

KINGDOM BIBLE STUDIES

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

FROM THE CANDLESTICK TO THE THRONE

Part 169

THE THREE ANGELS' MESSAGES (continued)

"And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast...the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of His indignation; and he shall be *tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy messengers, and in the presence of the Lamb*" (Rev. 14:9-10).

"Tormented with fire and brimstone...in the presence of the Lamb." What an amazing divine paradox! The Lamb — precious embodiment of the very character of innocence, patience, meekness, gentleness, holiness, sacrifice, and redemption — being made TORMENT unto His people and to men for whom He died! The very thought seems incongruous. You see, dear ones, IT IS NOT THE NATURE OF A LAMB to torment anyone. It is simply not in the nature of the lamb to want to hurt in any way. Really! What could a lamb do to torture anyone? It has no capability for such a thing. And so it is with the LAMB OF GOD! The Lamb of God has no desire, no ability to inflict torture in any way — His desire is entirely redemptive — that men might have life and have it more abundantly!

I cannot imagine, as the churches teach, One with the nature of a lamb packing poor lost souls like brick into a kiln, standing there blowing the fires of hell through them forever. Yet that is how this passage is interpreted by almost every church on earth! No wonder the church systems of man are called "daughters of the harlot" in the book of Revelation! Where did such hideous ideas originate? They originated with the "mother of harlots," the apostate church which began to form early in the centuries after Christ. The great apostasy actually began with the so-called "Church Fathers." Some who read these lines are familiar with Tertullian's words (around the year A.D. 200) concerning those in torment, "How shall I admire, how laugh, how rejoice, how exult, when I behold so many proud monarchs...groaning in the lowest abyss of darkness." Such a grotesque representation, if we say this reflects the attitude of our Lord, attributes to the Lamb of God the character of a monster worse than Adolph Eichmann!

Ah, the torment comes not from the Lamb. In our previous Study on this subject, we pointed out that the word "torment" comes from the Greek word *basanizo* which actually refers to the "touchstone" and the principle "*to test, to examine the quality of a thing.*" Jesus is our touchstone, the standard by which all men and their works are tested! Because of the ancient custom of testing persons by torture, as for instance, when the chief captain told one of his men to examine the apostle Paul by scourging (Acts 22:24), the word gradually took on a secondary meaning, *testing by torture*. In whatever measure that applies here, these are tormented "in the presence" of the Lamb, but the torment lies within the bosoms of the tormented. To be "rubbed against the touchstone" is not a pleasant experience! The scripture does not say that the Lamb torments them! If you think it does, you are mistaken. It states that *they are tormented in the presence* of the Lamb. What a thought! TORMENTED IN THE PRESENCE. The Lamb is merely present. He does not torment. The condition is within themselves.

Because the carnal Christians, who are worshippers of the beast, are wrong and resistant to the spirit of the Lord, rebellious in their hearts against the truth, selfish in their minds, and fleshly in their desires, they

are ***condemned in their consciences*** by the very ***presence*** of the pure, heavenly, spiritual, selfless, sinless, sacrificing Lamb of God. It has been said that hell is at its fiercest when it sees heaven, and not till then. When these realize the presence, or the character of the Lamb, they are tortured in their consciences, for in the Light of the Lamb they see themselves for the wretched little devils they are. The very ***presence of truth*** torments the deceived and those who love the lie. The very ***presence of holiness*** is torment to the immoral and corrupt. The very ***presence of unconditional love*** greatly disturbs and agitates the one full of condemnation, legalism, and judgmentalism. The very ***presence of peace and joy*** torments those who see religion as something stern, exacting, and demanding, that must be endured with a long face and a sour countenance. The very ***presence of the life of the Lamb*** is the most awful torment to all the opposing forces of the world, the flesh, and the devil, until all the deceit and hostility has been taken out of them, and they come to know the Lord in the power of the spirit.

Let it be thoroughly known that John has not changed the subject here — we are still in the scene involving the Lamb upon mount Zion and the 144,000 who are with Him. The LAMB is on mount Zion! The manifest sons of God are on mount Zion! To be “in the presence of the Lamb” is to stand before mount Zion, just as Israel of old stood before mount Sinai. Mount Sinai was ablaze with the awful fiery presence of Yahweh. Mount Zion is ablaze with the fire and brimstone of the holy presence and glory of the Lamb! When the worshippers of the beast have been exposed for a sufficient time to the “holy angels” or the “holy messengers” who are the manifest sons of God, and to the full, blazing glory and majesty of the Lamb, the Lamb will overcome them; His love, truth, righteousness, and power will conquer their hearts; the carnality, deceit, rebellion, waywardness, and the spirit of Babylon will be taken from them and they will at last ***enjoy*** the Presence of the Lamb!

When the maniac of Gadara encountered the Christ the devils cried out, saying, “Art Thou come hither to *torment us* before the time?” (Mat. 8:29. It was not that the devils supposed that Jesus was there that day to cast them into eternal hell-fire — it was simply torment for a possessed person to stand in the *presence* of the Christ! It is torment for any enemy of God to be ushered into the presence of God. Anyone who is unacquainted with God and happens to come into a group that is worshipping and praising God, is in torment all the time he is there. Yet no one there is tormenting him! But the sooner such a person can leave, the better he likes it. Such an atmosphere is hell to that person. Why is it so hard to get an unsaved person to attend an evangelistic crusade, or to get your dear fundamentalist friend to come to a gathering of the sons of God? They are unhappy and miserable in such a setting! They are tormented when the saints are worshipping and moving in the Spirit of God! They are estranged from the life of the Spirit, from the glory and power of God, from the truth of His present kingdom and purposes, and cannot relate to the unveiling of Christ in the midst of His body. This all makes them uncomfortable and unhappy.

Suppose a few filthy, vile men and a few immoral women from a house of prostitution were *forced* to sit in a large congregation of singing, shouting, worshipping saints. *This certainly would be torment to most of them!* They would be tortured in the flames of the blazing glory of God in that place! If they were not held in their seat *by force*, most of them would rush out of there. I have been in meetings where I witnessed three responses to the glorious manifestation of the Lord’s presence. First, the saints who loved the Lord rejoiced and adoringly worshipped. Some who were not believers, but whose hearts were tender toward the Lord, came under deep conviction and, weeping and broken, gave themselves into the loving hands of Jesus. But others, filled with self, haters of righteousness, I have seen jump up and literally *run* out of the meeting — **TORMENTED IN THE PRESENCE OF THE LAMB!** Yes, they would *rush*, even *run* to get away from the power of the Holy Ghost!

A person under deep conviction of the Holy Spirit is tormented. Tormented with what? He is tormented with the fire of God’s holy presence, the fire of His penetrating, burning word. He has no peace or rest, day or night. His soul troubles him continually. When some who read these lines were under deep conviction for your sins and past life were you not tormented by the Holy Spirit, the presence of God? And you had no rest day or night! When you were finally broken by the Holy Spirit’s dealing and repented, you cried and shed many bitter tears of remorse and also tears of joy. I have seen religious people go through the same torment as God was drawing them out of the systems of man and bringing them into new truth and experience in Him. In some cases it took months or even years of struggle, fears, and inner conflict and torment before the Lord conquered our hearts and firmly planted His new day in our lives with great peace

and joy and praise in our mouths! And I do not doubt that it will take many dealings along with the mighty working of His power to win the hearts of the Babylon dwellers who persist in worshipping the beast!

To all the fleshly and carnally minded religionists HIS GLORY IS A LAKE OF FIRE AND BRIMSTONE — divine, cleansing, purging, purifying, consuming fire! In ages yet unborn God shall expose *all men* to the sweet abiding presence of the Lamb. They will come under such severe processings, under such profound conviction that they will be tormented and have no rest day or night until their hearts are conquered. And when they do yield to Him who is worthy, their wonderful Creator, Father, Redeemer, and Lord, many fountains of tears will flow with weeping, thanksgiving, and praises unto the name of the Lord. I believe it! God hasten it!

NO REST DAY OR NIGHT — FOR AGES OF AGES

“And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up *for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night*, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name” (Rev. 14:11).

The best way to arrive at the true meaning of a word is to study carefully the way it has been used. If we are to study a Greek word, we must go to the Greek text and not to a translation, nor to a definition which has been derived from an interpretative translation. If, in the original text, the word appears in different forms, surely these forms must have some special significance. A singular form cannot have the same meaning as the plural. Since both forms are used they should be distinguished when they are translated. In English, for example, anyone knows there is a difference between the expression *a dog* and *dogs*. Yet in certain places in scripture the singular form is translated by exactly the same words as the plural form and thereby the true import of the words is hidden. For example, compare the following passages where “for ever and ever” appears: “*Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever*” (Greek: for the *aion* of the *aion*). “*To Him be glory... for ever and ever*” (Greek: for the *aions* of the *aions*). “*Unto all generations for ever and ever*” (Greek: for the *aion* of the *aions*). In I Corinthians 10:11 we have the expression: “the *ends* of the *aions*.” Then in Hebrews 9:26 we have, “the *end* of the *aions*.” How can a period that is definitely said to come to an end be *endless*? How can a group of periods, each said to come to an end, be *for ever*?

I am aware that some people will oppose us on the grounds that the Greeks of today use the phrase “the *aions* of the *aions*” as meaning eternal, everlasting. A Greek gentleman told me several years ago that “the *ages* of the *ages*” is how they express eternity in Greek, and that when the book of Revelation says, “and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up *for ages of ages*” it means *forever*. Ah, that sounds convincing, conclusive, final, and unanswerable, does it not? Who can argue with a Greek? But, precious friend of mine, in studying Bible language we are studying ANCIENT GREEK, not MODERN. The Greek language in two thousand years has changed to such an extent that the ancient tongue is altogether unintelligible to a modern Greek. The fact is, for over a thousand years, up until the year A.D. 1453, Greek was almost unknown or forgotten in most of Europe. Even in Italy, which formerly had been dominated by Greek, it became almost unknown. Ancient Greek has been a dead language for 1500 years! Anyone who knows anything at all will at once see the utter ridiculousness of this form of argument. Ancient and modern Greek are as different as day and night.

As well might we teach our children the English of 2,000 years ago, and then expect them to be proficient in modern English, as to apply modern meanings to ancient Greek. The older the English, the more unintelligible it becomes. The spelling changes, word meanings change, sentence structure changes, until finally one is hopelessly lost in a morass of undecipherable hieroglyphics. Even in the four centuries since the translation of the King James Bible, what changes have taken place! “Thee” and “thou” have been replaced by the more familiar “you” and are no longer used except in classical literature and religion. “Let” meant to “restrain, hinder, or prevent” in King James’ day; now the word means the exact opposite, to “permit or allow”! So with Greek. Ancient Greek is a dead language, while modern Greek is a living language, with about as much similarity as there is between German and English. And if you want to know what an ancient Greek word means you must first of all examine its *usage*!

It was the false doctrines of the apostate church that caused the meaning *eternal* be placed upon the Greek phrase “the *ages* of the *ages*.” And don’t think for one moment, dear friend, that religion doesn’t

influence language! The English word “hell” once meant “a dark hidden place,” and people “helled” their potatoes when they covered them to preserve them through the winter. But church dogma has through the years caused the word to take on an altogether different connotation. Ask any church member, or even an unbeliever, for that matter, what “hell” is and they certainly won’t tell you it’s a dark hidden place for potatoes! Word meanings *do* change! And religious dogma has effected many such changes!

So *usage* is the fundamental key to unlocking the meanings of ancient Greek words. That the expression “for ages of ages” cannot mean an endless succession of ages, or eternity, is clearly revealed by comparing Revelation 11:15 with I Corinthians 15:24-28. Many, many other passages could be cited also. In Revelation 11:15 our Lord is said, in the Greek text, to reign “for the ages of the ages.” But in I Corinthians 15:24-28 His reign is said to *end*. He only reigns *until*, and then He delivers the kingdom up to the Father. So, comparing the two passages, Christ does *not* reign “for ever and ever” though He *does* reign “for the ages of the ages.” Therefore, “for the ages of the ages” is a limited, specific time involving ages. It cannot denote eternity! As the Son, God reigns unto the ages of the ages through a process of subjecting, subduing all things unto Himself. When that work is completed and there is nothing more in all God’s vast universe to subdue and reconcile unto Himself, God reigns no longer as the Son, but His *indwelling life* in all things and all creatures will constitute His government, for God will be ALL IN ALL! Oh, the mystery of it!

Endlessness is expressed in the scriptures by simple phrases like “no end,” “endless (indissoluble),” “incorruptible,” “immortal,” “perpetual,” etc. Had the Holy Spirit wanted to convey unendingness in reference to man’s torment in the fire and brimstone in the presence of the Lamb, He could have used words that plainly denoted that, rather than words which plainly denote *time periods (ages)* as “for the age,” “for the ages,” “for the age of the ages,” “for the ages of the ages,” etc.

Notice, my beloved, that these are tormented *day and night* for the ages of the ages, and have no rest *day nor night*. The very terms *day* and *night* and *ages* show beyond question that we are dealing with the realm of *time*. There is no *day* nor *night* in *eternity*! Both are creatures of time. There is no way of knowing how long a time this will be, but since it unquestionably speaks of day and night and ages, it does therefore belong to time and no endeavor must be made to equate it with eternity. Ages can be long dispensations covering centuries or millenniums, or ages can transpire within ourselves as we move from one dealing of God to another in our experience. I know brethren who have lived under the age of law, the age of grace, and the age of the kingdom within their own experience during the short span of a few years. I have passed through a number of “ages” within the scope of my experience with God, and I have become a different person, and been related to God in a different way, in each of those ages!

Once we understand that the Greek word *aion* and all the forms and compounds of that word denote *time*, how clear everything becomes! And how ridiculous the ignorant pratings of men! In an effort to harmonize the scriptures with the false doctrines of the apostate churches, the translators rendered “for ages of ages” as “for ever and ever.” This one little mistake once and for all exposes their folly. Even in English we can see that “for ever” cannot be endless if “*and ever*” may be added to it. Eternity cannot be added to! You cannot make “for ever” any longer by adding another “ever.” Only time may be compounded. Eternity is absolute *timelessness*. Eternity is without beginning or end. There cannot be more than one eternity, nor can one eternity be added to another eternity, nor can an eternity end. Ah, but ages are time and time, my friend, *can* be added to and it *can* and *does* and *shall end*! When the Greek speaks of “ages of ages” it is speaking of aggregated periods of time — not eternity! And you cannot get eternity by compounding all the time periods of the past and the future, for time *began* and time *ends*. The ages and all the time and times combined do not equal eternity. There simply is no such thing as “the endless ages of eternity” as the preachers love to say, for the phrase is a complete contradiction of itself. No one who is sane and reasonable can maintain otherwise. To do so is to contradict all the known facts and to contradict God’s own word.

One final thought before we pass on to another passage — a strict adherence to the tense of the verb makes our text read, “*They have no rest day nor night who are worshipping the beast...*” It denotes a continuous action, as long as they persist in worshipping the beast, while the testing of God is upon them, they have no rest day nor night. Their state of agitation, trouble, restlessness, and distress is co-extensive with their continuing to worship the beast. Can we not see by this that just as soon as they repent, take a new

mind, turn from their worship of the beast, and yield under the mighty hand of God all the confusion, vexation, and torment is washed away by the quickening stream of HIS LIFE. Isn't it wonderful!

THE PATIENCE AND FAITH OF THE SAINTS

"Here is the *patience of the saints*: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus" (Rev. 14:12).

The Lord's called and chosen elect must have patience concerning the work of God in us, in all of the Lord's people, including those now imprisoned in Babylon, and indeed in all of creation! Once we hear the "gospel of the ages," the good news of God's great plan of the ages, and see the fiery dealing of God with men "for the ages," it is *here* that we learn the great need for *patience*! Oh, yes! "*Here* is the patience of the saints." If you've taken a trip with young children, you'll recognize the question, "Are we almost there yet?" It's an annoying question for parents, especially when it comes about twenty minutes into a day-long drive. But the Lord's children are not innocent of such questioning either! "O God, aren't we there yet? Haven't we been through enough? Isn't it time for you to do something about the shame of the church and the sin of the world? Are the sons about to be manifested? Do we have to endure this night much longer? Isn't it time for our change? Is the work about finished? What about the words that have been spoken to me by prophecy, and in visions and revelations? When will I begin to see them come to pass? Will I make it in to the high calling before I go by way of the grave? Are we almost there yet?"

The three most common words heard among believers in time of crisis are: "Lord, *do* something!" It is completely contrary to our nature as human beings to stand still and do nothing when we face perplexing trials. In fact, waiting patiently for God to act is probably the most difficult thing about the walk of sonship! Can you imagine how Jesus felt for thirty years in Nazareth working in the carpenter shop — waiting for His sonship to be revealed while the world was rushing onward to hell! The Father raised up patience in His life, for even at the last minute, before His glory was shone forth, He said, "Mine hour has not yet come." Even those with deep dealings of the Lord in their lives sometimes panic when the Lord doesn't move according to their timetable. We are prone to give God deadlines and time limits. We cry, "Lord, when are you going to do something about this? If you don't act now, it will be too late!" But I do not hesitate to tell you, my beloved, God is *never* too late! Mary and Martha found that out when their brother, Lazarus, died and was buried! "Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother would not have died." "Martha, I AM the resurrection and the life!" He always acts — not according to our schedule, but His.

The Lord is calling a people unto Himself in this new kingdom day who will truly trust Him for all things. Indeed, He often leads us into situations that are frightening, critical, difficult, in order to teach us His ways. He tests us to reveal in our hearts whether we are able to stand still and see the salvation of God! Every called out one should pray that the Lord will open his eyes and show him the eternal truth of these words of scripture: "The steps of a good man are *ordered by the Lord*: and He delighteth in his way" (Ps. 37:23). The Hebrew word for "ordered" here means "prearranged, step by step, fixed, ordained by God." This means it is God, not the devil, not some freak accident, not our lack of faith, but God Himself who leads us even in the difficult places. We may cry out, "Lord, why are you allowing this to continue?" But the truth is, not only does He allow our circumstances, He *arranges* them! And that is hard on the carnal mind!

I firmly believe that every step I take is ordained by our heavenly Father. And if that is indeed true, then I know that God will never lead me to the brink of a difficult situation only to abandon me. He wouldn't say, "Okay, Preston, I've directed you up to this point. Now you're on your own!" No! Our wonderful Father is absolutely faithful to every one of His sons, in every situation and circumstance. Whenever God requires anything of a person, there is always a reason for it. The reason so many people fail to attain to great heights in the Spirit is because they are unable to see God's *purpose*, and therefore they fail in the faith that lays hold upon the great heights that are in Him. His word to you today, precious one, is just this: "Will you be the one who will not waver — who won't charge God with forsaking, abandoning, and failing you? Will you stand still in your crisis, in your testing, when it seems that all the Lord has promised has fallen to the ground, leaning upon the faithfulness of your Father, trusting Him to reveal His power in you?" That is the stuff sons of God are made of!

A dear brother shared the following. “In this fast-paced age, to tell someone to wait brings some difficult problems. A child sees all his presents for his birthday and yet must wait until the date arrives. Oh, the excitement that he feels, for he contemplates the pleasures hidden just under those pretty wrappings for him. In like manner we know some joys of the kingdom. They are like the outer wrappings of the child’s gifts. We anticipate the full glory of the kingdom of God, but also know that must wait. The first picture the word ‘wait’ sets before our eyes is as the child and his presents. Time holds him back from receiving what is his. He sits and with anxiety waits for the hour when he will be free to possess them. His waiting is an exercise in *patience*. Our waiting upon the Lord has this element, yet is much greater! When we wait upon the Lord, we twist together with the One for whom we wait. The boy aims his sight on receiving what is his by the promise of a birthday. Time passes, and with each moment of thought upon his gifts, he is uniting to his ownership of them. He sees the big wrapped box in the corner and thinks, ‘This is *mine*. I wonder what it is?’ Whatever it is, he unites to his possession of it. So also do we wait upon God!

“In the spring of 1979 I attended the graduating ceremony of the Bible school I attended before God sent me back to Missouri. Now, they had a guest speaker at their meeting. He was recognized as one who hears from God and shares what’s on his mind for the moment. As he came to the podium, before him sat the young graduates. Without an introduction or even an hello, he began to speak in a mild voice the word God wanted these to hear. His voice became louder and more intense with each sentence. Finally, his concluding statements were at the top of his vocal range, yet without breaking the richness of his voice. He went through several Old Testament characters attaching the word *wait* to each one. He said, ‘Abraham, God has called you to birth the son of promise, but you must *wait*. *Wait* you must! Isaac, you must *wait* for the time for Rebecca to come. You must *wait*! Jacob, *wait* and *wait* and *wait* for Rachel your love. And *wait* you will to have your name changed to Israel. You will *wait*! Joseph, you must *wait* for the day of deliverance. Yes, Joseph, you must *wait*! *Wait*, yes *wait* David you shall to be King David, you will *wait*. *Wait*! *Wait*! You must *wait*!’” — end quote.

To all who treasure the beautiful hope of sonship to God, who hunger to see the fullness of God revealed in His elect; to all who yearn to see the leaders of Babylon repent, to see the slaves of Babylon come out of her with great rejoicing, and to see the end of God’s fiery dealings with all His people until His bride has made herself ready; to all who long to see creation set free from the bondage of corruption, and all peoples and all nations marching up to Zion to learn the ways of the Lord and to walk in His paths; to all who hope in Christ for the perfection, completion, and fulfillment of **all** He has promised those who follow on to know Him in the Day; to one and all I say “*wait*!” “Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him” (Ps. 37:7). “But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it” (Rom. 8:25). “Be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises” (Heb. 6:12). “Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise” (Heb. 10:35-36).

That much time is required for God to work out His purposes is clear from the three angel’s messages. The first angel proclaims the “gospel of the ages,” bringing the revelation that not all things will be concluded at once, but step by step, age after age, until all things are subdued, reconciled, and restored into God again. The third angel reveals that even the dealing of the Lord with His people in Babylon requires precise time cycles (ages of the ages) through which He accomplishes His great work unto victory. Patience is often lacking when God does not seem to finish His work in our lives, or in others, or in the church, or in the earth as quickly as we think He should. But every son must understand this great truth — God seems to use *delay* as a choice process in the development of character and faith! *Wait*! Be *patient*, saith the Lord! Every promise of God *shall be fulfilled* in His appointed time, when every necessary preparation has been completed in each son and in every purpose. God will finish His work and show forth His glory in us, and deliver all the captives. He *will* do it! He *is* doing it! The work of God in us today is setting the stage for God’s great tomorrow. Not one thing shall fail of **all** that He hath spoken! “HERE is the *patience of the saints*...”

BLESSED ARE THE DEAD WHICH DIE IN THE LORD

“And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, *Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth*: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them” (Rev. 14:13).

These words have been often misunderstood, and preached at many a funeral. They have been wrongly interpreted — interpreted *literally* rather than *spiritually*. It has been generally thought that here we have a proof that the soul or spirit is blessed immediately after death. “From henceforth” was taken to mean: from the time they depart from this earth, immediately after physical death. Of course, this is true in itself. The dead shall be blessed, and shall rest from their labors as they enter into that eternal spiritual realm from whence they came. But it is *not true* that this word refers to that fact! In the first place, we might remark that in that case it would be very ambiguously expressed. Instead of “from henceforth” an expression like “from death on,” or “immediately after death,” would have been much clearer. In the second place — and this is a far weightier objection — the expression “the dead which die in the Lord” is a very strange statement indeed if the Holy Spirit is speaking of physical death. How can a *physically dead* person *die*?

Nowhere in all the word of God can we find a more definite and profound statement than that given us in these meaningful words. Call to remembrance here that we are dealing everywhere in the Revelation with symbols, and when the voice from heaven says, “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord,” it cannot in its spiritual meaning signify the death of the physical body. It is my deep conviction that it is not a *blessing* to die. Death is our *enemy*, says the Lord, and death is the last enemy to be destroyed. I prefer not to go to heaven by means of physical death. There is no need to give me that story, “I’m homesick for heaven,” because just as soon as you get sick and it appears it might be time for you to go there, you’ll spend every dollar you’ve got to keep from going there. A brother related the story of a friend of his who was a hypochondriac, she was always sick; if you mentioned some disease, the next week she had it. One day he went to the hospital to visit this dear sister. He walked into the room and said, “How are you doing, sister?” “Oh, brother,” she responded sobbing, “I’m homesick for heaven,” and she sobbed some more. “I wish the Lord would just take me on home.” The brother placed his hand upon her head and prayed, “Father, in Jesus’ name, just kill her right now!” At once she cried out, “No! No! No!” The message is clear — she wasn’t as homesick as she thought she was. Death wasn’t as *blessed* as she supposed. And after her moment of truth the dear lady never went back into the hospital for years!

I make the following declaration with confidence, knowing that only in a couple instances in all of scripture is there mention of the spirit returning to God or entering into the presence of Christ following the death of the body — the testimony of scripture is clear that *it is not necessary to die physically in order to get to heaven!* To the apostle Paul it was given to reveal the great truth, “*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings IN HEAVENLY PLACES in Christ Jesus*” (Eph. 1:3). The word “blessed” is the Greek word *eulogeo* which means “to speak well of.” We think of blessing as something good that we receive from the Lord, be it a spiritual feeling, spiritual gift, or a temporal blessing of provision, healing, etc. But that is not the meaning of this Greek word! *Eulogeo* is something which is *spoken*, “to speak well of,” and it is especially instructive to observe that it is the word from which comes our English word “eulogy.” A eulogy is something one says over a person who is dead! And do we not usually speak “good things” over a deceased person? Old uncle Joe may have been a scoundrel, but when we say a few words at his funeral we try to think of the one good thing he said or did in his lifetime, and that is what we share. I remember when I was a kid in the Pentecostal Church, at the funeral of some unspiritual, obstinate old man the preacher would preach him “straight into heaven.” Ah, yes, a eulogy — speaking well of! And what a blessing, what a eulogy the apostle spoke over the saints when he said, “*You are dead, and your (new) life is hid with Christ in God.*” That is indeed a wonderful eulogy! And when the almighty Father Himself eulogized us in the passage quoted above HE PLACED US IN THE HEAVENLIES IN CHRIST JESUS AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD — so, my beloved brother, my precious sister, you have already died and gone to heaven!

One has to be *born* into the kingdom of God, and by that birth a man is translated out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God’s beloved Son. But just as one must be *born* into the kingdom of the Son, one must *die* to get out of this present evil world! “*How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also (now) live with Him*” (Rom. 6:2-8). “*Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ, from the rudiments of the world...*” (Col.

2:20). *“It is a faithful saying: For if we **be dead with Him**, we shall also live with Him”* (II Tim. 2:11). My God, what beautiful words! To die this death in the Lord, man must die to himself and to all that he has from Adam, all that is outward, human, and possessing him. Oh, happy death indeed that sweeps away all that is not of the spirit! Oh, blessed death, bringing the soul out of itself, into God, into marriage with the spirit! Blessed death, the beginning of true life, the Christ life! What a wonderful revelation is ours when we discover the great truth that ***we are dead and our life is hid with Christ in God!***

There’s not a thing that I like about physical death. I don’t think it’s our friend, and I am certain it is our enemy and has to be overcome. So when the Spirit says, “Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord,” what I see implied here is something more than physical death. It is the *dead* which *die* and the place where they die is *in the Lord*. The Spirit is speaking of the death of the “old man,” death to the self-life. By “the dead” are meant those who *have died* and *are dead* in Christ — “in the Lord.” It signifies those who *are crucified with Christ*, who have afflicted their soul, and crucified their flesh. They have been crucified unto the world, and the world is crucified unto them. *“Whosoever taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me”* (Mat. 10:38). *“If any one will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me”* (Mat. 16:24). *“And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts”* (Gal. 5:24).

It will be useful to us to notice that there are many deaths referred to in the scriptures, each one being, fundamentally, nothing more than a separation from something. All humans in Adam are born dead, dead in “trespasses and in sins” (Eph. 2:1), that is, in their minds, by wicked works they are dead to God, dead to the spirit, dead to truth, dead to righteousness, thus separated from God, out of fellowship with Him. And then for such as come into the blessings of salvation, this original death is counteracted by another death, which is a separation from the world and sin and self, and leads to union with Christ in the spirit (Rom. 7:9-11; Gal. 2:19-20). Then there is the death we all know so well, physical death, which is the separation of the spirit from the body. After one is regenerated, there are many deaths all along the way, that is, if one is to follow the Lord all the way into perfection and the fullness of God. Paul said, “I die daily” (I Cor. 15:31). By this He meant his ongoing and complete separation from all that adhered to him of his own will, his own way, his own mind, his own desires, his own thoughts, his own ambitions, his own plans, and separation from all that might defile, from every vestige of the world, the flesh, even religion, for he spoke of being *dead to the law* by the body of Christ. He had given up all, with his nature changed from glory to glory as he was transfigured into the image of Christ.

And we conceive that this is what is meant by “dying in the Lord,” we conceive that it means a *separation* from all that falls short of the glory of God, in order that the nature, character, wisdom, power, and glory of the Lord alone may be manifested in one’s life. A literal rendering of the verse would read, *“And I heard a voice out of heaven, saying, Write thou: **Blessed ones, the dead ones, those who are dying in the Lord from henceforth...**”* If we can lay aside the tradition of the theologians we will see by these words that the expression, *“the dead ones, those who are dying,”* points clearly to those who have died with Christ and now continue to die daily.

When we have talked about the ongoing death to the carnal mind and the self-life we have sometimes imagined *restricting* and *restraining* ourselves, *denying* ourselves all kinds of pleasures, desires, emotions, and actions. But that’s not dying to Self! That’s an effort at restraining the outer man which in the final analysis *changes nothing!* Sixteen hundred years of the law of Moses demonstrated infallibly man’s inability to either restrain or reform the Adamic nature. Death to the self-life comes only by the raising up within ourselves of a new dimension and higher power of Life! It was the apostle Paul who taught us the wonderful truth that it is the *law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus that **makes us free from the law of sin and death*** (Rom. 8:2). I have some corruptible flesh with corruptible desires and things that would take me captive to the law of sin and death. But I’m looking past it! I’m looking at Him who is invisible, the Christ life, my inner son. I’m looking at Him who is mighty within me, who is able to subdue all things unto Himself, who is able also to keep me from falling and to present me faultless before the throne of His glory! I’m not dwelling upon my flesh, for the outward man *is perishing*, and there is no covenant with that dying man. But there is a promise to *Isaac*, there’s a promise to the *seed*, to the *new man* who is the nature and image of God in my spirit, and I’m looking unto Him who *is my life!* These things I write and these blessed

hopes I set before you that your spiritual eyes might behold the blessed truth that WE DO NOT DIE IN ORDER TO LIVE — WE LIVE IN ORDER TO DIE!

“Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, *that they may rest from their labors...*”

The only way we can rest from our labors of self-effort is to truly be *dead in Christ*. Dead men don't labor! I think that's good news! It's a *blessing* to be dead in Christ! He has blessed us with a eulogy! The eulogy is not about the old man who is perishing and passing away, but the new man who is seated in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus!

To be continued...

J. PRESTON EBY