

KINGDOM BIBLE STUDIES

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

FROM THE CANDLESTICK TO THE THRONE

Part 240

THE WORK OF THE LAKE OF FIRE

“But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, *shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death*” (Rev. 21:8).

You may remember the story of the man who was trying to get his mule into the barn. The man was tugging on the rope and pulling with all his might. He got behind the mule and pushed; he put his shoulder to its back but he could not budge the mule who just stood there, stiff-legged, and would not move. Try as he might he could not get it into the barn! A fellow walked up and watched for quite a while. Finally, he said, “Mister, I’ll get your mule into the barn for you if you like.” The man stopped in astonishment and said, “Can you?” He said, “Of course, it is easy.” The stranger walked over and picked up a two-by-four, came over to the mule, quietly lifted the two-by-four, and whacked him on top of the head, right between the eyes. The mule went a little cross-eyed! Then he hit him behind the ears. Before the mule could quite straighten up again, he struck him beneath the chin. With that he took hold of the rope and with two fingers led the mule into the barn! The owner stood there astonished. The fellow came out again and said, “You see, mister, actually this mule is a very cooperative critter. You just got to get his attention!”

Sometimes God has to GET OUR ATTENTION! And to do that He chooses to use events which are instruments of His judgment. We often think God’s judgments are punishment and vengeance, but more often they are skillfully designed to wake us up. God told Moses that the reason for His judgment upon the Egyptians was to make them know that He is God. Everything God does shows us something about who He is and what His purposes are, but in this instance of judgment God particularly expressed that His intent was to reveal Himself to the Egyptians. And He was successful in this, for in chapter eight of Exodus Moses records the magicians telling Pharaoh, “This is the finger of God!”

Our God has foretold the blessed era when He shall be ALL IN ALL. How can God ever be ALL — IN ALL? Properly translated that means that God shall be *everything to everyone!* Are there not some creatures and men too incorrigible to bend to His omnipotence? Let each one who knows Him as their ALL give answer thus: “He who has broken my stubborn will and brought me to His feet can draw the most obstinate to Himself.” Oh, yes! His will is more than a match for any man’s! Were it His decree to become their DOOM, they could not stop Him. But as it is His will to become their ALL (which is a far nobler and greater goal for Him who *is Love*), their ALL He shall become. His indignation may break and destroy pride and rebellion for the ages, but His love will endure endlessly and He will pursue all men until at last they surrender to His love. Not even *one* stray sheep will be lost!

Ah, yes, God knows just how to GET OUR ATTENTION! He can get it here and now. If He doesn’t get it here, He will get it in hell. If He doesn’t get it in hell, He will get it in the lake of fire. He

will get it by gracious words and tender mercies, if He can. But if not, He will get it by severe judgments and grievous dealings. But, blessed be His name, He *will* get our attention!

God gives us power, in the positive realm, to get men's attention, to subdue them to Christ. Jesus has said, in effect, "All *authority* has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Go ye *therefore*, I give you authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy. I give you this authority. I am behind you, and all the powers of heaven are on your side. Go ye therefore and MAKE DISCIPLES!" They were a poor lot to go. They were nearly all fishermen, with one honest tax-collector. If you can find one honest tax-collector in America, I think you might make him an apostle without further investigation. These men whom Christ sent out were uneducated for the most part. They had no political clout and no social rank, until Christ took them in hand. They did not know very much until He took them in hand for three years. It was astonishing what He made of them! Even then they did not realize His mission until the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost and brought to their remembrance the things which Jesus had said, and showed them the meaning of Jesus' words after He had risen from the dead, when, on the mountain side in Galilee, He gave them *authority to make disciples*.

But sometimes God has to use more severe means. Many years ago I turned on my car radio while enroute to a meeting on Sunday morning and heard a preacher relate a most interesting and illustrative story. He said, "I remember a friend of mine that I was in school with. He was a pastor in the East Texas oil fields at the time of the explosion at the New London School. I shall never forget that night when word came in over the radio that that school had exploded and that over 300 boys and girls had been killed. I was speaking the next morning on the radio in Dallas, Texas. And that morning I directed everything I had to say to the parents and loved ones of those boys and girls. We received cards and letters from New England, from Mexico, and from all over the country.

"But this pastor friend of mine told me this story. He said, In the parish in which I was the pastor, there lived a man who had become suddenly rich. He was a Texan who had become oil rich, even had put up a small refinery. And he had made already several millions of dollars. He had built a lovely home. He had a wife and two beautiful boys. And the wife and two boys were believers, fellowshipping in our church. And this pastor went on and said, This man was the worst blasphemer I had ever met in my life. I've never heard a man talk as that man would talk. He would blaspheme God, curse God. And his wife was so concerned about him and asked me to go see him. I went to see him, and I've never been treated like that in my life. He cursed me from the moment I opened my mouth until I got out of earshot. He called me everything that was in the book and some things I didn't know were in the book. He was vile.

"His wife and one of his little boys took sick during the flu epidemic and both died at the same time. I went over that night to see them. I went in and there sat the father and the little boy that was alive. I went over and sat down beside them and began to talk, and he began to abuse me again. And curse — I've never heard anything like it! It was vile beyond description. He blasphemed God's name. There was nothing left for me to do but get up and walk out of there, which I did. I had the funeral. The man wouldn't even speak to me. And he became more vile after that. But all of the love that he'd had for his family, and that seemed to be the only thing about the man that was a redeeming feature, was now turned to this one little boy that was left.

That little boy was in the New London School. This man, when he heard of the explosion, went out to that school and went through that rubble like a madman until he found the torn and twisted, broken body of that little boy. Then he took it in his arms and walked up and down that schoolyard like a maniac until they actually took it away from him and carried it to the funeral home. You know, I felt it was my duty to go and talk with him. So that night I went over to that big home, and I went in and there was that little white casket and there he sat, the same place he'd sat before. I just steeled myself for the cursing that I was to

get. I was afraid to say anything. I just sat down. Then that great big hulk of a fellow looked up and our eyes met. He hadn't cried before, he was too tough to cry, but there were tears in his eyes. And instead of cursing me, he said to me, God has been after me all the time. He's tried to speak to me all my life, and I turned my back on Him. He took my wife and my other little boy, and I knew He was talking to me. But I was afraid of what men might say, those I worked with and were associated with. Oh, what a coward I've been! And now He's had to take this one! Well, he said, God can have me now. And that man got down on His knees beside that casket and surrendered his life to God and took Christ as his Saviour. The last time I saw that pastor friend of mine he told me that that oil man was still walking with the Lord" — end quote.

That man did not respond to the POSITIVE witness of the gospel of God's grace, so corrective measures were needed, and God stretched forth His hand and brought NEGATIVE forces into action, thereby *getting his attention*. Oh, yes, God knows exactly what it will take to gain the surrender of every heart! Once broken under the judgmental dealings of God, he knelt before the Lord and received the goodness and mercy and deliverance so graciously proffered. Hallelujah! It should be clear to every thinking child of God that God does not use the same means and measures with every man to bring them to Christ. It would be very simple to fill this message and a dozen more with instance after instance from holy scripture as well as personal experience which loudly and unerringly proclaim the nature and purposes of God's judgments in men's lives from the banishment of Adam and Eve from Eden's fair garden in Genesis to the blazing inferno of the lake of fire in the Revelation. But I would point you briefly to one plain and positive illustration which proceeded from the lips of our Lord Jesus the Christ. "But if that *servant* say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken; the Lord of that servant will APPOINT HIM HIS PORTION WITH THE UNBELIEVERS. And that *servant*, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be BEATEN WITH MANY STRIPES. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more" (Lk. 12:45-48).

In this parable it is plain that Christ is teaching degrees of punishment or correction. The Christ teaches that those who have committed things worthy of many stripes, will receive many, and those who were ignorant, and with lesser light did not know or understand the will of God, yet did things worthy of stripes, shall receive but a few. Here is set forth in the plainest of language not only varying degrees of judgment, but also varying lengths of time for the judgment. Whatever the judgment typified by the "stripes," it takes longer to inflict many stripes than it does to inflict just a few, so it should not be difficult to understand that some men are under God's corrective judgment for a longer period of time than others. The Word of God declares that the Judge of all the earth shall do right, and I believe that He shall do just that. As our children were growing up we did not have one stock punishment for all their misdeeds. We suited the punishment to the disobedience, yet we haven't granted the same privilege to God! We have said that everyone from your lovely next door neighbor who doesn't know Christ to Adolph Hitler is to receive the very same common punishment, hell fire, and that that judgment would endure for the very same length of time for all — *eternity!* How, then, I ask, can some be beaten with "many stripes" and others with "few stripes" if all receive the same punishment of endless damnation in hell fire? How foolish can we be! It is always extremely foolish to hold to a doctrine that clearly contradicts the Word of God.

I can almost feel the holy wrath, I can almost hear the stinging invective of some who think they have me now — "Ah," they say, "but Jesus is not talking in this parable about the condition of the *lost*: He is teaching about the punishment of disobedient SERVANTS OF GOD!" And you are so right, my friend. I concede the point. We never want to forget it. Nothing could be plainer, for Jesus prefaces His remarks with these significant words: "Who then is that *faithful and wise servant*, whom the Lord shall make *ruler over his household*, to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that *servant*, whom the Lord when He cometh shall find so doing. Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him *ruler over all that he hath*" (Lk. 12:42-44).

There would be no answer to your argument; I would be forced to throw up my hands and admit that these words of the Lord apply only to the correction and discipline of servants of the Lord, and have absolutely no bearing whatever on the judgment of unbelievers, or on hell, or on the lake of fire, **were it not for one significant statement in verse forty-six.** The Lord says, “The lord of that *servant* will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him off (from his position), and will APPOINT HIM HIS PORTION WITH THE U-N-B-E-L-I-E-V-E-R-S.” Do you see that? Ah, the punishment of this SERVANT is the SAME PUNISHMENT as the UNBELIEVER receives! He is appointed his **portion** WITH THE UNBELIEVERS! The punishment, therefore, of this servant of the Lord and the punishment of the unbelievers is equal, identical, of the same intensity, for the same length of time, the very **same** punishment — and that punishment is? — “MANY STRIPES”! Not unending stripes, not everlasting whipping, not eternal torment at the hands of the tormentors, for no master ever ordered the eternal beating of his slave! Just **many stripes.** Severe, yes, but restrained, responsible, and purposeful. Now, notice the similarity of the language describing this judgment with that which John records in our present text. The master commands, “appoint him **his portion** with the **unbelievers.**” What is the “portion” of the “unbelievers”? Hear it! “But the fearful, and **unbelieving...**shall have **their part (portion) IN THE LAKE WHICH BURNETH WITH FIRE AND BRIMSTONE.**” (Rev. 21:8). The “portion of the unbelievers” in the lake of fire! And not only are the unbelievers, idolaters, etc. judged there, but the unfaithful servants of God are dealt with there, too! And, by Jesus’ own words, this judgment is called “many stripes,” and is shown to be limited in its duration and corrective and remedial in its purpose.

Some years ago the following testimony came in the mail from a preacher by the name of Chuck Johnel who was well known by a certain circle of brethren who considered themselves “end-time” saints. This preacher wrote, “In the very early days of my walk with Jesus I was taken ‘in the spirit’ during abiding time and Father God showed me the damned after the judgment of God, which is the second death. What I was given to see looked like a massive hermetically sealed furnace and I was given to see inside briefly, but the Father would not allow me to know or experience it, only to see and know what He gave me to know. Inside this furnace I saw what at first looked like multitudes of white larva, maggot-like things that were bent over on top of each other stacked to the walls of this furnace. It was pitch black inside, and anyone who was claustrophobic would go nuts as the place was compressed tightly, there was no room or open spaces but everything was jammed onto everything else.

“I saw fallen angels mixed in with these maggots who ripped their way through these creatures trying to find an open space but there was none. Inside this furnace, though it was pitch black, raged a fire so intense that the heat was unbearable, and while it was a raging fire there was no light, only a suffocating heat and dense darkness. I then *knew* that these maggots were the souls of the damned, those who had been cast into the lake of fire, suffering the second death. I discerned an absolute sense of hopelessness in these wretched souls, they had no hope and were eternally separated from God. So horrific was this encounter that I was moved by a strong desire to run down the streets of Chicago screaming a warning, ‘*There is a place you must avoid!*’ However, I will say this — I knew that these souls were locked inside this fiery, black furnace that was shrinking in time and space forever, getting hotter and more suffocating by the moment for all eternity. No one could see inside this place (except Father God allowed that), it would be no longer visible or part of the new creation — yet the suffering of the damned would never end — only it would not be known, seen, or heard” — end quote.

It brings me no pleasure to say it, but this preacher is a liar. He is thoroughly and completely deceived. I don’t know whether he fabricated this story, received it from deceiving spirits, or if he was on some hallucinatory drug, but his story is not true. It sounds like something a distorted mind and a wild imagination would invent as a result of listening to years of hell fire and damnation preaching by the ministers of Babylon who are possessed of a sadistic mindset in regard to God and His judgments. If his testimony were true, the god he serves is a sadistic monster who by comparison makes Adolph Hitler look

like a heavenly angel of glory. I have no hesitation in saying that God did not show him any such thing as he claims. If some god showed him those things, it was certainly *not* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus the Christ who reconciled the world unto Himself, *not imputing their trespasses unto them*, who is *not willing* that any should perish but that *all* should come to repentance, who is the *Saviour of all men*, and the *Saviour of the world*, who because He was lifted up on the cross of Calvary *will draw all men unto Himself!*

I believe every word that the Bible says about the lake of fire; I don't believe what Rome says about it, nor what the church systems of man say about it, nor what tradition says about it, nor what Chuck Johnel says about it; but I certainly believe what the Bible says about it!

One would think that the lake of fire was a prominent theme throughout the scriptures from the book of Genesis to the book of Revelation. It is not. The fact is that the teaching concerning the lake of fire and brimstone does not appear anywhere in scripture *except* in the book of Revelation, the book with the most *signs, symbols, and metaphors* of any book in the entire Bible. If the book of Revelation had not been given us we would have no knowledge of the lake of fire at all. The Revelation speaks of the lake of fire five times. The last passage is our text. There should be no question as to the certainty of this lake of fire; neither should there be any doubt as to the awful consequence of having to be cast into it. The various passages with their dreadful foreboding should be a fearful warning to all unthinking, careless, and foolish people who, because of their love for the world, the flesh, and the devil, have dared to ask why we should serve God now if all are going to be saved eventually. Such people have no love for God nor fear of God, and they manifest by what they say that their professed serving of God is only a pretense, arising — not from any true love for Him — but from fear of punishment. If there were no prospect of hell or the lake of fire these would promptly tell God to go to hell and they would, themselves, go to the devil. It is not thus with those who really *know* God, who truly *love* God, for they serve Him not from fear, but from pure love and devotion. Remove all punishment and judgment completely from the universe, and they would still serve God with all their hearts!

Because of the gross misunderstanding of almost all people concerning the lake of fire, I would like to draw our attention to three words found in our text. “But the fearful, and unbelieving, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which *burneth* with *fire* and *brimstone*: which is the second death.” The word “BURN” means combustion, or to consume. To consume does not mean to annihilate, for there is no such thing as annihilation in the absolute and scientific sense. When fire consumes a log in your fireplace it does not destroy any of the elements within the log, it merely *changes their form*. Combustion is the process by which chemicals combine to form new chemicals. For example, a tree might be cut down, sawed into fire wood, and burned in your fireplace. When the wood is burning the heat causes the chemicals of which the wood is composed to vaporize, mixing with the oxygen in the air to form new chemicals, including water and the gas carbon dioxide. So what was formerly a tree is no longer identified as the form of a tree, but the substance thereof is now simply *changed* into a *different form* and exists in its new form within the atmosphere as water, carbon dioxide, etc. Thus, to burn means to CHANGE! And of course we are not speaking of our bodies being burned up in the lake of fire — the fire is *spiritual fire* and its work is a *spiritual work* upon our stubborn wills, our carnal minds, our flesh nature, our corrupt passions, and all that causes us to be cast into this divine processing of God! Furthermore, it is significant to note that fire does not burn down; it always burns up; it seeks the highest level. All that it consumes “goes *up* in smoke,” to exist in a new form in a higher dimension. Even if you take a pan of water and place it over a fire, before long the water will take on the property of the fire and will begin to go *up* in steam. To burn means to CHANGE, and the change is always UPWARD in motion!

“FIRE” is the heat and light that you feel and see when something burns. It takes heat to start a fire, but once the fire is started it produces heat that keeps the process going. Thus, fire is really *heat* and *light*. In my study of the lake which burns with fire and brimstone I was very much impressed and helped

by the understanding given by Charles Pridgeon and I would like to quote from his scholarly work on the subject of *brimstone*. He says, “The Lake of Fire and Brimstone signifies a fire burning with brimstone; the word ‘brimstone’ or sulphur defines the character of the fire. The Greek word *theion* translated ‘brimstone’ is exactly the same word *theion* which means ‘divine.’ Sulphur was sacred to the deity among the ancient Greeks; and was used to fumigate, to purify, and to cleanse and consecrate to the deity; for this purpose they burned it in their incense. In Homer’s *Iliad* (16:228), one is spoken of as purifying a goblet with fire and brimstone. The verb derived from *theion* is *theioo* which means to hallow, to make divine, or to dedicate to a god (See Liddell and Scott *Greek-English Lexicon*, 1897 Edition). To any Greek, or any trained in the Greek language, a ‘lake of fire and brimstone’ would mean a ‘lake of divine purification.’ The idea of judgment need not be excluded. Divine purification and divine consecration are the plain meaning in ancient Greek. In the ordinary explanation, the fundamental meaning of the word is completely left out, and nothing but eternal torment is associated with it” — end quote.

I realize that the above thoughts define the subject very briefly, but let us summarize the meanings thus: BURN means combustion; to change the form of. FIRE means heat and light. BRIMSTONE means divine. Putting these three together can we not see that the lake burning with fire and brimstone is, actually, DIVINE HEAT (JUDGMENT) AND LIGHT (ILLUMINATION) PRODUCING A CHANGE! Is such a process eternal? All the laws of nature shout that it is not! More than 2500 hundred years ago the Holy Spirit warned the wicked inhabitants of Jerusalem that God would kindle a fire at Jerusalem’s gates which would devour her palaces. “But if ye will not hearken unto me...then I will kindle a fire in the gates thereof, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall *not be quenched*” (Jer. 17:27). Did not God say this fire “shall NOT BE QUENCHED”? This prophecy was fulfilled and the fire did occur a few years later when Nebuchadnezzar’s armies devastated Jerusalem (Jer. 52) and the fire did destroy all the houses of Jerusalem. Since God said no person or thing would “quench” this fire, did that mean that it would *burn forever*? That is what most people think when they hear of “unquenchable fire!” The fire at Jerusalem accomplished the work it was sent to do, and since it is *not burning today*, it obviously went out *by itself* after accomplishing its purpose! Unquenchable fire is not eternal fire — it is simply fire that cannot be put out until it has consumed or changed everything it is possible for it to change! It then simply goes out, for there is nothing more to burn. Yet I hear the preachers ranting and raving about poor souls being cast into hell fire where “their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched” and this, we are told, means eternal, unending torment. How foolish, illogical, and *deceptive*! Such a view blatantly contradicts the plain meaning of the term “unquenchable” and its use in the Word of God.

If you think the kingdom of God is rosewater, or eau-de-cologne, you are mistaken. You cannot war on the devil with that. You cannot war on the carnal minds of men with that. You have to make war on the flesh, the world, and the devil with a sword sharper than any two-edged sword. You have to make war on the flesh nature and self-will with fire, divine fire, that must burn up every inherent altar of Baal, and lick up the very dust around. Make no mistake! **OUR GOD IS A CONSUMING FIRE!** He is man’s “horse breaker” and He will break you, precious friend of mine, and bring you to the foot of the cross of Jesus no matter how hot He has to build the fire around you! Even if long ages of fiery judgment and tormenting darkness fall upon you, they will last no longer than till the Great Fire of God has melted all arrogance into humility, all hostility into surrender, and all that is self has died in the bloody sweat and all-saving cross of the Christ, which will never give up its redeeming power till sin and sinners have no more a name among the creatures of God. Aren’t you glad!

Let us now explore with reverence some of those conditions that exist in men’s lives which will be dealt with by God’s Holy Ghost Fire. And I think you will see that it is not just the world of incorrigible sinners who are purged and purified in that fire, but indeed the unfaithful servants of God as well! There may not be room for all of them but we will do the best that we can.

“*But the fearful...*” If there was a list of names of every man and woman who will find themselves in the God’s lake of fire, and if we were permitted to scan that list, we might be surprised at all the names that would appear. Certainly the worst of sinners, and the most incorrigible of men, would make the list, but some seemingly very good people would likely be on it as well! Even our own names might be found on the list, for just the offence of being *fearful* would qualify one to make that list! Is it not obvious that fear is a powerful emotion that plagues, torments, and dominates the lives of many, especially of God’s own people? To begin with, many are fearful of displeasing the Lord and therefore being cast into the lake of fire! Others are fearful of missing the “rapture,” fearful of the “end-time,” fearful of the devil, fearful of the mark of the beast, fearful of false doctrine, fearful of being deceived, fearful of getting cancer, fearful about the economy and the future, fearful of dying, and fearful of a thousand other things. GOD has not given us the spirit of fear, my beloved, but of love, and power, and a sound mind! The fearful shall have their part in the lake of fire, for they must die to such debilitating things that rob men of peace, and joy, and victory in Christ!

There are three Greek words for fear. One is *phobos*, from which our English word “phobia” is derived. It refers to fear in general, whether good or bad, and has broad applications. Then there is *eulabeia*, which is always used in a positive sense and refers to reverential fear, godly fear, that is, to revere, venerate, stand in awe of, as in the fear of the Lord. But the word for fear in our text is *deilia*, which is always employed in a negative sense, with reference to a *cringing coward who refuses to take his stand*. Spiritually, this is tremendously significant! The highest courage appears when a man is desperately afraid, but in spite of his fear does the right thing at any cost. What is condemned in this word is *cowardice* which prevents one from embracing the truth, taking a stand, and moving forward in God as He leads. I remember when I was fearful of taking a stand on the ultimate salvation of all men, afraid that many of our friends and brethren would abandon us; yet at that time the Lord gave the anointing and the courage to write our “Saviour of the World” booklets and begin sending them forth across the land and around the world. I found that my fear was ungrounded, for our stand for the truth God had revealed had just the opposite effect, it opened far more doors to us than it closed! Oh, yes, people hear the Spirit’s urging, “Come out of her, my people,” and yet they are fearful of leaving the Babylon church system, fearful they won’t have any fellowship, fearful for their children outside the church structure, oh, so fearful! How true are the words of the wise man in Proverbs 29:25: “The fear of man bringeth a snare...” This fear was illustrated in the intriguing statement of the scripture record that the chief rulers “believed on Jesus”; that is, they believed in their hearts that Jesus was indeed the Christ; but they would not openly confess Him because they were afraid they would be put out of the synagogue. Thus they sacrificed a place of glory and honor in the kingdom of Christ on the altar of the “safe,” and at the destruction of Jerusalem they lost both! It is a terrible sin to allow the opinions and favor and support of men to keep us from stepping forth in the new paths of God’s leading, and perhaps this is the reason “fear” was listed first!

George Hawtin, in one of his booklets, asked this penetrating question: “Are we fully persuaded that God is calling us to *sonship*? Are we sufficiently persuaded about Zion to earnestly press toward it? Are we sufficiently persuaded about Babylon, the Mother of harlots, to *come out of her* and be joined to Christ and to Him alone? Are we fully persuaded about the *eternal purpose of God*? Persuaded enough, I mean, to abandon all else and cling only to that? Oh, how often we meet men and women on the way *back*. They become impatient about the road that leads to Zion’s hill, so back they go to Babylon’s tottering tower. They lose *patience* and can no longer believe that the vision they saw is sure and the promise immutable. They start thinking and reasoning in the natural and human wisdom tells them to forget the promise of God and return, so back they go. Can we not hear the voice of Jesus saying, ‘He that putteth his hand to the plow and looketh back, is *not fit for the kingdom*?’ And again, ‘Remember Lot’s wife.’ Let us then be *fully persuaded* concerning the promises of God, and, being persuaded, let us *lay aside* every weight and run with *patience* and *confidence* the race that is set before us” — end quote.

“...and the **unbelieving...**” Unbelief is to be void of faith, and the writer to the Hebrews assures us that “*without faith it is impossible to please God*” (Heb. 11:6). The message is just this: Unbelief is sin! Faith is the spiritual sense by which we recognize the presence, character, and purpose of God; both that He *is*, and that He rewards the seeker. Faith seeks for God; it believes that He is; it keeps the heart open towards Him; it bows in humility and hope for Him to make Himself known. To know God, to see God in everything, and everywhere, to hear in our heart His voice and His teaching, and in our daily life to be conscious of His presence so that we always walk with Him — this is the true nobility of the man of faith! This is the life that faith lives; this is the blessedness that Jesus has now fully revealed by coming by His *spirit of sonship* into our hearts, whereby we cry, “Abba, Father!” Faith can walk with God as a son of God! And it’s not *our faith*, but as Paul said, the life which we now live in the flesh we live by **the faith of the Son of God who...gave Himself for (and to) us**. Truly, HE is both the author (origin, source) and the finisher (maturity, consummation, fullness) of our faith! Consider HIS FAITH! Jesus had faith to walk with the Father. He had faith to acknowledge and walk out His sonship to God. He had faith to speak as the oracle of God. He had faith to heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, feed multitudes with five loaves and two fish, walk on water, turn water into wine, raise the dead, forgive sins, and fulfill the whole purpose of the Father in His life even unto Calvary and the tomb, and to conquer death, hell, and the grave! Oh, yes! **That**, and much more, is **the faith of the Son of God!** To doubt that faith within ourselves, to neglect the growth and development of that faith, to be **unbelieving** of God’s call, purpose, and power in our lives would surely put us in the category of “the unbelieving” who must be purged and purified in the lake of fire! Selah. Pause and think about that.

“...and **murderers...**” The subject is not just homicide, the bloody murderers of this world, although without doubt there will be multitudes of them there, but we must never lose sight of the fact that the Revelation is first and foremost a *spiritual book*, and its realities are *spiritual realities!* The natural figures the spiritual, and we know that a natural man can be killed many different ways — with a gun, a sword, a knife; by starvation, deprivation, suffocation, poisoning, and many others. The very same John who on Patmos penned these portentous words is also the one who wrote, “*We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not His brother abideth in death. Whoso hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding (dwelling as a life principle) in him*” (I Jn. 3:15). No one knew better than the beloved John what, in its spiritual meaning, “murder” signifies! The message is clear — If old Adam is still alive in us we cannot help hating our brother who offends, misuses, or abuses us, and we are in our heart a murderer; to boost our own ego, or enhance our standing with others, we will at least whisper behind people’s backs, repeat (with a certain sense of satisfaction or justification) a negative report, carry a tale about someone, engage in idle gossip, thus *assassinating the character* of any brother who appears as a threat to us, or whose place we wish to usurp — that’s the way the carnal nature works, even that “devil” who is a murderer *from the beginning!* Like the Inquisition, those who are not in allegiance with a particular church system have throughout the centuries been tortured in dark dungeons, burned on the racks, burned at the stake, boiled in oil, beheaded, or otherwise destroyed by accusations of heresy. Some were merely excommunicated, spiritually suffocated by being cut off from spiritual fellowship and spiritual food, unable to breathe the life-giving breath of the heavens. Don’t think it was just the Papacy who committed these atrocities, my friend, for John Calvin and Martin Luther and other Reformers and Christian kings killed and ordered the extermination of the “heretics” of their day! All who retain that carnal mentality, though in other ways they may be great men of faith, still will have to be dealt with by the Holy Ghost Fire of God to purge them of their *spiritual wickedness!*

“and **whoremongers...**” I’m sure vast numbers of the fleshly whoremongers of the world will be discovered in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, but I am just as certain that the whoremongering here is also a *symbol* signifying something spiritual, a joining to that which is not Christ. Women in the Revelation are always symbolic, either positively of the bride of Christ, or negatively of the

individual soul, or corporately of religious organizations and activities which are *soulish* rather than *spiritual*. These are those ministries, and multiplied millions of believers, who daily sow their seed, deposit their spiritual life of Christ, into man-made religious systems, mingling the reality of Christ with the commandments of men, joining themselves to carnal programs, promotions, methods, and worldly-minded religious activities, as well as with the political systems, governments, and social programs of the world, satisfying their own soulish appetites and sensual lusts in the name of the Lord. It is *spiritual whoremongering!*

The church is imitating the world! Christians regulate their devotion by the clock. The church schedule is packed with flesh-appeal programs and activities that run day and night, often called "outreaches." They feel that unless every night of the week is taken up with some sort of activity, the ministry is an ineffective thing. They have the strange idea that nothing is being done unless someone is talking! So they fairly swarm to conferences, seminars, workshops, committee meetings, platform discussions, concerts, plays, ball games, and programs and entertainments of many kinds.

It is distasteful to have to admit it, but the plain truth is that the vast majority of Christians live their lives in *soulish lusts*. The further truth is that God's purposes are not accomplished by intellect and soulical activity! The church systems go forward today like a little Samson shorn of its locks of power. It parades up and down, boasting of its accomplishments, and like Samson, it knows not that the Spirit of God has departed from it. But even as Saul and his armies tremble in fear before the mighty Goliath, the Lord is raising up a little David with a slingshot of the spirit of sonship to meet the enemy with all of his stratagems and come off with a mighty victory! The David company is still in preparation, far out in the solitude of the green pastures of a living word, and beside the still waters of the quickening spirit, learning by faith and obedience to slay their bear and kill their lion in their own experience. It is not unlike Jesus during His first thirty years in Nazareth as He learned the ways of His Father, daily growing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man. Ah, God's sons are gaining new victories every day and are learning within ourselves the power of God and the ways of His kingdom! Saul's armor will not do! The sons of God are being prepared to step forth in the majesty of the name of the Lord God of Israel! This preparation does not take place with David's seven brothers who appear so tall, handsome, articulate, charismatic, and accomplished, nor in the hustle and bustle of the streets of Bethlehem, but *alone with God* in the pastures of HIS choosing, outside the camp, in the secret place of the Most High!

Amid all the religious ruckus of the hour, and all the fuss of those who run after many lovers, whoremongering with the flesh, the world, and the carnal church systems of man, there is a *little flock* that has climbed the mount with Jesus. They care not for the flamboyant humbug of the gaudy harlot's house, but, having beheld the glories of the kingdom afar off, they are pressing through surging waves of flesh-oriented believers to *come apart* to receive instruction from the King of the kingdom. At His feet they hear the call to the heavenly mark and find a door opened for them to enter in and lay hold upon the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. These are they who follow the Lamb whithersoever HE goeth! They lean hard upon Christ! They keep themselves unto Him, and to Him alone. As the hart pants after the water brooks, so pant their souls after God! The spirit of sonship to God dwells within them! They are partakers of His mind! They have been given the knowledge of His will! They comprehend His great plan and purpose in the earth, in His sons, and in the unbounded universe! They have laid aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset them! They are running the race with patience! They esteem the hope that is set before them as higher and better than all the pleasures of Egypt and greater far than the enticements, allurements, and prestige of the wanton harlot of Babylon! They are patient in tribulation, knowing that through much tribulation we shall inherit the kingdom! They continue instant in prayer to God, and He comforts them and upholds them with the right hand of His righteousness! They no longer have any inclination to find their way on Sunday morning or on Wednesday night to the harlot's house to be entertained, stroked, and seduced by her. The fire of God has here and now purged from them the very

spirit of whoredom, so you will not find them in that great day in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone! To them the voice of the Father speaks in words of everlasting hope and assurance, “Fear not, *little flock*, it is the Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” Isn’t it wonderful!

“...and **abominable...and sorcerers...**” The word for “sorcerer” used throughout the book of Revelation is an altogether different Greek word than is used anywhere else in scripture. In our text it is *pharmakeus* and in Revelation 22:15 it becomes *pharmakos*. Then in Revelation 9:21 the word is *pharmakeia*. It is at once obvious that these are but three different forms of the very same word, and the prefix “pharma” reveals that the meaning of the word has something to do with drugs, as in the words “pharmaceutical,” “pharmacy,” and “pharmacist.” No other place in scripture, but in the book of Revelation, is the idea of “sorcery” associated with drugs! The word identifies deadly poisons and those who either make or sell those deadly poisons. That is just what the words mean, nothing else. In the Greek language a Pharmacist is, therefore, a Sorcerer, a maker or a dealer, a vendor or a user of deadly poisons sometimes administered as medicines. Legal, or illegal, in many cases they destroy the brain, weaken the immune system, damage the liver, kidneys, heart, and other vital organs and systems, addict or madden the user, and ruin the spirits, souls, and bodies of countless millions who rely upon them.

Now, our purpose in this message is not to attack prescription drugs, medicines, or pharmacists. The apostle John certainly knew what drugs were and who sorcerers were in his day, and among many cultures they are not so different today. In my encyclopedia, under the headings “MEDICINE MAN” and “WITCH DOCTOR” it states that these treat diseases by appealing to the sick person’s superstition. The medicine man wears fierce-looking masks to frighten away the evil spirits that are causing the disease. He makes up drugs or potions which are strange mixtures of hallucinogenic herbs, lizard’s tails, frogs teeth, and such things. As a sorcerer they have crafted the art of manipulating the human mind. Ah, the apostle John also understood what, in their *spiritual meaning*, drugs and sorcerers signified! All who think with a spiritual mind will perceive the truth that the drugs point to the *doctrines* and *teachings* of religious Babylon which dull the spiritual senses of the Lord’s people and are destructive to true spiritual understanding and spiritual life, giving them a distorted view of God and His purpose, a false hope, a mis-directed goal, and causing them to live by religious superstitions, myths, traditions, legends, and folklore. Do you know how many preachers and religious systems today are masters at *manipulating the human mind*? They are sorcerers! Doctrines about the power of the devil, financial prosperity, the rapture, eternal torment, free will, so-called end-time events, the antichrist, the great tribulation, a mansion over the hilltop, along with holidays, rituals, ceremonies, sacraments, and a hundred more delusions ***drug God’s people into a spiritually hallucinogenic state***. They live in a false, starry-eyed, fairy-world of soulical imaginations which they suppose to be spiritual realities! Pleasure! Fun! Thrills! Excitement! Charismatic personalities! These and many more things are the result of a cunning spirit that saturates the church systems as they run after the “high” of soulical programs, concerts, fleshly manifestations, emotionally stirring singing, entertaining preaching — the same as any drug user in the world. In chapter eighteen of the Revelation the Holy Spirit testifies that all nations are deceived by the “sorceries” or the “spiritual drugging” of Mystery Babylon!

I do not doubt for one moment that there will be a great assortment of shamans, medicine men, witch doctors, and sorcerers in the lake of fire. Nor do I doubt that there will also be quite an array of preachers and teachers and ministers of various kinds who administered an unceasing supply of Babylon’s deadly poisons to the Lord’s people! There are not many people who are sufficiently awake to believe it, but at this very moment hundreds of millions of church goers of every sect and creed are walking and talking and acting under the delusions of Babylon’s drugs. They are filled with false doctrines, false hopes, false expectations, false interpretations, false understandings, false forms of worship, and though they profess to be Christians, they would not know the real Christ if they met Him on the street. They are so “high” on their mixed potion that they giddily imagine that they are going to be caught up in the sky where they will sit on a cloud with Jesus eating pork chops, or some such foolishness, at the marriage supper of the

Lamb, while the inhabitants of earth suffer the excruciating pangs of “great tribulation” under the rule of a superman dictator called “the Antichrist.” Ah, Babylon, and the multitudes that are deceived by your sorceries, your psychotic hallucinations are so intense that you actually believe that the vast majority of earth’s billions of human souls will be *lost* to the all-loving, all-wise, and omnipotent God — finally, irrevocably, and eternally — and not only will they be separated from God and heaven forever, but they will be given over to the most sadistic, inhuman, ungodly tortures that could be devised by the vilest fiends — a thousand times worse than anything inflicted on man by Adolph Hitler or any other tyrant of human history.

I once saw a picture which originated as a painting in the cathedrals of Europe which is a picture of hell. I also saw one not so different right in the Vatican in Rome. This picture supposedly illustrates what hell is like and was placed in the cathedrals to teach the people the horrors of eternal damnation. There are little paths running everywhere through hell. There is this huge demon scampering about loose snatching people off the paths and stuffing them in his mouth, eating them alive. There are legs sticking out, arms hanging out of his mouth, while he’s grabbing more people to eat. There are many other little demons running around stabbing people with pitchforks, bringing them to the head demon to eat. And we wonder why the minds of the captives of Babylon are so warped? Millions of people actually think like that — to them it is the “wisdom of God” and the “gospel truth.” No wonder that the doctrines of Babylon are called “abominations and filthiness” (Rev. 17:4). These are the abominations and filthiness of concepts that misrepresent, denigrate, defame, vilify, revile, malign, and impugn the nature, the character, the love, the wisdom, the power, and the purpose of God! Vast multitudes of the Lord’s precious people can scarcely believe that God *loves them*, that God does not *condemn them*, and that God is not out to “get” them because of the *sorcerers* and the *sorceries*, the *manipulation of their minds* by the practitioners of the church systems! In my opinion you have to be either a great lover of “Christian fiction” or very “high” on something to believe such things! I do not hesitate to say that all these shall have their part in God’s great Holy Ghost Lake of Fire to be purged, purified, and refined — delivered from all the errors and delusions of the harlot church system!

“...and idolaters...” Upon hearing about men worshipping idols our thoughts immediately travel to other lands, and other times; either to the idolaters of ancient civilizations and empires, or to religions very alien to our own. Of course the Roman Catholic Church as well as others venerate the images of Christ, the Virgin Mary, and the saints. The truth is, however, that much that goes on in Christianity and within the walls of church buildings and in the name of God is little more than a refined form of idolatry. An idol is anything that usurps the place of the living God, of His living reality in our lives. In their crudest form, idols are fashioned by men according to their own imaginations out of whatever material they are pleased to use. Christianity’s “refinement” for this practice is still to worship a god manufactured by their own imaginations, emotions, traditions, and will, merely abolishing the manufacture of an artifact. In short, those who present a god who is different than the God revealed in and through the firstborn Son of God are guilty of idolatry. No matter how religious the depiction, how appealing the description, how supposedly “orthodox” the assumptions, any church, minister, or movement that presents a god other than the One revealed in Jesus is guilty of making an idol.

No man lives without a god. The real question is, who or what is his God, or gods. The pronouncement in the nineteen fifties and sixties that “God is dead” did nothing to God. Instead it simply attempted to assert that a certain God or kind of God was dead. It was a false image of God that men were endeavoring to cast away. All of us have had false images or concepts of God that we venerated which now we have had to cast aside! We have even had to tear down their altars in our heart! If you listen to people speak, and hear what they say, it is easy to see their image of God. The fact remains, our Lord Jesus Christ is the *true image* of God! Any characterization of God that deviates from the revelation of the wisdom, nature, power, compassion, mercy, love, truth, and grace revealed in Jesus is a demon god, an idol image!

God has caused us as His called and chosen elect to repent and empty our minds and hearts of the remnants of false beliefs and inadequate concepts of God which most of us had accumulated in our early childhood, or perhaps carried over from an elementary stage of spiritual understanding and experience of God.

What is an idol? It is an *image*. The image may be in our mind, but it is an idol. When we honor, give respect to, pay homage to, that is, *worship* an untrue image of God, we are idolaters! It is the soul that births the false ideas about God — not the spirit. It is the soul that plays the harlot, and it is the soul that creates false “images” of God in the mind and understanding. Our spirit has a true knowledge of God, our soul does not — it has to be taught. Our spirit has a true sense of worship, our soul does not — it worships images. So this great religious Babylon, this great confusion originates not with the outward religious system, but out of the souls of men — peoples, kindreds, tongues, and nations. It comes from the woman inside of us! There are millions of people in confusion today because they have false images of God enshrined in their minds. And there are many gods! In the church systems of man there is a literal pantheon of gods! Religion, yea, Christianity is beyond any doubt a polytheistic system! There is one image of God honored by the Catholics, another image of God revered by the Baptists, a different image of God esteemed by Jehovah’s Witnesses, a further image of God adored by the Pentecostals, a distinct image of God elevated by the Mormons, and so on. Some of these “images” barely resemble one another! But of this I am certain: All of them will go up in smoke as they are burned out of men’s minds and consumed out of their hearts in the lake of fire! That is the mystery!

“...and **all liars...**” The word “liars” in this passage is the same Greek word as “false” in Acts 6:13. It signifies that which is false, not true, a lie. Later in chapter twenty-one of the Revelation John adds this warning: “And there shall in no wise enter into it (the holy city) any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or *maketh a lie*: but they whose names (natures) are written in the Lamb’s book of life” (Rev. 21:27). Ah — there are no pretenders in the holy city of God, no fakers, no hypocrites, no imposters, no false doctrines, no traditions of men, no empty rituals, no lifeless ceremonies, no childish immaturity, no play acting. All this religious externalism will be consigned to the garbage heap of history, the dung hill *outside the city*. Crawling around with the liars on that dung hill are the others: “For *without* are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and *maketh a lie*” (Rev. 22:15). The more our hearts bow down in meditation upon the seriousness of these spiritual realities, the more we are brought face to face with God’s purpose to make men holy. You will notice that the list of people “outside” the holy city is essentially the same as those who “have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone.” Oh, yes! To be *outside* the “holy” city, whether one is a believer or an unbeliever, is to be headed straight into GOD’S HOLY GHOST FIRE OF PURGING AND PURIFICATION! Can you not see the mystery?

To be continued...

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