candlestick realm* is the *vehicle* of our *overcoming!* The seven churches represent for us the progressive way to the throne of God! God has deliberately put us in an imperfect church as a training ground for overcomers! This is God's school! As each

member of God's called and chosen elect overcomes spiritually within himself all that these churches represent, we truly become qualified to receive the promises and finally REIGN WITH CHRIST UPON HIS THRONE! Sonship is *via* the church! I'm not talking about the organized systems of men *called* churches, I'm talking about our living relationship with Christ in an imperfect state! Actually we travel through the churches, overcoming first in one area, then in another, until we have overcome within ourselves all that the churches represent. When we have overcome in one God "calls us out" unto the next. The seven churches are *seven stages* of our *out-calling* from realm to realm until we are perfected in the image of Jesus Christ to stand in the fullness of the mind, nature, will, glory, and power of God!

Have the flaws in your own character, my beloved, been magnified in your eyes until you despair of ever attaining to the High Calling of God in Christ Jesus? Today I point you to CHRIST THE HEALER. Think not for one moment that Jesus Christ is the healer only of diseases of the body! He has come to cleanse His church, to sanctify and purify His elect, to purge and refine and make every whit whole His children called to be sons. I declare to you today that HE IS THE HEALER AND PERFECTER OF HIS FAMILY. He purges out of His kingdom all things that defile and offend. Listen! The great and wonderful mercy of the Christ receives all who have blemishes, and His power heals all who walk with Him in the light of His presence. Have you received the call to sonship? Then be of good cheer! "And the very God of peace *sanctify you wholly*; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved *without blemish* unto the unveiling of our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Thes. 5:23). If we are to be cleansed, healed, made whole and preserved without blemish there is only one way, and that is shown in the verse that immediately follows the one quoted above: "Faithful is HE that calleth you, WHO ALSO WILL DO IT." What a word!

We have now come to the close of the church age and God is ready to *change the order*. The hour has arrived for the *manifestation of the sons of God* gathered out of the church age, and the rule of the kingdom of God over the nations. That which God is bringing forth for the next age will be perfect, it will be sinless, deathless, and gloriously victorious! There will be no weakness or failure in all of God's holy mountain! The sons of God shall not go out with power to heal the sick, cast out devils, and do signs and wonders, but with no power to be honest, pure, and holy. You won't have to worry about them swindling you out of your money, seducing your wife, being caught in some homosexual act, lying, cheating, deceiving, swelling up with pride and pompousness like a frog, manipulating the Lord's sheep for their own profit, or building another tower of Mystery Babylon around their ministry. **God won't do it that way this time!**

You can have imperfect apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, and imperfect Christians, but you can't have IMPERFECT MANIFESTED SONS OF GOD! Sons of God won't carry on their cars the bumper sticker that proclaims, "I'm not perfect — *just forgiven!*" If God were to give unlimited power into the hands of men with character flaws, imperfect lives, and corrupt hearts, they would become the most despicable race of devils, monsters, and tyrants the world has ever known. They would wreck the kingdom of God in short order and creation would never be set free. But God is preparing a people in this hour to receive *kingdom power and authority*. He is preparing our hearts, purifying our souls, cleansing our motives, changing our desires, raising up grace and truth and righteousness in our inward

parts. Fear not, little flock, for it is the Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom! He will finish His work and cut it short in righteousness!