

KINGDOM BIBLE STUDIES

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

FROM THE CANDLESTICK TO THE THRONE

Part 244

THE HOLY CITY (continued)

“...and he showed me that *great city, the holy Jerusalem*, descending out of heaven from God...having a wall *great and high*, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: on the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb” (Rev. 21:10-14).

As the entire city symbolizes the perfected bride of Christ, the glorified sons of God, and the fully established kingdom of God invested, manifested, and operating in and through them, so the several parts of the city described signify special attributes, characteristics, and conditions that will obtain in the divine kingdom in its perfection.

One of the beautiful symbols given us in the new Jerusalem is that of its majestic wall. John testified the wall was built of jasper, or, as it would be called today, of blue-white diamonds. John used the beauty and brilliance of these diamonds to describe the glory of the city as a whole (21:11), but verse eighteen indicates the wall is totally built of these diamonds. Here is glory indescribable! The scene is one of luminous splendor! The idea is not one of mere physical appearance, but of *spiritual* wealth, beauty, power, and glory! How beautifully they reflect the glory and power of God!

“And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal. And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of the messenger. And the building of the wall of it was of jasper...” (Rev. 21:15-18). According to this passage the city lies foursquare, 12,000 furlongs each way, which translates into 1,500 miles wide, 1,500 miles long, and 1,500 miles high with a wall around it that is 144 cubits high. Twelve is the number of divine government. 12 X 12 is 144 — that is, divine government squared, brought to its ultimate fullness. The measurement of the wall (144 cubits) means that the city is surrounded and protected by the divine authority and omnipotent power of God! That makes the wall, in our measurements, 264 feet high. Now, if this is a literal city in heaven, who are the enemies this wall is designed to keep out? What would be the purpose of a wall 264 feet high? Or, if we understand this city carnally, will the new heavens and the new earth *wherein dwelleth righteousness* be so wicked that walls are needed to protect and defend it? Even in our time, what protection would a wall 264 feet high provide? Would such a wall hinder demons, or terrorists, or jet planes loaded with bombs, or missiles carrying warheads?

The literal interpretation of these beautiful symbols cannot explain any purpose for this wall. But understood spiritually, the wall has deep meaning and wonderful significance. The walls of this city are

SALVATION. “In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah: We have a strong city; *salvation* will God appoint *for walls and bulwarks*” (Isa. 26:1). “Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call *thy wall Salvation*, and thy gates Praise” (Isa. 60:18). “For I, saith the Lord, will be unto her a *wall of fire* (the scintillating gems) round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her” (Zech. 2:5). “The *name of the Lord is a strong tower* (literally: a walled place)...” (Prov. 18:10). The mighty power of God’s salvation in our lives is the wall of the city of our God! God is raising up this wall within us from glory to glory. The wall has a measurement — there were 144 cubits, according to the measure of a *man*. John said that the *man* was the angel, or the *messenger*. So the man was not an angel as we think of angels, for he was indeed a *man*. The *man* is Christ Jesus! The *man* is the *measure* of the wall of the city! That is the measure of the second man, the last Adam, the perfect man, the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. It is the *measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ* (Eph. 4:13). This measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ IS THE SALVATION that brings every son and daughter of God into that safety where no enemy can harm! As we come into the perfection of Christ we dwell within the walls of His salvation! The power of the Christ formed within is our defense, His life becomes the strength of our life! It is the raising up of His life within us that overcomes sin, defeats Satan, dispels darkness, subdues carnality, and vanquishes death. This is the eternal salvation that has been brought to us by the man Christ Jesus!

This “so great a salvation” is our inheritance in Christ. Where is it? “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, *to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled*, and that fadeth not away, *reserved in heaven for you*, who are kept by the power of God *unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time*” (I Pet. 1:3-5). This great salvation is “reserved in heaven” for you, that is, *in the realm of the spirit*. It is reserved not in some far-off heaven out in space, but in the heavenly, spiritual dimension of our very own lives from whence it is raised up in power within us. And it is reserved for *you* — for each individual who will enter the kingdom. It is reserved for *you* and for *me*! It means that it is kept in this treasure chest of the Lord, reserved, labeled for each saint predestinated unto the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us not cheat ourselves out of our inheritance! Let us not *neglect* so great a salvation! The inheritance is our FULL SALVATION in spirit, soul, *and* body. It already exists in the spirit within us, reserved for us to appropriate in the totality of our experience!

This great salvation is “ready to be revealed in the *last time*.” The “last time” is not a date on the calendar. It signifies the completion, the fullness, the consummation, the final crowning work of God in His people. Everything in our spiritual walk and experience in God is moving us forward toward that “last time,” the ultimate maturity and power of Christ raised up in us! The Emphasized Version expresses it so beautifully, “...ready to be revealed at the *ripening time*.” The ripening time is the season in our lives and in all of the Lord’s elect when the full fruit of God ripens in our experience. The Father has waited long for the precious fruit of the earth to come to maturity — fully ripe. God wants His people to be perfectly ripe so that all the nourishment, strength, victory, power, and life of Christ is reproduced within us, the beautiful fruit that He will present to creation to partake of. Think of it!

This inheritance, incorruptible and undefiled, is reserved in the heaven of our spiritual reality to be revealed in the last time, or in the ripening time. Dear ones, are we afraid to ride the rocket of God? Are we hesitant to venture to believe that something is reserved for people now that no other people has been able to reach? Are we afraid to believe that? Or do we wish to believe that this age is just like every other? Will we venture to ride on God’s rocket and soar away by faith in God and say, “Lord, I am not going to look at my weakness or consider my unworthiness, but I know you have something for me which has been reserved in my name far beyond anything I have ever dreamed of, and I do now arise to possess my inheritance.” It is reserved in heaven “for you,” *ready to be revealed*. All things are ready, ready to be revealed, manifested in us. It is just as though we had something beautiful, something that eyes had never seen which was veiled, and the veil would be removed and all could look upon it. What God has for His people is ready to be revealed. God wants to lift the veil from our eyes so that we might see the full salvation that He has prepared for those who love Him. That is what was happening to John when he saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God. And there he beheld in transfixed wonder the great and glorious WALL OF SALVATION by which every enemy is shut out, even the last enemy, which is death, forever shut out from us by the mighty, impregnable wall of His victorious life!

You see, beloved, walls are not for protection only, but for exclusion. The purpose of a wall in Bible times was for protection and defense, to keep out enemies. Every garden had a wall. Every city had a wall. To be inside the wall signifies protection and freedom from enemies. It means to have no enemies! Are you still struggling with enemies, dear one? Then get inside the city! Realize that you *are* the city and God has a great and strong wall about you! There are no enemies there, for every enemy has been put under foot! There is no sin there! There is no flesh there! There is no immaturity there! There is no misunderstanding there! There is no sickness there! There is no pain, sorrow, or death there! Oh, what a wall of salvation! Everything is excluded that defiles! “And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life” (Rev. 21:27). Nothing can come into the city but that which is of the life of Christ. Anything that is not of *incorruptible life* is excluded.

Those who inhabit this glorious realm are separate from the filth of Babylon and the flesh-pots of Egypt. They abide in union with Christ. They put on His glorious mind and are transformed into His wonderful likeness. Nothing else is permitted entry into their world! “Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain” (Ps. 127:1). Thank God, the Lord Himself is the keeper of the walls of salvation in the city of God! The wall of salvation has nothing to do with so-called “coverings” of elderships, headships, fellowships, rules, regulations, laws, or doctrines. If there was really “safety” in any of those orders you wouldn’t see so much confusion, divisions, disgraced ministries, and fellowships falling apart. The wall of salvation reflects the glory of God in the life of the child of God as the faith and strength and power of God Himself is formed as a nature in him. Isn’t it wonderful!

THE GATES

“And had a wall great and high, and had *twelve gates*, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel. On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates. And the *twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl...and the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there.* And they shall bring the glory and honor of the nations into it” (Rev. 21:12-13, 21, 25-26).

The beautiful type is seen in Solomon’s temple of which we read, “*And he set the porters* (answering to the twelve angels at the twelve gates in the passage above) *at the gates of the house of the Lord, that none which was unclean in anything should enter in*” (II Chron. 23:10). Something more than a mere “gate” is understood by the word in Hebrew. It signifies a porch or a structure enclosing the gate, sometimes containing chambers. We may take our conception of what John saw from the gates of cities in ancient times which were often elaborate affairs, massive gateways which form entrances, not simply gates as we know gates. The same is seen in the temples of Egypt. It was something like entering through the “customs house” at the border of a foreign country.

Rare indeed is the man or woman in the religious systems of earth who has a true and spiritual understanding of the holy city, the new Jerusalem, the bride of the Lamb. In one remarkable prophetic word the prophet Isaiah carries us beyond the symbol to the reality, saying, “Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call *thy walls Salvation*, and **THY GATES PRAISE**” (Isa. 60:18). How clear that the idea of a material city is but a product of carnal minds and childish understanding, as the Holy Spirit pulls aside the veil and identifies for us just what the walls and gates of the city of God really are. The WALLS are SALVATION and the GATES are PRAISE! Salvation and praise are wrought out through a *people* — not through stone walls or pearly gates. There are twelve gates of praise — twelve aspects or dimensions of HIS PRAISE lived out through the lives of those ministries through which men are ushered into the realities of the city. Again, twelve is the number of divine government, thus the rulership of the spirit in our lives evokes the praise by which HE is glorified. Jesus, our elder brother and pattern, was ruled by the mind and will of the Father at all times and in all things. His whole life *was a praise* unto God! His life, in all its words, attitudes, and actions GLORIFIED GOD! Praise is often associated in our minds only with verbal singing, thanksgiving, and noise — but true praise lies beyond what one speaks — it is a state of being. Christ’s life *was a praise* to God. It was in harmony with the purpose of God and revealed the character and glory of God.

The gates are the *entrance* into the presence, majesty, and glory of God! “*Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise*” (Ps. 100:4). The gates are also the *entrance* into the kingdom of God! “There is a path which no fowl knoweth, and which the vulture’s eye hath not seen: the lion’s whelps have not trodden it, nor the fierce lion passed by it” (Job 28:7-8). “It shall be called the Way of Holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err and go therein” (Isa. 35:8-9). It is only by and through the wisdom, grace, and Spirit of God that we can find an entrance in through the gates of the holy city. Nothing that is unclean or that defileth, nothing of the world, the flesh, or the devil can enter into this eternal divine relationship with the Lord. The *holy city*, the *divine government* of the Lord, is composed of only those that have been made fully *one in Him*, filled with His fullness, invested with His nature. They have laid aside the corruptible things of this life and have put on the Lord Jesus Christ, being granted an abundant entrance into His kingdom and glory. These are they whose life is hid with Christ in God, and when Christ, who *is their life*, appears, they appear with Him in His glory (Col. 3:3-4).

Since the gates are never closed by day, and there is no night there; and since “entering in” by the gates is mentioned, while there is no suggestion of anyone exiting through the gates, we can conclude that there will always be access to God’s presence, power, and glory; and always access to enter (become a part of) the bride! Think of that! Night is caused by the earth turning away from the light. In this realm there will no longer be a turning away, no longer a vacillating back and forth between light and darkness, truth and error, spirit and flesh. And there is no more a dependence upon any light of any kind from *without*, for the Lamb who *is the light* dwells within! Every man has His *own light within* and no longer draws any light (receives any ministry) from anything or anyone outside himself! What a word that is!

The twelve gates of the city bear the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel. This fact has led some to erroneously assume that the natural Israel, the fleshly seed of Abraham, the multitude of nations that have come out of his loins, the thousands of millions of physical descendants of Rebekah and Leah, are the bride of Christ. But such can never be! The book of Revelation is entirely a book of symbols! A symbol is *never* the reality, it merely points to the reality. Should we begin to interpret the book literally, we would start down a slippery slope indeed, which would land us in an abyss of innumerable absurdities. If the term “children of Israel” signifies literally the fleshly descendants of Israel, then why would the term “gates” not signify literal gates of a material city? One simply cannot “pick and choose” what is to be taken literally and what is figurative and metaphorical.

The city as seen by John in holy vision is not a literal city — it is a symbolic city — a people. The gates are not literal gates — they are spiritual entrances into the presence, holiness, glory, and power of God. The river of the water of life is no babbling stream like the rivers of earth — it is the eternal outflowing of the life of God in the spirit. The wall is nothing like that wall which surrounded the ancient earthly Jerusalem — it is the almighty defense of His salvation-power in our lives. The throne is not a golden seat in some far-off heaven somewhere — rather, it is a symbol bespeaking the realm of His omnipotent power and sovereignty, and His universal dominion. Thus, when we read of the *names* of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel upon the gates of the city it cannot mean the literal names written with letters of the alphabet, nor can it signify the fleshly Israel — else the symbolism breaks down and what is intended as merely a figure becomes in fact the very reality. It must point beyond the outward and physical to the inward and spiritual. The things pertaining to the city of God, the *heavenly Jerusalem*, which comes down *out of heaven from God*, are both **heavenly** and **spiritual** — not of the earth, earthy. They belong to the new creation — not the old!

The names of the twelve tribes of Israel are deeply meaningful to us in the spirit. An understanding of the tribes reveals to us ways and means by which we are able to enter into the new Jerusalem today. The first is RUEBEN, meaning, “Behold a son.” God is perfecting the spirit of sonship in a people, and this spirit is one of the entrances into the governmental realm of God. The throne is within the city, and it is the manchild, the manifest sons of God, who is caught up into that throne. Therefore, the spirit of sonship in our hearts by which we cry, “Abba! Father!” is the first gate of our entrance into the city! The second tribe is SIMEON, meaning “Hearing.” The admonition to the overcomer always is, “He that hath an ear, let him *hear what the Spirit saith* unto the churches.” Faith comes by *hearing* the word of God, the *living word* of

God, and this spiritual capacity to truly *hear* in the Spirit and by the Spirit is the second gateway into the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. LEVI, the third of the tribes, means “Unity” or “Joined,” and truly “he that is *joined* unto the Lord is one spirit.” It speaks of the principle of *abiding* in Christ — experiencing a *divine union* with Him. “I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that *abideth in me*, and *I in him*, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.” Those of the spiritual tribe of Levi have discovered the secret place of the Most High!

The fourth is JUDAH, and means “Praise” — not “praisers” per se, but a people transformed to show forth HIS PRAISE, that is, HIS VIRTUES AND HIS EXCELLENCIES, TO BECOME His praise in the earth. “This people have I formed for myself; they shall *show forth my praise*” (Isa. 43:21). “I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night: ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, and give Him no rest, till He establish, and till *He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth*” (Isa. 62:6-7). “That I may *show forth all Thy praise* in the gates of the daughter of Zion: I will rejoice in Thy salvation” (Ps. 9:14). Being changed — becoming His praise — is the fourth gate of entrance into the kingdom of God! The fifth tribe, ZEBULON, means “Dwelling.” It speaks of possessing our possessions, of apprehending that for which we also have been apprehended of Christ Jesus, actively entering into and laying hold upon that which has been promised. It means to no longer just “talk the talk” but begin to “walk the walk”! This principle is another mighty gate of entrance into the power and glory of the city! The sixth tribe, ISSACHAR, means “Bearing a reward.” This bespeaks of *attainment* — that which surpasses grace and gifts and imputation — something bestowed in recognition of actual accomplishment and qualification. The gifts of the Spirit are given, not because of the goodness of the recipient, but because of the goodness of the Giver. They are free gifts, not merit badges. But in Issachar we receive a “reward,” as the Lord has said, “Behold, I come quickly; and *my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work shall be*” (Rev. 22:12). As we begin to receive His reward for our growth and development in Him, we discover another gate of entrance into the governmental realm of God!

GAD, the seventh tribe, denotes “A seer” — the spirit of prophecy, the opened heavens, divine wisdom by which one understands the true nature of all things. All truth, spiritual understanding of all mysteries of the kingdom, fullness of revelation — without doubt these are an important prerequisite for rulership in the kingdom! ASHER, the eighth of the tribes, means “Happy.” “The *joy* of the Lord is our strength” — no longer that soulish joy often “worked up” in meetings by singing, clapping, and praising, nor yet that bubbly, giddy, superficial excitement of spiritual *children* over God’s goodness and blessings; but that deep, confident, abiding joy of spiritual maturity which is undisturbed by anything that happens in the outer world of appearances. If something bad or disappointing happening can rob us of our joy, then it is not this *kingdom joy* that comes down out of heaven from God! This is the *mind of Christ* and the *kingdom attitude* that is unmoved and unshaken by events, the fundamental quality that admits us into the inner calm and stability of the Christ in the face of all situations and circumstances. That is one gate we *must* enter in order to reign with Christ and enlighten the nations! The ninth tribe is NAPHTALI, meaning “Wrestling.” This denotes victory in spiritual warfare, not just in our own personal battles, but on behalf of others and on behalf of creation. It is an aspect of overcoming, but not merely the overcoming in our own lives, but overcoming the powers arrayed in the outer world — “for *we wrestle* not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high (exalted, entrenched, heavenly, spiritual) places” (Eph. 5:12). What an accomplishment that is for showing forth the glory, authority, power, and majesty of the Christ!

The tenth tribe, EPHRAIM, means “Double fruit” — that which becomes provision for all men out of the abundance of HIS LIFE. It is provision and sonship ministry. As Jesus went about healing, delivering, casting out demons, raising the dead, feeding the multitudes, speaking to the elements, His ministry was not out of the “in part” measure of the church age, for He received the Spirit *without measure*. His ministry therefore was not out of the “gift” realm, but out of the spirit and power of *sonship to God*. Every apprehended son of God must eventually move out of the old “church order” into the *kingdom order*; and out of the “five-fold” ministry into the *sonship ministry*, as Paul the apostle has taught us, “And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: TILL we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, UNTO A PERFECT MAN (SON), UNTO THE MEASURE OF THE STATURE OF THE FULLNESS OF CHRIST” (Eph. 4:11-13).

This “perfect man” and this “measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” ministry bears the fruit of the tree of life in the midst of the city, the leaves of which are for the healing of the nations, and the fruit of which will satisfy the hunger of all creation!

The eleventh tribe, MANASSEH, means “Forgetfulness” — representing the *ministry of reconciliation*, unconditional love, mercy, forgiveness, and blessing — God in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, *not imputing their trespasses unto them*, wherein He says even to the rebellious, “And they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for ALL shall know me, from the *least* to the *greatest*. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sin and iniquities will I **REMEMBER NO MORE**” (Heb. 8:11-12). All God’s sons must enter through this gate of reconciliation, mercy, and love, partaking of the spirit of the firstborn Son of God who “came *not* into the world to *condemn* the world, but that the world through Him might be *saved*.” It is here that we *forget* the “sin” message as it is preached in the church systems, and go forth in the power of the true “salvation” message — *saviours* upon mount Zion! The twelfth tribe is BENJAMIN, meaning, “Son of the father’s right hand.” Benjamin is the youngest son and the figure of authority and power, revealing the great truth that all the foregoing principles, characteristics, and attainments must be thoroughly established in one’s experience and life *before* he qualifies to share THE DOMINION OF HIS THRONE!

There are twelve gates to the holy city — three gates on each side — and each gate is one great pearl (Rev. 21:13,21). Think of it, beloved, the seer of Patmos does not tell us that the gates are *made of pearl*, but that each of the gates IS ONE PEARL! What kind of pearls are these! Why is every gate a pearl? You remember the heavenly merchant man in Jesus’ kingdom parable of the pearl of great price. “The kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went out and sold all that he had, and bought it” (Mat. 13:45-46). You may say, “That is the sinner seeking the Saviour. Jesus is the one Pearl of great price, and we must sell all we have and all we are to obtain that priceless stone.” Indeed! a sinner *selling*? What has old Adam got, what has the natural man got that is of any value to *pay for the Christ*? What has the natural man got to sell but his sin, lack, ignorance, limitation, darkness, and death? And what does the carnal, baby Christian in religious Babylon have to sell but his wood, hay, and stubble? Nay, the pearl of great price in this parable is not Christ Jesus, but the church! Not that filthy harlot system which calls itself the church, but the true elect of God born from above!

I do not hesitate to tell you that the Christ went and sold all that He had, He emptied Himself, made Himself of no reputation, being made in the form of a servant, and in the likeness of sinful flesh, laying aside the glory He had with the Father before the world was, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross — truly He payed ALL for the church which is the new Jerusalem! The inspired writer has borne divine witness: “Take heed therefore unto yourselves...to feed the church of God, which HE HATH PURCHASED WITH HIS OWN BLOOD” (Acts 20:28). “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and GAVE HIMSELF FOR IT; that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be *holy* (the holy city) and *without blemish* (as the pearls and gems of the city) before Him in love” (Eph. 5:25,27). The pearl of great price is the true church in her unity, beauty, perfection, and completeness — the *bride* adorned for her Husband, the *wife* of the Lamb, the exalted *queen* of heaven, the glorious city of God! The bride so fascinated with the Lord Jesus, was of such value and preciousness unto Him, that He parted with “all that He had,” to get that pearl! Aren’t you glad!

The pearl was the most precious substance known to the ancients. A large pearl is almost priceless. A single ordinary pearl’s worth may be in the hundreds of thousands of dollars. And there is a reason for the pearl’s great value. Some one hundred years ago, a common mussel living in the Tennessee River, began feeling mighty uncomfortable. A fragment of shell from some other mussel, long since dead, had washed into its housing. This shell fragment became an irritant within the mussel. Immediately the mussel began a response, a *healing* response, to the irritation. Because of the irritation and hurt, a juice or fluid began to be exuded by the mussel to “coat” the foreign substance. Secreting streams of pearly saliva or *nacre* — one of the things mussels as well as oysters do best — this particular mollusk managed to cover all the rough edges of the shell fragment. This provided some temporary relief. But each time the substance hardened it again created suffering, renewed pain, on the part of the mussel. Another layer of nacre was

added. As the years passed, it added more and more coats of nacre until the fragment became deeply hidden in the pea-like object. Each layer added hardened into a spherical form of lustrous beauty. Thus was born an authentic North American fresh-water pearl.

The value of a pearl more than an inch in diameter is fabulous. The world's largest natural pearl found anywhere (recorded by Guinness) turned up in a giant killer clam off the coast of the Philippine Islands. It weighed a little more than 14 pounds. The pearl is baroque in shape, a little larger than a man's head, and was (at that time) valued at \$4,080,000. In the light of all this, how staggering is the statement that the portals of the new Jerusalem are each a single pearl! Each one represents the wealth of a world! Twelve of them matched! It stuns the imagination. But the type speaks powerfully to us of the immense heavenly value of our *process of entrance* into the high calling of God in Christ Jesus!

The pearl is formed within a living creature by a living process. Pearls do not grow in the open air, or exposed to the outer elements. Most are formed within an oyster, hidden away within the depths of the seas. The oyster is certainly not a beautiful creature on the outside, yet God has ordained a spiritual lesson for us in that on the *inside* of the oyster, through processes that He has ordained, something BEAUTIFUL and of GREAT VALUE can be formed. Thus a pure heart, a divine mind, a heavenly nature is formed in the center of the ugliness of an outwardly earthly creature. It is a living thing — a living process — and has its seat at the very center of the life. As already pointed out, the creation of the pearl is initiated by the introduction of an irritant, a piece of shell, or in most cases just a grain of sand. When the irritant arrives, there seems only one thing for the lowly creature to do. To deny the existence of the sand is futile, for it is there. To rebel is useless, for there is no way to extract it. So, slowly and patiently, the oyster begins to build layer upon layer of that milky substance, leaving a lovely coating over all, which then hardens to become a beautiful pearl. In the life of the overcomer that irritant is THE CROSS. It is produced out of suffering, and the crucifixion of a life. The “sea” is a type of our fleshly, human nature, and the living process involved in making the pearl is the living, dynamic work of GRACE that flows out from our spirit within in response to the inworking of the cross, producing the beautiful character qualities that give us an entrance into the higher dimensions of God's kingdom. Our hearts are made pure, the new creation life is formed in soul and body, through the crucifixion of the natural life and the outflowing of His grace. The cross enters our lives as something that *hurts* — we may see it as a trial, a difficulty, a hard place, a crisis experience — but it pierces the flesh-life, evoking streams of the pearly nacre of HIS LIFE, GRACE, AND GLORY, forming the beauty of the Christ within. Thus the trials, testings, and difficulties are conquered and the seeming misfortune turned to blessing. All who enter this fair city pass through the gates of pearl, and by the abundant grace of God they turn their trials into triumphs. Oh, the wonder of it! Oh, the mystery of it!

The city has twelve gates and each gate is a pearl. This reveals the great truth that every gate of entrance into the blessedness, righteousness, life, power, and glory of this city will bring you pain, irritation, and the fellowship of His sufferings as you experience the work of His cross within yourself. Is it any wonder why most people would rather “look for the city” up in the sky than to “enter into the city” in their own experience? As we enter the city we *become* the habitation and expression of God in the earth! The pain we experience as we enter the city is the crucifixion of our old nature, our old creation man, our fleshly, soulical life, and our natural understanding. At each gate we lose more and more of Self and gain more and more of Him! Once we have experienced all of the gates of the city all the shadows have flown away, all the in-part realm has been swallowed up, there is no more seeing through a glass darkly, for in union with Christ we see face to face.

Never forget, precious friend of mine, that each gate, each means of entrance into that city, is a PEARL — we cannot be admitted to the heavenly Jerusalem unless God has produced something in our lives akin to the *beauty* and *value* of the pearl. As someone has pointed out, pearls can be found anywhere in the world, even in waters that are somewhat shallow, but the best quality pearls are found in the *depths* of the sea, speaking to us of a *deep* work of God in our lives. “They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; these are the works of the Lord, and His *wonders* in the *deep*” (Ps. 107:23-24). The deeper the work of God in us, the more astounding it is to us! Without a doubt a pearl is one of “His wonders in the deep.” As God does a deeper work in us, piercing to the very depths of our life, then truly “deep calleth unto deep at the noise of the waterspouts” (Ps. 42:7).

Leland Earls wrote: “A pearl cannot be produced without suffering in the oyster. Hebrews 2:10 says that Jesus was ‘made perfect through suffering.’ The Greek word used here is *pathema*, meaning ‘something undergone, i.e. hardship or pain.’ Another Greek word is used in Hebrews 5:8 where we read that Jesus ‘learned obedience by the things which He suffered.’ The word in this passage is *pascho*, which means ‘to experience a sensation or impression.’ Thus it was ALL the experiences that Jesus went through which prepared or *perfected* Him for His role or ministry as **King-Priest** in the kingdom of God. And remember — Jesus is not only our Saviour, but also the **Pattern Son** for *all* the *sons* who are to be brought to His same glory and share in His King-Priest ministry and rule. We are now being prepared for future roles of responsibility. And the experiences of life correspond to the ‘irritants’ that ‘invade’ the oyster! How we respond to them is important! If we let the spirit ‘exude’ divine grace within us, even as the oyster exudes a living substance that forms a pearl, then our right and grateful response to every experience can be used by God to form the pearl-like beauty of His nature and character in us. Pearls may be rose, cream, white, bronze, brown, or pastel shades of lavender, blue, green, etc., depicting the various ‘hues’ of the Lord’s work in us by His Spirit. It is not the irritants (experiences) themselves that make us overcomers, but rather our drawing upon His grace — His divine life substance, that builds layer upon layer of pearl-like beauty in us. The appealing iridescence and the luster for which pearls are prized are due primarily to the reflection and refraction of light on the surface of the translucent gem. Ah, beloved, the light of the new Jerusalem is the GLORY of God! Can we be ready for that city unless when that glory shines upon us there is a reflection and refraction of HIS VERY OWN beauty and image developed within us? — end quote.

In ancient times, pearls were regarded as a symbol of perfection. This came about because of their pure color — predominantly white with other hues and tones. Their appearance was also regarded as softer, more feminine, than that of mineral gems such as diamonds and emeralds. Because they are softer and vulnerable to scratches, pearls need gentle treatment. A modern comparison of pearls and other precious gems, made by a woman’s magazine some time ago, stated in a mock-serious vein that, while diamonds make a woman appear harsh and mysterious, pearls make her more sexy and sensuous. Is it not remarkable, in the light of this worldly evaluation, that two millenniums ago the Holy Spirit used the pearl as a symbol of entrance into the company of the prepared, adorned, beautiful, and glorious *bride* of the Lamb! She is prepared, perfected, matured, adorned with goodly pearls as a bride for her Husband. Corporately, it is the feminine qualities of God formed in a people and united to Himself. Individually, it is the soul cleansed, sanctified, and transformed, made one with the spirit. O glorious city of God!

To be continued...

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