

KINGDOM BIBLE STUDIES

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

FROM THE CANDLESTICK TO THE THRONE

Part 226

THE FIRST RESURRECTION

(continued)

"Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years" (Rev. 20:6).

Like all people, the ancient Greeks mused about the "best possible government." Known as the originators of democracy, their great philosopher Plato believed the best possible government would be led by a philosopher-king. Plato wrote that if an ideal city-state was to ever come into being, "philosophers must become kings...or those now called kings must truly philosophize." In our text above, however, God does not agree! God does not unite in His kingdom philosophy with kingship. Oh, no! Rather, He unites *kingship* with *priesthood*. God does not govern His kingdom through philosopher-kings but through king-priests. When the people of Israel met God at mount Sinai He spoke to them these words of counsel and promise: "Now, therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: *for all the earth is mine*: and ye shall be unto me *a kingdom of priests*, and an holy nation" (Ex. 19:5-6).

The subject of the Royal Priesthood, like many of the themes of scripture, is inexhaustible. It sparkles as the twinkling stars of the heavens with glories which many have not yet beheld. Let us put our eye to the telescope of the Holy Spirit, and allow this grand subject to be brought nearer to our spiritual vision for, in so doing, we shall behold more of the grandeur and ineffableness of the "High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus," and of the purpose and majesty of *our oneness in Him*. This makes it mandatory upon us to remove the shoes from off our feet and tread carefully upon this holy and mysterious ground. But at the same time it also holds out the promise to us that we shall here gain an insight into some of the most marvelous and glorious things in God's whole mighty work of creation and redemption.

And just what is God's purpose? He declares, "Ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: and ye shall be unto me a KINGDOM OF PRIESTS." Since kingship was virtually the only type of government or state known in the ancient world, "kingdom" could well be translated today as a "government" or "state." A

GOVERNMENT OF PRIESTS! A PRIESTLY STATE! A HOLY NATION OF PRIESTS! A HOLY PRIESTHOOD! Can you not hear what John is saying in our text above? “Blessed and *holy* is he that hath part in the *first resurrection*...they shall be *priests of God*...” Certainly this confirms the great truth that the first resurrection is something different from a resurrection of bodies, for it does two things — it makes men HOLY and it makes men PRIESTS. This deals with the soul, the very nature, character, and disposition of man! God offered to Israel this glory of being a “kingdom of priests.” It had nothing to do with the state of their bodies, but was conditioned upon them walking in the covenant and law of the Lord. Great was the power and ministry offered to them, for ALL the tribes were to be priests! Because of their failure by unbelief to enter the promised land at Kadesh-barnea, and because they made and worshipped a golden calf while Moses was on the mountain receiving God’s law, only one tribe was chosen to be a priestly tribe — and that not on behalf of the world as God had said, but only on behalf of the unbelieving, rebellious people of Israel! God’s purpose remains, however, to have an entire nation of priests in the fullness of what priesthood means. Israel collectively was to be a royal and priestly race, a dynasty of kings and priests, each member uniting in himself the attributes of king and priest. Every man a king! Every man a priest! A KINGDOM OF PRIESTS! A GOVERNMENT OF PRIESTS OVER THE WHOLE WORLD, “for all the earth is mine.”

As one has pointed out, there is a strong and instinctive need in this world of sinful men for a priest, to be a mediator, to lay one hand on man, and the other on God, and going between them both to bring the two together into unification. A priest or priesthood infers that there is a reason why such has been called into play. It denotes that there is an estrangement between God and His creatures and the priest ministers to bridge that gulf and bring about peace and at-one-ment.

Webster’s dictionary defines priest as: a mediatory agent between God and man. In the Old Testament the word priest is translated from the Hebrew word *cohen*, the root meaning of which is “one who stands up and draws nigh for another.” The Greek word, in its root, means “to minister.” And the priest always draws nigh and ministers in *two directions* — drawing nigh to God on behalf of the people and drawing nigh to the people on behalf of God. The priest, on the one hand, stands and ministers unto the Lord on behalf of the people while, on the other hand, he ministers unto the people on behalf of the Lord. Both of these ministries must be effectually fulfilled or there can be no reconciliation. The ministry of the priest is thus an intermediary or go-between ministry. He reaches out with one hand and takes hold of God; he reaches out with the other hand and takes hold of humanity; and brings the two together by virtue of his priestly ministration. Both aspects of the priestly ministry are alluded to in the Revelation. “Priests *of* God and *of* Christ” in our text is different from “priests *to* His God and Father” in chapter one, verse six, and “thou hast made us *unto* our God priests” in chapter five, verse ten. Priests *to* God signifies priestly ministry Godward, but priests *of* God denotes priestly activity towards men.

You, precious saint of God, are being prepared to rule and reign with Christ! We need to grasp the full implication and reality of what we are called to. Long centuries ago amidst blazing fire and quaking mountains God revealed His purpose for His elect. “Ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: and ye shall be unto a KINGDOM OF PRIESTS.” The Greek Old Testament (Septuagint) states it this way: “...ye shall be unto me a PRIESTHOOD OF KINGS.” It was intended to be the way of life, the office, the nature, the ministry of all Israel on behalf of the whole earth, not just a selected few. Israel’s would be a priestly way of life, with priestly dignity, priestly power, priestly authority, priestly holiness, priestly character, and priestly ministry. God’s kingdom people were to be a priesthood set at the crossroads of the world to minister to all tribes and nations the things of God. They would become the holy people, the mediating nation for all the

other nations. And beloved, there is a realm of living and ministry that goes beyond just being a Christian, or attending church, or going through the motions of so many religious activities. God has always wanted a Kingdom of Priests! Priests and Kings — just like Jesus! One of the chief reasons for the weakness and immaturity of the popular church is the mistaken idea that the saint's *happiness* and *blessing* is the main object of God's grace and salvation. A fatal error! God's aim is far holier and far higher. He chooses out of the nations a people, inworks into them all the triumph of HIS REDEMPTION, all the victory of HIS LIFE, that they in turn shall carry out His redemptive purposes on behalf of the whole creation. A Royal Priesthood! Ah, that is God's aim, His purpose.

Ah, my brother, my sister, is it your heart's desire to *be* a blessing? God is creating within us the insatiable desire to be a blessing, not only to our precious brethren, our children, our family, our friends, our neighbors, our city, state, and country — but to be a blessing to the whole earth and to all creation. I want that. Oh, how I desire it! Now here is God's promise: "Now, therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: FOR ALL THE EARTH IS MINE: and ye shall be unto me a KINGDOM OF PRIESTS..." I have often characterized this scripture as the GREAT DIVINE SANDWICH. A sandwich is two slices of bread between which is placed meat, fish, cheese, or the like. Three items are necessary to make a sandwich, the two outer items — two identical pieces of bread — and in between another, different item, the filling of meat or something else. Such is the structure of the scripture passage just quoted. There are two statements of like nature surrounding and enclosing another and different kind of statement. Notice the two outer statements: (1) *ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people* (2) *ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests and an holy nation*. Then, "sandwiched" in between these two wonderful promises is this remarkable word: FOR ALL THE EARTH IS MINE.

In the light of this inspired scripture I would like to reaffirm something which the world at large, and many believers, seem to have forgotten: THIS IS GOD'S WORLD! "Every beast of the field is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains: and all the wild beasts are mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the fullness thereof" (Ps. 50:10-12). Moses said, "Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens is the Lord's thy God, the earth also, with all that therein is" (Deut. 10:14). God said to Job, "Whatsoever is under the whole heaven is mine" (Job 41:11). And David said, "The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof; the world, and *they that dwell therein*" (Ps. 24:1).

I will be the first to admit, however, that this world doesn't look much like something that is owned by the great and good God! I look out over the world today and see demons stalking through the lands, with literally billions of people held in the prison houses of the dense darkness of false religions, worshipping idols, and devils, and false prophets, and the gods of superstition, tradition, and fear. I look out over the world today and I see the spirit of strife and hatred and war, thousands dying daily at the hands of terrorists and at the hands of those fighting the terrorists, and in bloody revolutions on earth's battlefields. I look out over the world today and I see nearly two billion people still enslaved under the iron heel of godless, atheistic communism, in spite of the collapse of the former Soviet Union. I look out over the world today and I see poverty and squalor and ignorance on an incomprehensible scale, millions of people starving to death, pitiful little children with protruding eyes and stomachs bloated from malnutrition, without hope in the world. I look out over the world today and I see untold millions of people in the industrialized nations bowing before the gods of humanism, secularism, and worshipping before the shrines of the gods of pleasure, sex, perversion, and debauchery. I look out over the world today and I see millions of our children spaced out on drugs, angry at the world, hostile to parents and all authority, and out-

of-joint with society. And time fails me to speak of sin, sickness, sorrow, crime, corruption in government, and other ills of many kinds.

I believe that God passionately loves the world. It is my deep conviction, born of communion with my heavenly Father, that God now loves all lost men. There are lost men in jails and prisons and psychiatric hospitals. They are in saloons and brothels and in death and in judgment and in hell, and God loves them all. He still remembers them and remembers His Son on the tree, suffering and dying on their behalf. And in the redeemed body of this resurrected and glorified Son He now prepares with infinite wisdom and care a Royal Priesthood after the Order of Melchizedek, a SON COMPANY, a KING COMPANY, a PRIEST COMPANY, to restore mankind into the image of God again. ***“Because all the earth is mine, YE SHALL BE UNTO ME A KINGDOM OF PRIESTS!”*** Ah, that is the “divine sandwich” — one piece of bread is the promise, “Ye shall be unto me a special people.” The second slice of bread is the promise, “Ye shall be unto me a royal priesthood.” And the meat in between is the reason and purpose for the special people and the royal priesthood — **“BECAUSE ALL THE EARTH IS MINE!”** The earth, the world, and all they that dwell therein belong to God first because He made them, and second because He redeemed them!

The scriptures clearly reveal how *ownership* is one of the central thoughts in both creation and redemption, the link that binds them together. Two things are always inherent in ownership — *purpose* and *responsibility*. Do you not know that when a person makes or buys anything he surely has some *purpose* in mind for it? And is it not also true that when a person makes or buys something he has the *responsibility* for it? The man who buys a good hunting dog has a definite purpose in owning the dog, and if he is not a hunter he will not buy it. With ownership of the dog there comes the responsibility for the dog, to feed and care for it and treat it humanely. If the dog gets ill it is his responsibility to take it to the vet and also to pay the bill. You have, I suppose, sometime bought something? As you have paid your money for it and it was delivered to you did you not have a plan for it? And are you not now responsible for it?

You see, my beloved, not one of us is in this life because we willed to be here in this world. The whole human race is not here because of its own will. Johnny came home with a bad report card and put all the blame on teacher who had it in for him. That was not the end of the world, but it was almost the end of the world when, unleashing the tragic holocaust, Adolph Hitler blamed the Jews for all the woes of the world in his day. “Scapegoatism” is old, Adam put the blame for his sin on Eve, and Eve shifted the blame to the serpent, but God, the great Proprietor of all does not place the blame on others — HE HIMSELF TAKES FULL RESPONSIBILITY for all that has happened to His creation. “For the creation was subjected to frailty — to futility, condemned to frustration — *not willingly*, not because of some intentional fault on its part, but BY THE WILL OF HIM WHO SO SUBJECTED IT. Yet with the hope that creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and corruption and gain an entrance INTO THE GLORIOUS FREEDOM OF GOD’S CHILDREN” (Rom., 8:20-21, Amplified).

God is *responsible* for our existence here in the flesh, lowered into the realm of vanity, sin, and corruption. Adam was not responsible for his existence, for God by *His will* brought him into being. All scripture testifies to that fact! In fact the whole race of humanity is God’s responsibility! We are here because of His plans, His desires, His purposes, His will, and God is a God of principle. He having begun a work, will finish it and not throw it aside because it was marred by sin, which itself was the result of an event which He Himself created, arranged, and orchestrated. Ah, while men are busy blaming others for the world’s problems, and the devil for their own, God Himself as Owner of all TAKES HIS

GREAT RESPONSIBILITY FOR ALL and therein lies the basis of the whole scheme of creation and redemption.

God has a plan! Indeed, God has a wonderful plan for this world! It is a plan of which the architectural drawings were made in eternity. It encompasses the minutest detail of all creation. I assure you that when time has run its course, and when the last trump has sounded and the veil is dropped upon the final scene of the drama, we shall discover that the plan has been worked out to its very tiniest detail, just as God planned it before the world began — that His will has been done! I cannot believe, as some naively assume, that God could ever be satisfied with a world gone awry and a people gone astray, such as we see in evidence today. Just as sure as many years ago, Lorain and I restored our demolished home *because it was ours*, so certain is it that God will save and restore a lost world! “*Because all the earth is mine, ye shall be unto me A KINGDOM OF PRIESTS.*” God has provided redemption for every man who has lived or ever shall live, and now raises up a Royal Priesthood, a many-membered Priest in union with the great and compassionate and faithful High Priest in the heavens, our Lord Jesus the Christ, to minister the claims, and power, and blessings, and benefits of His redemption unto men until all have been restored into His image!

Because all the earth is His, God is raising up a Kingdom of Priests to reign in mighty spirit power and authority over the earth, not to be little human dictators, but with an outflow of life and light and love, to touch God with one hand, and humanity with the other, bringing the two together, that God may indwell men by His Spirit and live and rule in them in power and glory. The kingly nature in us is not to dominate other men’s lives, but to deal with them in judgment and mercy to break the power of selfhood, rebellion, sin, and the devil, that men may be reconciled to God. Kings have power and authority over every enemy, priests reconcile in mercy and love. But once the reconciliation has been effected, and the Christ is enthroned, we shall deliver men up to God, even the Father, that GOD MAY BE ALL IN ALL. That is the law of the kingdom. We rule only to subdue men unto God — then GOD RULES IN THEM, for the kingdom of God is *within you*. That is the power and glory of the kingdom of God! Oh, beloved, come, let us now open our hearts wide to Him. Come, and as we reverently consider this glorious ministry and its life-flow to all the families of the earth, let us yield ourselves unto God that He may work His wondrous work in our lives, that we become in nature and power and intent and disposition HIS ROYAL PRIESTHOOD in the earth! The manifestation of the sons of God is nothing less than the full manifestation of God’s fully developed and empowered body of king-priests after the Order of Melchizedek!

If we are to reign the question of competency is raised. How many cities could you rule over for Christ? You say, “I’m just a simple person, I am not highly educated, I have little position or recognition in the world, I’m just a farmer, or a housewife, or a single mom flipping burgers, how could I reign in such a ministry of wisdom and power?” Ah, let me ask you — What have you learned in the school of God that you could bring to bear on others as a divine influence? It is that little bit that has cost you something that is really effective; what you have suffered for and learned from by experience, you can minister to others. The administration of the world to come will not depend on your natural status in the world today, but on your spiritual status in the development of Christ within you as life. No person will take any part in it without being qualified to do so! Whatever place God puts you in, whatever role you are to perform, you are being qualified for today by the lessons you are learning in spiritual life. When the time comes, the Spirit of the Lord will raise that up in power within you and send you forth to communicate it wherever it is needed. The Lord does not send incompetent servants, even today. He gives them the spiritual competency for the service He intends them to render — a competency which is not of

themselves but of God. Paul's three years in Arabia, Peter's trance on the housetop, are illustrations of how men, when the hour comes, are equipped to fulfill their ministry. The incidents in chapter eight of Luke's Gospel, were wonderful preparation for the sending forth of the twelve in the next chapter. It was a course of education to teach the disciples the ability of Christ to deal with the most difficult and hopeless cases, so that they might go forth in understanding and faith. They were qualified by what they had learned of Him! That's where it is, my friend; it has nothing to do with how simple, unlearned, or unaccomplished you may seem to be in this natural world. In this connection it is important to notice that these priests in Revelation 20 *lived* as well as *reigned* "with the Christ." They are people who are in association with Christ IN SPIRITUAL LIFE, and those who live and walk with Him are qualified to exert influence of the same character as He — they can reign with Him! Aren't you glad!

I must emphasize with all solemnity, beloved, that when God chooses men to be priests He means for them to BE PRIESTS. Priesthood is not an honorary title, a gift, a reward, or some emotional blessing to be worn like a merit badge for show. Priesthood is real. Priesthood is ministry, to God and to men. Priesthood is work. Priesthood is caring, loving, touching, interceding, forgiving, healing, changing, transforming, teaching, and doing all necessary to bring lost and dying, sick and sorrowing, tormented and hostile men back to God. Priesthood is praise and worship and consecration and holiness unto the Lord. The priesthood of Aaron was set apart, sanctified unto the Lord, that they might serve in holy things. There was to be no life of luxurious *idleness*, of worldly *ease* and *comfort*. They were, it is true, to lack nothing, for we find that full provision was made for all their needs; but their life was to be *a life of service*, and that service in the very presence of God.

I am convinced that great numbers of people today think that sonship is a matter of the head; that it is believing intellectually and theoretically certain "end-time" or "kingdom" truths. These kind of folk want a constant diet of exotic "revelations," but little inworking or outworking of HIS LIFE. "What is your latest revelation, Eby?" "Give us something rich, come on, pour it on, we can take it," is their cry. But they are not the least bit interested in BECOMING THE REVELATION. You can believe all the "Kingdom Message," and be on the highway of the devil, just as in the churches today a man can be a first-class theologian and be the bondslave of a first-class devil. You can know all the points of Calvinism and never know God. You can know all the answers in the Catechism and never touch God. And you can know intellectually all the "deeper teaching" of this hour and be spiritually bankrupt. You can understand theoretically the whole thing, holding it as a doctrine, and never possess anything. You are like a man who has a beautiful picture of a magnificent estate, and all the title deeds to that estate, but they are not in his name. He has no rights of property there at all.

There are multitudes of people today who describe, and truthfully describe, many great and wonderful things concerning the kingdom of God, but they do not possess any of them. What is the use of talking about a thing unless you possess at least something of it? What is the use of talking about a religion that does not possess you? Why talk about a God and a realm that is afar off, and does not possess you here and now? What is the use of talking about a calling and a ministry that is mere theological theories? That may do something for a moment, but a theory never did anything until it was put into some practical form. You may have a very fine theory, and it may, if properly applied, become a very powerful thing; but as long as it remains mere theorem, what is it? Of no use at all!

There can be no priesthood without first a thorough change. That is why the souls who sit on thrones and reign as priests with Christ are those who are of THE FIRST RESURRECTION. Their soul life has been quickened, made alive, purified, purged,

perfected, made one in union with the spirit! Sin, self, ego, greed, prejudice, hatred, bigotry, criticism, retaliation, unconcern, insensitivity, immaturity, pettiness, unrighteousness — all must be dealt with! “Blessed and HOLY is he that hath part in the first resurrection...and they shall be priests of God.” Oh, yes, that’s it! Thus, we are not seeking just a salvation experience, sins forgiven, covering over the past, and hoping for the best in the future, but we desire that the Holy Spirit of God, working mightily within our soul, shall bring a change in us, until every word, will, attitude, desire, emotion, action, and reaction shall flow from HIS HEART to all about us. You can be a believer and die and go to heaven without such a thorough change, but you can never BE A PRIEST WITHOUT IT! You can speak in tongues, prophesy, see visions, fall out under the power, and be a deacon, pastor, or perhaps even an apostle without such a thorough change, but you can never BE A PRIEST WITHOUT IT!

I do not hesitate to tell you that there are no arm-chair priests in the kingdom of God! There are no country-club elite priests. There are no playboy priests. There are no honorary priests. There are no theoretical, self-styled priests. If you have received the call to the Royal Priesthood then God is very practically inworking into your life something of the priestly nature, life, and heart. It is real! It works! It works right here and now in the nitty-gritty of everyday living. More and more you have the disposition of a priest in all your associations and dealings. Priesthood is mercy. Priesthood is compassion. Priesthood is forgiveness. Priesthood is blessing. Priesthood is sacrifice. Priesthood is love. Priesthood is reconciliation. Priesthood is healing. Priesthood is tenderness and empathy and the power of *His life* to change things. Ah, even your dog will know it if you are of a priestly spirit! I do not need to ask God, my brother, my sister, whether you are a priest; I need only to ask your spouse, your children, your neighbor, your boss, your employees, your associates, yes, and your enemies!

COMPASSIONATE PRIESTS

Priesthood is the Spirit of the High Priest. Jesus lives, and Jesus loves us, and has Himself cleansed us in His own blood. He bestows upon us the disposition of priesthood by His indwelling life. His indwelling is but the first step, then follows the *inworking* by which we *become* that which He is. The spirit of priesthood is love. Love is the queen of all the graces of the Christ life. Love is the passion of self-giving. It never stops to ask what it can afford, or what it may expect to receive in return; but it is ever shedding its heart’s blood. It will pine to death if it cannot give. The love of Christ which went out so tenderly to those who walked and talked with Him when He was upon earth, is no less far-reaching and all-powerful to usward. It is this fathomless love of Christ which conquers; and His all-conquering, boundless love, is the banner unfurled in the lives of His Kingdom Priests. O precious love divine, higher than the heavens, deeper than the abyss, broader than all the ages of time! O mighty love that reached through countless ages and brought Christ down from the bosom of the Father to redeem creation; which brought Him to the cross; which brought Him to the tomb; which brought Him forth and raised Him up to the right hand of God, as the High Priest of the heavens who ever liveth to make intercession for us; which is come again *in us* and is now shed abroad in *our hearts* by the Holy Ghost!

Surely Paul was speaking of the priestly spirit when he admonished the saints in Colosse, “*Clothe yourselves with compassion...*” (Col. 3:12). Examine today’s popular books on how to be successful, or look over one of the many lists of what it takes to be a leader, and you don’t often find the character trait of *compassion*. But compassion is the first item on Paul’s list here of character traits for those who are made one in Christ! Compassion can be defined as “tender affections one person has towards another, resulting in acts of goodwill and mercy.” Such a definition is helpful, but to grasp the depth of it, you

have to see compassion in action. The father of compassion is Love. Throughout the scriptures God is portrayed as a God of compassion. “But Thou, O Lord, art a God *full of compassion*, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth” (Ps. 86:15). “He hath made His wonderful works to be remembered: the Lord is gracious and *full of compassion*” (Ps. 111:4). “Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness: He is gracious, and *full of compassion*, and righteous” (Ps. 112:4). “The Lord is gracious, and *full of compassion*; slow to anger, and of great mercy” (Ps. 145:8). “The Lord will not cast off for ever: but though He cause grief, yet will He have *compassion*, according to the multitude of His mercies” (Lam. 3:31-32).

Each of us surely needs God’s compassion, because we do not deserve it! As human beings, we sin against God, offending Him in our actions against Him and against our fellowman. Sin has brought disharmony, pain, and destruction into the beautiful world God has made. Who would blame God if He lashed out in anger because of the mess we have made in His world? And that is just the kind of God most Christians suppose that we have! He is a God with thunderbolts flashing from His fingertips, ready to judge and destroy men with storms, tsunamis, earthquakes, fires, and plagues, and finally banish them to the everlasting fires of hell and damnation because of their sins and rebellion. But instead God responds with **compassion!** “*For He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust*” (Ps. 103:14). Our continuing existence is evidence of God’s compassion. Jesus’ ministry was driven by compassion for the multitudes of sinning, sick, tormented, and dying. Having received God’s compassion every member of His Royal Priesthood is a person whose heart is filled with concern for all people in their many needs. Compassion does more than feel pity; it searches for a way to minister God’s remedy and manifest His glory!

The wonderful book of Hebrews is literally packed full of mysteries, types, shadows, and allegories, all pointing to the ministry of the *manifest sons of God* who are God’s *Royal Priesthood*. These are only unfolded by the Holy Spirit as we are able to bear it. Hebrews chapter five sets forth the qualifications that the typical High Priest under the law, and therefore Christ Jesus, the anti-typical High Priest of the new order of the kingdom of God, must possess. All the members of the Royal Priesthood, the kings and priests of the kingdom who are, with Him, “partakers of the heavenly calling,” must also have the same qualifications, for they are the body of the High Priest.

“For every High Priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins: **who can have compassion** on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way, for that **he himself is compassed with infirmity**” (Heb. 5:1-2). Here we have defined the intrinsic nature of the priestly office. First, he must be “taken from among men,” that is, he must partake of both the nature and the circumstances of those on whose behalf he acts. Second, he acts not as a private individual, but as a public official: “is ordained for men.” Third, he came not empty-handed before God, but furnished with “gifts and sacrifices for sins.” Finally, he himself must not be exempt from infirmity, so that he might the more readily identify with man’s weakness and need and therefore be able to succor the distressed and distraught.

All this is important for it points to Jesus’ qualifications to be our great High Priest. A High Priest must know and experientially understand the problems and limitations of those he represents. “Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; **for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity.**” On three different occasions Matthew tells us that our Lord was “moved with compassion” on the multitudes. Frankly, when you read the Gospels you read of Jesus doing miracles, healings, signs and wonders; but Jesus never went around looking for a miracle to perform. HE WENT ABOUT DOING THE FATHER’S WILL. The Father brought Him to a place where His heart could be

moved with compassion. It was not a gift of compassion that came to Him by the Holy Spirit; it was the compassion wrought out in His life by His many sorrows, sufferings, and testings. He had suffered loss, He had suffered pain, He had suffered reproach. Coming to a town He sees a funeral procession and as a Son, having suffered the loss of Joseph and friends and family members, and shared in the sorrow of His mother at the loss, thereby developing the nature of a priest, He is filled with compassion when He sees the widow and her dead son. There was no Social Security in those days, and the boy was the only person to look after the widow, so He stops the procession, raises the boy, hands him over to the mother, and goes about the Father's business. I find that the basis of the sonship ministry of Jesus was *not power* — IT WAS COMPASSION!

When He saw the multitude He was moved with compassion. They were hungry, and He had known gnawing hunger, so He said, "Let us feed them." When He met the leper He was moved with compassion, for He had experienced pain and shame, and He laid His hands upon him and healed him. He could have spoken a word to heal him, but that man needed the touch of somebody's hand on him, he had been separated from people so long, he needed more than to be healed from his leprosy, he needed the sense of the hand of God upon him. When Jesus looked upon the careworn faces of the toiling, tax-ridden multitudes — taxed by cruel priests; taxed by Herod; taxed by Pilate; taxed by their own sins and sorrows; wearily burdened, wounded at heart, and heavy laden — He was not looking for a chance to show off His power — He was moved with compassion.

"Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; FOR THAT HE HIMSELF ALSO IS COMPASSED ABOUT WITH INFIRMITY." The condition which develops compassion in us, is that we *ourselves* get compassed — surrounded, hedged in — by the problems, the difficulties, the needs that are going to be represented in the people to whom we minister. So many of us are intolerant in certain areas of our lives because we have not gone through the pressure, we have not been compassed by that particular infirmity, weakness, sorrow or need. *Priesthood* demands suffering, trial, testing, tribulation, and pressure. *Sonship* demands relationship with God. He sends the Spirit of the Son into our hearts and we cry, "Abba, Father!" Now God intends that all of us who have been called should be sons of God, and that all of us should be a Kingdom of Priests, a Royal Priesthood unto God. But you may be a *son* and still not be a *priest*!

John the Revelator said, "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them...they shall be *priests* of God and of Christ, and shall *reign* with Him a thousand years" (Rev. 20:4-6). Here you see that it is not the sons who are reigning — it is the PRIESTS! What about the sons? "He that overcometh shall *inherit all things* and I will be his God, and *he shall be my son*" (Rev. 21:7). The sons inherit, for they are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ (Rom. 8:17). Who, then, is destined to reign? THE SONS WHO ARE **PRIESTS!** Christ was a Son before He was a Priest. He was not a Priest during His years in the flesh, although He was qualifying to be one, but He was a Son. Christ in His ministry from the heavens today is not merely the Son of God. As a Son He is "heir of all things," but to become the great High Priest and provide the priestly ministry on our behalf the Son had, as a Son, to go through the experience that was necessary to perfect Him for the understanding heart of the Priesthood. "We have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feelings of our infirmities; BUT WAS IN ALL POINTS TEMPTED LIKE AS WE ARE, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15). "Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered; and being made perfect, He became...AN HIGH PRIEST AFTER THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK" (Heb. 5:8-10). "Every High Priest...must be compassed with infirmity."

Ah, Jesus could have been a son without being so totally compassed with infirmity, BUT HE COULD NEVER HAVE BEEN A PRIEST WITHOUT IT. He might have been perfect in character, noble in motive, and desirous to help us; but, if He had never tasted death, how could He allay our fears as we tread the verge of Jordan? If He had never been tempted, how could He succor those who are tempted? If He had never known pain, how could He have compassion on the sick and sorrowing multitudes then and now? If He had never wept, how could He dry our tears? If He had never suffered, hungered, wearied on the hill of difficulty, or threaded His way through the quagmires of grief, how could He be a merciful and faithful High Priest, having compassion on the ignorant and wayward? But, thank God! Our High Priest is a perfect one! He is perfectly adapted to His task. If we would sit with Him upon that blessed throne of mercy we must not shrink from the problems and troubles and perplexities of this life, for this is the stuff priests are made of!

There have been those precious folk who have said to me, “Brother Eby, I don’t understand. Since I came into this Kingdom message things have gotten worse — all hell has broken loose.” That is just what you need — IF YOU WOULD BE A PRIEST! Have you not known some beautiful saints to whom you naturally betake yourself in time of trial and sorrow? They always seem to speak the right word, to give the very counsel you are longing for; you do not realize, however, the cost they had to pay ere they became so skillful in binding up gaping wounds and drying tears. But if you were to investigate their past you would find that they have suffered more than most. They have watched the slow untwisting of some silver cord on which the lamp of life hung. They have seen the golden bowl of joy dashed at their feet, and its contents spilt. They have stood by ebbing tides, and drooping flowers, and darkened skies; but all this has been necessary to make them comforters and healers, **the priests of men.**

The only persons on earth who really understand our sorrow are the persons who have traveled the *same valley* of despair. Only those who have been bereaved know what bereavement really is. They alone can shed the sympathizing tear and intercede in power with God, for they alone truly understand. Others may kindly and with feeling offer their condolence, but they can do little more than that, for they have not experienced the pain and loneliness of our loss. The reason our blessed Lord is *touched with the feelings of our infirmities* is that He *knoweth our frame*, not because He is God, but *because He was a man*. He remembereth that we are dust. He knows this not by revelation or by divine omniscience, but He Himself was a “man of sorrows and *acquainted with grief.*” He knew what it was to be despised, afflicted, and rejected of men. He knows what it is to be misunderstood, to be dragged from prison and judgment with **no man** to declare His generation. He knows what it is to be tested in all points as we are tested, and the sympathizing tears flow from His eyes as He extends His nail-pierced hand to lift us from the shades of our gloomy night to the ineffable light of the plane on which He dwells.

If you are going to be a manifested son you must first get bound because God wants His sons to be Priests, kingly Priests who show forth both authority *and* redemption. You must not only have the authority of Kingship, but also the compassion of Priesthood. Let me say now, I DO NOT RECOMMEND PRIESTHOOD — I RECOMMEND SONSHIP! When you are a son you have an inheritance, great wealth, blessings from the Father’s hands, and freedom. As a son you have power to do things, but the moment you become a priest, they put you in chains: compassed, surrounded, hedged in, pressed on every side by infirmity. Infirmity is weakness. I pray that as God deals with His sons in these days that we will not despise our limitations, our infirmities, and our sufferings, but *look unto Jesus* who has pioneered the way of Royal Priesthood before us.

Christ was tempted as a Son, but after that there came a temptation in testings that had nothing to do with Him, but were preparing Him for the perfection of the Priesthood. As sons of God, with full inheritance, we should be blessed beyond measure, we should have no problems, by rights we should be in perfect health, have good jobs, money in the bank, and everything coming to us. And we can *demand* our rights! Vast numbers of Christians today choose to walk only in their kingdom privileges of blessing, health and prosperity. And they do not know it, but they SHALL NOT REIGN WITH CHRIST. It is the **priests** that **reign!** “And they shall be priests of God...and they shall reign.” To the priests God says, “No, I am going to limit you here, put you through pressure there, subject you to suffering, hedge you in and compass you about with infirmity, not because you have no rights, but that it will work a compassion, an understanding, a mercy, a grace, work something in you so that out of you will flow a river of love, forgiveness, tenderness, redemption — and then a flow of power, enabling and ability.

What the church world in general cannot understand is that the Christ does not rule alone but through a many-membered body. Man in God’s image, man in Christ at the right hand of God, is God’s government in the kingdom of God. I have met men who professed that they have no desire, no ambition whatever to rule and reign with Christ. It is enough, say they, to know that we are saved by grace and shall make heaven at last. They would be happy to make it just inside the gate and possess but a “cabin in the corner” of Gloryland. In fact, I have been greatly criticized and abused by some for my hope of inheriting the kingdom of God and sitting with Christ upon the throne of universal dominion. In the eyes of these accusers my hope is vain, self-righteous, presumptuous, heretical, and I am power mad, suffering delusions of grandeur because I cherish the beautiful hope of sonship and rulership in the kingdom of God. But I have no hesitation in telling you that it is Christ Himself who has graciously bidden us to overcome and share with Him His authority over the nations and all things! He would both be King IN US and exercise His regal power THROUGH US. He would both be Priest IN US and reconcile, deliver, and bless all humanity THROUGH US. Someone has truly said, HE WHO DESPISES A THRONE DESPISES HIM WHO CONFERS THE THRONE. “And they sung a new song, saying, ***Thou*** hast redeemed us unto God by Thy blood...and hast ***made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth***” (Rev. 5:9-10). It was one of our Lord’s rebukes to the Pharisees — “The glory that cometh only from God YE SEEK NOT” (Jn. 4:44).

As one has written, “God is exceedingly rich. He is like a successful business man who has an enormous amount of capital. God has a business interest in this universe, and His vast wealth is His capital. We do not realize how many billions, countless billions, He has! All of this capital is simply HIMSELF, and with it He intends to ‘manufacture’ HIMSELF in mass production. God HIMSELF is the Business Man, the Capital, and the Product. His intention is to dispense Himself to many people in mass production. Therefore, God requires such a divine arrangement, a divine management, a divine dispensation in order to bring Himself into humanity.” Praise His name! As His Kings and Priests upon His throne the elect sons of God are His governmental arrangement by which and through which God dispenses Himself into His creation. For that reason the whole creation continues to groan and travail for the manifestation of the sons of God. What an opportunity to change things! What an occasion to bless and heal and lift and transform the world! What power for doing good and accomplishing great and mighty things for the kingdom of God! Yet, the little fellow, the small-minded man sitting on the front porch of his cabin in the corner of Gloryland, content that he has escaped hell and made it in to the City of God, possesses no such vision and no such power. It would be a crime against humanity, my beloved brethren, to carelessly neglect and thus despise, as Esau despised his birthright, the position of responsibility and opportunity to be the instrument in the mighty hand of God to bless and restore creation proffered to us by the illustrious King of kings,

Lord of lords, and High Priest of the priesthood! It would be a mean and despicable crime against humanity as well as God Himself to settle for a cabin in the corner of Gloryland!

Throneship involves far more than mere power over men's lives and events. IT IS A MINISTRY AND AUTHORITY TO BLESS! I might add that it is the greatest ministry available with the largest capacity to bless. The purpose and scope of this king-priest ministry is stated by the apostle Paul in these words, "That in the dispensation of the fullness of times He might gather together into one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in Him" (Eph. 1:10). We do not desire the throne for what we can get out of it, for our own fame and fortune, but for the infinite potential it holds for blessing and restoring creation. Today the world is full of broken hearts, the prisons are overflowing with erring souls and depraved natures, the hospitals are crowded with sick, suffering, and dying, the cemeteries are being filled, even nature itself is groaning under the burden of sin, bondage, and darkness. You go down to the seaside and you can hear the sob of the waves, you go to the mountains and you can hear the low sigh of the wind in the tree tops, you walk through the forest and you can hear the anguished shrieks of the animal kingdom. Creation is groaning, waiting, yearning, crying for the manifestation of the sons of God!

It is not more preachers we need. It is not more radio broadcasts or television programs. It is not more missions and missionaries. It is not more tracts or even Bibles. It is not more programs and crusades. It is not another revival. Now, don't misunderstand me. I am not opposed to any of those things, and we praise God for every one of them. But all together, for two long millenniums, have not delivered creation from the bondage of corruption nor subjected all people and all nations to the blessings and benefits of the kingdom of God. All we need is the cry of the groaning creation and the prayer of the travailing saint to be joined with the unutterable longings of the Holy Spirit, all crying in unison and harmony for the manifestation of the sons of God. Oh, how my heart cries for it! There is an elect people who, even as I pen these words, are being made participators in this grandest of all dramas of history. Their prayer, praise God, is soon to be answered!

To be continued...

J. PRESTON EBY

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If you would like to receive these studies write to:

J. Preston Eby
P.O. Box
El Paso, TX 79937-1240

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