

KINGDOM BIBLE STUDIES

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

FROM THE CANDLESTICK TO THE THRONE

Part 155

THE BEAST OUT OF THE EARTH (continued)

“And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, *and he spake as a dragon*” (Rev. 13:11).

In the nineteenth chapter of the book of Revelation we find that this same beast is referred to. And there we read, “*And the **beast** was taken, and with him the **false prophet** that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire that burneth with brimstone*” (Rev. 19:20). And in Revelation 20:10 we find mention of him once more: “*And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the **beast** and the **false prophet** are.*” There is no difficulty in identifying these two, the beast and the false prophet. The beast is obviously the first beast, the one out of the sea; and the false prophet is none other than the second beast, the one out of the earth, having two horns like a lamb, and a voice speaking as a dragon, who deceives them that dwell in the earth-realm. Therefore we understand that the second beast is also called — *the false prophet!*

What is a prophet? We must banish from our minds the popular conception that a prophet is chiefly a person who foretells the future. True, a prophet also foretells the future; but the prophetic ministry is broader than that. A prophet is, according to scripture, one who speaks for someone else. Aaron is called the “prophet” of Moses when they two go together before Pharaoh, and Aaron delivers the message to Pharaoh on behalf of Moses the stutterer. And that is why all the prophets of God have prefaced their prophecies with the phrase, “Thus saith the Lord!” They are men who speak *for God*, delivering His message to His people, appealing to the minds and hearts of men on behalf of God and His purposes. They teach and speak and reveal the will of God and draw men to embrace that which is the mind of the Lord.

So this second beast is also a prophet! He speaks for someone else. His purpose is to influence the minds of men, to persuade them, to rally them to the cause on behalf of which he speaks. But he is a *false prophet!* That does not mean that everything he says is a lie — not all that the serpent told mother Eve in the garden was a lie — but it was truth laced with just enough error to deceive. That is the purpose of the words of a false prophet — deception! And if we consider this in relation to the beast now under consideration, we shall find that this is in reality his character. In the first place, his very appearance is deceiving. He looks like a lamb; and one would receive the impression, therefore, that every word he speaks is the word of The Lamb of God! But he speaks like the dragon, that is, the message he bears is not in the final analysis the *gospel*, the *good news* of the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, but is liberally laced with *bad news* of threats, intimidation, fear, coercion, control, judgment, hell and damnation.

What beast is this? Ah, this refers to the false church, one that outwardly looks like the church of Christ, but he speaks as a dragon. Today in the church systems of man the dragon’s voice can be heard from multitudes of pastors, evangelists, and church leaders of all kinds. They sing songs of worship, they preach of Jesus and the gospel, they have “church” written on their signs and their buildings, they perform religious ceremonies, they do good works — it looks like the Lamb. Yet as one listens there is discernible another

sound, it is “another voice,” the dragon’s voice, and it leads millions into man-made rules and regulations, false ideas about God, distorted understanding of His will and word, fear, condemnation, and horrible religious bondage and slavery.

The dragon-voice speaks as loudly now as at any time in all history. If you do not belong to, or submit to, or bow down to this two-horned beast that now dominates the lives of dead and living alike, you will find yourself more and more misunderstood, more and more ostracized, more and more cut off, loudly called a fanatic, a schismatic, a heretic, a lone ranger, a fool, a false prophet, in error and under the condemnation and judgment of God. And if you are in the system and seek to follow on to know the Lord, if you do not heed the counsel of the Holy Spirit to come out from among them and be separate and touch not the unclean thing, you will eventually be ignored or rejected, rebuked, denounced, anathematized, and unceremoniously excommunicated under the deafening roar of the dragon’s mouth!

When we understand this, it is not difficult to comprehend the action of the second beast. Further on in chapter thirteen of the Revelation we find that he does great things, signs and wonders, and that it is exactly through these that he succeeds in drawing men to his cause and thoroughly deceiving them. Naturally, a prophet must do signs and wonders! These are used to establish his prophetic authority, to convince men of the truth of the things he speaks. You see this principle all through the Bible. The mighty works wrought by Moses and Aaron before Pharaoh were for the express purpose of impressing the ruler with the authority by which they spoke. Thus it was with Elijah on mount Carmel, with Jesus as a prophet, and with the ministry of the apostles of Christ in the pagan world. They all performed signs and wonders in order that these might validate the truth of their message. But it is no less true of the false prophets! So Jesus Himself prophesied, “*For there shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they should deceive the very elect*” (Mat. 24:24).

Through the deception of the false prophet the world has been led to believe in a *false Christ* — a counterfeit, cleverly and subtly foisted off on an unsuspecting “Christian” civilization. Endlessly, evangelists speak of “Jesus,” they praise His name; they talk of “sweet Jesus,” and sing lyrical, worshipful-sounding songs about Him. They wax emotional, crying real tears, as they tell of “loving the Lord” and how much Jesus “loves everybody” — yet the picture of the Christ they present is a horrible caricature of the REAL CHRIST! The “Jesus” of whom they speak is *not* the one in whom God came reconciling *the world* unto Himself. The “Jesus” they preach is *not* the one who has been lifted up and will now draw *all men* unto Himself. The “Jesus” they teach about is *not* the one who is the Saviour of *all men* and the Saviour of *the world*. The “Jesus” they proclaim is not the one unto whom *every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess*. No, it is a *totally different* “Jesus” of men’s imagination; of historical fantasy; of myth, legend, folklore, superstition, and fairy tales!

The God of the false prophet is an angry God, an exacting God, a harsh and vindictive God. He is the God who has designed *eternal punishment and damnation in hell-fire* for the vast billions of mankind who lived and died without the knowledge of God and His Son. In considering the issue of eternal punishment of the lost, many Christians can only visualize this punishment as *vindictive*. In other words, sin and sinners are afflicted by God because of God’s hatred of sin and His intolerable disposition towards them in their sin. And this is the impression one certainly receives from Calvinistic descriptions such as the following: “The damned shall be packed like brick into a kiln, and be so bound that they cannot move a limb, nor even an eyelid; and while thus fixed, the Almighty shall blow the fires of hell through them forever.”

G. H. Lang, commenting of Revelation 14:10-11 in *The Last Assize*, states basically the same thought, though perhaps in less barbaric language: “Mingled unmixed; every ingredient compounded that shall make the punishment fit the crime; but *no element of mercy or alleviation* shall be mixed with this dread draught of the wine of the wrath of God. If the Lamb can look on their torments, shall His saints be unable to do so?” And on this same passage yet another further shockingly comments: “Should this eternal punishment and this fire be extinguished, it would in a great measure obscure the light of heaven, and put an end to a great part of the happiness and glory of the blessed!”

I do not hesitate to tell you that these statements come from men who profess to represent the Lamb of God — but who can deny that IT IS THE VOICE OF THE DRAGON!

Of all the blasphemous absurdities of the bestial church systems, this is probably the worst, a lie intended to scare poor souls into her clutches in order to rob them of their dollars, a lie which makes our God of love to be a hideous monster, an insane and sadistic monstrosity who takes delight in tormenting and torturing His creatures made in His own image, a lie which makes our Saviour to be nothing but a lunatic, a deceiver, and a rascal of the first magnitude. It makes Adolph Hitler look like a Sunday School teacher, and it makes Calvary to be the most awful burlesque ever enacted on earth.

Now this leads us to another point of immense importance, and it is another clue in the identification of the *false prophet*. We often hear it said that “the death of Christ was necessary in order to *reconcile God to man*.” Now this is a pious stupidity, arising from inattention to the language of the Holy Spirit, and indeed to the plain meaning of the word “reconcile.” God never changed — never stepped out of His normal and true position. He changeth not! He abideth faithful! It was not because of His anger at sin and sinners that He sent Jesus. Oh, no! “For God so LOVED the world, that He gave His only begotten Son.” That, my friend, is the truth! There was, and could be, no derangement, no disappointment, no confusion, no alienation, so far as He was concerned; and hence there could be no need of *reconciling Him to us*. In fact, it was exactly the contrary. Man had gone astray; he was the enemy, and needed to be reconciled. Hear it! “For if, when *we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son...*” (Rom. 5:10). And again, “*And you,, who were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath HE reconciled*” (Col. 1:21). Wherefore, then, as might be expected, the scriptures never speak of reconciling God to man. Never! There is no such expression to be found within the covers of the New Testament! “*God was in Christ reconciling THE WORLD UNTO HIMSELF, not imputing their trespasses unto them.*” And again, “*All things are of God, who hath reconciled US to Himself by Jesus Christ*” (II Cor. 5:18-19). In a word, it is God, in His infinite mercy and grace, through the cross of Christ, bringing us back unto Himself. But that is not what the dragon-voice has to tell us about our God!

“*Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ; whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time His righteousness: that He might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus*” (Rom. 3:24-26).

The following words penned by George Hawtin are true and graphic on this point. “The word *propitiate* means *to appease, to sooth, to cause to be favorably disposed, and to conciliate*. When Paul says, therefore, that God has set forth Christ to be a *propitiation*, the great question that must be answered is this: Whom is Christ propitiating? Whom is He appeasing? Whom is He soothing? Whom is He causing to be favorably disposed? Whom is He conciliating? Is this propitiation for *His benefit*? Or is it for the sinner’s benefit? Is God trying to conciliate Himself or is He conciliating the sinner? You know as well as I do that the church system has always erroneously taught that it is *God* who must be propitiated, conciliated, and soothed, but I want you to know that such teaching is utter rubbish and the brashest sort of nonsense. It springs from that Romish tradition that likens God the Father to a fearful and offended depot, spoiling for the blood of the offenders, and it makes Christ to be the one who pleads with God on behalf of the victim until the Father is consoled and conciliated.

“The church all down through the ages, including all evangelicals of the past and present, have taught that Jesus came to *propitiate God* and to endeavor to dispose Him to be kind toward His fallen race. If you search in a thousand places, I doubt that you will find one man who does not make this incorrect assertion. How often I have listened to preachers describe Jesus Christ as a lawyer who stands up before God to plead our cause and beg for our lives on the grounds that He, being innocent, died for us and God is propitiated by Him and we are forgiven. This gross misunderstanding of the truth of propitiation is everywhere evident in sermons, in writing and in hymns. Notice how this error is brought out in the words of the following hymn:

Five bleeding wounds He bears,
Received on Calvary.
They pour effectual prayers;
They strongly *plead* for me.

Forgive him, *O forgive*, they cry,
Nor let the ransomed sinner die!

The Father hears Him pray,
His dear anointed One;
He cannot turn away
The presence of His Son.
My God is reconciled:
His pardoning voice I hear.

“This is church tradition, but *it is not the truth*. The Father did not send Christ to appease Himself. The idea that God would send forth His Son to propitiate and appease Himself is exceedingly absurd. The truth is that Christ came to propitiate you and me that we might repent of our rebellion and iniquity against Him, believe and be reconciled to God, who has always loved us and been our friend and not our enemy. We might also take notice that in referring to the scripture, *‘There is one God and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus,’* the preachers have also turned this backwards and made Christ to be our mediator with the Father, but that is not what Paul said. He said that the mediator was between *God and man*, not between man and God. So Christ was sent as a propitiation, a propitiator, or one sent by God the Father to dispose man to repentance and kindness, love and faith toward God” — end quote.

What a hideous affront it is to the God of our salvation to wickedly accuse Him of needing to give His own Son as a propitiation TO APPEASE HIS OWN WRATH, though this is the inexcusable lie we hear continually from the pulpit and over the air waves! God is portrayed by the preachers as so mad at sin and sinners, so violently angry and beside Himself that He is metaphorically foaming at the mouth with uncontrollable rage which can only be appeased by looking upon the bloody sweat and cruel, ugly death of His Son upon a Roman cross. All sermons and songs that picture God as a God of rage who must be “appeased” like a pagan deity and “soothed” by blood are heathenish and should be piled on a bonfire and burned. Such may appear on the surface to be out of the heart of God, but my ear clearly discerns THE VOICE OF THE DRAGON!

Appeasement is the basis of the offerings and sacrifices of all pagan religions. In the late 1800’s John Alexander Dowie wrote: The religions of the world are worldly, are sensual, and are devilish for the most part. No one will doubt that is true in China. No one will doubt it, notwithstanding the clever philosophies and moral axioms of the Chinese Analects, or the works of Mencius and Confucius or the commentators upon these. No one will doubt that the worship of the Chinese is essentially a Devil Worship. I remember once going into a very fine Chinese joss-house (temple) in Australia, where offerings of the costliest kind hung upon the walls, where many interesting things were to be found. I was talking with the chief priest, and said to him, “Tell me how you worship,” and he told me. “Why,” I said, after I had heard attentively, “My dear fellow, it seems to me that you are worshipping bad divinities.” “Oh,” he said, “of course we do. The good ones we do not need to worship. They will do us no harm. To protect ourselves we have to get right with the bad ones, so we make it right with the devils.” I thought to myself that there were some other people like that in America and Europe, who are not Chinese! (End quote).

Can we not see by this that the Christians have copied the heathen and have made a fiendish devil of their God, and have then used the sacrifice of Jesus to “appease” this God who is more like a malicious devil than a loving and gracious Creator and Redeemer? Most Christians know, by hearing at least, that “God is Love,” but the sense of condemnation from His Presence beclouds the vision of the heart, so that The Face which He has revealed in Christ Jesus cannot be seen. Often this is because of the continual preaching which describes God as a destroyer, a vindictive punisher. Even as a child many were taught to fear Him, to think of Him as an avenger of every little thing they did wrong. Parents have said, “Now don’t you do that because GOD will punish you! He will punish you!” And even much stronger things are told to little children. I know from painful experience that as a child I was led to believe that if I went to sleep at night with even one little secret unconfessed sin in my life, should I die during the night with that sin not “under the blood,” I would burst hell wide open. I was told that Jesus might come splitting the eastern sky at any moment to rapture His people to heaven, and should I have even one evil thought in my mind I would be left behind to suffer the torments of the antichrist and the great tribulation. For many years I lived under a cloud

of condemnation and fear of God, knowing that God would judge me harshly for the weaknesses and failures I constantly saw in my life. In the Pentecostal Church in those days they sang a song which said, "There's an all-seeing eye *watching you!*" Even the words of that song struck terror in my childish heart. You see, beloved, it is one thing to describe God as a *loving* Father, and all the relations of the little child to a *loving* Father who corrects in order to bless. It is quite another thing to darken the heart of a little child with threats of the certain vengeance of a Being who is in constant terror over the life. It is a false and terrible thing to leave upon the heart of a little child, as their first impression of God, that He is always waiting, lurking around, to punish them. The preachers may think it is the *gospel*, but it is *not* the gospel because it is not *Good News*. Can any deny that it is THE VOICE OF THE DRAGON?

Think of it! That little child whose whole being is susceptible to LOVE; who is always looking for and wanting LOVE; who is capable of the purest and fullest simplicity of response to LOVE — think of it! marked and stamped with the impression that "God" is one to be constantly scared of. As though He is waiting everywhere with a punishing whip of large dimensions! Such impressions remain through a whole lifetime as an actual foundation of belief and action. That Wonderful Father! That Gracious Redeemer! That most Loving of all Beings! Oh, how I love Him! He revealed Himself to me as He *really is!* He turned my heart back again and restored me into His life. God, the Father, the Most High, sent Jesus — the very fullness of His own heart — sent Him into the world to die on Calvary's cross. But the real grasp of what that love and mercy actually *is*, may often be nearly destroyed by the impression of the *wrath* deeply ingrained in the mind. If our basic understanding of "God" is that He is a Destroyer, that impression can discolor and influence our thought and our prayer life and our faith so that we can with great difficulty SEE HIM AS HE IS. How wonderfully He changes that when we come to Him repenting (changing our mind about Him) and believing in His loving Word. We cry out with an almost inexpressible joy that we *love* Him. It is love, *His Love*, which does it! He flows into our lives in *what He is*, and we no longer think of Him as a great force out there somewhere or a great destroyer, but as the LIFE GIVER.

The dragon-voice proclaims that once a person dies, his or her fate is sealed forever. If anyone has been fortunate enough to have repeated the "sinner's prayer" one moment before death stole the spirit away, he is guaranteed, according to the "orthodox" teaching, that he will go straight to heaven. Matters not whether he was truly drawn to the Son by the Holy Spirit, or whether someone convinced him of a convenient "fire-escape," as long as he muttered the correct words before the final beat of his heart yielded to the stillness and silence of death, his salvation is eternally secured. But if he has the misfortune of being a single minute too late in learning about this "sinner's prayer" his doom is sealed in everlasting flames of hell! I ask you, dear reader of these lines, does such a teaching sound more like the tender voice of the Lamb of God or does it resonate as the voice of the dragon!

The question is, *does physical death* end the availability of God's grace? The death that came to Adam was first and foremost a *spiritual* death, and all men enter this world "*dead* in trespasses and sins." Does physical death render our moral character changeless? Does it irrevocably fix our eternal destiny? Are the grace and mercy of God *tied to our heartbeat*? Here is a young man driving along the road on his way to an evangelistic meeting where he will hear an anointed message of salvation. Someone has been witnessing to him about God's salvation and conditions are such that he may be saved this very night. His heart is tender. His mother is praying. The Holy Spirit will be mightily dealing. But — enroute to the meeting there is a terrible accident. The brakes are slammed on, the car skids wildly, spins uncontrollably off the highway, rolls down the embankment, crashing violently into a tree. Death is instant. Abruptly the young man is gone "out into eternity" without having finally embraced the Lord's salvation. The question follows — was the mercy and redemption of God tied to his physical heartbeat? Was there mercy for him IF HE WOULD HAVE MADE IT TO THE MEETING, BUT ETERNAL DAMNATION INSTEAD BECAUSE A DRUNKEN FOOL PULLED OUT IN FRONT OF HIM IN THE DARKNESS? These are issues that I dare say those ensnared by the bestial church system of man *never contemplate!*

I do not hesitate to say that there is not one passage of scripture in the whole Bible that indicates that the grace of God is limited to physical life, or that the mercy of God is tied to one's heartbeat. I am sure that my readers recognize that it is the *spirit* of man that is of the greatest importance to God. Why should there be salvation provided so long as the *mortal body* remains animate, but no salvation for the much more valuable spirit of the same man or woman as soon as the last *mortal* breath is drawn? Oh, I know that the writer to the Hebrews states, "*It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment*" (Heb. 9:27),

but that proves nothing relative to the question now under consideration. It merely establishes the *fact* of judgment — not the process of judgment, the duration of judgment, the outcome of judgment, or what may transpire following the judgment! There is neither time nor space in this writing to consider the true meaning of the words of that beautiful passage, but let me hastily add, the passage is conspicuous for what it does *not* say! It does *not* say, “It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this ETERNAL DAMANATION.” But that is how the dragon-voice quotes it! Yet, the whole theory of eternal torment rests upon a faulty translation of a couple of Greek words, and actual distortions and perversions of what the scriptures say.

So the church system concludes that God has both the will and the power to save a mortally breathing man, but neither the will nor the power to save a non-breathing man. It teaches that God has both the will and the power to regenerate a spirit which has a mortal body of dust, but no will nor power to regenerate the same spirit apart from its corruptible body. God’s mercy and power limited to the temporary function of certain animal organs! Good heartbeat, good mercy. No heartbeat, no mercy!

If, instead of bringing every sin into judgment — punishing that sin and correcting the sinner — we imagine the poor sinner suffering the eternal torments of hell with its unbearable anguish, the agony of unquenchable fire, the pangs of conscience, the taunts of fiendish demons, one hour of which is more than all his earthly sorrows rolled into one — lengthen this out to endlessness and season it with hopeless despair — and its horrors will be absolutely inconceivable. Though our lips may be afraid to frame the words, our hearts *will* whisper, “Can such be the final fruit of God’s great love and His glorious plan?” Is this the result for which He hungered when He *purposed* that sin should estrange His creatures from Himself? But this is far from all! Multiply this single case by *scores of billions* of human beings, who age after age, have been hurled into this hopeless hell — all tortured and tormented while the ages roll, and roll, and roll...without mercy and without remedy!

If the above scenario be true then something horrid must have happened to both God and His saints in heaven! Before the death of these people God loved them all, and in many instances they loved each other, saved and unsaved alike, and would have performed a great number of kindnesses for one another. Many of these had Christian friends and loved ones who were very concerned about them and prayed earnestly for them. But now that both saint and sinner are out in “eternity,” God and all the saints in heaven have either lost their love and compassion for their lost loved ones, or else God has brainwashed all the saints so that they have erased from their memory the fact that their beloved mothers and fathers, their lovely sisters and brothers, their precious daughters and sons, and their good friends and neighbors are suffering the most terrible pain and hideous torture for all eternity. So we see this: there is ***more love and compassion*** in the natural world in God and the saved ones, than there is in the spirit world. Furthermore, there is ***more love*** for sinners while they have mortal bodies than there is for sinners without corruptible bodies!

What has happened to cause God and the saints to turn from love and pity for the lost, to a feeling that the lost are now getting what they deserve and should suffer the torments of the damned for all eternity? What, I ask, has happened to God and the saints to cause them to love and seek the lost as long as their frail, mortal bodies endure, but to turn from that love for the precious unclothed spirit of the very same man or woman? Can we believe that God, having created *all things for His pleasure*, having *so loved* His creation that He freely gave heaven’s most precious gift, after a few paltry years, the brief span of a man’s mortal existence, throws up His hands in futility and disgust, saying that He has done all He can and men would not respond, so He must cease all effort, seat Himself upon His golden throne, and consign His creation to everlasting hell? Yet this is exactly what we are told today! Methinks I detect THE VOICE OF THE DRAGON! The so-called “message of salvation” as preached by the church systems today has the outward appearance of the Lamb of God, but it speaks as the fire-breathing dragon! God is not that fickle, my friend, and God does not give up that easily! In fact, God does *not* give up! Neither is He defeated in any of His plans and purposes! HE started the whole program of creation, redemption, and restoration, and, blessed be His wonderful name! He will not cease His work until He is Victor — “All in All” throughout all the vastnesses of infinity for evermore!

How often we have heard preachers warn people that “the day of grace will soon be over forever.” Now nothing could be further from the truth, for as long as God exists the ***grace of God*** will be with us. The

end of the grace of God, were it possible, would mean the destruction of God Himself, for He is the God of all grace, and grace is one of His eternal, immutable attributes. Please notice that Paul shows that the grace of God is going to be displayed and made known in the AGES TO COME through those who have received it here and now in this dispensation. *“And hath raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ, that in the ages to come He might show (exhibit, put on display for all to see) the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus”* (Eph. 2:7-8). Not only does this passage tell us of the great revelation of God’s grace in the AGES TO COME, but it also shows us that it is for this very reason that God is saving a *firstfruit company* now. The unveiling of the grace of God to the whole creation is the true reason for the *manifestation of the sons of God*. God has no intention of bringing all the world into the fold now. If that were His purpose He surely would bring it to pass, for He is the omnipotent God who worketh *all things* after the counsel of *His own will*.

The whole purpose of this age is to *gather out a people to display His grace in the coming age and ages*. James also declared this great truth when at Jerusalem he said, *“Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles to take out a people for His name...that the residue (rest, remainder) of men might seek after the Lord and ALL THE GENTILES upon whom my name is called...known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world”* (Acts 15:14,17,18). This so-called “age of grace” is coming to an end, but grace will be more manifest in the future than in previous times! This age which is presently coming to a close should more properly be called “the church age,” for grace will not end. In the age to come God will move from calling out a body from among the nations, to the saving of the nations themselves. *“And the nations of them that are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor into it”* (Rev. 21:24). In ages beyond that God shall deal with the residue of men and all the reaches of His vast creation!

The limitation of God’s mercy, if it were possible, would be the condemnation of God Himself. If there are limits to His mercy, the Word of God, which says that “His mercy endureth forever (all ages),” is a lie. The limitation of God’s mercy is a trick of the dragon, to discredit God and defeat His gospel. The limitation of God’s mercy makes the disobedience of Adam more powerful and more enduring than the *obedience of Christ*. I am glad for a gospel that is coextensive with, and *greater than*, the devil’s work in spirit, soul, and body. I am glad for a gospel that is not limited to one age, or to the threescore-and-ten years of man’s frail existence, but reaches out into the ages to come until GOD IS ALL IN ALL. I am glad for a gospel which tells me that God has made a way by which even His banished may return. How gloriously true, then, the words of the chorus:

“His love has no limit, His grace has no measure,
His power has no boundaries known unto man;
For out of His infinite riches in Jesus
He giveth, and giveth, and giveth again!”

EXERCISING THE POWER OF THE FIRST BEAST

“And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed” (Rev. 13:12).

The first beast is the bestial world system of man — human government and institutions of all kinds. The second beast is the carnal church system of man — religious Babylon. The “power” of the first beast is many-faceted, but first and foremost it is *political* power, the right and ability to rule and control men’s lives. In many countries there is a religious system that still has much authority, even politically. The church power is ruling along with the government power. In many other countries the church does not possess that degree of power, yet the principle of *organization, hierarchy, laws, and control* over men’s lives is just as real. The church systems as we know them today, even the so-called “non-denominational” denominations, exercise all the power of the first beast as they usurp control over men’s lives, enslaving millions of worshippers, binding the professing Christians with the hideous chains of church laws and traditions, threatening excommunication if the church’s demands are not obeyed, thus separating the offender from the grace of Christ, from the only source of salvation (the church), essentially consigning him to eternal damnation in hell.

Under New Testament economy the Christ of God was to be the one and only Head of His church. In the days of the apostles, men were made the children of God by new birth, by the operation of God alone, and thereby taken out of the nations as a people for His name. The church was a *living organism* composed of *spiritual members* who by *one spirit were baptized into one body*. It was the operation of God by the Spirit! There was no *organization* and nothing to *join*. The ministries in the body of Christ were sovereignly raised up and anointed by the Holy Spirit. With what power, signs, and wonders did they witness to the living presence of Christ! They were not lords over God's heritage, rather they were servants of the body of Christ. Their authority was not that of legislated authority, but *spiritual authority*. Their vocation was not to rule and dominate the Lord's people, but to encourage, admonish, instruct, bless, and build up the saints in the life of Christ. There was no man-made structure, no carnal church boards, no dominating hierarchy, only the dynamic presence and power of Christ manifested in and through the living members of His body!

Today, however, the beastly system of man-made religion operates on the *political* level rather than the *spiritual* plane. By fleshly domination the false prophet exercises all the power of the first beast, causing men to pay homage to the *system* rather than to the leadership of the Spirit!

FIRE FROM HEAVEN

“And he *doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast...*” (Rev. 13:13-14).

My heart's desire and prayer to God is that He will give the spirit of understanding to all who read these lines. There are commentators who are of the opinion that we should not think of the beast performing genuine signs, but fake signs produced either by trickery or by the power of Satan. Some who interpret the book of Revelation historically tell of Roman priests who, with the aid of fireworks, made flames burst forth from images of the emperors, or who, by means of ventriloquism, made it seem as if these images spoke. Others appeal to what the apostle refers to as “lying signs and wonders,” and tell of the stigmata that appeared on certain Roman Catholic Priests, bleeding icons, weeping statues, appearances of the Virgin Mary, and many other marvelous things that have been reported through the centuries of Christianity.

Such deceit may have been practiced. The text, however, does not say that the beast *fakes* great signs, but that it *does* great signs. That gives the impression that genuine signs are meant. This explanation is supported by the words of the Lord Jesus, wherein He said that “*false Christs and false prophets shall rise and shall show great signs and wonders*” (Mat. 24:24). According to the apostle John the precise purpose of these great signs and wonders is to *deceive the earth-dwellers!* They are for the purpose of *deceiving the carnal Christians!* What a word that is! Because of the signs “which” — as the original Greek text says — “were *given it to do in the sight of the beast,*” the earth-dwellers are deceived. Here and in verse fifteen the word “given,” which we find repeatedly in the first part of this chapter, is again used in the Greek text. It reveals that the beast is not doing these wonders by its own volition or power. The ability comes from another source. It does not say that the first beast gives him this power, nor does it say that the dragon gives him the power. It is my conviction that none other than GOD grants to the beast the ability to perform these miracles! They are real miracles. They are *called* miracles! And the power to do them is “given” him! Rather than supposing that the power comes from trickery or from demons, I rather believe the power is from God, but they abuse the powers granted to them, usurping the gifts and powers of God for their own ends, to deceive the people, to keep them in the system, to gain a following, to build a kingdom, and for financial gain. I have seen this in the church systems a thousand times! Oh, yes!

This is better understood once we see that the *Lord's people are in Babylon*. When John was being shown that mighty city of Religious Babylon he also heard a voice from heaven, saying, “*Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues*” (Rev. 18:4). In the Old Testament it was God's people Israel that was led away captive into the Babylon of that day. The captives there were the Lord's people! And the Lord's people were *not themselves Babylon*, but they were in captivity *in Babylon*. It is here that we must distinguish between the Lord's *people* and the *system* so many are involved in. The leading of the Lord in our lives has been two-fold. First, we seek fellowship with all

the Lord's precious people, regardless of their level of growth and development in Christ. They are HIS and I do not hesitate to call them my brothers and sisters, and I am mature enough to relate to them right where they are. Just as I can play with my grandchildren without looking down my nose at them or denigrating them for their immaturity, so I can fellowship with any believer without putting on an air of superiority. At the same time, we cannot, DARE NOT fellowship the Babylon System! We can and will fellowship anyone — but we *will not* fellowship their system! This means that much of our fellowship is confined to a “one on one” basis, after we get past those who won't fellowship us at all because they perceive us to be heretics, separatists from the body of Christ, or something worse!

Let us now notice that even in Babylon God honors His people! God always honors the seeking heart and faith — even in spite of their weakness, failures, immaturity, carnality, and the fleshly system they may be bound in. On far away Patmos John beheld in vision seven golden candlesticks. He also saw *in the midst* of the candlesticks one like unto the Son of man (Rev. 1:12-13). These are wonderfully significant words! The candlestick realm is the church realm! The One John saw was not seated on a golden throne in heaven, He was not standing in a rainbow before a waterfall, He wasn't standing on a mountain top, He wasn't standing before the altar in a great cathedral. Oh, no! He was standing *in the midst* of the seven golden candlesticks! He is standing *in the midst* of the churches! Now, we also know that there were serious problems in the seven churches of Asia in the book of Revelation! There was sin, carnality, error, pride, the Jezebel spirit (spiritual harlotry, Babylon), the Nicolaitane spirit (hierarchy, elevation of the clergy, man's control), the doctrine of Balaam (compromise), lukewarmness, and so on. The Lord admonished and rebuked the churches for these conditions!

My beloved brethren, I am as much opposed to religion and man-made, organized, carnal minded, fleshly religious systems as any man alive today. This has been my passion since that blessed day when the voice of Christ bade me, “Come out of her.” At the same time I recognize that the redeemed *people* of God constitute the *church*, and I recognize the *church* as being made up of those who are the Lord's people. I thank God for the *church*, the seven golden candlesticks! It will greatly aid our understanding to see how the Lord Jesus, the Son of man clothed in the garment of His priesthood, with eyes of discernment like flames of fire, with burning feet of judgment like unto brass heated red-hot in a furnace, and the two-edged sword of His living word flashing out of His mouth, walks IN THE MIDST OF EACH OF US AND ALL OF US whom He has redeemed! Isn't it true that nearly all of us were *in the church systems* when first we heard *the Voice*? Was not the Lord walking in our midst *even then*, even in the midst of all the wretchedness of that harlot system? Who can deny it!

In chapters two and three of the Revelation we see the seven conditions within the seven churches, good and bad, positive and negative, spiritual and carnal, commendable and reproachable. The Lord is in the midst of every one of these conditions! He walks in the midst of the churches, in the midst of their love, strength, patience, righteousness, truth, and faithfulness, and also in the midst of their weakness, faults, failures, carnality, false doctrine, nakedness, rebellion, and shame. The Lord is there in the midst of every condition! In the midst of images, crucifixes, candles, incense, holy water, ritual and ceremony, the Lord walks! In the midst of man-centered, flesh oriented programs and promotions, the Lord walks! In the midst of a distorted gospel, false teaching — the prophetess Jezebel — the Lord walks! In the midst of organization, man-made structures, and grasping after men to draw them into the *system* and hold them in its clutches, the Lord walks! He condescends to come down into the midst of all this religious foolishness and live and walk and move in their midst to bless men right where they are. What love! What matchless *love*! We cannot deny that He is there, touching men, saving men, delivering men, quickening men, healing, responding to heart-cries, answering prayers, *doing wonders*! I have witnessed “evangelistic crusades” where men were dangled over the flames of hell as a means of scaring them into the loving arms of Jesus, and yet people ran to the altars crying out to God for mercy, and He *was merciful*, for He was there and He met them there on that level and brought salvation into their lives. What love! What humility! What condescension! What goodness! What compassion! Even the Psalmist recognized the great tenderness and faithfulness of the Lord to walk wherever we walk when he cried out, “*If I make my bed in hell, behold, Thou art there!*” (Ps. 139:8).

Here is the beast out of the earth, the caricature of the Lamb of God, the beast with the dragon-voice, the enemy of all that is pure, the enemy of the anointing, the bondage of the captives, and yet Jesus Christ's

love is such that He will walk in the midst of it, ministering to the captives! He will touch its ministries, move by His Spirit among the people, bless their feeble efforts, fill with His Spirit, impart gifts and graces, show signs and wonders and miracles, manifesting His presence and His power there — in Life! As a friend of ours once said, “What a God you are to allow yourself to be brought down so low IN ORDER TO SERVE! The church system has some truth — but it is truth twisted, perverted, tangled, garbled, grotesquely represented, but truth all the same. How willing He is to start where we are, to condescend to stoop to our depths and meet us there, only to raise us from that to a higher realm!”

Many, however, are not ready to be raised to a higher realm. Yet we behold the loving kindness of the Lord! Can we not see that the church systems *use* the blessing of God, they *use* the anointing of the Spirit, they *use* and *abuse* the gifts, anointing, and power of God, in order to bring men under their domination, build their movement, and establish their own kingdom. ***Fire from heaven!*** Can it be that the fire the beast calls down from heaven in the sight of men is truly ***heavenly fire?*** Our text does not deny it! It says plainly that he doeth great wonders, that he makes fire come down from heaven, and that he *had power* (Greek: was given) to do miracles! It is not a question of whether this beast actually is given heavenly fire, divine fire, to do great signs and wonders, but *what does he do with this power? How does he use it? What is his motivation, his purpose, his intent?*

The answer is not long in coming! “***And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he was given to do.***” Can we not see by this that he *uses* or *mis-uses* this power in order to DECEIVE! All through the scriptures miracles and blessings were esteemed to be the vindication, validation, and proof of the truthfulness of the prophet’s message. God confirmed the word of Elijah by sending down fire from heaven and consuming the sacrifice, the altar, and even the dust! The ministry of Aaron the high priest was validated by fire from heaven consuming the burnt sacrifice upon the altar! But here in our text the fire is used to validate a *lie*, to seduce men and lead them into errors, into false worship — the paying of homage and obedience to the beastly system! Have you not heard the gospel preached, seen men blessed, even miracles performed, and though men responded to the truth and anointing that was present, they were also thereby sucked into submission to men, slavery in a religious system, and into the false doctrines and carnal programs of that system. They are the Lord’s people in captivity in Babylon — yet brought there by the very manifestation of the power of God! Oh, yes! Fire from heaven — to *deceive!* That is the mystery.

Well did George Hawtin admonish: “Set not your heart on miracles or signs or wonders. You will be deceived if you do. Refuse to fellowship with the harlot system on the basis that some of her cardinals or bishops *speak in tongues*. Many thousands are being deceived by this and are already falling into the clutches of a world church system. Personally I am extremely skeptical about all the movements of this present hour — the World Council of Churches, The Ecumenical Movement, the Charismatic Movement, and the mass meetings of world renowned evangelists. They are all heading in one direction. They are moving with increasing momentum toward a world church — a super body that will dictate to and completely dominate everyone on earth. They are merely different arms of the Babylon octopus. If they do not grasp you in one arm, they will grasp you in another. If they do not hook you on one lure, they will catch you on another. It is all a very deceitful and false thing, and the only safety for a Christian in our day is to be obedient to the voice of Christ and come out from among them, and abandon every phase and form of them, and be separate unto Christ, refusing to touch the unclean thing” — end quote.

It has been my experience that God is thoroughly “pruning” His sons in this hour that they may be able to bear and bring forth an abundant harvest of *kingdom fruit*. He not only prunes away from us the sins and works of the flesh, but a great deal of religiousness and religious activities and those involved therein as well. There was a time when we made the circuit, speaking for the Full Gospel Business Men’s Fellowship and various churches in the Pentecostal and Charismatic circles. Our desire was pure — to share the present truth of sonship and deeper life of the Christ within, to inspire them and bless and challenge any and all possible. Here and there we found an elect few who had ears to hear, but for the most part it became evident that we were “spinning our wheels.” Then one day it dawned on me! Our word was not producing results on the “kingdom” level in those places. Oh, they were delighted to have Brother Eby come by and share his testimony, even minister a revelatory word and prophesy over some people, momentarily satiating the intense craving in a few hearts for a richer diet of spiritual fare. But after I left, nothing changed! There was

no fruit. There was no heightened vision, no going on to higher realms in God. These merely took the word we ministered, diluted it with their shallow church program, and *used* it to further their own kingdom. Ah, they enjoyed drawing life from us so long as it didn't require them to bear kingdom fruit! As long as our ministry could be "used" to increase their branches and put on many beautiful leaves — the manifestation of life without fruit — we were welcome in their midst. But what they were doing was sapping the life out of us to enhance and embellish and strengthen their own Babylonish system! The beast was "using" the word and the power of God to *deceive* and *enslave* the people in the bestial religious system of man. Suddenly the voice of the Lord thundered authoritatively in my ear, "ENOUGH!" And the celestial husbandman did a work of pruning in the garden of my life. He pruned away from my walk a religious realm that will draw life, but will not bear fruit of that life. No longer would the mighty work of God in me be "used" to cause men to pay homage to the beast! May God make the truth of this real to all who read these lines.

To be continued...

J. PRESTON EBY