

KINGDOM BIBLE STUDIES

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

FROM THE CANDLESTICK TO THE THRONE

Part 174

THE SEVEN ANGELS WITH THE SEVEN LAST PLAGUES

“And I saw *another sign* in heaven, great and marvelous, *seven angels having the seven last plagues*; for in them is filled up the wrath of God” (Rev. 15:1).

This first verse of chapter fifteen introduces the deep mystery the Holy Spirit now reveals to the called and chosen elect of the Lord. John speaks here of “another sign,” that is, a similitude, something like a parable, and this sign is in contrast with the other signs he previously beheld in spirit — the sign of the sun-clad woman with the moon under her feet, ready to be delivered of a man-child; the sign of the great red dragon standing before the woman to devour her child as soon as it is born; the sign of the beast from the sea, having seven heads and ten horns; the other sign, of the two-horned beast rising up out of the earth; the sign of the three messengers flying in mid-heaven; the sign of the Lamb standing upon mount Zion and 144,000 with Him; the sign of the Son of man coming upon a white cloud to reap the harvest and vintage of the earth — all these signs, and many more, John has already seen. And now, with rapt wonder, he beholds **another sign!**

The sign which he now sees in the heaven of the Spirit is great and marvelous. It is, in other words, awe-inspiring and wonderful! And no wonder: for the sign which he now beholds is of the greatest importance. It cannot be looked upon or understood without moving us deeply and filling our hearts with the overflowing of wonder and joy.

In this remarkable introduction we once more meet our old friends, the seven angels of His presence, and here again they are operating in the action the Holy Spirit sets before the beloved apostle in his visions. They are prepared to pour out the seven vials or bowls of God’s passion. This pouring is called the *plague*, for the outpouring of God’s determined passion, zeal, or wrath, as the King James Bible terms it, is indeed a plague to the carnal mind, the soulish disposition, and the flesh life! We must always remember that the code-word “wrath” in the Greek language of the Bible simply denotes “passion,” *not* vengeance.

John beholds seven angels, or messengers. And although, without doubt, the sight of these seven shining heavenly messengers positioned side by side is already breath-taking — for they are glorious and beautiful, resplendent in their appearance, pure, radiant, dazzling, and powerful — yet their purpose and message is still more majestic and sublime! These are the seven messengers who have the *seven last plagues*. Evidently they do not have the seven plagues of themselves, but the power of these seven plagues is *given them*, and they now hold this power. They possess the power of pouring out these plagues into the earth-realm, the carnal and soulical religious realm of man, and completely devastating it — for the destruction implied in these plagues is complete. We have only to recall that we are dealing here with spiritual realities represented in the form of *signs* and *symbols* to understand the great truth revealed in this scene — the seven messengers in their symbolism represent a seven-fold message, ministry, and moving of God by His Spirit and by His Word to bring an end to the soulical power of man’s natural life and the soulish religious realm of man. The messengers are seven in number, the number of completion and fullness, signifying that by their seven plagues the work of God’s wrath or passion shall be fully fulfilled, finished,

and completed. All the soulical operations in the lives of God's dear people, all the self-hood, every vestige of the believers' own mind, will, emotion, desire, and inclination to religiosity shall once and for all and forever be brought to an end! Seven is the symbol of completion of the kingdom within the Lord's people! Seeing that in the order of John's visions this wonderful work has already been accomplished in God's called and chosen elect, the manchild company, the 144,000 on mount Zion, it follows that this dealing of God is now ready to come upon the masses of the Lord's people who still walk in a carnal realm and serve the Lord in the carnal church systems of man. Seven is the symbol of the completion and triumph of the kingdom of God in the lives of God's own people!

It is interesting to note that when no one in heaven or on earth was able to open the scroll sealed with seven seals, John *wept* (Rev. 5:3-4). When the seventh seal was opened which introduced the seven trumpets (Rev. 8:1), the event was so significant that there was complete *silence* in heaven for the space of half an hour. Now the third cycle of God's dealing begins, to execute the seven plagues "which are the last," as it reads in the Greek. But this time there is neither weeping nor silence but great joy and a mighty song of victory! (Rev. 15:2-4). Final victory is near in the church of Jesus Christ and it is the elect of God who are singing the song of triumph!

THE SEVEN LAST PLAGUES

"And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels having the *seven last plagues*; for in them is filled up the wrath of God" (Rev. 15:1).

The word "plagues" is a most interesting word! It is translated from the Greek word *plege* meaning "a wound caused by a stripe or blow." *Plege* is translated in the King James Bible as "wound" or "wounded" four times; it is rendered "stripes" five times; and is rendered "plagues" only in the book of Revelation twelve times. Thus, the "seven last plagues" may be characterized as the "seven last stripes" or the "seven last scourgings" or the "seven last chastenings" in which is filled up the passion of God to correct His children. "Last" plagues in which the passion of God is "filled up" or "complete" signifies that these are the *last* or *final* dealings of God with a people. Not the last in the sense that God will never deal with them again about anything, but last in that these dealings of the Lord will have completed His work in a people to make right what is wrong and transform them into all that He wants them to be. That is the mystery!

Elwin Roach once wrote, "There is something else that is last. There are seven of them — plagues. They are the last seven plagues mentioned in the book of Revelation. What a promising word! They are full of the wrath (*thumos* — *passion*) of God. If we will notice, these plagues are poured out on men, upon flesh. Everything which is carnal will be subjected to the plagues! It appears that seven plagues, seven days, seven colors of the light spectrum make up the Last Day, and it swallows up every dark thing in its path. It is like a tidal wave of fire sweeping over the earth. There is nothing but stubble left in its wake..."

When these seven "last plagues" have gone, there will not be any more flesh, carnality, or selfhood dominating in any of the Lord's people. This will ultimately be true for all men everywhere, as we see at the conclusion of the Revelation, but here it refers to the people of God who are still immature children and who are enslaved in the carnal religious systems of man. There is the same truth as it pertains to the individual — that is, each one of us in our journey into God. The unproductive human identity — the flesh with its sinful disposition, the soul with its religious inclination, the carnal mind with its humanistic reasoning, planning, and scheming — ***all must suffer the seven plagues!*** Make no mistake about it — God will touch *everything* in the lives of His people! That is the final outcome of redemption, for He has redeemed us unto Himself and for His pleasure and purpose! Consider the following order of symbols used in the pouring out of the vials. They are poured out upon:

1. The Earth. (soulical religious realm)
2. The Sea. (body, sensual realm, fleshly passions, wicked works, ungodliness)
3. The Rivers and Fountains of Water. (sources of ideas, concepts, culture, teachings, philosophies, doctrines, traditions, customs, carnal knowledge, worldly wisdom, the sources from which carnal

men draw their life, their natural joy and refreshment, all that gives vitality to the programs of men. “Rivers” suggest the *flow* of these ideas as they are taught, propagated, and promoted by human institutions and instrumentalities of all kinds)

4. The Sun. (the external light of the *old* heavens and earth — laws, rules, commandments, authorities, hierarchies, dominions of the old world of man — religion, science, business, finance, etc.)
5. The Seat of the Beast. (human heart, deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, out of which all evil emanates — also the corrupt seat of spiritual wickedness)
6. The Great River Euphrates. (the power that keeps God’s people enslaved in religious Babylon. The Euphrates River stands symbolically for the separation between the kingdom of religious Babylon and our promised land of inheritance in Christ.
7. The Air. (the *atmosphere* created by man’s programs, promotions, and works — realms of understanding, feeling, sentiment, emotion, especially religious)

When the last seven plagues have finished their work there will be no more missing the mark, no more childish immaturity, no more deception, no more fleshly manipulation and control, no more mistakes, no more spiritual bondage, no more falling short, no more sins of omission, and no more resistance to the will of God. There will be no more cause for correction, chastisement, purging, or purification, no more need for gaining more understanding, wisdom, or maturity of stature. Oh, my Father! As long as there remains something of this human nature, Your passion (wrath) is so kindled against it that You do not let it have any rest! For Zion’s sake You will not hold Your peace, and for Jerusalem’s sake You will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth! You will have no rest, till You establish, and till You make Jerusalem a praise in the earth! (Isa. 62:1,7). Great is the mystery!

THE WRATH OF GOD

“And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up *the wrath of God*” (Rev. 15:1).

The seven plagues are here described as acts of judgment in which is “filled up the wrath of God.” The concept of “filled up” (Gr., *etelesthe*) means to bring to conclusion or to the ultimate goal, that is, a complete fulfillment of God’s purpose in a thing or person.

Just as in Revelation 14:8 we read, in connection with Mystery Babylon, of “the *wrath* of her fornication,” the Greek word for “wrath” here, as mentioned previously, is *thumos* meaning, according to Strong’s Concordance, “*breathing hard, passion.*” That certainly sheds light upon the expression “the *wrath* of her fornication,” for there is no “wrath” suggested in the act of fornication. A man and woman who are having a fling, or a prostitute who has been paid for her services, do not engage in wrath — rage, violence, revenge, vengeance, punishment — while they are fornicating! Oh, no! But they certainly are in the fever heat of *passion*! Thus, the passage should read, “...she made all nations to drink of the *passion* of her fornication” rather than “the *wrath* of her fornication.” This fact alone should settle once and for all the real meaning of the Greek word *thumos*. So it is clear that God’s “wrath,” as revealed in the book of Revelation, has to do with His passion, or feeling very strongly about something. It is illuminating that in Revelation 14:10 we find that God’s disobedient children, who ignore the wooing of His Spirit and resist His hand of dealing, are made to drink “*the wine of the passion of God.*” Anyone knows that wine inflames the passions, but does not generally invoke wrath. Can we not see by this that God’s wrath or passion is not that which is vindictive and vengeful, but rather that which is impassioned, fervent, zealous, enlivened, glowing, vigorous, intense, burning, determined, and dynamic!

God has a passion to make right what is wrong, to cleanse and restore His people and creation, like any father who wants his son to grow straight and strong. He has a passion, therefore He will spare nothing,

not even the rod, to accomplish His great purpose. The wrath of God is the wrath of a Father and in His wrath He remembers mercy! His purpose in wrath is always corrective and redemptive! Multitudes of religious people are full of bitterness, self-righteousness, condemnation, censure, denunciation, vindictiveness, judgment, anathemas, and damnation — the wrath of man — and really can hardly wait for the deceived religionists and the sinners and tyrants of this world to get just what they deserve — eternal damnation in hell. But now GOD’S WRATH is revealed! It is the wrath of our Father and our Redeemer! What a revelation that is! Oh, the wonder of it! How sublime the very thought! How awesome the implication! How divine and glorious the outcome!

However, as the love of God does not cancel out His wrath, so His wrath does not cancel out His love! Every parent who has ever disciplined a child understands this! Wrath and love work together to correct what is wrong and make it right. Strictly speaking, the wrath of God and His love are not equally *eternal attributes* of God. God IS love, the scripture testifies, but nowhere does it infer that God IS wrath! You do not see in any listing of God’s attributes that wrath is included. Neither is wrath listed as one of the *fruits of the Spirit*. When sin and error are finished in God’s universe His wrath will end, but His love will abide eternally upon all His creatures and upon all the works of His hands. God *reacts* to sin by wrath — stern measures of discipline and correction. The wrath really is the love of God in reverse! According to the Word of God His wrath *is but for a moment* — but His love is *unending*! In wrath God remembers mercy — because GOD IS LOVE!

Men have been given a wrong view, a mistaken image of God! Religion preaches and serves a God who is a monster, who is exacting, mean, cruel, and vicious. They say that God is love, but in their hearts they believe that God is vindictive, implacable, harsh, and ultimately unmerciful because they believe that God’s judgment against sin and error is eternal torture in the fires of hell *without one degree of mercy ever*. They have a distorted, deranged notion of God’s *justice*, too, for He will send to this eternal doom men who never had a chance, who never heard the name of Jesus, who were ignorant and undiscerning, who were careless and unconcerned, who were guilty at most of merely fleshly, temporal sins, although they did not hate God or deliberately walk in rebellion against Him — they merely had the misfortune of not *knowing Him*. But then, the way the churches tell it, the vilest man who ever lived, who hated and blasphemed and abused and murdered, if on his deathbed, at the last gasping breath of his life, he simply says, “Father, forgive me; Lord Jesus, save me,” this one gets an immediate one-way ticket to heaven, whereas another who tried his best to be descent, honest, caring, and a really good person, but through no fault of his own never once heard the *real gospel*, dies and goes out to his sealed doom of eternal torture in the sizzling flames of damnation. Now that, my beloved, is classical *fickleness* — not *justice*!

And yet — even in passion there can be anger. In fact, one of the divinest things I know is anger! A divine indignation burns like fire and cuts sharper than any two-edged sword. As you can measure the height of a tower by the length of its shadow at a certain time, so one can always measure the height of a man’s love by the intensity of his anger at evil. Righteous, holy, divine anger was manifested in our Lord more than in any other man. Have you not read of His anger? Many believers do not seem to understand Him at all. You ought to have seen that divine countenance that night in Bethany as He knitted with His divine fingers that whip of small cords, and fastened it with His divine hand upon that firm little handle. He put it within His robe as He ascended the mount of Olives, then descended that eminence and climbed up the temple mount.

He walked into that temple, and then burst out in His divine indignation. “Get ye hence!” as He took that whip and laid it upon their backs. “Get ye hence!” and He laid it again upon their backs as only His divine hand could. He overturned the money-changers’ tables; He opened the cages of the doves and let them go, and drove the lowing cattle out of the temple of God. “Get ye hence!” “My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations, but ye have made it a den of thieves.” They were driven out. They were not counseled with, pleaded with, nor persuaded. They were *driven out* with the whip of divine anger! Do you think the firstborn Son of God never got angry? Do you think that He never spoke strong words? He looked into the faces of the religious ecclesiastics and said, “Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father it is your will to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and stood not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father thereof.” “Ye who claim to belong to Abraham are hypocrites, liars, and children of the devil. Get ye hence!”

Jesus became angry at the dinner-table when He marked the hypocrisy of His host. The Pharisee saw that uninvited guest who had crept in from the street, who was weeping in her penitence at the Saviour's side. The Pharisee was saying in his heart, "This fellow, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is who toucheth him, for she is a sinner (prostitute)." He was a hypocrite in his heart, and Christ unveiled him. "Simon, I have something to say to you." "Rabbi, say on." Jesus continued and told the story of one who was forgiven so much. He said to Simon, "Which of them will love him most?" He answered, "He to whom he forgave most." "Seest thou this woman, Simon?" and then Jesus unveiled him. He had given Him no kiss. He had not washed His feet, but the woman had kissed His feet, and washed them with her tears. He turned from the severity of His reproach to the pity of His love and said to the poor, broken woman: "Thy sins are forgiven thee; thy faith hath saved thee: go in peace!" Do you not see the Christ's hatred of hypocrisy, His anger at self-righteousness and the sublimity of His love? If a man cannot get angry, if there is no indignation in him against evil and error and injustice, he never knew God nor His Christ. He knows nothing of the divine nature! Divine anger is always accompanied by divine love. I thank God I can be wholesomely and heartily angry. It has never interfered with love, for I know that I have never hated either the sinner or the Pharisee, even when I have despised them both for their sin. This holy and divine anger is the wrath of God, the passion of God to correct that which is wrong!

The following illustration will make this clear. It is frequently said in the Old Testament that Yahweh is angry. Yet Jesus came as the revelation of our Father, Yahweh, and He said that "God (Yahweh) so *loved* the world, that He gave His only begotten Son." The beloved John states that as to His nature, "God IS love." Does not love appear to be far above anger and wrath? This may be compared to a wise father out of love telling his children that he is very angry on account of something bad that they have done. It is obvious in this case that the word "angry" stands for the sternness issuing out of the father's love of his children and his intense and determined hope of their improvement, and is the outward expression of his love. He may even take strong measures to show them his displeasure and how fervently he requires their repentance and change of behavior. Can we not see by this that whatever he does to correct his children is not done out of uncontrolled rage, unbridled vengeance, nor as vindictive punishment — rather his actions are the expression of *meaningful correction out of love*. And that, my friend, is what is meant by the "wrath" of God! It is His divine, determined passion to make right what is wrong in the lives of His immature, irresponsible, or rebellious children. Aren't you glad!

Consider this. Our language betrays the fact that the average person sees God as an antagonist. When high tides or strong winds shatter beachfront homes, what do men call it? An act of God! When an earthquake collapses buildings and lives are lost and thousands left homeless, what do we call it? An act of God! True enough, but why don't we call a bumper crop or a surplus an act of God? Why don't we call a warm, sunny day an act of God? The tendency to see (and fear) God in adversity as some kind of divine ogre is as old as civilization. But the actual message of the Bible and of God's Christ is just the opposite! Their main claim is that God *cherishes* you. He is *for* you. God *loves* you. He has paid the highest price for you! And God *so loves the world*. He so loves *every man in the world*. Moslem, Communist, Roman Catholic, drunk, prostitute, homosexual — God so loves them all! And He is angry! His passion is stirred! He shall arise and take all the measures necessary to bring correction, repentance, and redemption into the earth! Repentance shall come, but how great is the need for the inworking of His judgments, until that submission comes. To this very end there are even now seven angels prepared in the temple of God having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the passion of God!

THE SEA OF GLASS MINGLED WITH FIRE

"And I saw as it were *a sea of glass mingled with fire*: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God" (Rev. 15:2).

The next scene that opens to the view of this prophet is one of victory. Those who have witnessed the brilliant spectacle of a tropical sunset at sea have caught a faint idea of the glory the prophet here attempts to describe. As the great sun sinks like a ball of blazing fire, the ocean itself seems to break forth

into flames of glory; the mirror-like surface, touched with crimson, transforms the whole scene into a mingling of flood and flame. So was the scene that opened in dimensions of spirit to the seer of Patmos!

Early in his visions, when John beheld the unveiling of Christ — Christ the Head and Christ the body — he also saw “a throne set in heaven” with God’s Christ upon the throne. It is then that we read, “And *before* the throne there was a *sea of glass like unto crystal...*” (Rev. 4:6). Ezekiel, in the first chapter of his book, speaks of seeing the color of the “terrible crystal” or in contemporary English the “awesome, shining, dazzling crystal.” Crystal is pure glass. When you hold it up to the light and look at it you see the colors of the rainbow and the reflections of beauty out of the purity of the crystal. This is the purity of the walk of one who has been cleansed by the refining fire of God! How can one describe such purity, such holiness, in words? Ah, the wisdom of God is revealed from heaven in the vision shown to John — a sea of glass *mingled with fire!* It is a sea, John beholds them, not as many, but as one; as a sea of glass mingled with fire, as thousands upon thousands of grains of sand that have been melted and molded together into a substance of transparency. These are they that have come through the furnace of afflictions, tried as by fire, and they are filled with the divine Love of God and with the Holy Ghost and Fire. How better could one express the spiritual reality of a cleansed, sanctified, transformed life!

We bear in mind the qualifying words, “*as it were...*” “And I saw *as it were* a sea of glass mingled with fire.” If we have considered the matter as we ought, surely we realize that those believers who expect to go to heaven one day and literally stand upon a celestial sea of glass mingled with fire are certain to be disappointed. What John saw was not an actual sea of glass, but *as it were*, that is, a *vision, a symbol standing for reality*. The surface of glass cannot ripple or swell or wave as water in a sea here on earth. Water bespeaks the emotions of the multitudes. Here, then, we are shown a vast multitude standing in the glory of God knowing *no anxiety*, no fear, no envy, no hatred, no distress, no lust or demanding desires. As surely as the raging sea represents multitudes of restless, clamoring, surging, sinning humanity, so does the exquisite sea of glass before the throne of God represent an assembled throng of quickened and transformed saints IN WHOSE HEARTS THE PEACE OF GOD RULES. This great *sea of redeemed men* is calm and serene, tranquil and quiet, transformed “even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” Furthermore, the *sea-dwelling beast* has been dealt with! The inner nature of man has been transformed, satan is bound, the sea is now calm. In contrast with the hurricane and the tumult of winds and waves, we now perceive the effectual dominion of God — the peace and rest of the divine nature, undisturbed by earth’s changes and storms. The sea of glass illustrates the ineffable calm of the divine nature — a mighty deep within of holy, divine love and purpose, of understanding and confidence, of righteousness, peace, and joy, upon which no wind blows, no tempest strives, no violent currents disturb its unfathomable depths.

Just how did this crystal sea become what it is? John envisions this sea of glass twice. In both of these descriptions, they are symbolical views of both a people and a state of being. They have been as individual grains of sand — for glass is *melted sand*. Glass and sand exposed to heat — *sand and fire!* John beheld this sea of glass mingled with fire — having come through the furnace of testings, trials, and afflictions. As the Lord says, “Behold, I have refined thee...I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction” (Isa. 48:10). These have been perfected through their fiery trials! “Tried with fire...and now they have been...found unto praise and honor and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (I Pet. 1:7). In the image and likeness of Christ, they are bonded together in a divine union of life. John sees the whole redeemed company, not as millions of individual grains of sand, but as one body, even as a crystal sea of glass!

Glass is sand that has been heated in the fire and is melted and flows together until each grain of sand loses its individual identity as sand. These myriads of grains of sand are melted together into one piece of glass. This makes them smooth, level, calm, serene. This shimmering sea that John beholds is composed of a vast throng of the Lord’s people who have passed through the fires of tribulation, trials, testings, and provings, and have overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil, by the power of His indwelling life. They can never again be affected, moved, tossed, disturbed, agitated, distracted, disquieted, bothered, or tempted by anything in those realms, for they have fully and forever *overcome!* They are standing in their eternal victory over the fleshly, beastly nature of the carnal, human identity, and the spirit of this world, as well as the false religious image of the man-made church systems.

When the hour comes for a son of God to be tried as by fire, first your *faith* must be tried, your ability to trust God all the time and in every thing. “...*who are kept by the power of God **through faith** unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold testings: that **the trial of your faith**, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be **tried by fire**, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ” (I Pet. 1:5-7). Your faith must be tried, and it must possess three qualities, *praise, honor, and glory*. God won’t put honor on any unless they have **become a praise** unto Him, and God won’t put glory on any thing He cannot honor. I wish you would get the tremendous importance of these words! Your faith must be tried; then when you come forth unto the praise of His glory He will put some honor on you, and people will say, “Look how God can trust that man or woman.” He puts honor on that faith, He will glorify it. When? Now, and at the unveiling of our Lord Jesus Christ within you! This is the first step in the path of sonship to God!*

Second, *you* are to be tried. “*Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to **try you**, as though some strange thing had happened **unto you**: but rejoice, inasmuch as **ye** are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when **His glory** shall be revealed, **ye** may be glad also with exceeding joy” (I Pet. 4:12-13). This is not the fiery trial of your faith now; this second trial is upon your *character, your virtue, your life, your state of being*. Your very nature must be tried, of what kind of fiber you are, what kind of spiritual quality, whether you are a piece of second-growth hickory or just a piece of pine. What is the matter with pine? It works nice, the lathes can be run nearly three times as long turning out pine, as when working on hickory, but God cannot make sons out of pine people! I have heard people say, “I became a son of God ten years ago.” No, you did not! It takes a long time to grow good hickory. You have to *grow* in grace. The temple of God continually *groweth unto* a holy temple in the Lord. The body of Christ must be *edified, built up until* we all come unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. You have to *grow up* into Him in all things! You are a child of God, yes, but that doesn’t make a son out of you; that will start you out in the family of God, but you have to grow, and grow, and keep on growing to become a mature, manifest son of the Father!*

Third, your *work* must be tried. “*For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. 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 fire shall try every man’s **work** of what sort it is. If any man’s **work** abide which he hath built...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. 3:11-15). When your faith has been tried you think you are all through, but some more trials come on and you haven’t spiritual illumination to know the difference, and think your faith is being tried again. Once you understand God’s ways you can see whether He is trying your faith, or your character, or your works, and this sacred knowledge will help you to stand! Mere inspiration and revelation will not take you through these things. You need your soul, your mind, *illuminated*.*

Paul tells us in the passage above that various kinds of **works** may be built up **upon the foundation of Christ**. It is of great importance that we understand this potential and its outcome! There are works of great spiritual content and value which are characterized as gold, silver, and precious stones. These are enduring works, raised up by the nature and power of the Holy Spirit. Then there are works with little spiritual content and of questionable value which are characterized as hay, wood, and stubble. These are perishable works, raised up by the zeal of man, carnal, fleshly works which are pawned off as something spiritual and valuable for they are built up upon the foundation of Christ, that is, they are done in His name and professedly for His glory.

Nowhere are these combustible works, made to be burned in the day when men’s works are tried by fire, more evident than in the religious world of the carnal church systems of man. The so-called “gospel” in this hour is fashioned to appeal to the carnal mind, offering men blessings, prosperity, instant solutions to problems, a miracle a day, ease and comfort, and all the good things of life, rapture out of tribulation, and in that glory-world above golden streets, harps, and wings to flit about a celestial Disney World with nothing to do and all eternity to do it in. There are no enduring qualities in these works, for the benefits are all *natural, physical, earthly, tangible, for creature comfort* — not *spiritual or heavenly*! I do not err when I say that if

all the prayers and faith that are exercised daily for *earthly things*, blessings of money, cars, homes, clothes, physical healing, comforts, and luxuries that pamper the flesh were stripped away from most believer's prayers, their prayer lives would hardly exist at all!

All carnal, man-made church systems, programs, rituals, ceremonies, promotions, outreaches, and efforts are but hay, wood, and stubble before the consuming fire of God. Through the years we have received a steady stream of letters in the mail telling of this great program and that great endeavor for God, with their pleas for financial help. With glib tongues and plausible programs by which the world is going to be won for Christ, well-meaning people are urged to give to further grandiose programs hatched by kingdom-building (their own kingdom) preachers who live in wanton luxury upon earth, which programs are not the plan of God at all, but merely the product of an imaginative, scheming, and avaricious mind. Through long centuries billions of dollars have been squeezed from God's precious people, often fleeced from the poor and the widows, to build huge temples, cathedrals, church buildings, and institutions of various kinds; to promote innumerable programs and schemes to do this and that for God which, not only did God not ordain, but were in all truth a stench in His nostrils and an abomination before His face.

Whether it be carnal and deceptive operations such as those described above, or merely our own good works to be seen of men, our self-efforts to appear righteous and holy, or our human zeal to do something for God and be pleasing to Him, when all these good religious fleshly works are brought into the blazing presence of God who is a consuming fire they will one and all go up in smoke! "*For the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.*" What a bonfire that will be! Oh, yes, my brother, my sister, every man's work shall be made manifest, for the day shall declare it, because it will be revealed by fire. Even all our good "kingdom" and "sonship" works, ministries, outreaches, books, preaching, conferences, and all the rest, shall be tried by fire! EVERY MAN'S work shall be tried by fire! That is the final test. If the work abides the fire and comes out unscathed on the other side, that man shall receive a reward. Those who truly stand the test in *all things* shall receive the *prize* — the HIGH CALLING OF GOD IN CHRIST JESUS! These stand upon the sea of glass mingled with fire, having the harps of God, and sing the song of Moses and the Lamb! These are they who shall reign with Christ. Those whose works are all burned shall suffer great loss with embarrassment, shame, dishonor, reproach, humiliation and mortification. Yet God in His rich mercy says, "If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but *he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.*" This one will have nothing, no reward, no honor, no place, no position of responsibility in God's great kingdom — how art the mighty fallen! He will escape with *only his eternal life!*

A sea of glass like unto crystal! The figure is a striking one, and now in chapter fifteen of the book of Revelation he tells us that this glassy sea which spread before the throne of God was shot with flame, and upon it stood a host of those who had come victorious out of the conflicts of earth, and these have harps and sing the song of Moses and the Lamb — the song of deliverance, the song of the overcomer! Here we see a picture of a people who are neither going through the sea, nor being tossed by it, because they have passed to the other shore, triumphantly victorious. The message is clear — the crystal sea speaks of the *nature in which they stand*, and their *walk* has become stable and transparent!

The sea of glass *mingled with fire* represents the purification that is necessary for every son of God who enters the throne zone. It is not possible to partake of the realm of God's sovereign, unlimited, omnipotent power and authority until we have passed through the crystal sea mingled with fire and been purged from all carnality and self-hood by the quickening radiance of Christ's own pure and divine life. By the regenerating power of the living water which Christ is we lose the scent of the world, the flesh, and the devil. Every son of God is today passing through the sea of divine purification, into the state of transparency, which gives us access to the throne-room of God!

It is here that all the fickle emotions of the soul and the relentless passions of the body have been put under our feet until they toss us no more. There is a great calm! There is substance — a solid foundation — under our life and our walk, for we cannot fail to observe that God Himself possesses the same attributes as the glassy sea which surrounds His throne. The sea before the throne is the very nature of God established within a people until they stand and walk in the power of it. The sea is the emblem of mystery in many of the apocalyptic writings. But here we are told that the mystery which surrounds the nature of God is no longer mystery to those who are able to see Him *as He is*. The sea of glass is crystal clear with the light of

truth! The glassy sea is thus a beautiful figure for the perfect revelation of the grace, righteousness, and glory of God.

Those who stand upon the sea of glass have escaped from the imprisonment of self into the mind of Christ. They have lost themselves so completely in the life of God that there is no longer any distinction between “I” and “Christ.” They have reached the good beyond the good; the right within the right; the truth of which the truth we have known is but the shadow. They have been lifted out of the tossing sea of human passion and carnal understanding into the eternal calm of Christ-consciousness. These love without fear of losing, and worship without ceasing that which is the living God reflected in our own being — our very reality and state of being, *being the homage* we render unto Him who is the source and substance of all.

All who attain to the heights in God are moved to climb the steep and winding path that leads from the valley of the shadow of death to the everlasting heights of divine life and nature. As we scale the heights of mount Zion we ***become what we seek!*** We shall never enter upon the realization of any reality which is external to ourselves. Knowing is being, and apart from *being* there is no knowing of the things of God! Only those who can stand upon the glassy sea, are those who walk in the spirit and come off victorious in the conflict with the beast of the flesh and the carnal mind. That means waging war with the foul and degrading desires of the flesh and the deceptive illusions of the old Adamic mind — even the “good” religious mind! When the sea waves toss your little ship to and fro in the storms of life, lift up your eyes to the throne in the midst of which is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. Understand that that throne is here now — the power and dominion of the Christ within ourselves is strong and mighty enough to cause us to enter into our full heritage in God! To follow Jesus to the heights of victory; to be privileged to gaze upon that infinite crystal sea, the manifested life, light, love, righteousness, and power of Christ in our very own spirits, is the vision John saw and has shared with us. The reality is far greater than the symbol!

The following words from the pen of brother Carl Schwing resonate profoundly within my spirit today: “A glorious visitation of the Holy Spirit draws near. He is going to annihilate us. This will be the true ‘Slain by the Spirit’ experience. He is the consuming fire of God! He will consume all that is left of ‘self.’ His holy flames will consume all the marks and traces of our religiousness and self-righteousness. All of our fears and worries, doubts and failures, and all of our pious opinions and judgments of others will become dust upon the holy ground of the Lord. This, the Spirit must do...for our Beloved would then take us unto Himself. He is the most holy temple of God. He will clothe us with the incorruptible garments of immortality. He will give us to have life in ourself. He will make us the lights of the world, lights that will dispel the darkness of the age. All that sit in their pews of darkness will see our great light and shall know and serve the Lord of all. And, they shall partake of the liberty of the sons of God. He will appoint us to be the ‘freedom givers’ to all mankind, to all creation. He will have us break asunder the gates of hell and set the captives free! He will have us shout the everlasting gospel from Zion’s holy hill. And all that are in the graves of earth and of the sea will hear the word of the Lord and come forth, unto judgment. The Father’s judgment is with love and wrath, thus, His mercy will prevail and all, in their time and order, shall find reconciliation through the precious blood of Jesus Christ. The world has never known or experienced such love, mercy, grace, and power! In the place where hell once dwelt, a garden will appear. Eden will flourish again! Flowers that are everlasting, with blossoms of mercy and scents of compassion, shall bloom profusely. The sounds of sorrow and moans of despair shall be no more. For, in the joy of redemption, the former inhabitants have gone to kiss the feet of God. Hallelujah!”

I’m sure it would be thrilling to stand upon a literal, physical sea of glass and play a harp while waving a palm branch. But that would change nothing within us! How much more glorious to stand in that ***eternal calm*** where all warfare, strife, struggle, fear, temptation, and failure have forever ceased — far, far above our own soulish efforts, yet deep within our spirits even now! When shall we behold that glorious expanse of righteousness, peace, and joy? When? Only when we ourselves ***become*** the perfectly manifest life, light, and love of God, eternally at one with Him, and with all that is His image and likeness. This alone is real; all else is but seeming. There is nothing beyond the crystal sea but the throne of God!

TRIED BY FIRE

Tried in the fire, consumed in the flame,

Melted till nothing of self remains;
Tried in the furnace till God only sees
The beauty of Jesus reflected in me.

Tried in the fire till all self has died,
Tried in afflictions with Christ crucified;
With much pain and tears, pressed out of measure,
For God is preparing **HIS** special treasure.

The great Master Builder knows how to make
A man in His likeness with not one mistake;
He works with precision His image to mold —
Not one that's earthly, but one that's pure gold.

— sister Lee Cline

To be continued...

J. PRESTON EBY