

# KINGDOM BIBLE STUDIES

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

## FROM THE CANDLESTICK TO THE THRONE

Part 255

### THE EPILOGUE

(continued)

“And the Spirit and the bride say, *Come*. And let him that heareth say, *Come*. And let him that is athirst *come*. And *whosoever will*, let him take the water of life *freely*” (Rev. 22:17).

A number of commentators who have exegeted this passage of scripture have been of the persuasion that when the Spirit and the bride say, *Come*, and he that heareth says, *Come*, it signifies that both heaven and the church desire the coming of the Lord. The idea is that all these are speaking *to* the Lord and are earnestly *praying* for His coming again.

However, the internal evidence in the verse refutes that view entirely. First of all, if that were true, the Spirit would be calling for the Lord to come. Now, the Spirit does make intercession *for us*, but there is no evidence in scripture that the Spirit prays to the Lord for Him to do that which is only the Spirit's desire. Secondly, the Spirit and the bride say, “Come.” The Spirit in this case is the Spirit of the Bridegroom, for it is the *Spirit* in association with the *bride* that issues the call to come, and as such, if the Spirit were praying to the Lord, He would be praying to Himself! The Spirit of the Bridegroom dwells in the bride. Hence it is *through the Spirit* that the bride says, “Come.” This also shows that it is Christ who is speaking through the bride imploring *men* to come...the Spirit and the soul, the Bridegroom and the bride, for the Lamb's wife has made herself ready, the union has been consummated, the wedding feast has been lavishly spread, and now, blessed be God! the Spirit *and* the bride say, “Come!”

Now let us notice the next part of the invitation. “And let him that is *athirst* come. And *whosoever will* let him *take the water of life freely*.” The theme of “come” is continued here, and it most definitely is *not* addressed to the Lord nor does it concern *His coming*. The invitation is addressed to the world of mankind — to all who are thirsty, to *come* and quench their spiritual thirst by drinking of the water of life. If the first half of the verse were asking the Lord to come, and the second half asking men to come, we would have an unexplained and unreasonably abrupt shift in focus. Therefore it is better to interpret the first half of the verse by the second half and understand the entire invitation to be addressed to mankind.

We are approaching the conclusion of John's record of his visions, of what he saw and heard while on Patmos. The final verses of John's great experience are like the final movements of a glorious symphony. All the instruments of the orchestra join in one tremendous flood of triumph. Many voices are alternately audible; it is difficult to discern at times just who is speaking; sometimes it is the seer who speaks, sometimes the messenger, sometimes a deeper voice from the throne — the voice of our Lord Jesus Christ Himself. There are various invitations throughout the book, but in our present text we

come to one of the most beautiful and meaningful of all summons in the pages of Holy Writ. This verse can rightfully be called the *final* invitation of God. And how precious, how remarkable that it appears as part of the *Epilogue*, right at the end of the book. How strange that would be were the preachers correct in their contentions that at this point in the Revelation everyone's destiny and fate is already *eternally determined* and *sealed*. The age of grace is supposedly ended, the day of mercy is over, the saints are all in New Jerusalem and the unsaved are all screaming in the lake of fire without any further hope. He that is filthy is irrevocably filthy and he that is righteous is eternally secure. The dogs are forever shut outside and the sheep are safe in their heavenly corral. And in the face of such an irreversible end these words ring out with crystal clarity and divine power: "And the Spirit and the bride say, *Come!* And let him that heareth say, *Come!* And let him that is athirst *come!* And *whosoever will* (no restrictions or reservations at all), let him *take of the water of life freely!*" Isn't it wonderful!

A great preacher once said that God's favorite word is "Come." It echoes in every chapter of the Bible. One could delete from God's Book all other passages — the entire history of patriarchs, sages, and prophets — and yet, with only those great passages that pronounce the word "Come," there would be a full and adequate gospel to preach. The clear, full, resonant note of scripture is "Come." The word occurs hundreds of times! Down through the ages God has been tolling out the message "Come" like a tower-bell, inviting wanderers to return, the weary to rest, the lost to salvation. Oh, how the Lord Jesus Himself sounded out the peal! It was the word that brought the disciples to Jesus. It was the word that He spoke to the little children, to those who were weary and heavy laden, to those who were in the shadow of darkness, to those who were thirsty, even to the dead! How fitting that the gracious Lord should choose, as His final chord of music, that glorious word, "Come!" It is like the "Hallelujah Chorus" at the conclusion of Handel's "Messiah"!

Ah, yes, at the time of this invitation to "come" the river of life is issuing from the throne of God and of the Lamb in the midst of the holy city. It heals everything that it reaches, removing the curse from the earth. There are no barriers now! No cherubim with flaming sword are here portrayed, as in the first Eden, keeping sinful Adamic man resolutely away from any access to the tree of life. On the contrary, the gates of entrance into this city of righteousness, glory, and immortality are shown to be "open continually; they shall not be shut at all." And there, with all this as the backdrop, the Spirit and the bride say, "*Come!*" Their voice echoes out from *within the city*. The sound goes out to all flesh, and anyone who even hears it is commanded to repeat it, and whosoever will — with no exceptions — is freely invited to come into the city which stands there continually to receive him. God's elect leads on, showing the masses of humanity (eventually all creation) the way to forgiveness, salvation, transformation, eternal righteousness, peace, and joy, and immortal life until it can be said, "there shall be no more death." This most wondrous picture of the final, full, complete, immortal victory of God's creative handiwork and of Christ's glorious redemption is that which John saw as the fitting conclusion to the whole panorama of events he was shown on Patmos!

Does it not seem wonderfully significant to you that in the closing pages of the book of Revelation, when the Spirit of God reveals the final and ultimate revelation of God to creation through the glorious City of God, the very last message proclaimed is, "*Come!*" Remember, before this call went out we had seen a great white throne and scenes of judgment. Multitudes were cast into the lake of fire. Our God is a consuming fire! The fire of God is God's glory. The pillar of fire in the wilderness was the glory of God! Only the Holy Spirit can make this real to us, but a person under deep conviction for sin is tormented. Tormented with what? He is tormented with the fire of God's holy presence, the fire of His penetrating, burning word. "*Thy word is a fire...*" He has no peace or rest, day or night. His conscience troubles him continually. When you and I were under deep conviction for our sins and past life we were tormented by the Holy Spirit, the presence of God. And we had no rest day or night! I have seen men literally *run* out of meetings in an effort to escape the convicting presence of God. When we were finally broken by the Holy Spirit's dealing and repented and came to Jesus for mercy and cleansing, we cried and shed many bitter tears of remorse and regret.

The smoke of their torment rises day and night, the scripture says of those in God's lake of fire. If this were a literal lake of fire, filled with the spirits of the damned for all eternity, in that realm there would *be no day or night*. Day and night relates only to our present condition on earth, not the spirit

world. The fiery dealings of God are upon the proud, the self-centered, the carnal minded, the rebellious, the blasphemers. Is judgment the *last word*? Is the lake of fire the *concluding word*? Is the torment of the damned the *final word*? NO! Is there no escape? Ah, beyond the judgment, beyond the tormenting flames a voice comes sounding out of the city, "Let him that is *athirst, come!* And *whosoever will, LET HIM TAKE THE WATER OF LIFE FREELY!*" That, my beloved, is the LAST MESSAGE! How blessed that "the *Spirit* and the *bride* say, Come!" The bride is the Holy City! At the very end of God's redemptive program we see the bride, not submerged in the world, nor egocentric, basking only in her own unspeakable and eternal glory, but in harmonious concert with the Spirit of her Bridegroom her heart expresses itself in that one word — Come! That is the FINAL WORD! And for how long shall this cry continue? The force of the Greek present imperative *erchou* ("Come") is:

"Be thou **continually coming.**" Again, I ask, for how long shall this cry continue? *For as long as the torment lasts.* The voice comes out of the city, and the gates shall *always* be open! Ah, the "day of grace" never ends! That is the message. Should grace end it would mean the destruction of God Himself, for God is love, and He is the God of *all grace* — the fullness and omnipotence of grace. God's grace and goodness and glory shall flow...and flow...and flow...until the last poor hungry and thirsty soul has marched out of the lake of fire and out from all the realms of outer darkness and come through the portals of the City to TAKE THE WATER OF LIFE — FREELY! Jesus is able to save to the UTTERMOST ALL WHO COME and who take of the water of life. What a word!

When the Lord Jesus passed through Samaria He stopped there by Jacob's well. We all know the story of the Samaritan woman who came to the well, whom Jesus engaged in conversation. Talk about an unsavory character! Not only was this woman at the well argumentative and religiously messed up, she also had been married five times and was presently the live-in lover of a sixth man. Would this woman be welcome in most of our churches? I doubt there would be great excitement about her presence. Yet the Son of God makes it a point to not only acknowledge this woman but also to draw her into a conversation. And Jesus is not in the least put off by her sin!

Now, that doesn't mean that Jesus *condoned* the woman's lifestyle. He doesn't tell her that what she has done is right; however, I find it significant that neither does He tell her that what she has done is wrong! He was not there to preach sin-consciousness. Jesus was just doing what He always did — hanging around with sinners! When the Pharisees accused Him of being the friend of publicans and sinners Jesus replied, "They that be well need not a physician, but they that are sick." What a revelation that is! That is what a *son* does! God sent not His *Son* into the world to *condemn* the world, but that the world through Him might be *saved!* The sons do not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them! They come with leaves from the tree of life (living words) to HEAL THE NATIONS! They must needs "go through Samaria," that is, they step outside the pearly gates of the City to beckon to all who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death, calling with pathos of love, mercy, and redemption, "Come! Let him that is athirst come! Whosoever will, let him come and take the water of life freely!"

An obvious but extremely important point to remember is this: Where you find sinners, there you will find sin. The people Christ seeks for are not generally "nice" people who just happen not to know Jesus. Yet if we are going to reach them and make an impact on their lives we must learn to put sin in its place, as our example, the firstborn Son of God, did. Jesus knew the woman's sin needed to be dealt with — but not until her heart was won by the love of God. In fact, her sin could *not* be dealt with until she received an infusion of *life!* You see, the preachers get it all backward. As I have listened to preachers by the score striving desperately and even frantically to get men to repent and be saved, my heart is often filled with sadness because the message they preach is made weak and futile by their failure to grasp the infinite purposes of that omniscient mind who prepared so great a salvation in Christ before there was a world or a sinner in it. Those who preach the "salvation message" nearly always begin to laying a "guilt trip" on the people they are preaching to, reminding them of how terrible their sin is, how horribly it offends a holy God, and what its tragic, eternal end is in hell and damnation. After a long discourse of gloom and doom, they then quickly offer them a way out — coming to Jesus. Yet, Jesus never did that to a sinner!

To the woman at the well He *began* by offering her *living water*. He told her that if she would ask Him for this water, and drink of it, that it would become in her a great artesian well of water springing up and overflowing in life more abundantly! Nothing was said about her sin. The issue wasn't sin. The issue was LIFE! She needed life! Only life could deal with her sin. Jesus was not there to condemn her, He was there to save her! And He knew the process. Condemnation will never lead to life and victory. But life will always lead to cleansing and purity. So the voice out of the City bears no condemnation for sin. It is only an offer of life! Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely!

It is the very same message Jesus proclaimed to the woman of Samaria. And now it is the same Christ, the Spirit and the bride, who says, "Let him that is athirst *come!*" And what they come to is just what John saw in his vision. "And he showed me a *pure* river of water of *life*, clear as crystal." The river has two constituents — it is *pure* and it is *life*. Therefore it ministers two things — *purity* and *life*. Only divine life can make men pure! And it is not a crystal river up in some far-off heaven somewhere that makes men pure, but the artesian well of water *within us*, springing up into life. That is why Jesus offered the water first, before He pointed out the woman's sin. Only the water of life can make one clean! There was no need to begin by telling her how dirty she was. Every man, in his heart, already knows how filthy he is! He just needs the solution. That is the mystery.

Many of us today receive unsolicited credit card applications in the mail. The accompanying letters usually begin the same way: "You have already been approved to receive this card!" Being told we have been approved for something we haven't applied for can sound strange. But in a way it can remind us of how God's love is extended to us: unconditionally. We don't have to worry about trying to earn God's favor. God loves and accepts us in spite of who we are or what we have done. Sometimes people make promises accompanied by certain conditions. They say, "I will love you as long as you stay thin," or, "I will pay your tuition, but only if you enroll at this college."

Sometimes what appears to be a gift is actually a veiled attempt to manipulate someone into meeting certain expectations. God's promises are nothing like that! Paul experienced the unconditional love of God in his life, and he describes it beautifully in these words, "God commendeth His *love toward us*, in that, *while we were yet sinners*, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). It is the same word we have been sharing — God didn't begin by dealing with our sin — He began with the *pouring out of His life!* Now the message is not, "Forsake your sin and I will give you living water," but rather, ""Come and take the water of life freely!" No matter who you are or what you have done — you have been *pre-approved for this water!* The mighty action of that living spring of water will wash the filth out of you! Stop struggling with your sin, dear one; get to the river!

The following story illustrates so powerfully God's attitude toward mankind:

Once upon a time two brothers, who lived on adjoining farms, fell into conflict. It was the first serious rift in years of farming side by side, sharing machinery and trading labor and goods as needed. Then the long collaboration fell apart. It began with a small misunderstanding and grew into a major difference, and, finally, exploded into an exchange of bitter words followed by weeks of silence.

One morning there was a knock on John's door. He opened it to find a man with a bag of carpenter's tools. "I am looking for a few days work," he said, "perhaps you would have a few small jobs here and there where I could help you?" "Yes," said the older brother, "I do have a job for you. Look across the creek at that farm. That's my brother's. In fact, it's my younger brother. Last week there was a meadow between us, but he took a bulldozer to the river embankment and now there is a creek between us. Well, he may have done it to spite me, but I will go one better. See that pile of timber by the barn? I want you to build me an eight foot fence so I won't need to see his place or his face anymore." The carpenter said, "I think I understand the situation; show me the nails and the post-hole digger and I'll be able to do a job that will please you."

The older brother had to go into town, so he helped the carpenter get the materials ready and then he was off for the day. The carpenter worked hard all that day, measuring, sawing, nailing. About

sunset when the farmer returned, the carpenter had just finished the job. The farmer's eyes opened wide and his jaw dropped. There was no fence there at all. Instead there was a bridge — a bridge stretching from one side of the creek to the other — a fine piece of work, handrails and all. The farmer's younger brother was coming across, his hand outstretched. "You are quite a fellow to build this bridge after all I've said and done." The two brothers stood at each end of the bridge and then they met in the middle, taking each other's hand. They turned to see the carpenter hoisting his toolbox onto his shoulder. "No, wait! Stay a few days. I have lots of other projects for you to do." "I'd love to stay on," the carpenter said, "but I have many more bridges to build." "For if *when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son*, much more, being reconciled, we *shall be saved by His life*" (Rom. 5:10).

"Oh," someone replies, "the story of Lazarus, and the rich man who in Hades *lifted up his eyes, being in torments*, teaches us that there is no bridge between heaven and hell, between the saints in glory and the sinners in doom, no way to escape the tormenting fire." I shall speak very plainly about that. In the first place the story of the rich man and Lazarus is usually considered without any reference to its setting. Near the close of Jesus' ministry He had eaten dinner with a Pharisee, at which time He not only healed a man with dropsy, but gave some pointed instructions about how to give a dinner party. When He left the house, great throngs followed Him (Lk. 14:25).

Many of this crowd were publicans and sinners. In Luke 15:1-2 we read: "Then drew near unto Him all the publicans and sinners to hear Him, and the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them." It is against this background of criticism from the scribes and Pharisees that the teaching of Luke 15 and 16 is given. That whole discourse is called a parable. "And He spake *this parable* unto them, saying..." (Lk. 15:3). The Greek is very definite in making the word for parable clearly a singular noun. It is "the parable this." Five seemingly separate stories enter into His teaching to proclaim the truth of "THIS PARABLE." His usual method of teaching all but the inner circle of His disciples was by use of parables. "All these things spake Jesus *in parables* unto the multitudes; and *without a parable* spake He *nothing* unto them" (Mat. 13:34). "But privately to His disciples He expounded all things" (Mk. 4:34).

Now, it is not my purpose to explain the meaning of the parable in this writing, for that is another story altogether. I would be remiss if I did not point out, however, that while the story itself *is a parable*, in all parables there must be a correspondence between the type and the antitype or they fail to have validity as parables. Let me illustrate. Jesus spoke a parable, saying, "Behold, a sower went forth to sow." He then explained how the seed fell upon various kinds of soil, and the result from each. Now, since this is a parable, it is obvious that Jesus is not just relating a series of facts; He is not talking about a certain literal farmer sowing actual seed such as wheat or corn. Each part of the story is a symbol, a metaphor, an illustration of something else, and we know, of course, that the sower is the Christ, the seed is the word of the kingdom, and the soils are different kinds of hearts. But — if there were *no such thing* as seed, and *no such activity* as sowing, and *no actual* soil in existence, then the parable would have no basis, no strength, no meaning — it would not be a parable at all, but merely a fantastic, unrealistic, imaginary fairy tale! It is the FACT of seed, sowers, and soils that gives the parable its strength and meaning.

So, in the story of Lazarus and the rich man, if there is no such thing as Hades, and if there is no sense of suffering of punishment in Hades, then the application of the parable fails. There must be some reality to these things or the parable is not a parable at all! But in the parable Lazarus is said to be "in Abraham's bosom." The phrase "Abraham's bosom" was a well-known one, current among the people of Judea to express the state of the faithful Israelite who had died and been "gathered unto his fathers." Abraham's bosom typifies a position of acceptance and favor in the kingdom of God, for, "If ye be Christ's, then are ye *Abraham's seed*, and *heirs* according to the promise" (Gal. 3:29), and "many shall come from the east and west, and shall *sit down with Abraham* in the kingdom of heaven" (Mat. 8:11).

The rich man wanted Lazarus to come and cool his tongue. He had been a very bad man, and so was tormented in the hell he had created for himself. But when he asked that Lazarus should cross, Abraham said, "Between us and you there is a great gulf fixed; no one can cross it." Abraham couldn't cross that gulf. It was a fixed gulf to him and to those who were with him. Abraham could not cross

that abyss, nor could Lazarus. There is no denying that. But, oh, may the blessed Spirit of God give understanding to all who read these lines — THE CHRIST CROSSED THAT ABYSS. There is the difference! You say that Abraham said, “Between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, that they who would pass from hence to you may not be able, and that none may cross over from thence to us.” Let me remind you that, though Abraham said that, the Christ did not. That is right, Abraham, you could not bridge it! And even if you could, you did not have the *keys to the gates*. But the Christ, when He arose, grasped the keys of both *death* and *Hades* and He holds those keys in His omnipotent hand. The Christ crossed that gulf, and HIS SALVATION BRIDGED IT. Christ bridged it! The Christ Himself IS THE BRIDGE! It is no use talking nonsense, saying that the gulf was not bridged. It was not bridged at the time Jesus told that story, but when He arose and grasped the keys of death and of hell, He made a way for His banished to return.

It was bridged by Jesus Christ, and there is not any gulf that He cannot bridge. I believe it! If there is, then He is not God, because there is no gulf that God and His love cannot bridge. Jesus Christ has bridged the gulf between God and man, between Israelite and Gentile, between bond and free, between male and female, between rich and poor, and between heaven and hell. He has bridged all the gulfs, blessed be His name, and so “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28). Thank God! a greater than Abraham is here. He bridges the gulf between heaven and earth and between earth and hell, for it is written, “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” (Phil. 2:10-11). Weymouth translates, “That in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of *beings* in the highest heavens, of those on the earth, and of THOSE IN THE UNDERWORLD, and that *every tongue* should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, *to the glory of God the Father*.” The hymn writer captured the wonderful truth of this when he penned these immortal words:

Oh, the love that drew salvation’s plan!  
Oh, the grace that brought it down to man!  
Oh, the mighty GULF THAT GOD DID SPAN —  
At Calvary!

But, some will ask, what about all those scriptures which speak of the end of the wicked, how they shall be cut off, burned up, utterly perish, etc .? Certainly, these are very true, and indeed, they are a word of promise. God has purposed to bring the *Adamic man*, the *old man*, the *man of flesh*, the *evil, rebellious, wicked man* — to an end! When you read a scripture about man being destroyed, you must immediately ask, “Which man?” Because there are only two men on earth — the *first* man, who is of the earth, earthy, and the *second* man, who is the Lord from heaven. Every man on earth is a part of one of these corporate men or the other. There is only the first man Adam and the last man Adam. In Christ God brought the first man to the end of himself on the cross. That is why every believer can say, “I am dead, and my new life is hid with Christ in God.” That is why Paul could write, “**I** am *crucified* with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but *Christ liveth* in me.” So don’t worry yourself about those scriptures which speak of the *end* of man — we who believe already know just *how true and how wonderful it is!*

In his memoirs, John B. Gough tells of a personal experience when he was addressing the inmates in a particular penitentiary. Among those convicts was a Scotch woman, whose general character is best indicated by the name her fellow-prisoners gave her. They called her “Hell-fired Sal.” Mr. Gough began his address, “Ladies and Gentlemen.” Speaking to a company of felons, including the lowest and the hardest of mankind, Gough remembered that they were his fellow creatures and the creation of God, and called them “Ladies and Gentlemen.” He reminded them that they were all akin by nature; that they started life together as innocent babies; that many of them in their childhood had been told about God and the Saviour of the world, and taught to pray. He told them that, under evil influences, their lives had been wrecked, as his had been; that he had lived for years in the gutter; that the hand of God had delivered him, and that by His mercy and grace there was a chance for them, too, to come back. Gough says that while he was speaking, he noticed Sal listening, at first indifferently, then eagerly, until at last he saw her trying to hide a tear. Then, with no handkerchief, both bare hands

began pawing at her wet cheeks. “And when I finished,” he said, “Sal came forward, grasped my hand, and said in her broad Scotch: “Thaat’s so, Maan; ah, I ken thaat’s so; and there’s anither chaance for e’en the like o’ me.” Oh, yes; another chance for all, even beyond any man’s wildest dreams:

*He comes to make His blessings flow  
Far as the curse is found...*

Robert Schuler related the following. Tony Orlando, a friend of mine, made the song, “Tie A Yellow Ribbon To The Old Oak Tree” famous. Not long after he made it a hit, I said to him, “Tony, do you know where the story of that song comes from?” He said, “No.” I shared with him how the author was inspired by a true story of a man who committed a terrible, terrible deed. He had violated the trust that his wife and his family had in him. It was so bad that charges were pressed and he was found guilty. He was sent to jail. During his imprisonment, he didn’t hear from his wife, nor his family, who still lived in Alabama. He had shamed them all and they cut him off. Then the time came when he was going to be released, so he wrote to his wife. He said, “I am getting out of prison on such and such a day. I’m getting on the train that comes through town.” They had lived in a house near the railroad tracts. He said, “If I am forgiven, will you hang a white pillowcase from the old oak tree. If there’s a white pillowcase, I’ll get off. If not, I’ll just stay on the train and I’ll keep on going. You’ll never hear from me again. I won’t give you any more pain. I’ve given you more than enough for a lifetime.” This man boarded the train. As it neared his town, he knew he would see the old oak tree after the next bend. Suddenly, there it was, but there wasn’t a white pillowcase from the branch. Instead, there were white bed sheets and white towels and more white dresses and the whole tree was draped in white! He got off the train, and he was welcomed home again. Wow! Can you feel the healing? That is what God has done for us and for all mankind in Jesus Christ!

Several years ago brother Vern Goss shared this word in one of his monthly articles. Years ago a preacher came to this area with a tent crusade declaring, “God will save from the gutter-most to the uttermost.” Uttermost means an *extremity, an end, a frontier, an edge, the brink*. Adam ran to the outer parts of the garden to hide among the trees. He had departed from the heart of his Creator, and was now abiding in fear, sin, and death. The Bible is full of instances in which the word uttermost is used. This is recorded in the book of Nehemiah:

*“But if ye turn unto me, and keep my commandments, and do them; though there were of you cast out unto the uttermost part of the heaven, yet will I **gather them from thence**, and will bring them unto the place that I have chosen to set my name there”* (Neh. 1:9). This dovetails with scripture in the New Testament. *“That in the dispensation of the fullness of times He might **gather together in one all things in Christ**, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him: in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will”* (Eph. 1:10-11). Ultimately, the Father is in the GATHERING BUSINESS. Adam fled to the uttermost parts of the garden, but our Father went seeking for him to bring him and all who come out of his loins back into the fold. I doubt if any man has ever understood the significance of the price paid by God to bring redemption to man, but our Father fully understands, and He does not have a throw away mentality. In Christ there is not a junk yard for rusting, wrecked, worn out vehicles of humanity — rather, HE MAKES ALL THINGS NEW!

The story is told of a seminary professor who, walking through campus one day, came upon a custodian reading the Bible during lunch hour. The professor asked what he was reading. “The book of Revelation,” the custodian replied. “I’m sure you don’t understand what it means,” said the professor condescendingly. “Actually, I do,” he responded. *“It means Jesus wins.”*

Full redemption given, the measure of God’s grace,  
Reconciling unto Him those of every race.  
In His love and mercy, atonement made complete;  
The veil of flesh now rent in twain, that hid the mercy seat.

The Spirit of life given, according to His plan,  
To bring His body into one, thus form the perfect man.  
A seed to bless all nations, and reconcile through grace  
Those that once rejected Him, will find in Him their place.

The restitution of all things, it is God's sovereign plan;  
The love of God now flowing in all the barren land;  
Reaching every nation, restoring one and all!  
The dead will rise in unison when they hear the call.

— Mildred Eslick Garner

The immensity of the measurement of the city of God, New Jerusalem, is in itself a divine revelation of the scope of Christ's redemption. If the city were a literal city, with stories like our modern skyscrapers, it would be able to accommodate untold billions of people! The message is just this — there is ample room in the kingdom of God for *everyone!* Thus the call goes out to all everywhere, "*Come!*" One final anthem swells into four invitations to mankind beseeching and commanding them to come to the City of God and partake of all that God has made abundantly available in His kingdom of Life, Light, and Love. First, the Spirit and the bride say, "*Come!*" Secondly, the one hearing these words — John, a messenger, you, I, or anyone — is admonished to join in the chorus and say, "*Come!*" Thirdly, the one who is thirsty for righteousness, peace, and joy is invited to "*come!*" Finally, with the beautiful English words, "*whosoever will...*" ALL are invited, with no limitation or restriction of either location, condition, or time. The call will never end until every man has responded and the gates will never be shut at all. And they will surely come by the billions, as every person who has ever lived or ever will live shall make their way into THE CITY OF GOD. They will come in a constant procession until the families and nations of mankind shall indeed all assemble to worship the Lord when they see the great victory He has accomplished, and realize that they are specially invited to receive of its blessings and benefits. Ah, both within and without the city the provision of God for all men and every nation, kindred, tongue, and people is indeed abundant and complete, for it has the RIVER OF WATER OF LIFE, THE TREE OF LIFE, and THE LIGHT OF LIFE as well!

"*Let him that heareth say, Come!*" The camel caravans that moved through the ancient world did not usually keep close together. Sometimes as much as half a mile would separate the units. But when the leader saw water in the distance, it was his duty to turn around, and with a wave of his arm, cry, "*Come! Water!*" The next man would do the same, and the next, and the next, until the whole long line of riders had heard the news that water was at hand. Having *heard*, it was the duty of each to pass the word on to someone else. And that is where we are today, calling to our fellow travelers on this earth, "*Come! for all things are now ready.*" All saints are not actually joining in the cry. He that "*heareth*" would apply especially to a believer who is not in concert with the Spirit and the bride, that is, the Bridegroom and the bride. Multitudes of believers do not believe the call is for *every man*, especially those who wander in the outer darkness and those who have made their bed in hell. To all who are of the persuasion that the great white throne judgment and the work of the lake of fire eternally seals the doom of the billions of lost men and women out of the ages, I say today, as the Spirit and the bride say today, and will still be saying in the age and ages to come — forsake your false teaching, get over your limited view of God's great and unconditional love and eternal purpose, and join us in the cry to creation — "*Come!*"

"*And let him that is athirst come.*" This invitation is extended to all those souls who are "*athirst.*" Those in whom God has wrought exercises and desires through His dealings which have not yet been met. The answer to them all is CHRIST — and Christ is experienced as the living stream of the water of life and the divine and incorruptible power of the tree of life. God will satisfy the thirsting soul! There is no craving so fierce and intolerable as the craving of thirst. This is due to the fact that the deprivation of liquid is a condition with which *all* the tissues of the body can sympathize. Each atom of the body joins in the cry, and the expression is concentrated in the parched mouth and the dry feverish lips. The great craving of thirst is used in this verse to symbolize the craving of the soul. How intense and utterly demanding it is! The thirsting one is called to come and find the deepest satisfaction of all his lack and need in the City of God. All God's glorious and eternal reality — His invigorating, animating, enlivening, vivifying, vitalizing, strengthening, and restoring power — is continuously available for thirsting hearts!

I am deeply impressed that in the Revelation, only a few verses after we are told that "*whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire,*" a great voice out of heaven



announces, “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. *I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely*” (Rev. 20:15; 21:6). Permit me to ask with all reverence — What would make ones soul thirst for the satisfying and life-giving spiritual water of life more than *anything*? The answer is not far to find: FIRE! And once one has been subjected to God’s Holy Ghost Fire long enough he will certainly desire this water of life, he will, in fact, cry out for it, he will be willing to *come* for it! And just as the blazing pillar of fire that led Israel by night was, in the heat of the day, transformed into a covering, protecting cloud that shaded them, so the flaming dealings of God will suddenly become as a refreshing rain in due season, and a gigantic waterfall bathing the soul and quickening the life. Where there was once searing pain in the soul, the spirit of life will be as the healing balm of Gilead, to cleanse from sin, and make a man a new creation in Christ Jesus. Oh, the wonder of it!

“*And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.*” Finally, grace goes out to the widest limits: “Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely!” He may not even thirst. It supposes one with whom there is little depth or earnestness of desire, but he needs this life whether he knows it or not, and the invitation reaches even him. It is not even said that he is to *come*. He has not to move even a single step; the water of life is flowing freely close to him; he has but to *take* it. It is the all-inclusive call of infinite grace! The final emphasis is on the word *freely*. Glorious sovereign grace! The love of God, so touching and tender, is addressed here to all those who even faintly have been made conscious of the need of living water. Let them not hesitate. Let them *take* it. It costs nothing. It costs *them* nothing! The price has been paid, the provision has already been made. There is no qualifying, for it is a *gift*, and a gift is given, not because of the worthiness of the recipient, but because of the goodness of the Giver. Hence, let them take and drink freely! It is indeed wonderful!

As we approach the conclusion of the Revelation Jesus comes on stage, as it were, in front of the curtain for the *epilogue*. Through the visions of John men are privileged to look behind the curtain of time into the drama of the ages. We have seen a God of love who reveals Himself in the Lamb in the midst of the throne. We have seen a God who rules throughout history. We have noted the judgments which fall upon the Adamic man to bring him to his end. We have witnessed a great white throne judgment from which no man escapes. We have seen the great lake of God’s fire which purges, purifies, and refines. Portrayed for our comfort and encouragement has been the glory of the manchild ascending the throne, and the glory of the new Jerusalem bride — the government of God. Only when all this has been fully accomplished throughout this church age (for the book is sent to the *churches*) does the invitation go out to every man, irrespective of his location, position, or condition, to come and drink freely of the water of life. Only then do we see that even as the invitation goes forth the gates of the city will *never* be shut. There is no time limit! It will take as long as it takes, until every man and all creation is restored again into God! Blessed be the Lord!

To be continued...

J. PRESTON EBY

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Mark Eby  
Kingdom Bible Studies  
P.O. Box 371240  
El Paso, TX 79937-1240

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