

KINGDOM BIBLE STUDIES

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

FROM THE CANDLESTICK TO THE THRONE

Part 196

MYSTERY BABYLON (continued)

“And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel? *I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns. The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition:* and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is” (Rev. 17:7-8).

The vision was no mystery to the messenger showing John these things. The “angel” or “messenger” signifies the *living word of God* unto John! The messenger assured John that he would explain and make known to him the meaning of the woman and the beast that was carrying her. This was one mystery, not two. It is designated as “the mystery” of the woman and the beast — one mystery. The beast and the woman are inseparably related. One cannot be understood apart from the other. One does not even exist apart from the other! The messenger also said he would explain the meaning of the seven heads and ten horns. Special attention is drawn to them because of their importance to the understanding of the sentence of judgment on the great harlot.

The implication of the Greek word used is of a *wild beast* — untamed, unruly, and violent-natured. Now we know that we are *not* speaking of a literal animal — for what does a wild animal have to do with the great mysteries of God? Internally, this wild beast is the bestial nature of the natural man, the carnal mind and the fleshly nature of the unregenerate self. Externally, this wild beast is the world — the institutions, systems, and authorities created in human society by the fleshly wisdom and soulical power of natural-minded men. Thus, this woman, the false church, is carried — underwritten, supported, maintained, and sustained internally by the flesh, and externally by the world! It reminds me of something I once read. In a newspaper survey asking what is wrong with the world, G. K. Chesterton sent back the shortest letter of response the editor had ever received:

Dear Sir:
Regarding your article “What’s wrong with the world?” — **I AM.**
Yours truly, G. K. Chesterton

As we consider these things we come to a strange and astonishing statement regarding this beast. The messenger showing these things to John clearly says to him, “The beast that thou sawest *was*, and *is not*; and *shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition.*” How can we understand the beast that *was*, and *is not*; and yet *shall ascend out of the pit, and go into perdition*, that is, into *destruction* — for destruction is the meaning of the word perdition.

To those who can receive it the following word penned by John earlier in the Revelation will give help and light as they *contrast* the nature of our Lord Jesus Christ with the nature of the Adamic man and the nature of the world systems of man. “*Grace be unto you, and peace, from Him which is, and which was, and which is to come*” (Rev. 1:4). In the realm of the spirit the past, present, and future co-exist. It is high

and lifted up in the throne realm that we are given the ability to see the past, the present, and the future all at once. Again and again in the book of Revelation, where our Lord is mentioned, He is spoken of as He who is, He who was, and He who is to come — meaning that when we leave the earth realm we transcend time as we know it.

“I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which *is*, and which *was*, and which *is to come*, the Almighty” (Rev. 1:8). That is awesome! You see, every time Jesus is mentioned in this book He is never mentioned in the past, or just the present, or in the future. Every time we meet Jesus in the book of Revelation it is the Jesus who *is*, and who *was*, and who *is to come*. The reason is that the book of Revelation gives us a view of the kingdom of God from the divine perspective — as God views it — and the past, the present, and the future encompass the outworking of God’s purpose in the earth through His wonderful **plan of the ages**. That is what is so powerful — in the spirit you can see the whole plan of God from beginning to end! The purposes of God in the earth embrace *past history*, *present awareness*, and *future consummation*. Everything in the universe, and everything in your life, precious friend of mine, exists in the past, the present, and the future. Jesus was doing something before the foundation of the world, Jesus was doing something at the dawn of creation, Jesus was doing something two thousand years ago, Jesus was doing something five hundred years ago, Jesus was doing something fifty years ago, Jesus was doing something yesterday, Jesus is doing something right now, and He will be working His great work in all of our tomorrows!

Age after age, generation after generation, through the rise and fall of empires, and the shifting sands of history, God remains. He works all His purposes in all things, but HE changes not! Yet — God in Christ became a man! God as man has tenses to His being, the yesterday of the past, the today of the present, the tomorrow of the future. This is not the *eternal* God, but the God who has dispensed His eternity into time. “Jesus Christ the same — *yesterday, today, and for the ages*” (Heb. 13:8, Literal). He is eternal, that is, unchangeable or “the same,” but His eternity is manifested in time, “yesterday, today, and for the ages.” “And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not *day and night*, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which *was*, and *is*, and *is to come*” (Rev. 4:8). Day and night do not exist in eternity nor in the heavenly realm of God’s Spirit! Is it not clear that this scene is not set in some far-off heaven somewhere. In the heaven the preachers preach about there *is no day and night*! There is no sun or moon or stars, and there is *no night* there! This scene is set *in time*! HE is praised and extolled both DAY AND NIGHT, this God who WAS, and IS, and IS TO COME! HE is worshipped and adored both DAY AND NIGHT, this God of the ages, this Architect of history, this Lord of time, this King of the universe, this Most High who “liveth for the ages, whose dominion is an age-during dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation: and all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou?” (Dan. 4:34-35, Literal & KJV).

Oh, take me not back through the long ages to a Christ that walked the shores of Galilee, to a Christ that *was*! He *is*! He lives! He is here! In my *today*! I can never be alone, never grope in the dark for a hand, never be forsaken, never lack in the hour of need, never fail in His on-going purposes in me, never need a Saviour, a Guide, a Brother, a Head, a Leader, a Captain, a Father. I have Him, He who was everything in the yesterday of the past, and who will be everything in the tomorrow of the future, is mine today; and in each conscious moment of my existence here, and throughout all the ages, He is my life, my all! He is not a far-off, untouchable God, “inhabiting eternity,” as the King James Bible erroneously states, but a God made nigh, INHABITING THE AGES, involved in His creation, working tirelessly and unceasingly and unfailingly until His wonderful plan is brought to a successful conclusion and HE becomes gloriously ALL IN ALL!

What Christians for centuries have called “eternal life” is in the Greek “life *aionios*” — the life of the ages! How I thank God that my present state of being is *not eternal*! There is *more*! The new man within me is changing, growing, increasing, maturing unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ! Some entertain the notion that once they have received Christ within them they have the whole Christ in all His fullness and that’s all there is. They only need to get to heaven to spend eternity. But in the scriptures there is the *growth* and the *formation* of Christ in us, and the *increase* of God! To those in whom the Christ

life is but a *babe* within them, Peter writes, “As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may *grow* thereby” (I Pet. 2:2). To those pressing on to maturity Paul wrote, “But speaking the truth in love, may *grow up* into Him in all things which is the head, even Christ” (Eph. 4:15). Some would rather ignore this growing, changing, increasing *life of the ages*, somehow projecting themselves into that life which is eternal, claiming “by faith” the finished product, while by-passing the tedious processing that develops and matures that life. Ah, dear ones, it doesn’t work that way! Christ is being *formed in us* and it will take “the ages,” my friend, to unfold it all. As long as there is need for growth, change, and advancement, there is need for *time*. Until redemption is complete its work will proceed in time, but the finished work of redemption stands at time’s end. Thank God! There is an **end** — then eternity, God all-in-all! “I am the *beginning* and the *ending*, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come.”

The Lord which *was* is also the Lord which *is*! The present tense of God’s manifestation in Christ is expressed by the apostle Paul when he said, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ *liveth in me*” (Gal. 2:20). Jesus Himself prophesied of this manifestation of God in His people, saying, “If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and *make our abode with (in) him*” (Jn. 14:23). “God is in you.” “God dwelleth in you.” When we think of God manifest in the flesh we at once think of the Man walking by the shores of blue Galilee, walking among humanity, in His humanity, demonstrating what humanity was intended to be. But God has raised our vision beyond **He who was** and is causing us to see **He who is**! Two thousand years ago God walked this earth in Jesus of Nazareth — but “**NOW ye are** the body of Christ.” Christ is no longer walking in that body that tread the sands of Galilee! He is walking in another body today, in your body, in my body, in all those blessed sons whom He is bringing to glory! In the realm of **He who is** we find a glory beyond the **was** which enables us to press into and participate in the **is**. While many still look for the coming of the **was** in the clouds, we have now experienced the One who **IS COMING TO BE GLORIFIED IN HIS SAINTS**!

Beloved, if **He that was** is now **He that is** within you, what, under all God’s heavens, could be added to you *from without*? Let us bow in holy reverence to worship and adore, and to live and walk in the blessed reality of such an high and holy calling! Stop seeking anything at all from or through the myriad *substitutes* pawned by the countless modern day antichrists of the church systems of man. These external religious observances will not suffice for those destined for the throne! **CHRIST HIMSELF IS SUFFICIENT!** In the name of Jesus Christ, divorce yourself completely and forever from all the substitutes, the realm of the **instead of**. You will find absolutely nothing in any of it that will satisfy the deepest cravings of your heart after God. **CHRIST WITHIN IS ALL YOU NEED!** This is the Lord who *was* Jesus of Nazareth, but who now *is* the many sons of God in the earth, the many-membered Christ! God is bringing many sons to glory and we are being conformed to the image of God’s firstborn Son. The eternal God never changes, but this Lord who was, and is, and is to come does change from glory to glory!

What, then, does it mean when it says, “...and the Lord which *is to come*”? The expression “which is to come” is from the Greek *erchomai*, meaning “the coming one.” Now, how is the Lord which was, and the Lord which is, also the coming One? What does it mean? It means that in our consciousness, in our experience, He is yet coming to be all that He is! That’s what the processing is all about! “And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven...when He *shall come* to be glorified **in His saints**, and to be **admired in all them** that believe in that Day” (II Thes. 1:7,10). There is no way that I could say it better!

God will not allow us to refuse to see Christ in each other and then look upon Him in some other form. Look not for the Christ who *was*, and do not cling to the Christ who *is*, yet know of a surety that the Christ in us is HIM all the way! We will have to recognize Him in our brethren. God will not satisfy our carnal nature by allowing us to see Jesus descending from heaven in clouds of glory, alone in that glory. We shall be *glorified together*, the scripture affirms. Why would I look for Jesus in clouds of glory in the sky while I pass by His body on earth and refuse to *see Him glorified in them*! It is this message that is coming to us today! If I want to see Christ I look at you, because that is where He is forming Himself, manifesting Himself, and glorifying Himself! The body of Christ is not something apart from Christ, not something that Christ has formed as a separate entity to *use*. Oh, no! The body of Christ **IS CHRIST** in the earth! “*For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body:*

SO ALSO IS CHRIST" (I Cor. 12:12). Until I *see, recognize, love, and honor* Christ in you, my brother, my sister, I would not see, recognize, love, or honor One I would see riding upon a cloud! When this precious knowledge becomes sweet to our soul, we begin to look at one another and BEHOLD HIM! I now see **Him who is** and I shall look, and look, and look until in His temple which we are I see **Him who is to come!**

Now, against this backdrop of how terms such as *was, is, is not, and is to come* are used in the Revelation, let us return to our text. "And the beast which thou sawest **was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition (destruction)**...and they shall wonder...when they behold the beast that **was, and is not, and yet is**" (Rev. 17:8). Once we clear away all the speculations, imaginations, and absurdities that men add to this scene the meaning becomes very simple and wonderfully clear. *Christ* is the One who was, and is, and is to come! The *beast* is the one who was, is not, yet is, and shall go into destruction! What an amazing contrast! Christ and the beast are opposites — the one is eternal, the other is passing away no matter how diligently he seeks to survive! Christ is our *spirit*, the beast is our *flesh*! Christ was, is, and is ever coming — always shall be! The flesh was, is not, yet is, and shall finally be destroyed! What a message that is!

It is very necessary that we be able to see this great truth that the beast bears a title which is in contrast to the title of Christ. Christ was, and is, and is coming, whereas the beast was, is not, is yet to be, and goes to destruction. The beast, on the other hand, was, is not, yet is, ascends out of the abyss, and goes into destruction. In chapter eleven John uses the same expression in connection with the beast, calling him "the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit" (Rev. 11:7). "Ascendeth" denotes a continued action, giving the impression that ascending or arising from the abyss is a permanent attribute of the beast's character rather than a single episode in its career. This impression John confirms here by immediately employing the present tense, "...and it *goes into* perdition (destruction)." It is a second permanent attribute of the beast that no matter how many times it arises from the abyss **it is constantly heading for destruction**. It cannot escape destruction! Its end is determined, its doom is sealed! Wherever in our experience this beast of the carnal mind, of the human nature, of the flesh-life has appeared, has risen up within us, and sought to overcome us, it has also been headed straight to destruction! The message is just this — You will not defeat this beast in your life by one great effort or by one wonderful victory. Oh, no! But every time he arises out of the abyss of your fleshly heart, and you face him in the power of the spirit, he will grow weaker and weaker with each encounter, and the determined counsel of the Lord is that HE IS GOING INTO PERDITION! What a word that is! Isn't it wonderful!

I cannot emphasize too strongly how the Holy Spirit draws this contrast between Christ and the beast — the bestial nature of man *and* the bestial kingdoms of the world. The beast appears and disappears, it is and then it isn't, and then emerges once more. It descends out of view, lurking in the deepest recesses of being, and then returns. Speaking of the external form of this beast, the worldly kingdoms of man, Ray Prinzing once put it this way: "If in some manner it seems to no longer exist, yet, in fact, it is still there under another name and form. The same old immorality under a new name." But no matter how many forms the beast takes, within or without, how many lives it seems to have, how terrible its appearance, how intimidating its power, or how indestructible it appears to be — its end is destruction! "The soul that sinneth, it shall *die*." "The world *passeth away* and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God *abideth forever*." "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth *were passed away*; and there was *no more sea*." "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are *passed away*; behold, all things are become *new*." Hallelujah!

You will understand a great mystery when you see that the world is *always passing away*. The great truth is that from the dawn of history until now there have been many "worlds." The apostle Peter speaks of *three of these worlds* when he writes, "Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of His coming (*parousia*, manifest presence)? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the *heavens were of old, and the earth* standing out of the water and in the water: whereby *the world that then was*, being overflowed with water, perished: but the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition (destruction) of ungodly men...nevertheless we,

according to His promise, look for *new heavens and a new earth*, wherein dwelleth righteousness” (II Pet. 3:3-7,13).

There are important time divisions in the plan of God which scripture refers to as “worlds” or “ages.” The word “world” does not generally refer to this physical planet with its mountains, oceans, plains, rivers, vegetation, etc. The word is often translated from the Greek word *kosmos* which means “an order, system, or arrangement of things.” The present order, system, or arrangement of things upon this earth involves all the people, institutions, organizations, cultures, laws, traditions, etc. which have been developed to either control or give motivation to the lives and actions of men and nations. This includes all governmental systems, educational institutions, religious organizations, economic orders, the cultures and every other thing that gives form and substance to our present societies. All of these, together with the time period during which mankind functions within their framework, constitute a biblical “world.”

In the scripture passage quoted above the apostle Peter tells us of *three* such “worlds.” Let us take a closer look at a portion of the passage. “For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: whereby THE WORLD THAT THEN WAS, being overflowed with water, *perished*.” Now let us read this from the New English Bible: “In taking this view they lose sight of the fact that there were heavens and earth long ago, created by God’s word out of water and with water: *and by water THAT FIRST WORLD WAS DESTROYED*, the water of the deluge. And *THE PRESENT HEAVENS AND EARTH*, again by God’s word, have been kept in store for burning.” That first world, then, existed from the time of the creation unto the great flood. Thus, the entire period of time from Adam to the great deluge is called a “world” — *the world that then was*.

What kind of world was that ancient world? The Bible says of it: “And it came to pass, when men began to multiply upon the face of the earth...God saw the *wickedness of man* was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the Lord that He had made man upon the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart. And the Lord said, I will *destroy man* whom I have created *from the face of the earth*. And the *earth also* was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God looked upon the *earth*, and behold *it was corrupt*, for ALL FLESH HAD CORRUPTED HIS WAY UPON THE EARTH. And God said unto Noah, the *end of all flesh* is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will *destroy them with the earth*” (Gen. 6:1-13).

“...the world that then was, being overflowed with water, *perished*.” Does the fact that the world of that day “perished” and was “destroyed” mean that we are not living on the same earth that saw the flood in Noah’s day? Does it mean that this planet was *abolished* so that it no longer existed? Does it mean that Noah was “raptured” off to some other planet or to some far-off heaven somewhere while God “created” a “new heaven and a new earth” for him to live upon? Of course not! Then what “world” or “earth” was destroyed by the flood? The scripture shows plainly that it was a *world of people* and a *way of life* — a *kosmos*, an order, a system and arrangement of things! So we see that the world that was destroyed in Noah’s day was not this physical earth of mountains, oceans, plains, rivers, and vegetation, for of that earth the scripture states, “One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but *the earth abideth forever*” (Eccle. 1:4). And again, “For thus saith the Lord that created the heavens; God Himself that formed the earth and made it; He hath *established it*, He created it *not in vain*, He FORMED IT TO BE INHABITED” (Isa. 45:18). It is clear that while God did not destroy this planet, He did bring an era of wickedness and depravity to an utter and total end, thus destroying, not only the fleshly mankind, but a WHOLE WAY OF LIFE including all the institutions, organizations, governments, religions, cultures, etc. that were characteristic of that civilization.

Yet — who can deny that the “world” that perished soon *reinvented itself right out of the carnal nature of man*? It was not so long before the wickedness of the antediluvians had become repeated in all its grotesque corruption in Sodom and Gomorrah and throughout the seven nations inhabiting the land of Canaan. God inspected the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah and determined that the sin of the inhabitants was very heavy; He judged that the cities must be brought to ruin. Later Jude wrote that those cities underwent the “vengeance” (Greek: judgment) of “fire” which brought total destruction. So these cities experienced a

day of judgment — and their “world” passed away! In like manner the Lord condemned the seven nations dwelling in the land of Canaan in the days of Joshua, declaring that their iniquity “was full.” In other words, they were as wicked as it was possible to be, and at that time their wickedness was irreversible. Therefore God sent Joshua and the children of Israel to destroy those seven nations with orders to not spare anyone, but to completely obliterate them root and branch. Israel never did totally destroy them, but they slew hundreds of thousands and conquered and subjugated those few that remained. Thus those seven nations experienced their day of judgment — and their “world” passed away!

Likewise, when Judah and Jerusalem became unfaithful and merited the Lord’s sore displeasure, He promised to “execute judgment in the midst of her.” This destructive and corrective judgment befell them when Nebuchadnezzar came and plundered the land, destroyed the city and tore down the temple, carrying the people away slaves to Babylon — and their “world” passed away!

God conducted a legal case against ancient Babylon, the longtime enemy of God and His people. Because of being unnecessarily cruel to the house of Judah, not intending to release them after the seventy-year captivity and crediting the god Marduk with the victory over Yahweh’s people, Babylon was in line for a destructive judgment. That came to Babylon in the year 539 B.C. when the kingdom was violently overthrown by the Medes and Persians — and their “world” passed away! Similarly, Jeremiah prophesied that God would “put Himself in judgment” with Edom, among others, hence that nation which had shown repeated hatred for Yahweh and His people experienced destructive judgment and was forever obliterated from the earth — thus their “world” passed away!

Because of their repeated sins of idolatry and self-righteousness, another and more severe day of judgment upon Jerusalem and the Jews was prophesied. Joel foretold an outpouring of the Spirit of God which would begin “*before that great and terrible day of the Lord.*” Under the anointing of the Spirit Peter, upon the day of Pentecost, explained that they were then experiencing the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy. Jesus also prophesied of that same judgment: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, *your house is left unto you desolate...there shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.*” That particular day of destructive judgment came in A.D. 70 when the Roman armies executed judgment upon the Jewish nation, destroying their city and temple, pillaging their land, murdering more than a million of its inhabitants, dispersing the survivors and catapulting them into a “judgment day” that lasted for nineteen long and tortuous centuries — their “world” passed away!

Peter identifies the second world and the second heaven for us. “But the heavens and the earth, **which are now**, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire...” Peter here refers to “the heavens and the earth which are **now**.” And what kind of world is this **second world** — the one in which mankind has been living from the day of Peter until now — the one in which we live? Paul, in writing to the Galatians, says, “Who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from THIS PRESENT EVIL WORLD” (Gal. 1:4). Paul calls this world “this present **evil** world,” and who can deny it? Paul then declares that God’s elect are being delivered or saved out of it through Jesus who gave Himself for us. To be delivered from this present evil world does not mean being “raptured” off to some golden shore in the heavens any more than Noah was raptured away to some other planet when he was “saved” from the world that then was. Of Noah’s deliverance the record states: “For Christ hath also once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: by which also He went and preached unto the spirits in prison; which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited **in the days of Noah**, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were **saved by water**” (I Pet. 3:18-20). Ah, yes, Noah was **saved** by water — the very same water that **destroyed** the world! He was saved FROM A WORLD, but the wonderful truth is that he had been “saved” from that “world” a long time before the waters of the flood arrived! For just as the scripture declares of Jesus, that He was “harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners,” so the scripture testifies of Noah that he was “a just man and **perfect** in his generations, and *Noah walked with God*” (Gen. 6:9). Noah was saved. He was saved from the evil world of his day. He was no part of it, though it was all around him. Noah was different. He walked with God while all the rest of mankind wallowed in the filth of the lusts of

their flesh. And now, in this day, God has sent forth His Son to raise up His life within us, His called and separated elect, and save us from **THIS PRESENT EVIL WORLD!**

It is difficult for many of the Lord's people to understand the truth that "**THE WHOLE WORLD LIETH IN WICKEDNESS**" (I Jn. 5:19). The Amplified Bible correctly translates the latter part of this verse: "The whole world around us is under the power of **THE WICKED ONE**." This whole world system not only lies in wickedness, but it lies in, it is under the power and control of, **THE WICKED ONE** — a personality, a spirit, a mind. How few truly comprehend this! Many entertain the notion that there is at least *something of God* in the politics of this world, or in the educational programs of this world, or in the religions of this world, or in the fashions, philosophies, or economics of this present world system. Do not its leaders acknowledge God? Do they not have prayer in the congress? Does it not say "in God we trust" on our currency? Are not our laws and culture rooted in so-called "Judeo-Christian ethics"? Are not our state funerals conducted in the cathedral? Do not our leaders take their oath of office with their hand on the Bible? Was not our nation founded by godly men who sought justice and religious freedom?

Somehow it does not sink in that the whole world system is, in its totality, **A PRODUCT OF THE CARNAL MINDS OF MEN**. Our culture, our politics, our economy, our military, our educational system, our entertainment, our social programs are one and all under the power and control of carnal-minded men, sold under sin, dominated by the spirit that controls this age, influenced and governed by *the god of this world*. We have tried to believe that our present constitutional and political systems are somehow an expression of the kingdom of God simply because they were given to us by pious men. So we have been busy trying to preserve and perpetuate a flawed system, a passing carnal order which is even now steadily disintegrating before our very eyes, as our omnipotent Father demonstrates for all to see that even our government and institutions are truly *of this world*; and again He shall prove the truth of that word which unerringly proclaims, "**The world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever**" (I Jn. 2:17). Many still hope that out of our present political system will come the integrity and wisdom to solve the immense problems facing our increasingly weak and depraved society and the explosive world situation. Surely, think we, God will raise up someone with the answer! If only we could elect enough Conservatives, or enough Liberals, or enough Christians! What a multitude of Christians have swarmed to the polls to vote for some candidate they were led to believe by propaganda and shrewdly managed image-building techniques was a Christian, or Conservative, or possessed of great intelligence and superior wisdom, only to awaken later to the stark and unvarnished reality that in fact he was just another carnal-minded man, just another *politician*, dominated by the god of this world system which spawned him, controlled by the spirit of the age of this present evil world which is "**under the power of THE WICKED ONE**." Let God be true, and every man a liar!

Now we can understand in fuller measure the import of the message delivered by John in his epistle: "**And we know that we are of God, and the whole world is under the power of the evil one**" (I Jn. 5:19). This world is not for us. Its ways are not for us. Its methods are not for us. Its fashions are not for us. Its standards are not for us. Its politics are not for us. Its spirit is not for us. We are different. We are of God! The called and separated elect of the Lord are sons of God, led by the Spirit of God. God is now in the process of **SAVING US OUT OF THIS WORLD!** Those apprehended to be the manifest sons of God are **overcoming this world** just as the firstborn Son of God testified, "**I have overcome the world**" (Jn. 16:33). Again the apostle John wrote, "**For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith**" (I Jn. 5:4). Yes, the elect of God must overcome the flesh. Yes, the chosen of the Lord must overcome their own will. Yes, the sons of God must overcome the wicked one. But from many statements of holy scripture we may confidently affirm that the primary thrust of our overcoming is that we must **OVERCOME THE WORLD!**

The apostle James likewise warns against walking after the spirit of this world and being entangled therein: "**Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world IS THE ENEMY OF GOD!**" (James 4:4). The great whore is a fornicator, an adulteress. Haughtily she rides astraddle this beast of the world! But thank God! this world shall pass away! Not the planet earth that we live on, but the world — this whole present, carnal, corrupt, abominable system of things. And with it, all the chaos, sin, warfare, crime, uncleanness, poverty,

pain, pride, haughtiness, deceit, sickness, death, yea, all the sorrows and ways of man shall be brought to an end. By the word of our omniscient Father and by the quickening eye of faith and hope we look for a NEW HEAVEN and a NEW EARTH *wherein dwelleth righteousness!* And the time for this change is at hand! Blessed be the name of the Lord, we have arrived at the hour, at a consummation of the ages, for the NEW WORLD to begin! Even now, as God's overcoming company learns to rise up in the spirit, to hear God's voice, to learn God's ways, to be led by His Spirit, to be partakers of His divine nature, to be conformed to His image, the substance and glory and authority and power of that NEW WORLD is taking on form within us! Oh, yes! In this new world the carnal mind of man will not rule. In this new world the satanic powers of darkness will have no authority or dominion. In this new world the politics, the economic system, and the religious orders of this present dark age will hold no sway. Every enemy shall be put under foot, and the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death! Aren't you glad!

The next point I wish to consider is the process by which the world shall pass away. Of that first world we read, "The world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: but the heavens and the earth *which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire*" (II Pet. 3:6-7). The fact that the water which destroyed that first world was literal leads some to believe that the fire which shall destroy this present world must also be literal — but this by no means follows. The temple of God once was of literal stones, but that does not set aside the fact that the body of Christ, which is now the true temple, is built up a spiritual building, a holy temple, not made with hands. Noah's ark was literal too, but it typified Christ who is now our hiding place and the mighty resurrection power of Him who will save the sons of God from the loss of this perishing world and which, through them, shall replenish and renew humanity. Almost all things under the old covenant were outward, natural, and literal; almost all things under the new covenant are inward, spiritual, and supernatural! Think of it!

One important fact which we want to take note of here is that in Noah's day not only was the world *destroyed* by water, but Noah was *saved* by water. The very SAME WATER! The water of the flood brought destruction to the world and salvation to Noah. And it is significant to note that the scripture reveals the very same process at the end of this present evil world! For the *fire* that shall bring total ruin to this present system of things shall bring *perfection and glory* to the Lord's anointed people! The VERY SAME FIRE! Ah, without doubt this is the HOLY GHOST FIRE, for "HE shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with *fire*: whose fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor, and will gather the wheat (the inner life) into His garner; but the chaff (the outer flesh nature) He will burn with *unquenchable fire*" (Lk. 3:16-17). "*Our God IS a consuming fire!*" HE HIMSELF is both the Holy Ghost *and* the fire! "Behold HE shall come, saith the Lord of hosts. But who may abide the day of His coming? and who shall *stand* (the test) when HE appeareth? for HE is AS A REFINER'S FIRE...and HE shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and HE shall *purify the sons of Levi* (God's Royal Priesthood) and *purge them as gold and silver*, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness" (Mal. 3:1-3).

"Now if any man build upon this foundation, gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; *every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the (same) fire shall try every man's work* of what sort it is. If any man's work *abide* which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work *shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; YET SO AS BY FIRE*" (I Cor. 3:12-15). Surely even the most questioning person will concede that the fire which tries a spiritual work is not literal fire; fire is an appropriate symbol to represent the utter destruction of conditions represented here by hay, wood, and stubble. This fire will consume and sweep away all carnal works of flesh but will be powerless to destroy the faith-and-character structure built with gold, silver, and precious stones of divine nature and truth and spirit! Literally scores of scripture passages speak of this mighty work of God's SPIRITUAL FIRE.

When righteous Noah stepped out of the ark that bright morning he stepped onto the soil of the very same earth that existed before the flood, and at night he gazed into the star-spangled splendor of the same heavens above. Yet — *it was changed!* The *old order* of things was gone, and a *new order*, or a *new heavens and earth*, would now be manifested. Was it not a *new heaven* and a *new earth* by being *purged* through the overflowing waters of the flood from the wicked and corrupt order that previously polluted the earth? With what joy and satisfaction do we now entertain the precious promise: "For behold I create new

heavens and a new earth, and *the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind*" (Isa. 65:17). Hallelujah! What a wonderful thing that God shall so thoroughly cleanse our own little world and the whole vast cosmos that even our minds will be purged from the remembrance of it! God will make such a good job of His work, that the past will be completely obliterated and never thought of any more!

God shall not end this present evil world and call forth the new by destroying either His creatures or His creation. When the scriptures speak of our God as a consuming fire *burning up* the wicked, it bespeaks the great truth that what God is destroying in this day is ***the old man, the old humanity, the Adamic nature, the outer man of flesh***. It is *that man* who is the "enemy" of God! "Because the *carnal mind is enmity against God*: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are *in the flesh* cannot please God" (Rom. 8:7-8). Oh, yes, the old flesh man will be dealt with by God's Holy Ghost fire — but not one precious person of God's creation will be lost! He shall bring this world to an end and establish new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness by **MAKING ALL THINGS NEW** — changed, purified, and transformed by His Word! "And He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, ***I make all things new***. And He said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful" (Rev. 21:5). Not *all new things*, but ***all things*** — **NEW!** That is the wonder.

You see, my beloved, there have been many "worlds" and each and every one of them has been *destroyed*. There was the exceeding wicked Antediluvian world. Then there was the Patriarchal world. There was the Babylonian world, the Medo-Persian world, the Grecian world, the Roman world, the Medieval world, and many other worlds of lesser duration and glory. They are all gone. They have each in turn "gone into perdition — destruction." Even their languages, for the most part, have perished from the earth. Their culture has disappeared. Their gods and goddesses have no thrones today. Their temples and their altars lie in ruins. Their religious ceremonies and sacrifices and priestly ministrations have all been silenced. The scripture has come true which long ago was spoken by Jeremiah. "The gods which have not made the heavens and the earth, *even they shall perish from the earth and from under the heavens*" (Jer. 10:11). Where now are the gods worshipped by our European ancestors? Where are Wodin and Thor and other Nordic deities who even gave their names to the days of the week still observed by the Western world? Where is the worship of the host of heaven — sun, moon, and stars?

And yet, what the apostle John calls "the world" still exists! One world passes, another world emerges. That's the way it is with the world! Our society today, in whatever land you dwell, is "the world." With utmost solemnity the beloved John exhorts, "***Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world; if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever***" (I Jn. 2:15-17).

I shall now endeavor to show you a mystery even more dreadful than those of which we have spoken. Our Lord Jesus Christ came into this world in an hour of incredible spiritual darkness, moral corruption, political oppression, and human violence. The iron rule of the mighty pagan Roman empire was at its zenith. We must try to imagine quite a different world from that in which you and I live now. For one thing it was not so large. All civilization — or nearly all — was comprised in the communities which lay around the shores of the Mediterranean Sea. I suppose you know why this body of water was called the Mediterranean; it was because it lay, as the name implies, in the *middle* of the civilized world. Just at the time when the gospel of Christ began its career all this vast territory had been brought under the dominion of the Roman Caesars; it was one enormous empire held together by military strength. Many different races, languages, and cultures lay within its mighty grip; Rome had no rival, and her reigning emperor, whoever he might be, was therefore fittingly called "LORD OF THE WORLD." Political freedom had been crushed out, although in other respects the Roman policy was to be tolerant of local and national customs and religions.

But there was one religion of which Rome was **not** tolerant, and that was the new faith which was becoming known as Christianity. To be a follower of Christ was not respectable then; it was despised and dreaded in much the same way as Communism or Nazism have been in our day, and for very similar reasons. If the believers in Christ had not had such **power** — if only they were preaching a new doctrine, creed, or ritual of religion, you may be quite sure they would have had to suffer no persecution for their opinions;

Rome would only have laughed at them as crazy visionaries. But when we find that, instead of laughing, even the strongest of the Roman emperors — such as Domitian and Marcus Aurelius — regarded them as a danger, and adopted the most rigorous methods in order to stamp out their teaching, we know at once that the power of the gospel drew vast multitudes of men like magnets to acknowledge JESUS CHRIST AS LORD OF THE WORLD, thus assailing the existing political, social, and religious orders and threatening their overthrow.

What mighty power, light, and glory flooded the world through the ministry of Jesus and His apostles! It was more than a teaching — there were mighty signs and wonders, all manner of sick healed, lame men walked, deaf ears were unstopped, blind men received sight, demons were cast out, and the power of sin and pagan religion was broken in men's lives and they stood as new creation men transformed by the living presence of Jesus Christ the Lord. The word of HIS LORDSHIP, in the power of the Holy Spirit, swept the world like a prairie fire. It climbed the mountains and crossed the seas. It made kings to tremble and tyrants to fear. Within the lifetime of those early apostles it was said that they had turned the world upside down — so transforming was their word in the power and demonstration of the Holy Ghost. In spite of imprisonment, torture, and martyrdom it grew and multiplied, for God dwelt mightily in the midst of His people. The knowledge of the glory of the Lord covered the earth as the waters cover the sea. The day came when that word of the Lord and that power of the risen, ascended, and glorified Christ conquered the mighty empire of Rome! The corrupt and inhuman state of things in that pagan world was swept away by the power of the gospel that broke forth upon the empire of the Caesars. The mighty Roman empire shut up its idol temples, sheathed its persecuting sword, and sat down as a disciple at the feet of CHRIST THE LORD.

It appeared for a season that the bestial empire of Rome with its political, social, and religious orders had been forever deposed into the abyss, never to rise again. But no sooner had Christianity prevailed in the world than a strange and unexpected thing began to take place. Even before the apostles had passed from the scene, a spirit and system had set in among the people of God and the *beast* of man's *flesh* began to rise up in the midst. Leaders began instituting rules and regulations, laying down laws, formulating creeds, observing days, establishing ordinances, sacraments, and rituals in place of the living presence of Christ. Men began to set themselves up as "lords" over God's heritage and the authority of bishops was elevated to a place equal to God Himself. Soon the glory and power of the anointing — the moving of God within His saints — began to be eclipsed, and the power of carnal-minded men took the place of the awesome presence and power of the Lord. Consequently, man's carnal understanding was put upon the scriptures and the truth, the living word of God, fled from their midst as they established a vast and elaborate system of theology, ritualistic religion, and human authority and rule.

As the blind led the blind the visions of the people were in error and darkness, and the pure vision and experience of CHRIST LIVING AND REIGNING IN HIS PEOPLE was lost to them. Instead of conquering by the power of the Spirit and by Truth — as in the early days — the religion that had once suffered under the sword of Rome began itself to propagate itself and maintain its control purely by the *power of the sword!* An apostasy of a dark and dreadful nature arose, and in the progress of the centuries assumed enormous proportions, and a character so diabolical as to challenge all the idolatries of paganism! The greater light granted was abused and perverted, until it became a darkness exceeding any previous darkness — and the central period of its duration and reign is, by common consent, called "THE DARK AGES." Thus the very gospel of Christ gradually *became* the *religion of antichrist!* As the church of Rome consolidated both its temporal and spiritual power over the nations the new Holy Roman Empire replaced the old Pagan Roman Empire — the ancient Pagan Roman "world" passed away, giving way to the new Christian Roman "world." The old Roman beast *was not* — yet **IT WAS!** The new form and face of the beast ascended out of the abyss and ashes of the old! That is the mystery.

It seems to me that if those holy apostles who set in motion the invincible power that toppled the pagan world could be brought back from the unseen realm and placed in the midst of our so-called Christian "world" today, they would immediately recognize the ancient beast which was, and is not, and yet is! I have no doubt that they would be greatly surprised to behold the gaudy harlot sitting upon her beast! They would realize that the Roman world they knew was gone, but the kingdom of God had not come. They would miss the Roman soldier, but would find the Christian nations an armed camp. They would be confounded to

behold Christianity enthroned and endowed while the very pagan practices and moral evils against which the gospel was directed are flourishing before our very eyes. They would wonder what new brand of Christianity this was; they would be able to recognize little in it except the name. They would see the amazing spectacle of earnest servants of the Lord everywhere preaching false ideas about God, proclaiming hell-fire, damnation, and eternal doom upon the masses of humanity, laying laws and commandments upon the people, worshipping in cathedrals beneath the glow of stained glass, observing ancient pagan customs and rituals renamed as Christmas and Easter, with myriad denominations, organizations, hierarchies, and strange church names, along with a thousand other things foreign to the primitive gospel. This would be a new gospel to them, and to call it Christianity would puzzle them UNTIL THEY RECOGNIZED THE BEAST!

I think this understanding will give greater meaning to the words the messenger spoke into the anointed ears of the Seer of Patmos on that long ago day. He spoke concerning the beast. And he imparted into the spiritual mind of the apostle a divine understanding of certain characteristics of the beast. The beast is not just one thing. The beast takes various forms. It was, and is not. It vanishes, but then reemerges. It sinks to the lowest depths of the unseen, the very abyss, the bottomless pit, only to clamber out once more. And it does this *again and again!* Whether it appears as a sinner or a saint, as a pagan beast or a Christian beast, as the flesh nature within an individual or the carnal life of a church system — it is still the same beast! It is an enigma. It is a seeming contradiction. But you can never understand the beast until you grasp this one great truth: Just as the world re-invents itself into new images, institutions, governments, and structures of all kinds, just so your old man, your human nature, your carnal mind re-asserts itself on new levels of expression and manifestation! It will tempt and try you in one way today and just when you think you have the victory (and perhaps you do, in that area) he will arise from the depths in another form and seek to ensnare you in a way you have not met him before. Can you not see the mystery?

Paul tells us plainly, “Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were *baptized into His death?* Knowing this, that our *old man is crucified* with Him, that the *body of sin* might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that *is dead* is freed from sin. Now if we *be dead* with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him” (Rom. 6:3,6-8). Sounds as though our “death” is an accomplished fact! Yet — in another place the same apostle instructs, “Likewise *reckon ye also yourselves to be dead* indeed unto sin, but alive unto God...*let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body...*” (Rom. 8:11-12). The instruction is surprising. To “reckon” yourself to be dead means to “consider” yourself as dead or to “think” of yourself *as though* you were dead! The question follows: Why should that which “is dead” need to be “considered” or “thought of” *as if it were* dead! But that is not all. Again the same apostle Paul tells us, “For ye *are dead*, and your life is hid with Christ in God...*mortify* (kill, put to death) *therefore your members which are upon the earth:* fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry” (Col. 3:3,5). This is all very strange!. First we are told that we *are* dead. Then we are admonished to *think of ourselves* as though we were dead. And finally we are instructed to *kill our members*, that is, *kill, put to death our outer man* — KILL OURSELVES! **KILL A DEAD MAN!** How can it be that that which “is dead” can now reappear with a vengeance to molest, torment, and defeat me again? Why do I have to deal with and put to death that which is supposed to already be dead? Ah, we can indeed understand the mystery only when by the spirit we see “the beast that *was*, and *is not*, and which *shall ascend out of the bottomless pit,*” yea, “the beast that *was*, and *is not*, and **YET IS!**”

The beast appears to be forever gone — into the bottomless pit, which in the Greek text is the *abyss*. We have seen that nearly everything in the book of Revelation takes place in one of three realms: sea, earth, and heaven. The abyss, however, is a realm deeper than the earth, deeper even than the sea! It is the *lowest realm*, unseen and unknown by the mind of man. Therefore the great mystery and the great truth that the Holy Spirit is seeking to reveal to those who can receive and understand it is that there is a dimension of man’s being which is not a result or manifestation of anything else, but lies so deep within us that it is indeed the secret and hidden *root* and *cause* of all that pertains to the natural man. Individually, this signifies something deeper even than the *body realm*, the darkest, most inscrutable, unknown depths of the human heart, deep within the recesses of the inner nature. When we slay one of the heads of the beast he immediately retreats into this abyss and is there suppressed, restrained, confined, hidden, disguised, muted

— one would be led to believe the victory over him is complete and final — those negative, fleshly things within us having once and for all been conquered, never to rise again!

The principle is given us again in chapter seventeen of the Revelation, verse eleven. “And the beast that *was*, and *is not*, even he *is* the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition (destruction).” The beast is truly “going into perdition” as God deals with this bestial nature within us again and again. Our deliverance is found through battle after battle as we gain one victory after another. That’s what the whole series of events in the Revelation is all about! There is no one grand leap from old Adam into the full stature of Christ. There is no instantaneous death with the full victory over sin and death accomplished with one sweep of the executioner’s sword. You cannot cut off all seven heads of this beast in one swift action. Would God it were that way! Yes, God is getting rid of the old Adamic mind-set and the old corrupt Adamic nature, but never forget, my beloved — this beast has *seven* heads and *ten* horns! And when, after a marvelous victory *another head* (*thought, idea, desire*) or *another horn* (*strength and power of the fleshly nature*), that is, another form of the beast rises up out of our abyss, do we not cry out, “O my God, I thought that was gone!” Fear not, dear one, for God has *revealed* it to *destroy* it! “...he shall ascend out of the bottomless pit (of the heart of man), and ***go into destruction.***” That is the mystery!

To be continued...

J. PRESTON EBY