

KINGDOM BIBLE STUDIES

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

FROM THE CANDLESTICK TO THE THRONE

Part 228

THE LAKE OF FIRE

“And the devil that deceived them was cast into the *lake of fire and brimstone*, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever. And death and hell were cast into the *lake of fire*. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the *lake of fire*” (Rev. 20:10,14,15).

As we approach this subject of the lake of fire and brimstone I wish to preface our study of scripture with the testimony of a dear sister, Mildred Garner, with which I am certain many of my readers will be able to relate. She writes:

“I grew up in rural Arkansas during the great-depression years. Those were very stressful days for our parents, but at the same time they were good times, especially for the children. I well remember how the whole community gathered in a one room school house to worship on Sunday morning and night. Well, I really can't say everyone gathered into the church house, a few of our good neighbors, my parents, and those awful heretics down the road, which belonged to some strange denomination, were usually absent. Otherwise, everyone seemed to be in perfect harmony. I was a very serious youngster, and tried to believe everything the preacher and teachers said. But I was having a secret problem. I found out early on that God was very angry at me over Adam and Eve eating an apple. I really did not understand why He was so mad over them stealing one little apple, since He owned the cows on a thousand hills. But, I knew that I was in danger of being burned forever.

“I gathered from what I perceived that there was only one way to keep God from putting me in His huge lake of fire to burn forever with Adam and Eve and everyone else that stole apples. This escape operation entailed getting His Son, Jesus, to leave heaven and come and get inside of me. Now, from where I stood, that was going to be a major problem; I could not understand how a grown man could do that, since

I was so small. Besides, I was not sure how Jesus felt about the stolen apple, since His Father was so upset. I worried about hell continuously. In those days we heard a lot more about hell than we ever heard about heaven. We heard a lot more about judgment than we heard about grace and redemption. We certainly heard more about the devil than we heard about the Holy Spirit. In fact, I did not hear about the Holy Spirit.

“Sometimes I felt like the minister would pick me up and shake me over a bottomless hole. I gathered that there was fire connected with this hole, but I had no idea what kept the fire from falling through, since it did not have a bottom. Maybe we would just fall with the fire and burn while we were falling. Most ministers gave us a very explicit picture of miles and miles of flames leaping and dancing around the heads of millions of screaming people who were pleading for mercy, while a few saints who had barely made it in to heaven by the skin of their teeth looked on the sad state of their former loved ones. In my dreams I was never fortunate enough to be an onlooker. Not only was I confused about the lake of fire idea, I could never get the story straight about where most of the dead were. Sometimes the minister said they were in hell burning, and then he would tell us about judgment day when the graves would be opened and the people would get out; then we all had to be judged. I wondered how we would get from our grave into hell or heaven, since Lazarus, in the allegory of the rich man and Lazarus, never went to the grave at all. It was also an unsolvable mystery how we could get out of hell and back into the grave to be resurrected and judged, and sent back to hell. I was troubled about how we could wash our garments in the Lamb’s blood and get them as white as snow.

“I had a very poor image of the object of my adoration; I always pictured God as having one eye and being a bit pudgy. He was always sitting in a big chair with an arm missing; this accounted for Him having the ability of ‘leaning on the everlasting arm.’ This constant leaning position gave Him a very clear view of the earth at all times. He grew a bit when they sang, ‘There’s an All-Seeing Eye Watching You.’ It was well known that if you had only one good eye, you would wear a patch over the other one. I sensed that one useable eye following me everywhere I went, even to the old board out-house. Perhaps this comprehension sounds funny to an adult, but it was everything but funny to a child who was somewhere between three and ten years of age. I wonder how many children suffered the same nightmares that I suffered in those days. I do not condemn the scriptural truths that some of these old-time favorites represent, but I do condemn this manner of presentation of the wonderful story of creation and redemption to little children. How could any child love a god that was presented in such a manner?

“I do not condemn our forefathers for their lack. The conflicts they faced back there slowed the progress of the civilized world; besides it has taken some difficult suffering and a lengthy time to emerge from the Dark Ages. Every generation of Christians must struggle for more light while they try to escape the wrath of blind religion. Now that we have all the wonderful Bible helps — words of spiritual wisdom of the ages — made available to us, we need to use them to expand our spirit’s horizon. If the atonement of Christ *reconciled the world* to Yahweh, why are we yet teaching an angry God theory? Is it not time to preach the *Good News*? People are in bondage to their nature. They need a solution to the entrapment; they need a way out. They need a Savior!

“If you are a Christian, you have experienced the unmerited mercy of a loving God, as I did. After being confused by religious people for over twenty years, I finally accepted the unconditional love of a merciful Father. No works, no mighty deeds, no change, no cleaning up; I had nothing but a plea for mercy. And, bang-go! It happened instantly. I had a divine experience — my heart of stone could, and did, love the unlovable. My burdened soul could laugh again. The tears all dissipated, and as the cross was lifted from my shoulders old Self-pity and his army packed up and moved out of my temple. I came alive, vibrant, excited. I had hope. Halleluyah! I was still ignorant about everything except one thing: I was no longer ignorant about a living, loving God. God was alive, I could live again. In 1953, my afflicted lungs did not prevent the *breath of life* from entering into my body and soul. Hey! I had a spiritual experience that day that lifted me above my old nature and got my foot out of the grave. I became a member of the new creation, and I felt it. The sky took on a deeper blue; the trees were much greener than they had ever

been. The birds sang louder and more beautifully, and best of all I lost all sight of hell with its ghastly flames. All of a sudden the All-Seeing-Eye became my constant Keeper. He was not a spiteful pirate with a bandaged eye any more. He was my all-wise Keeper! I still marvel that Yahweh was able to penetrate my head — it was so padded with religious concepts that had built a wall too high for me to hurdle in order to make any sense out of my life. Yahweh, or the world. He alone bridged the gap! I was surprised to learn that He had never been angry at me. He had not been angry at Adam and Eve. He clothed them...” — end quote.

Before proceeding with our study it will be instructive to note just *who* and *what* is put into the lake of fire, and *when* they are put there.

1. **The dragon**, that ancient serpent, which is the Devil (accuser), and Satan (adversary), is cast into the lake of fire and brimstone (Rev. 20:10).
2. **The beast** and the **false prophet** are ALREADY in the lake of fire when the devil is cast there. “And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet **are**” (Rev. 20:10). They were judged and cast into the lake of fire at the fall of Babylon (Rev.19:20).
3. **Death** and **hell** are cast into the lake of fire *after* Satan is put there — the process to end both death and hell in all men begins (Rev. 20:14).
4. **Those whose names are not written in the book of life** are cast into the lake of fire — to be purified by the Holy Ghost fire of God, thus paving the way for HIS LIFE to be raised up in them (Rev. 20:15).

One thing many of God’s people have failed to realize is that not only is Satan a great *deceiver*, but he himself is totally *deceived!* To my mind, this is a self-evident truth. He would not be trying to overthrow God and His kingdom if he did not somehow believe that he could. He is deceived by the very lies which he tells, by the very deception which he propagates. Christ is the creator of the world, of the whole vast universe, and is its present ruler. The scriptures make this very plain. The inspired apostle Paul tells us that all world rulers are “God’s ministers,” and that there is “NO POWER **but of God**” (Rom. 13:1-6). The great prophet Daniel declared, “The most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and **giveth it to whomsoever He will, and setteth up over it the basest of men**” (Dan. 4:17,25). And Satan also serves. The only power Satan has is that measure of power which God has appointed to him. I’m sure it is with him as it was with the wicked men who crucified the Lord — “they know *not* what they do.” That is deception!

Being deceived, Satan believes that the power is really his own and that he can ultimately wrest the whole creation from God’s control. He works on that premise. And God has allowed it. In fact, God ordained it so! Satan is like a dog on a leash. He can go only as far as the master permits or purposes. I have no time for people who seem to be serving a puny little God who is so weak and timid that He must run to get out of Satan’s way every time he makes his appearance, lest He be devoured. Satan never slips up on God’s blind side and pulls anything over on Him! Neither is God busily *trying* to do things while the devil comes and hinders or upsets God’s apple cart. Oh, no! God is, and always has been, and always shall be, the supreme ruler of the universe. Satan is the prince of demons and has power only by special concession, in order to bring about what God has decreed shall be. Christ is king. He rules. Before His ascension He proclaimed, “ALL POWER is given unto me in heaven and in earth” (Mat. 28:18). “ALL power” means **all power**. What a marvelous truth!

Satan, by God’s permission, has been the delegated ruler of man’s dark world. Jesus spoke of him as “the prince of this world” (Jn. 12:31; 14:30). John said that this present evil world “lieth in (is under the control of) the *wicked one*” (I Jn. 5:19). Paul said, “For we are not wrestling with flesh and blood...but against despotisms, against the powers, against the master spirits who are the world rulers of

this present darkness, against the spirit forces of wickedness in the heavenly (spiritual) sphere” (Eph. 6:12, Amplified). And in this realm of dark power Satan himself is deceived. Have you not noticed among cult leaders, corrupt politicians, and scores of other such figures, that those who are *great deceivers* are first of all themselves *greatly deceived*? Satan actually believes that the power is of himself, just as all tyrants do, and he designs to gather all things together into one *in himself*! And this is the underlying principle behind all of his workings in and through the carnal mind and fleshly nature of man!

There are two realms of government. The realm of God (almighty power) and the realm of Satan (ceded, limited power). We were formerly aligned with the realm of Satan’s government. Paul says, “Who hath delivered us from the *power* (governmental authority) of darkness, and hath translated us into the *kingdom* of God’s dear Son” (Col. 1:13). That is governmental terminology! The Amplified Bible reads, “...hath delivered us...out of the *control and dominion* of darkness and has transferred us into the *kingdom* (government) of the Son of His love.”

God’s kingdom is a body politic. And there are two parties: God’s righteous government and the opposition. The opposition, *deceived* and *deluded* by its own character of darkness and rebellion, and by its illusions of grandeur, has been trying for six long millenniums, by any and every means, to gain control of the government. But it has been a disheartening battle. The prophet Isaiah spoke God’s divine truth when he declared, “The government shall be upon HIS (Christ’s) shoulders, and of the increase of His government...THERE SHALL BE NO END...to order it, and to establish it with judgment and justice from henceforth even forever” (Isa. 9:6-7). Because this rule can never *cease*, and must throughout all ages *increase*, every apparent victory of the enemy, in the end, has turned out to be a defeat. Oh, the mystery of it! The human race fell to the deception of the opposition at the very beginning. But instead of that being a victory for the enemy, it turned out to be a blessing for the human family. For now, through Christ, not only will men be restored to what was lost by the fall, but because of Christ’s resurrection, ascension, and enthronement in the highest heaven at the right hand of our eternal Father, all men redeemed by Christ are translated in Christ to the celestial realm, to that GLORY WHICH HE HAD (and we had) WITH THE FATHER BEFORE THE WORLD WAS — a position and eminence as far removed from the perfect Edenic state as the east is from the west!

The opposition even went so far as to crucify the King, the Prince of Peace, bury Him in a tomb, and set the official seal of the mighty Roman Empire upon it. But that seeming defeat for the Christ’s cause was a signal victory, for on the third day the crucified One arose from the tomb, broke the seal, rolled back the stone, and stalked forth in a glorious deathless body, thus breaking the sway of death and delivering all who were in bondage from its clutches. Because He arose, so shall every son of Adam arise! “The hour is coming, in the which A-L-L that are in the graves shall hear His voice and shall come forth” (Jn. 5:28-29). “As in Adam *all die*, even so in Christ shall *all be made alive*” (I Cor. 15:22). The whole creation is awaiting the ultimate triumph of this wonderful victory! “All creation is yearning, longing to see the manifestation of God’s sons. For the creation was made subject to futility, not of its own choice, but by the will of Him who so subjected it; yet with the hope that at last the creation itself would be set free from the thralldom of decay to enjoy the liberty (from sin and death) that comes with the glory of the children of God” (Rom. 8:19-20).

The kingdom of the righteous One has not been established in fullness and perfection over the earth. As history reveals, there is a *process* for the unfolding and establishment of all things. We are yet passing through a period of preparation in which those who prove themselves faithful to the rightful King, are being called, separated, prepared, and sealed, awaiting the hour when, upon the full manifestation of the kingdom, they will be raised to great honor and power and majesty, to reign as heavenly kings over the earth and all things, to bring life and light and glory to all peoples everywhere. The revelation given to John on far-away Patmos is the “manual” setting forth the principles and the processes by which this kingdom shall triumph over all!

While the Lord has permitted Satan, the great adversary, to rule in the hearts of “the children of disobedience,” He has never ceased to be interested in the ultimate blessing of mankind. In fact, throughout all the thousands of years during which He has refrained from interfering on any large scale with the reign of sin, darkness, and death, God has been laying the groundwork, as it were, for a glorious day of deliverance. God does have a strategy! And He is the Master Strategist! Up until this time His plan of redemption and restoration has progressed silently and unobserved by the world. Just as the firstborn Son of God was raised up during His silent and hidden years in the village of Nazareth and none knew the power and glory of His appearing until the day of His emergence upon the stage of history, so God has been quietly dealing with Christ’s “many brethren,” His apprehended ones, processing, purging, purifying, perfecting, teaching, training, maturing, equipping, and preparing them for the day of battle and the overthrow of Satan’s kingdom. There was no fanfare in the village of Nazareth during those first thirty years of Jesus’ life, and there is no fanfare in our own little “Nazareth” today as our Father reveals His sonship purpose in our lives. Even as Jesus was prepared in His Nazareth, the “place of no good thing,” so today the Lord has a remnant, unseen, unknown, unheralded, unobserved, hidden away from all the activities of the world and of popular religion, in the secret place of the most High, learning the ways of the Father, discovering the principles of the kingdom, coming under the Lordship of their glorious Head, in preparation for the day when the great Commander “arises to the prey.” As we follow on in these closing chapters of the Revelation we now come to the unfolding drama of the final triumph of the kingdom of God in the earth. Oh, the wonder of it!

The truth I will try to unfold in this message, though exceedingly glorious, could never in a million years be grasped by the natural mind, and because it concerns the ultimate destiny of *all* of God’s great and infinite creation, runs contrary to the perverted creeds of the church systems of man. These sects and denominations of the Babylonian system have taken away the key of knowledge. They turn our God of love and grace and wisdom into either a despot, an idiot, or a sadistic maniac and thereby control the masses of Christians with tactics of fear and bondage. Once the key is lost, then the doors of truth and redemption and restoration are locked and remain locked to their understanding and the Christian is barred from the distant peaks sublime.

The question before us is just this: WHY is Satan first *bound* in the bottomless pit, then *loosed* from his prison, and finally *cast* into the lake of fire? WHY these precise steps — seemingly in rapid succession to one another. The traditions of the past have so dimmed our understanding that every truth is side-tracked to be made to conform to the doctrine and teachings of a Babylonish church. My heart leaps within me for joy as I contemplate this wonderful truth and seek to reveal to you a great mystery of God’s glorious purpose of the ages.

In response to the questions asked above, let us consider this. A man who keeps his bulldog tied to a fence has no right to brag that the dog has never bitten the mailman. How *could* the dog bite the mailman? If the owner wants to brag about his dog, let him set the dog free; then everyone (including the mailman) will know the dog’s true nature. There you have the difference between Satan *restrained* in the pit, and Satan (or men or anyone or anything else) purged, purified, and transformed in the *all-consuming Fire of God!* Evil of any kind can only be dealt with in one of two ways — it must be *restrained*, or it must be *remedied*. You can either *jail* the criminal, or you can *rehabilitate* him! It is for this very reason that wicked men are shut up in hell, reserved under chains of darkness, awaiting a day of release and deliverance. God restrains wicked men until according to His purpose He can save them. The blind interpretations of religion are what caused all the confusion in the mind of Mildred Garner according to her testimony which we shared at the beginning of this message. She confused “hell” with the “lake of fire,” and understood nothing of the difference. She didn’t realize as a child that hell is *not* the place of fire, but hell is *cast into* the lake of fire. You see, my beloved, hell is a *holding place*, a *prison house* — but the lake of fire is the mighty and divine work of *purification, purging, refining, and transformation!*

With the release of the mystery of iniquity into the Adamic race, the wickedness of man soon became great in the earth, and by Noah’s day we find that “every imagination of the thoughts of his heart

was only evil continually” and “the earth was filled with violence” (Gen. 6:5,11). God allowed man’s sin and violence to go a particular course for a certain length of time, knowing full well just how far He could allow man to express these evil inclinations, and just where to draw the line. At the appropriate moment the spirits of these wicked men were put in prison, as society today puts a criminal in prison; the flood swept them away into hell and hell restrained the Antediluvians from committing more wrath upon the earth.

But God only *restrains* until He can *save!* That is precisely why Jesus, after His death and resurrection, went to PREACH to these spirits in prison, the spirits of the very men who had been *disobedient* in the days of Noah. To them He carried the **word of reconciliation**, showing not only that the Christ had died for their sins, but that He was risen for their justification. If perchance our minds are numbed with the wonder of such a thought, let us consider the inspired record of this great event from Weymouth’s beautiful translation. “Christ also once for all (all men) died for sins, the innocent One for the guilty many, *in order to bring us to God*. He was put to death in the flesh, but *made live* (resurrected) by the Spirit, **BY WHICH (RESURRECTION) HE ALSO WENT AND P-R-E-A-C-H-E-D TO THE SPIRITS THAT WERE IN PRISON**, who in former times had been *disobedient*, when God’s longsuffering patiently waited in the days of Noah during the building of the ark, in which a few persons — eight in number — were brought safely through the water” (I Pet. 3:18-20).

Despite the crafty and deceptive efforts of some to twist and explain away the plain meaning of this passage, it reveals that Jesus, after His death and resurrection, went and preached, not to men in the flesh, but to SPIRITS in prison; not to angels, not to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob nor any of the other Old Testament saints, but to those wicked men who had been willfully *disobedient* to the preaching of Noah in the days preceding the flood! And what did He preach to these long-departed spirits who had been held in confinement in God’s great prison-house for two thousand years? Well, I Peter 4:6 unequivocally answers this question! The passage is only a few verses further on from the one under consideration, and as Peter continues speaking on the same subject we are informed, “For this cause was *the Gospel* preached also *to them that are dead*, **THAT THEY MIGHT BE JUDGED ACCORDING TO (JUST LIKE) MEN IN THE FLESH, BUT LIVE ACCORDING TO GOD IN THE SPIRIT...**” The message is clear — though these were dead so far as their flesh bodies were concerned, and lived only in the realm of spirit, but not in the flesh, *the gospel was preached unto them* that they might be judged, or dealt with by God, the same as men who were alive in the flesh. So when the time had come for the apostles to go forth preaching the gospel to the nations to lead multitudes to salvation in Christ, Jesus Himself went down into hell and preached salvation to the spirits in prison for the same purpose and unto the very same end! Oh, yes! Please notice, precious friend of mine, it was not doom and gloom and judgment and eternal damnation that was preached to the wicked men in hell, but THE GOSPEL, the GOOD NEWS WHICH IS THE POWER OF GOD UNTO SALVATION!

Now I will share with you another mystery which is exceedingly great. This mystery is revealed in the verse just preceding the one quoted above. Peter is on this wonderful theme of God’s dealings with those who are dead and held in the prison-house of spirits. Speaking of the living wicked, the Gentiles of his day who walked in lasciviousness, lusts, drunkenness, idolatries, and wickedness of all kinds, he points out that they think it strange that the saints don’t run around with them in all their evil deeds, and they speak evil of them. He then adds, “Who shall give account to Him that is *ready to judge the living AND THE DEAD*” (I Pet. 4:5). I know no words, be they many or few, that could more plainly open to our understanding the fact that a great, important, and wonderful *change* in God’s dealing with mankind is couched in the statement of this inspired passage. Until Christ came, God had not dealt with the nations of earth, nor had He brought judgment to the masses of dead who had departed this life. That the day would come when the *judgments* of God would be revealed to all men was a promise repeated again and again throughout the Psalms and the Prophets. And it was to be a most glorious time! Now Peter announces that that day has come, and after the spirits of the dead had been held in confinement in the spirit realm for thousands of years, without a visitor, without a word, without even one glimmer of light or ray of hope, held in chains of darkness, awaiting the day of judgment — Peter declares that now God is

“READY.” The Greek word in its root means “*adjusted*,” denoting a change. God wasn’t “ready” to do this before, but now He is ready, prepared, all systems are go. Ready for what? “Who is ready to **judge the living AND the dead.**”

You see, my beloved, God had not done this before! What does Peter mean about God “judging the dead?” The very next verse explains it: “*For this cause was the gospel preached to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh.*” Can you not see the mystery? God is now, in this very age, judging *all men*, both the living and the dead! It is an on-going process, and God has a time for every man. Whether a man lives or dies, God will deal with him the same when the time is ripe. God can save men here in this life, and He is just as able to save men who have departed this life. He can save you on earth or He can save you in hell, it makes no difference to God. God is **now ready** to deal the same with both the living and the dead! That is the mystery. If your loved ones have passed on outside of Christ don’t think it will necessarily take long eons of His unfolding purposes before they can be touched by the grace and power of God. Oh, no! Wherever they are, when it is their turn in God’s gracious purpose, He will call them forth, and His judgments will unfold in their lives right there in that place. HE IS READY TO JUDGE THE LIVING AND THE DEAD! HE IS READY TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THEM THAT ARE DEAD! Isn’t it wonderful!

It is written in the plainest of language. But there are some people who will not understand plain speech. They do not believe that the Christ went down into hell to preach the gospel to dis-embodied spirits of wicked and rebellious men; they think He went somewhere down in the heart of the earth to rescue Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and all the Old Testament righteous people out of a place called Paradise and take them up to heaven. He may have done that, but there is not one shred of evidence for it anywhere in the pages of God’s wonderful Book. The Bible nowhere says that. He went down to the lowest hell, and He was there on business! Wherever He went He did business for God. He went there to begin His new age deliverance ministry among a group of spirits that had been imprisoned — restrained — there for two thousand years, but now it was time for them to be REHABILITATED — SAVED! And blessed be God, it was the *gospel* that was preached to them, informing them of the death and resurrection of God’s Son, who was given as a propitiation for them, that God had faith in the power of the blood of His Son to deliver them from the bondage of sin and death and hell into the glorious liberty of the children of God!

The twentieth chapter of Revelation gives us deeper and more comprehensive insight into the complete program of God in the restoration of creation, both the living and the dead. There is both hell and the abyss — places or conditions of restraint. There is also judgment. Then there is salvation. But there is also the lake of fire. Some men must be dealt with by the lake of fire before they are conditioned to receive of God’s grace and salvation. Their selfhood and rebellion must be broken! The devil most certainly has to be dealt with severely by the fire of this divine lake. The great truth that we need to understand in order to comprehend the picture the Holy Spirit is painting for us is that everything and everyone that is cast into the lake of God’s Holy Ghost Fire is placed there for the very same reason — purification unto redemption! Matters not whether they be men or devils or systems or the great dragon himself — the fire will accomplish its intended work and that man, that system, or that devil, will come forth refined, purged of all error, selfhood, and rebellion!

The following words by brother Elwin Roach are beautifully instructive. “Legalistic people of religion think like the legal system of our nation. They believe that more and bigger prisons is the answer to all crime. Lock them up and forget about them, is their mind-set. But that is not God’s mind-set! He does not look at things as men look at them. His ways are not man’s ways. You see, even though the powers of darkness would be held captive (restrained), there would still **be** darkness, sin, and death, the very things that must eventually be destroyed, forever. “*There shall be no more death.*” Holding Satan captive is only one phase of the victory. The next phase is casting him into the lake of fire. The answer to opposition is not to lock it in a prison and throw away the key. The answer is to destroy, consume, and/or transform it, and this is by ***the Great Fire of God — the Lake of fire!***”

“And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone...and shall be *tormented* day and night for the ages of the ages” (Rev. 20:10, Lit.). The Greek word used here for “tormented” is *basanizo* which is derived from *basanos*. *Basanos* is what is commonly known in English as the “touchstone.” Its proper usage in olden times was to test the genuineness of gold and other high grade metals after they had been melted down and separated all the dross. The metal is then cooled down and the touchstone rubbed on it. Pure gold rubbed on the stone would leave a peculiar mark, different to that of other metals or alloys. Therefore the touchstone acquired a symbolic significance: *a test or criterion for determining the quality or the genuineness of a thing; to test for purity or truth*. The Revelation tells us that both men and the devil are “tormented” in the lake of fire. That is, as they are dealt with in the blazing fire of God’s holiness they will be revealed to themselves, and as the fire continues to do its work the touchstone will be applied again and again, day and night, as it were, from age to age, from dealing to dealing, from experience to experience, until iniquity is found in them no more. The very terms *day and night* and *ages of ages* show beyond question that we are dealing with the limited realm of **time**. There is no *day* nor *night*, neither are there any *ages* in **eternity!** All three are creatures of time.

There is no way of knowing how long a time this will be, but since it unquestionably speaks of day and night and ages, it does therefore belong to time and no endeavor must be made to equate it with eternity. Ages can be long dispensations covering centuries of millenniums, or ages can transpire within ourselves as we move from one dealing of God to another in our experience. I know brethren who have lived under the age of the law, the age of grace, and the age of the kingdom within their own experience during the short span of a few years. I have passed through a number of “ages” within the scope of my experience with God, and I have become a different person, and been related to God in a different way, in each of those ages! When the process is complete in the serpent’s experience — **THAT WILL BE THE END OF THE DEVIL!** Why turn the devil loose out of the abyss? Ah, God doesn’t want the serpent to hibernate in the pit, that is not His objective at all. He wants the serpent to be *destroyed* in the refining and transforming fire of God. What a wonder! What a mighty God we serve!

We will understand the grand purpose of God’s dealings through all these “ages” once we see how the highest glories of the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, are revealed to us in Paul’s epistle to the Colossians. From the beginning He was “...the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: for *by Him* were *all things* created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: *all things* were created *by Him* and *for Him*: and He is *before all things*, and *by Him all things* consist” (Col. 1:15-17). Can the UNIVERSALITY of Christ’s creation be more graphically expressed? In every case the word ALL is used WITHOUT ANY LIMITATION whatsoever. The heavens and the earth with **ALL that is in them**, visible and invisible, include **all** creation — every created thing!

The verses that follow continue to express the UNIVERSALITY of Christ’s glories in the present and the future. “And He is the Head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in *all things* He might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in Him should *all fullness* dwell: and, having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to RECONCILE ALL THINGS unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether they be *things in earth*, or *things in heaven*.” The supremacy of God’s Son depends on the UNIVERSALITY or TOTALITY of His many honors. How extraordinary is the emphasis laid on this vital fact in this short passage! Within the compass of five verses we read no less than *eight* times that the glory given the Christ is all-inclusive and all-pervading. He is the firstborn of EVERY creature. ALL is created by and in Him, and ALL is created through Him and for Him. He is before ALL. ALL is bound together by Him. In ALL He is becoming first, exalted to preeminence. ALL fullness, or the fullness of ALL is gathered together in Him. He reconciles ALL through the blood of His cross. And on two occasions this is amplified and defined as ALL that is in the heavenly sphere and ALL that is in the earthly sphere. It is said to include both everything visible and everything invisible. What more could be said to impress upon us the absolute ALL-INCLUSIVENESS of both Christ’s creation *and* Christ’s redemption!

Oh, what a vast and all-inclusive statement that is! All the Principalities and Powers in both heaven and earth are included in the reconciliation effected by the blood of His cross. Oh, what a mighty redemption! Oh, what a universal reconciliation! Oh, church of the living God, unto you is the word given, “To make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: to the intent that NOW UNTO THE PRINCIPALITIES AND POWERS IN HEAVENLY PLACES (SPIRITUAL REALMS) MIGHT BE KNOWN BY THE CHURCH THE MANIFOLD WISDOM OF GOD, according to the purpose of the ages which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Eph. 3:9-11).

This word that we bear came to us by revelation of the Holy Spirit, though it is plainly written across the pages of God’s Word, and completely sealed us to the knowledge that everything, and we do mean *everything, everyone*, even *all creatures* that God ever created, are to be brought into unification with God through the blood of the cross of Jesus Christ. When the Holy Spirit graciously granted us light to see that Jesus Christ is indeed the Saviour of all men, we did not immediately understand that all the rest of God’s vast creation was included in redemption. We had no problem with people like the Pharaohs, Nero, Judas, Hitler, Stalin, or Castro ultimately being conquered by the love and power of God. They are just the kind that Jesus came to seek and to save, and really, ALL have sinned alike and stand in need of God’s salvation. But there were other beings in the creation of God for whom we saw *no help*. To us, the angelic beings, the principalities and powers of the heavenly realms, whether good or evil, whether angels of glory or demons and devils of every stripe, were entirely different classes of creatures and their ultimate purpose and end an entirely different proposition. We used to say, in ignorance, that God never sent Jesus to die for demons and devils and wicked, foul spirits — He died only for the human race. In years past we sang a song, the words of which went something like this:

Holy, holy, is what the angels sing,
And I expect to help them make
The courts of heaven ring.
But when I sing REDEMPTION’S STORY
They will fold their wings;
For ANGELS NEVER KNEW THE JOY
That our salvation brings!

And while it is true that there are glorious beings that have not sinned or fallen from their exalted state, yet now we know that redemption is not for humanity alone, but for the whole creation. Thank God for this great ministry of reconciliation! How far does this ministry reach? Is it just for mankind, or is it more far reaching? Why should we limit God’s love to mankind only? Why should we think that He loves us with an everlasting love, and has none at all for the rest of His creatures, the work of His hands? Are they not also His creation? Are they not included in the “all things” He created and in the “all things” He reconciles? Dare we really believe the words the beloved John penned while banished on the isle called Patmos? “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for Thou has created *all things*, and FOR THY PLEASURE they are and were created” (Rev. 4:11). Why should we think that God has gone to such great lengths to mold us into the kind of creatures that BRING PLEASURE to His heart, but does nothing on behalf of the wretched, filthy spirits in the kingdom of darkness who are also among the “all things” created *for His pleasure*? Does He derive some sadistic pleasure from their hideous, perverted natures? I think not! Why should we suppose that He has provided such a wonderful salvation for us, but has made no provision for them? They are as much a part of His creation as we are! And the sons of God are being prepared for the express purpose of delivering the *whole creation* from the bondage of corruption and *reconciling all things* back into Christ again!

God’s great plan is not partial — it includes ALL. “And having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to *reconcile all things unto Himself*: by Him, I say, whether things in *earth*, or things in *heaven*” (Col. 1:20). It is not just the scope of “things on earth” being reconciled that startles us most, for it goes on to say, and “things in heaven.” This indicates that the heavens also needed reconciling!

But just what are those “things in heaven” that are reconciled? Have we not thought that everything in “heaven” is peace, joy, and holiness? One day the words struck me with such incredible force, and the effect was to stop me in my tracks. There I faced anew one of the old, well-known verses of the Bible, and when the profound truth of it broke in wonder and glory within my consciousness I had a completely new Bible, and an increasingly wonderful God. For the first time in my life I saw precisely and comprehensively what God had *created* in the beginning according to Colossians 1:16 — and precisely and comprehensively what is being *reconciled* by the blood of God’s Son. I discovered at least sixteen different items or groups of items in that one short passage:

4. All things in heaven
5. All things in earth
6. Visible things
7. Invisible things
8. Visible things in heaven
9. Visible things in earth
10. Invisible things in heaven
11. Invisible things in earth
12. Thrones in heaven
13. Thrones in earth
14. Dominions in heaven
15. Dominions in earth
16. Principalities in heaven
17. Principalities in earth
18. Powers in heaven
19. Powers in earth

“By Him to reconcile PRINCIPALITIES AND POWERS IN HEAVEN *and* in earth” (Col. 1:16,20). These are the words that stopped me in my tracks. “What is there *in heaven* that *needs to be reconciled?*” I queried. The thought had never crossed my mind! I had always assumed that all was at peace and that never a cloud had darkened any brow in heaven! Discord in heaven? Perish the thought! Sin in heaven? Impossible! Negative forces in heaven? It couldn’t be! Wickedness in heaven? No way! “But,” I thought, “not only does it plainly state that the Christ will reconcile things in heaven, but it furthermore specifically identifies some of those things as PRINCIPALITIES AND POWERS! Principalities in heaven! Principalities in the heavens that are hostile to God! Principalities in heaven that *must be reconciled!* Powers in heaven! Powers in heaven that are adverse to God! Powers in the heavens that *must be reconciled!*”

If this scripture passage does not incontrovertibly establish these plain and simple facts then I plead ignorance of the English language. But are there, in fact, principalities and powers in the heavens which are enemies of God, alienated from God, haters of God, and hostile to the nature and ways of God, thus needing to be reconciled to Him? Indeed! If we have considered the matter as we ought, we have surely recognized that “heaven” is really THE REALM OF THE SPIRIT or the SPIRITUAL REALM in which God lives, moves, and has His being. “God is a *spirit*.” Heaven is the omnipresent realm of SPIRIT. All spirit entities inhabit that realm of “the heavens” on some level. Now consider this. “Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and *Satan came also among them*” (Job 1:6). “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against *principalities and powers*, against the *rulers* of the darkness of this world, against *spiritual wickedness in high (heavenly) places*” (Eph. 6:12).

The full import of these words can be appreciated by reading a clearer translation. Kenneth Wuest translates thus, “Our wrestling is not against blood and flesh, but against the *principalities*, against the *authorities*, against the world rulers of this darkness, against *spirit forces of perniciousness in heavenly places*.” The Amplified Bible says, “For we are not wrestling with flesh and blood — contending only

with physical opponents — but against the *despotisms*, against the *powers*, against the *master spirits* who are the world rulers of this present darkness, against the *spirit forces of wickedness in the heavenly sphere.*” The New International Version reads, “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the *rulers*, against the *authorities*, against the *powers* of this dark world and against the *spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.*” Ferrar Fenton renders it, “Because our fight is not against blood and flesh; but against the *sovereignities*, against the *powers*, against the *commanders* of the darkness of this world, against the *spirits of wickedness in the heavens.*” Weymouth translates, “For ours is not a conflict with mere flesh and blood, but with the *despotisms...the spiritual hosts of evil* arrayed against us in the *heavenly warfare.*” And finally, the Concordant New Testament says, “For it is not ours to wrestle with blood and flesh, but with the *sovereignities*, with the *authorities...with the spiritual forces of wickedness among the celestials.*”

The message is clear — we now wrestle against wicked spirits, not only on earth, but in the heavenly sphere. That this conflict is real, none can deny. But what shall be the end of these wicked spirits, these principalities and powers in heavenly places? “Eternal torment in hell fire!” you say. That there is much hell and torment ahead for these wicked ones I have no doubt. But when the ages have run their course, when the sons of God have finished their ministry of delivering the *whole creation* from the *bondage of corruption* and *reconciling all things in all realms unto God*, when all the redemptive purposes of God have been consummated, brought to their expected end, what then? Will there *still* be hatred of God and rebellion against Him on the part of some of His creation unendingly — *forever?* The testimony of God standeth sure: “For by Him were *all things* created, that are *in heaven*, and that are *in earth*, visible and *invisible*, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or *principalities*, or *powers: all things* were created by Him and *for Him:* and, having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to *reconcile all things* unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether they be *things in earth*, or *things in heaven*” (Col. 1:16,20).

You may say — “I do not believe it! I do not, I cannot believe that Jesus died to reconcile wicked, foul, hostile, filthy spirits in the heavenly realms unto God!” Tell it not to me, my brother, my sister, tell it to the Holy Spirit for it is He, and none other, who inspired these awesome words. All your letters of protestation addressed to me will be of no avail, for I possess no power to change even one jot or tittle of Holy Writ. When God declares that the blood of the cross of Jesus Christ avails to reconcile principalities and powers in the heavens and in the earth, I have absolutely no ability to do anything about it. God will do what He says He will do whether or not you or I like it, and whether or not we believe it. Your unbelief will not make the grace and power of God of none effect. God will finish His *universal reconciliation* either *through you*, precious friend of mine, or *in spite of you.* You may be either a spectator or a participator. But if you have no desire to see the foul, wicked, and unclean spirits of the universe conciliated to God, bowing the knee before Him, confessing Jesus Christ as Lord, bringing the whole universe at last into harmonious unification in the Christ of Calvary, then please, PLEASE, **P-L-E-A-S-E** don’t tell me about your call to sonship and how you are of that company which is destined to SET ALL CREATION FREE! If there is some portion of the creation that was created “by Him and for Him” that you don’t want to be “for Him,” then please recluse yourself from the ministry of reconciliation, for God will have to bypass you in His great and glorious work of redeeming and restoring ALL unto Himself.

You say that the devil is too utterly wicked, too hopelessly vile, too incorrigibly hostile to be changed. Come now! Have not bad men the devil’s nature in them? Are they not called “children (offspring) of the Wicked one?” Were not we ourselves “*by nature* the children of wrath,” and did we not walk “according to the course of this world, according to *the prince of the power of the air?*” Is not the same evil nature in all men, and is it not the devil’s nature, till it is slain by His cross? Has not the Lord died for all, that through His death He might destroy that evil, satanic nature and deliver them? And if this nature can be dealt with and slain in us, so that we are reconciled, thoroughly changed from *enemies* of God to His beloved children, pray tell me why it cannot be changed in the one who fathered it? Shall the Jews be saved, whom our Lord called “serpents” and “vipers” and of whom He said, “Ye

are of *your father the devil*...how can you escape the damnation of hell,” and yet it be impossible for God to have a salvation for those whose nature these wicked men have been made partakers of? Where in all of God’s wonderful Book do we read that there can be no hope for such? Is it not rather distinctly written, that “the Lord shall punish the host of the high ones which are on high, and they shall be gathered in a pit and shut up in prison, *yet* AFTER MANY DAYS THEY SHALL BE VISITED!” And are not “the DRAGONS and the DEEPS” called upon to “praise the Lord”? And is it not also written, “Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name that is above every name: that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE SHOULD BOW, OF THINGS IN HEAVEN, AND THINGS IN EARTH, AND THINGS UNDER THE EARTH; AND THAT EVERY TONGUE SHOULD CONFESS THAT JESUS CHRIST IS LORD, **TO THE GLORY OF GOD THE FATHER**” (Isa. 24:21-22; Ps. 148:7; Phil. 2:9-11).

If such be not the end of God’s great plan of the ages then Calvary is a failure and redemption a farce. Current so-called “orthodox” theology incorporates into its system belief in the superior power of Satan, the deathlessness of sin, the indestructibility of error, and the permanence of evil. The doctrines of the harlot church systems teach that since sin and death have entered upon the scene in God’s universe, they have come never to go out again, for they are too strong and incorrigible for God to subdue, and therefore unconquerable, ineradicable, endless.

Charles Schmidt has asked the burning question: “Is God, who is sovereign Lord, destined to possess the ultimate allegiance and obedience of only about 3% of all the billions who have sprung from His creative hand? Shall the absolute majority of all these created beings perpetuate hate and blasphemy against their blessed Creator throughout an endless eternity? Is Jesus, who died, effecting the death blow to all sin and to the works of Satan (I Jn. 3:8), destined to reign in a universe where sin shall exist in staggering proportions throughout eternity? The counsels of God, according to the sacred scripture, have declared an emphatic NO! Through the consuming fires of God’s holy Love...God has deigned to cause all everywhere eventually to drop the sword of proud rebellion and willingly acclaim the Lordship of our Jesus, and that to the glory of God. Have we hereby done despite to the justice and holiness of God? No, unlike those who hold the opposing view, we have rather fully satisfied it against all sin and rebellion! Have we hereby maligned the sovereign mercy and love of God? No, we have rather upheld it in its infinite scope!” — end quote.

Ah, I long intently for that blessed day when even the devil himself shall put away his pitchfork, hang up his horns, and come humbly and brokenly to the Father’s house! Does that startle you? How else could it be in that glad day when Christ has finally RECONCILED ALL THINGS IN HEAVEN AND IN EARTH, including all the PRINCIPALITIES AND POWERS OF THE HEAVENLY SPHERE! Hallelujah to the Lamb!

To be continued

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