

KINGDOM BIBLE STUDIES

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

FROM THE CANDLESTICK TO THE THRONE

Part 204

THE MARRIAGE OF THE LAMB

“And after these things I heard a *great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honor, and power unto the Lord our God: for true and righteous are His judgments: for He hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of His servants at her hand. And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever. And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia. And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye His servants, and ye that fear Him, both small and great. And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth*” (Rev. 19:1-6).

The vision of this chapter is introduced, not by an angel, but by the loud voices of a combined choir in heaven saying or singing a four-fold “Hallelujah Chorus,” sung in response to the dramatic events of chapter eighteen — the just overthrow and destruction of Babylon the great. The first seven verses are the “Te Deum of Heaven.” In meditation upon these things a strange and wonderful unfolding pervaded my spirit and the great truth that in this blessed vision of John we meet once more one of those remarkable contrasts, which are numerous throughout scripture, became exceedingly clear. **The same event arouses radically different responses in different people!**

When Christ was born and there was joy in heaven and the celestial hosts swept down to shout of the glad tidings for the earth and for all peoples, the shepherds of Bethlehem in joyful expectation made their way to the manger in the city of David; but, on the other hand, you find that King Herod, when he received the same news, was deeply chagrined about the event and made the treacherous attempt to snuff out the life of the little Babe before it could rise to glory. At the cross, which for a moment appeared to be the final and complete defeat of the Man of Galilee, we find Mary and John and the women who used to follow Jesus weeping in astonishment and sorrow because of this seemingly tragic turn of events; but at the same time there was a determined satisfaction and indeed an exultant joy in the hearts of the leaders of the scribes and the Pharisees — a joy aroused by the same event which evoked the grief of the Lord’s disciples. In like manner, at the resurrection morning the disciples joyfully and triumphantly greeted one another with the jubilant declaration, “The Lord is risen indeed!” And their hearts were filled with new-born wonder and hope. But the same fact of the resurrection caused the Roman guards to flee in terror and flooded the hearts of the Jewish leaders with dismay and devilish apprehension. The illustration could be multiplied literally by the hundreds! The same events, connected somehow with the formation and triumph of the kingdom of God on earth, are the cause of sorrow, fear, consternation, or mocking to some, and ecstatic joy and overflowing gladness and praise to God to others!

Thus it is with Babylon, the great city. For long centuries it has been the cause of dismay and fear and even terror to God’s faithful remnant. Babylon embodies all the principles which are an abhorrence to all the Lord’s called and separated elect who have been given eyes to see and hearts to discern, and therefore through the ages became the cause of their persecution and tribulation. The great of the earth committed

fornication with her, and the masses in general wondered at her glory and rejoiced because of the greatness of her power. But now Babylon lies in ruins, its burning has reduced it to heaps of ashes, and it has fallen to rise never again. And while the kings of the earth, and the merchants of the earth, and the ship-masters and sailors bewail and lament for her when they see her burning, and stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing, and cast dung on their heads, crying, Alas, alas, that great city — for in one hour is she made desolate! At the same time John hears a great voice of a vast multitude of people in the heavenly realms of God's Spirit, boldly proclaiming, ***“Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honor, and power, unto the Lord our God: for true and righteous are His judgments: for He hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of His servants at her hand. And again they said, Alleluia. And the smoke of her torment rose up for ever and ever...”***

In commentary on this passage Ray Prinzing once wrote:

“How clear are the statements of Jesus:

‘For judgment I am come into this world’ (John 9:39).

‘I am come that they might have life...’ (John 10:10).

“These are not contradictory statements, nor mutually exclusive of each other, but vitally connected in the outworking of the process. The ultimate is to bring us INTO LIFE, and as a means to that end we have the various judgments of God — those correctional processes which bring us into His righteousness. Another point of clarification needs to be made: when judgment is upon people, it is to CORRECT THEM, but when judgment is upon the systems of the world, it is usually TO END THEM. Babylon is not to be healed, but annihilated, wiped out completely. For it is written, *‘The world passeth away, and the lust thereof’* (I John 2:17). But, *‘He is the Saviour of ALL MEN, especially of those that believe’* (I Timothy 4:10). When the nations of the world are judged, it means the end of that governmental order, and then the process of cleansing and saving the people of that nation, though the severity of it be ‘by fire.’

“So, much people in heaven are saying, *‘Alleluia!’* Why? Because of His judgments! And specifically ***‘because He hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornications.’*** Oh, the worship that shall arise when God brings to an end all of the religions of man, consuming every idol, dissipating the cover of darkness upon men, eradicating every error and false doctrine, that the glorious light of the Gospel might fill the whole earth, as it is written: *‘The people which sat in darkness saw a great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up’* (Matthew 4:16).

“*“The Lord will be terrible (to be feared, revered) unto them: for He will famish all the gods of the earth: and every man shall worship Him, every one from His place, even all the isles of the heathen (nations)’* (Zephaniah 2:11). The judgment is against all the false gods which religious systems have promoted. And when men are loosed from all their superstitious fear and subservience to these falsities, and the glorious light of truth shines upon them, they will *‘worship Him, every one from his place.’* Every creature shall become a true worshipper. No wonder they cry out, *‘Alleluia!’* The very spirit of false religion that deceives and enslaves men shall be judged and dealt with, and therefore we also say, *‘Alleluia!’* ***‘And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye His servants, and ye that fear Him, both small and great. And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.’*** Wave after wave of praise and worship ascend to our God. Because of His judgments, *Alleluia!* And because He hath judged the great whore, *Alleluia!* And now, because the Lord God omnipotent reigneth, say it again, *Alleluia!’*” — end quote.

\ “For He hath judged the great whore...and hath *avenged* the blood of His servants at her hand” (Rev. 19:2).

Avenged — Vindicated. He has vindicated the blood (life) of His servants, that is, He vindicates the spiritual life of the people while He judges the system. It is not His people, not His very own people whom

He has purchased with His own blood, that God is out to “get,” but it is the system of Babylon which uses and abuses them! The system is judged, but the people are vindicated. The Lord’s precious people are delivered from the captivity of Babylon and brought forth to know Him in new and fresh dimensions of revelation, experience, and glory. Isn’t it wonderful! These are the ones mentioned in verses five through six, commanded to praise the Lord, every one of them from the least to the greatest, and they are a great multitude, as the sound of many waters, shouting and singing “*Alleluia — for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!*” These also begin to be glad and rejoice because the marriage of the Lamb is come and His wife has *made herself ready!* Before, under the bondage of Babylon, these did not really comprehend what brideship is; but now that they see it they commence to rejoice and be glad within themselves, and prepare themselves to attend the marriage.

Let us notice concerning these singers, in the first place, they are **in heaven** — they are heaven-dwellers, those who have been raised up and made to sit together in the heavenly places **in Christ Jesus**. The very same event which causes such sorrow, agony, and despair in the earth-dwellers, fills the heaven-dwellers with joy unspeakable and full of glory and causes them to rebound with a four-fold *Alleluia*, to the glory of Him who sits upon the throne! The earth-realm, the carnal-minded world, is filled with anguish — the joy is in heaven! Only those in whose hearts the stronghold of Babylon has been reduced to ashes by the consuming Holy Ghost fire of God can comprehend and appreciate this joy! They naturally are filled with joy because their souls have escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers; they have escaped and the destruction of this city is their liberty, their victory, and their glory!

Yet a further cause of their joy is set forth in the following sentence of the song of the multitude: “Salvation, and glory, and honor, and power belong unto our God.” It is because the salvation and glory and honor and power belong to God that the people are moved to sing these anthems of praise. All these four attributes of God, all these four ascriptions of praise, must be taken in their most comprehensive sense. First, salvation belongs unto our God — that is, salvation to the *fullest extent* — a FULL AND COMPLETE SALVATION IN SPIRIT, SOUL, AND BODY! At this point in the Revelation all things are ready for the unveiling of the *full salvation*, with the beautiful marriage of the Lamb, the revelation of the glory of the holy city, New Jerusalem, the enthronement of the sons of God within the city, and the complete salvation, and the light of the city illuminating the earth unto the restoration, and glorification of the nations and of all creation.

As we enter chapter nineteen in the Revelation we are fastly approaching the climatic, concluding scenes of God’s great redemptive drama. The multitude of heaven-dwellers naturally looks on salvation from this lofty, comprehensive point of view, the salvation of the whole man and the salvation of all creation, which have been redeemed by the Lamb. It is salvation *unto the uttermost*. THIS SALVATION IS OF OUR GOD! Only HE can accomplish it! And He shall! He is the originator, the planner, the author of this complete salvation. He is the finisher of this full salvation. Therefore, He it is who receives all the glory and praise! Truly, He who has begun a good work in us, in all of us, will perfect and complete it unto the day of God. And now, from the depths of their hearts, all of God’s glorified firstfruits, and all of His redeemed people shout and sing, “Salvation is of our God! Hence to Him belongs the glory! To Him belongs the honor! Of Him is the power that accomplishes it!” It is then, not in the abstract that they sing God’s glory, but because great Babylon is fallen and God’s FULL SALVATION is now ready to be revealed before the face of all nations and shed forth upon all peoples. That is the mystery!

This scene calls to mind the experience of Handel when he composed his unexcelled masterpiece *The Messiah*. This oratorio tells the Bible story of prophecy, the birth of Christ, His life, death, and resurrection, and is climaxed with the Hallelujah Chorus of heaven. It was composed in three weeks and two days, from August 22 to September 14, 1741. Handel later said that he had a great overflowing surplus of energy during that period; he ate and slept very little, because he was caught up in an ecstasy of insight that made earth’s cares insignificant. I can relate to that especially, since through the years of writing these studies in the book of Revelation, no matter the difficulties of life, or the pressures of the time, the moment I sit down to take up my pen I am able to sense the great overwhelming presence of the Lord, indeed an almost uncanny power of inspiration, and a special flow of anointing that abides all the hours that I write. There is such an alertness and awareness in the spirit until I am reluctant to lay down my pen and go home. Many times I have wished

I could just continue writing through the night and through the days and never stop to eat or sleep or do anything else of this life except to share the living word that is flowing into me until every chapter, every verse, and every word of the vision has been fully elucidated. When Handel was asked about his emotions as he composed *The Messiah*, he replied, “I did think I did see all heaven before me and the great God Himself.” In similar fashion, this scene from the pen of the seer on Patmos fills the soul with worshipful wonder as we behold the great God Himself upon the throne and the throngs of redeemed ones penetrating the vastnesses of space and vibrating the extremities of the universe with their celestial songs of deliverance and praise!

Here we have the great “Handel’s Messiah” of God’s elect! In recent years the word Hallelujah, or Alleluia, has disappeared from the Psalms in the King James Bible, and the phrase “Praise ye the Lord” has taken its place. However, it is still retained in the Revelation. Breaking down the word into its component parts, it becomes “Praise Yah,” or better yet, “Hail Yah,” and expresses a great sense of glorified reverence and gratitude. The first time the word is found in the Bible is in connection with the installation of the ark of God in the midst of Zion. David had ended his warfare, all his enemies had been defeated, the stronghold of Zion had been wrested from the Jebusites, and now the ark would rest in Zion and Yahweh would be exalted in their midst. David decided to have a choir in the midst of the worship of God and we read that “he appointed certain of the Levites to minister (in song) before the ark of the Lord, and to celebrate and to thank and *hallelujah* the God of Israel” (I Chron. 16:4, Literal). The ark of God was the symbol of Yahwey’s presence, power, victory, and glory among His people. Christ, of course, is the true ark, and as great Babylon is overthrown within and without, and Christ comes forth to take His rightful place in His people, all of God’s called and separated elect who dwell in the heavenlies, in the high places of the Spirit of the Lord, break forth in glad Hallelujahs. HAIL YAH! ALL HAIL TO THE CHIEF! That is the message! Oh, yes! Thus in this majestic chorus great joy is expressed for the overthrow of the carnal mind and all it has spawned in the earth. Hail Yah! For HE has done this by His mighty love, power, and purpose! To Him be the glory!

This joy culminates in the powerful and well known phrase, “For the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!” These words reach far beyond the multitudes of saints who proclaim them, for they embrace all of creation, all of time, and all purpose. If the Lord God is OMNIPOTENT, and if the Lord God REIGNS, then nothing anywhere can ever resist him, He is Lord over all, reigns over all, and that eternally! This declaration teaches us two things. First, that creation has a Lord and Governor who is in absolute control of the creation which He has made. The Lord God omnipotent reigneth! The all-powerful, all-mighty, all-wise Creator and Lord is over what He has created. And contrary to what nearly all church creeds say and most preachers proclaim, such sovereign power *cannot be usurped by anyone*— not by man, not by the devil, and certainly not by religion! The second division of our text teaches another sublime and glorious truth — that the outcome of God’s control and government over His creation will be unqualified and universal glory and praise. For the text says, “***Hallelujah:*** for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!”

How infinitely wonderful is the truth that God reigns over all His creation! How it floods our hearts with joy and shall intimately fill all creation with glory, delight, and praise! For this is the last shout and the ultimate triumph of creation! The purpose of creation must and will be fulfilled to the everlasting praise and glory of God. In short, the end of creation will be as the text suggests, all glorious. Creation has an origin and a purpose, and this origin and purpose of creation were determined by the wisdom, the pleasure, and the purpose of the omnipotent Creator. The world around us has a meaning. It is not meaningless. It is not a world that is adrift from its moorings, or a world such as modern, materialistic pseudo-science supposes, which came from nowhere in particular, has no particular aim and nobody knows where it is going, nor what the end shall be. Against that is set heaven’s thrilling declaration, “Hallelujah, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!” It came from God. It goes back to God. He reigns over it, therefore the outcome is secure, which is altogether and absolutely a glorious outcome. By redemption it will bring to God a revenue of praise and glory and adoration as no other device could do. Therefore it has a meaning. It is the field of the development and display of God’s love, wisdom, and power, a means by which He makes Himself to be known and understood, a means by which too, not only is God known, but a supreme joy and glory and eternal blessedness shall be achieved.

The greatest of all ends is in view, and that end is Christ! The fixing of ends in creation ought to be the most reassuring of all truths in a world like ours. It all depends of course on who fixes the end, and to what purpose and by what means. If the character of the Creator is one of goodness, righteousness, truth, and love, we can rely upon Him to use His omnipotence for the highest purpose conceivable and this we will be assured is the case, and we will applaud it when we see it to be the case, when in the heavens of the spirit, having eyes to see and ears to hear and hearts to understand beyond the finite, we shall cry, ***“Hallelujah! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!”*** If He were less than omnipotent, or if He allowed evil to develop and multiply itself in His own domain of creation, without His prior decree, permission, or purpose, then He is not God, and cannot be God. If evil there must be, let us be in the hands of God, and not of chance, and not of our own strength and devices, for if evil comes from outside the divine decree, otherwise than by the will and purpose of God, then there must be another god beside God. And that other god is greater than our God, because God the Creator has become the victim or the prisoner of His own creation. And He is then the most pitiful object of all.

And yet — is that not exactly what the Babylon religious systems teach! So-called “orthodoxy” has long taught that Satan was, in the beginning, a high and beautiful archangel in heaven. The theologians and preachers recite over and over how Satan was originally “the anointed cherub that covereth...the most beautiful and wise of all God’s creation!” This being was, so they say, the ruler and leader of the angelic hosts and apparently led them in their praise of God and shouts of joy...the greatest being God ever created, one who had unequaled strength, wisdom, beauty, privilege, and authority, and was next to God Himself. This blameless, perfect one, named Lucifer, was created without any form of evil and with the greatest intelligence of any created being. Then, we are told, unbeknown by God, this Lucifer, suddenly realizing how beautiful and intelligent he was, became inflated by power and pride, and his heart was lifted up in rebellion against God. According to this story, Lucifer gathered one-third of the heavenly angels to his cause, mustering an army with which he planned to knock God off His throne and supplant Himself as king and god of the universe — and there was war in heaven! Luckily, God won — well, He wasn’t able actually to get rid of Lucifer and his army altogether, but He was able to cast them out of heaven into the earth where he became, instead of an holy angel, the devil that he is today.

When they are asked whether the good God created a bad devil, they reply, “No, He did not create the devil; He created a beautiful and powerful angel who later *became* the devil!” Essentially, they say, the devil *created himself*. This may sound good *on the surface*, but when the spirit of wisdom and revelation from God shines brightly within our hearts, this line of reasoning is seen to be but shallow deductions of the carnal mind. Giving Satan the power to become within himself something other than what God Himself decreed, to transform himself into that which God never planned or purposed, to surprise the almighty with his rebellion, and then to enter into Eden, again to slip up on God’s blind side, and cunningly and quickly steal away the hearts and loyalty of the very first man and woman God created in His own image and likeness and placed on earth, and then, in spite of God’s great plan, power, love, and work of redemption, to continue to deceive, enslave, and carry captive the vast majority of the human race, taking them ultimately as his trophies into everlasting damnation, while God the omnipotent is able to rescue and save only a “little flock” to spend eternity with Him in His great kingdom — if that myth, that legend, that folklore, that fairy tale be the truth — then the song of the saints in heaven is a monstrous *lie*: ***“Hallelujah — for the LORD GOD OMNIPOTENT REIGNETH!”***

When God created the world and its inhabitants He did so with the ultimate intention of dying for it; the death of Christ did not, in the intention and wisdom of God, follow the unforeseen and unfortunate sin and disobedience of man, but in His foreknowledge and by His predestination preceded it, for Christ was indeed “the Lamb slain *from the foundation of the world...who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you*” (Rev. 13:8; I Pet. 1:20). The remedy was in advance of the disease. Isn’t it wonderful! The fall was the occasion of redemption, but redemption was always and first of all the preordained and ultimate intention of God, that thereby He might accomplish that which could not otherwise be achieved, namely, the display of His nature in all its manifold beauty of wisdom, holiness, goodness, love, patience, longsuffering, mercy, kindness, faithfulness, and power. By this means He achieves a creation which will not only be filled with an intelligent admiration of His almightiness, but with a rapture of praise, an ecstasy as upon an eternal marriage day, when long delays are

consummated in the fulfillment of love and desire, when mourning is turned into joy, an innumerable company of blessed beings — *all* of mankind — wear the garment of praise in exchange for the spirit of heaviness, where they obtain beauty for ashes, when they come to the heavenly Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads, where they obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing flee away. Then, precious friend of mine, shall a new creation burst in universal song, the meaning of all things be unfolded, all mysteries unveiled, all truth known, all evil forever put down, all creatures redeemed, restored, and transformed, and that one great cry will fill all things, ***“Hallelujah: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!”*** Amen.

I still vividly remember the day, when I was but a child, and the Second World War ended. The war tension was high and a heavy load hung dark upon many a weary heart. But one day the word flashed out, “The war is over!” What a time of rejoicing as factory whistles blew, church bells rang, and people shouted and danced about in boundless joy. And so again millions gather upon the plains of battle, and as great Babylon sinks and seethes in her own destruction, the hosts of heaven — saints both small and great — join in the grand Hallelujah Chorus. Back and forth they vibrate and reverberate, “Salvation, and glory, and honor, and power, unto the Lord our God...for He hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication...and again they said, *Alleluia*, and the smoke of her torment rises up for the ages of the ages.” And this vast company of “much people” is answered by the twenty-four elders round about the throne who shout back the same glorious word, *Alleluia!* And before the echoes die away the mighty living creatures in the midst of the throne thunder out their praise in an ***“Amen, Alleluia!”***

Before we received the call to sonship we were great *praisers*. And truly He is worthy of *all our praise!* We praise Him still! Not, however, as many who simply love the “atmosphere” of praise and get a “high” from entering into a realm of praise that makes them feel emotionally whole. If we are praising for what “we” get out of it, then we have missed the whole point of praise! Many people so esteem that wonderful “atmosphere” or “feeling” derived in the realms of praise that they truly *worship praise* more than they worship the Lord! Some do the service of praise because they believe that praise brings the presence of the Lord. The truth is, however, that it is the *presence of the Lord that brings praise!* In the days of the great Latter Rain outpouring of the Spirit the people were caught up in realms of the “high praises” of God, and it was glorious far beyond the ability of my poor tongue or pen to describe! Yet — many lost sight of the fact that it was not praise that brought the Rain — it was the Rain that evoked the praise! Never in the scriptures were men moved to praise God in order to bring a revelation of His glory. Instead, it was when the Lord came to them, and appeared to them in His glory, and glorified Himself on their behalf, that men were moved to praise and exalt His greatness!

In the book of Revelation we have the same picture; it is only when the Lamb is revealed standing in the midst of the throne that the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders sing their hymn of praise, followed by the voice of many angels, and every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, crying out, and saying, “Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever!” It was not the praise that brought the revelation of the Lamb! Rather, it was the revelation of the Lamb enthroned in His glory and majesty that evoked this universal paean of praise! And now the Lamb has overcome and the whore has been judged. All of God’s people have been set free from the delusion and tyranny of *religion*. And these are the very same heavenly praisers John beholds in our text, saying, “Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honor, and power, unto the Lord our God: for true and righteous are His judgments: for He hath judged the great whore...”

Only those who dwell in His presence and sit together with Him in the heavenly realms of His Spirit share in the rapture of this greatest of all songs, this mightiest of all shouts of triumph. John reports a voice whose speaker is not named, but it is a voice of much *people in heaven*. Then a voice comes out of the throne, and could therefore be thought of as emanating from God Himself. But it is not the voice of God inasmuch as the voice uses the words “Praise our God,” thus associating himself with those addressed. The voice calls on *all God’s people* to join him or them in the chorus of praise — “Praise ***our God***, all ye His servants, and ye that fear Him, both small and great.” Will you not agree with me that “ALL ye His servants, both small and great,” can only signify that innumerable multitude of all the Lord’s people who

have just ESCAPED OUT OF BABYLON AT ITS DESTRUCTION? For the song is a song of praise over Babylon's destruction! As we read these words of truth surely we must realize that the "voice out of the throne" can be none other than those whom the Lord has raised up to sit with Him in His throne — His kings and priests! "To him that overcometh *will I grant to sit with me in my throne*, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne...and they sung a new song, saying, Thou...hast redeemed us by Thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God *kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth*" (Rev. 3:21; 5:9-10).

Let us now earnestly consider this ministry of "kings and priests" and the hidden secrets concerning them that lie just beneath the surface in this wondrous drama we are now called to view. In the opening verses of the Revelation John addresses the saints, saying, "John to the seven churches...and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten from the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath *made us kings and priests unto God and His Father*; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen" (Rev. 1:4-6).

With these wonderful words John introduces the New Testament church to Old Testament understanding. For the first time in the book of Revelation, here at the very beginning, he is bringing the Old Testament literal types and shadows over into the New Testament fulfillment. The Old Testament was all about natural, physical, earthly types and shadows of kingship and priesthood. Their kings and priests sat on physical thrones and offered animal sacrifices upon brazen altars in temples made with hands. But now John is raising this kingship and priesthood into a higher, spiritual dimension and announces to the saints that Christ now "hath made **us** kings and priests unto God and His Father." With this simple beginning John does what we have seen him do constantly throughout the book of Revelation — refer to Old Testament *terminology* within the context of New Testament *spiritual reality*! And then, shortly, we are shown another scene.

"And *round about* the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold. And *out of* the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning *before* the throne, which are the seven spirits of God. And *before* the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and *in the midst* of the throne, and *round about* the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind" (Rev. 4:4-6).

Let us get a firm mental picture of this scene which John saw in heaven, in the realm of the Spirit. He saw the throne of God and God sitting on the throne. And in the middle of the throne, and also encircling the throne, were four beasts, full of eyes in front and behind. Then in a circle around the throne were twenty-four other thrones (called *seats* in the King James Bible), and on these thrones were twenty-four elders clothed in white robes and with crowns of gold on their heads. In the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a lamb as it had been slain. Before the throne, evidently between the elders and the throne, stood seven lamps of fire burning. Outside the circle of the elders stood a great multitude of the redeemed from every nation and tribe on earth; they were clothed in white robes and had palm branches in their hands. Around all this were the angels of heaven, an innumerable host — myriads upon myriads, thousands upon thousands. What a scene!

The word "beasts" is an unfortunate translation, being necessarily associated in our minds with the brute creation and that which is typified thereby. It is not the Greek word *therion* which in thirty-five instances in the book of Revelation is translated beast, meaning "a wild and ravenous beast," thus denoting an animal of ferocious disposition. It is, rather, the Greek word *zoon* which signifies simply a "living creature" and is so translated in nearly all modern translations of the Bible. In the Revelation the word *therion* is used as a type of the base corruptible and fleshly nature of the natural man and of the brutish and tyrannical kingdoms of *this world*, ruled by the carnal, depraved, and vicious nature of unregenerated men. The word *zoon*, however, means *living creature*, or a *creature expressing life*. It comes from the root *zao* from which also is derived the word *zoe* which is used exclusively in the New Testament in reference to *divine life* or the *life of the ages*. All of these words denote that which is alive or is lively! How significant, then, that these four *creatures expressing divine life* are found "in the midst of the throne" and "round about

the throne,” occupying the central position in the throne while emanating as an essence, glory, and power out from the throne!

In the midst of the throne! The four “Living Creatures” are four manifestations of LIFE — THE LIFE OF THE GOD OF THE THRONE! They are four representations of NATURE — THE NATURE OF THE GOD OF THE THRONE! The four Living Creatures are four expressions of the POWER AND DOMINION OF THE THRONE! If you want to know what the God of the throne is like, then take a look at the four Living Creatures in the midst of the throne. In them (in their symbology) is manifest the attributes of the life of the God of the throne. If you wish to know the nature of the authority, rule, and dominion of the throne, then understand the nature of the four Living Creatures in the midst of the throne, for these embody within themselves the character of the dominion of the God of the throne. Not only do they represent the life and nature of the God of the throne, not only do they express within themselves the character of the dominion of the throne — they likewise reveal the very life, nature, character, and dominion of A-L-L WHO SHARE THE THRONE!

This is the *life of the throne*! The throne means **kingship**! The One on the throne **REIGNS**! This is the glory of the *sons of God* who reign with Christ! This is the four-fold character of God revealed through the dominion of God from the throne. This is God’s identity through His kingdom administration in and through those elect saints who share **His kingship**, to reconcile and restore all things into God again. The four Living Creatures are the four faces of God revealed in His POWER (the *lion*), GRACE (the *calf* or *ox*), WISDOM (the *face as a man*), and EXALTATION (the *flying eagle*)! The four Living Creatures are the four-fold nature of God revealed in dominion. When the power, grace, wisdom, and exaltation of God have been raised up in that earth which *you are*, as it is in heaven, you will behold the four Living Creatures within yourself! Ah, my beloved, if you have received the call of the overcomer to “sit with HIM in His throne,” then all that the four Living Creatures represent is even now being wrought out in your life, their nature becoming your nature, for naught but the nature of the Lamb which is the nature of the four Living Creatures can stand “*in the midst of the throne*.” That is the mystery!

My spirit thrills with the harmonies of heaven as I contemplate these things and the supernal glories typified by the four Living Creatures unfold within my spiritual understanding, for truly they reveal the nature of throneship, the realm of God’s omnipotent power and sovereign dominion. They bespeak the position and ministry of KINGSHIP. God REIGNS! The Lamb REIGNS! The four Living Creatures REIGN! The overcomers REIGN! The manchild REIGNS! All are therefore IN THE THRONE! What else would you do in the throne? And if you would share that throne as a king in God’s great universal and eternal kingdom, then the nature of God, which is the nature of the Lamb, which is the nature of the four Living Creatures, is now becoming **your nature**, too! And that four-fold nature embodies the characteristics of OMNIPOTENT POWER, SOVEREIGN AND UNCONDITIONAL GRACE, DIVINE WISDOM, and the EXALTATION OF A SUPERIOR HEAVENLY LIFE. “And...the four Living Creatures and the four and twenty Elders...sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed **us** to God by Thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast **made us** unto our God **KINGS AND PRIESTS**: and **we shall reign on the earth**” (Rev. 5:8-10). There we have the clearest possible identification of the four Living Creatures. They are God’s kings! They represent His kingship! They are they that reign! Not in some far-off heaven somewhere — but *on the earth*! They are God’s government on earth! What a marvelous thing!

Let us consider now the twenty-four Elders “round about the throne” who are also seated upon thrones and have golden crowns upon their heads. “And *round about the throne* were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw *four and twenty elders sitting*, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads *crowns* of gold” (Rev. 4:4). The Amplified Bible gives us a better rendering. “Twenty-four other thrones *surrounded the throne* and seated upon these thrones were *twenty-four Elders*, arrayed in white clothing, with Crowns of Gold upon their heads.”

The twenty-four Elders in the book of Revelation bear a special signification for they are represented as distinct from both the four Living Creatures “in the midst” of the throne and the great multitude assembled “before” the throne. These Elders occupy a unique position described as “round about” the throne — yet

UPON THRONES! In order to fully appreciate the scenery here drawn by the Spirit, we need to go back and examine one particular of the order established by God among the people of Israel after they came up out of the land of Egypt. It is important that we get a clear idea, not only of the structure of the tabernacle of Moses, but also of the arrangement of both the people and the priesthood in relation to it.

What do we see then? In the second chapter of Numbers we find the order given for the encampment of Israel as they journeyed through the wilderness on their way to the promised land. The camp of Israel as it was established at the Sinai (where God made them His nation) formed a hollow square. In the center of the hollow was the tabernacle of Moses. Around the tabernacle Israel was divided into four camps: one camp of three tribes on the east side, another camp of three tribes on the south side, another camp of three tribes on the west side, and the last camp of three tribes on the north side.

The tabernacle with its courts set “in the midst” of so many thousands of delivered and happy Israel, must have been an imposing sight — an all-absorbing scene of wonder to the whole nation, as well as to each individual of the mighty host. In this arrangement we see the same typical picture, under different symbols, as that presented to us in chapters four and five of the Revelation. The Most Holy Place of the tabernacle was the abode of the God of Israel among His people. When the tabernacle was set up as described in Exodus chapter forty, then the Shekinah, the Cloud of God’s glorious presence, covered the whole tabernacle, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. It is interesting to observe that while the Cloud of God’s Glory rested upon the entire tabernacle complex, the glory of the Lord also “filled the tabernacle,” thus designating the Most Holy Place as the dwelling place or the tabernacle of God.

Later God said to Moses, “Speak unto Aaron thy brother, that he come not at all times into the Most Holy Place within the veil before the mercy seat...that he die not: for I WILL APPEAR IN THE CLOUD UPON THE MERCY SEAT” (Lev. 16:2). Isaiah testified, “O, Lord of hosts, God of Israel, that DWELLEST BETWEEN THE CHERUBIM, Thou art God” (Isa. 37:16). From various other scripture passages we learn that God was *in* the cloud, He *appeared* in the cloud, He *spoke* out of the cloud, He *led* Israel by the cloud, and in the cloud He *dwelt in the Most Holy Place, over the ark with its mercy-seat or throne of grace*. The tabernacle, and especially the throne upon the ark, between the cherubim, was in very fact **GOD’S THRONE** among Israel from which, by His word and His power, He ruled over them!

Armed with the understanding that the tabernacle constituted God’s “throne” among His people, let us note that just as John beheld in vision a “great multitude” standing “before” the throne in the heavens of God’s Spirit, so was there in the Old Testament type a “great multitude” of the camps of Israel positioned “before” the throne of God in the tabernacle. These thousands of Israel were receiving the blessings and benefits of His kingdom ministered through the typical sacrifices and ministrations of the tabernacle service and the priesthood. Thus we see that the tabernacle was the dwelling place of God — His throne, His sphere of activity, the center of His power, glory, and goodness. The camp of Israel, the great multitude “before” the throne, represents the whole world of mankind outside of God, estranged in their experience from His life, yet redeemed, blessed, and brought nigh by the blood of the Lamb. But there is a **THIRD COMPANY** — the **CAMP OF THE PRIESTS** — situated, as it were, “round about the throne,” directly *between* the “throne” and the “great multitude”! The Lord said to Moses and Aaron, “The Israelites shall encamp each by his own tribal standard or banner, with the ensign of their fathers’ houses, opposite the tent of meeting (tabernacle) and facing it on every side. Then the tent of meeting (tabernacle) shall set out, with the **CAMP OF THE LEVITES IN THE MIDST OF THE CAMPS**” (Num. 2:2,17). The priestly tribe of Levi was not counted among the tribes of Israel, for they belonged uniquely to the Lord Himself; therefore they were not camped with the four camps of Israelites before the tabernacle. They were the Lord’s priests, and were instructed to camp just outside the tabernacle, around the tabernacle, *between* the tabernacle and all the other tribes of Israel in their camps. Thus in type they answer to the twenty-four Elders in the Revelation who are located “round about the throne” — *between* the throne and the great multitude!

Divine infinite purpose lies behind this entire arrangement and the moment the wonderful significance of this dawns upon our spiritual understanding, we see that God has placed a **PRIESTHOOD COMPANY *between Himself and the whole world of mankind!*** Webster’s dictionary defines priest as: A mediatory agent *between* God and man. In the Old Testament the word priest is translated from the Hebrew

word *cohen*, the root meaning of which is “one who stands up and draws nigh for another.” The Greek word, in its root, means “to minister.” Thus, a priest is one who draws nigh and ministers in *two directions* — drawing nigh to God on behalf of the people, and drawing nigh to the people on behalf of God! The priest ***stands between***. The ministry of the priest is an intermediary or go-between ministry. He reaches forth with one hand and takes hold of God; he reaches out with the other hand and takes hold of humanity; he then brings the two together by the power of his priestly ministration. Can we not see that this is the very reason God placed the priesthood of Israel in an encampment directly *between* the tabernacle throne and the great multitude of the people. That is the picture! Most people miss this great truth, and I don’t remember ever seeing a drawing of the tabernacle and the camp of Israel in the wilderness with the tribe of Levi correctly positioned in the open area of the hollow square between the tabernacle and the camps of the tribes. IT IS FURTHERMORE ABUNDANTLY EVIDENT THAT THEY CORRESPOND PRECISELY TO THE TWENTY-FOUR ELDERS JOHN BEHELD “ROUND ABOUT THE THRONE.” Isn’t it wonderful!

Hear now the declaration of inspiration as the spirit of wisdom and revelation unfolds to us the mystery of God’s great purpose. The four Living Creatures “in the midst” of the throne speak to us of KINGSHIP. The twenty-four Elders “round about the throne” speak to us of PRIESTHOOD. Though not portrayed as being “in” the throne, yet they are seated “upon thrones” and wear golden “crowns” upon their heads! These all signify God’s KINGS and PRIESTS, truly His KING-PRIEST COMPANY! Know then, my beloved, that these are not two separate groups of people, but they do represent two aspects of ministry — kingship and priesthood — combined in one overcoming company of God’s called and chosen elect. “Thou hast made **us** unto our God **kings and priests**: and we shall **reign on the earth**.” Oh, the wonder of it!

With these truths firmly in mind we will now return to our text for this message. Here a voice “comes out of the throne,” saying, “praise **our God**, *all ye His servants!*” It is my deep conviction that this voice can be none other than the voice of God’s KINGS AND PRIESTS — the four Living Creatures and the twenty-four Elders! The message is clear — there is here a **change of ministry**. The great multitude has just been delivered from the captivity of great Babylon. No longer will the ministers of Babylon control and command the Lord’s people, for now the heavenly, enthroned kings and priests of the kingdom have become **the voice** heard by **ALL**! “And **a voice** (word, message, command) came **out of the throne**, saying, Praise **our God** (because of Babylon’s destruction and the Lord’s full salvation), **ALL** ye His servants, and ye that fear Him, both **small** and **great**. And I heard as it were the voice of a **great multitude**, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, ALLELUIA: FOR THE LORD GOD OMNIPOTENT REIGNETH!”

The voice is charged with the authority of the throne. Now — the Lord God omnipotent REIGNETH! God has now taken His great power and is reigning over His people! God is now establishing HIS KINGDOM in the hearts and lives of every saint of God everywhere! Babylon is over, finished, gone, vanished, a new Day has dawned! Oh, how wonderful are these things! And now notice, dear ones, this is the *last*, the *final* mention of both the four beasts and the twenty-four elders. They are mentioned altogether in the Revelation nine times. Here, and in chapter five, verse eight, both fall down and worship HIM who sits upon the throne. In chapter five, verse fourteen, the beasts say “Amen” and the elders fall down and worship. Here in our text both groups appear and worship God and say *Amen* and *Alleluia*. Can we not see by this that they are not only worshippers, but are now set to lead ALL of the untold millions of saints gathered out of the ages in that greatest chorus of praise — of salvation and deliverance — ever to echo and re-echo among the battlements of heaven. The celestial wonder of this universal chorus is like the sound of “many waters” and like the voice of “mighty thunderings.” God’s people have been delivered and now *His great salvation* shall be revealed! **Amen! Alleluia!**

To be continued...

J. PRESTON EBY