

PREPARATION OF THE BRIDE

PART 6

"PREPARATION FOR PRESENTATION"

HOSEA 6:1-3... "Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for He hath torn, and He will heal us; He hath smitten, and He will bind us up. AFTER TWO DAYS WILL HE REVIVE US: AND IN THE THIRD DAY HE WILL RAISE US UP, AND WE SHALL LIVE IN HIS SIGHT. Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord: HIS GOING FORTH IS PREPARED AS THE MORNING, and He shall come unto us AS THE RAIN, AS THE LATTER AND FORMER RAIN UNTO THE EARTH".

Praise God for the hope of this glorious calling! Our God is faithful Who hath promised, and is performing His redemptive process right on time, according to His schedule! He hasn't missed a beat! From the very initiation of this wondrous work, every historical event that has transpired down through the ages has fit perfectly into His pattern, precisely conformed to work into His plan, and is progressively revealing Jesus as LORD OF ALL! HE IS CLEARLY REIGNING OVER THE AFFAIRS OF LIFE, orchestrating them into His arrangement as a HEAVENLY MAESTRO of a DIVINE SYMPHONY! He is presently "tutoring" us by the Spirit, teaching us how to read the "notes", so to speak; granting us the spiritual understanding that ALL THINGS HARMONIZE, OR WORK TOGETHER FOR GOOD TO THEM THAT LOVE GOD, TO THEM THAT ARE THE CALLED ACCORDING TO HIS PURPOSE (Rom. 8:28)! Soon the orchestra will be complete, every instrument will be in tune, the arrangement will be finished, and He will gather His elect "musicians and singers" from the four corners of heaven to play and sing A NEW SONG, the "song" of their personal experience of overcoming all things (which they alone will know)! This beautiful ballad of reconciliation shall deliver the creation from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God! Praise His Name! There shall flow from their innermost beings a melodious stream of heavenly chords, the likes of which has never been heard on earth before, save through the life of Christ Himself; and as David's anointed music drove away the evil spirits from Saul, this "song of the ages", this anthem of the redeemed, shall set the captives free! SELAH!

In keeping with this thought, there is a truth conveyed in II Cor. 4:15-16, which would be worthy of our consideration: "For ALL THINGS ARE FOR YOUR SAKES, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God. For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day".

Interesting to note is the phrase in verse 15, "FOR YOUR SAKES". It comes from a Greek word "DIA" (# 1223 in Strong's), which means "a channel for an act". Therefore, to paraphrase what Paul said, we have: "*ALL THINGS SERVE AS A CHANNEL FOR AN ACT, providing God with an opportunity to reveal the abundance of His grace to those in need, all to His glory. And though the outward man may suffer in the process, the inward*

man is daily being transformed"! If it seems difficult for you to believe that EVERYTHING that happens in your life, both negative and positive, fits into God's eternal purpose, consider, if you will, the Greek word for DEVIL: "DIABOLOS" (# 1228). It is actually the combination of two words, DIA and BOLOS: the first part meaning, as we have pointed out, "a channel for an act", and the last part (# 906) meaning, "to throw, or cast down". Dr. Strong's concordance gives the singular definition for "devil" as "the traducer; one who accuses". To traduce speaks of *"the means by which deliberate false statements about another's acts or character are channeled; to transfer from one order of reasoning to another, usually through distortion"*. Is not this an accurate description of our ancient foe? He serves as the channel through which information passes to the carnal mind; and as such, he misconstrues truth for lies, and translates distortions as reality! He is the master deceiver... the original "channeler" of cursed thoughts! There is no doubt that the motivations behind the activities of the Devil are directed toward casting us down, or destroying us; but God causes even him to unintentionally serve as a channel to convey HIS GRACEFUL ACT toward us! What an utter frustration this is to the adversary... and what an utterly invincible attitude this is for us! "If God be for us, who can be against us"? How could anyone possibly be defeated with this kind of mindset?

This point is clearly illustrated in II Cor. 12:1-10; where Paul tells us that because of the abundance of revelations he had received, there was given unto him A THORN IN THE FLESH, THE MESSENGER OF SATAN to buffet him, lest he should become exalted. Not understanding how God could possibly be glorified through this, or how it might fit into His plan, he earnestly sought the Lord that he be delivered from this oppressive and restrictive condition. At the time, all he could see was the obstacle in his pathway, the hindrance in his life... and HE WANTED THIS "THORN" REMOVED IMMEDIATELY! Obviously, there was no lack of perseverance, nor lack of faith on Paul's part that kept him from receiving his request; he kept coming back to God for his deliverance. So apparently, God PURPOSELY CHOSE to ignore his petition, and leave him "in the dark" for a period! Finally, in Father's own appointed time, HIS message came through loud and clear, "MY GRACE IS SUFFICIENT FOR THEE: FOR MY STRENGTH IS MADE PERFECT THROUGH WEAKNESS" (v. 9a)! In due season, God opened the eyes of Paul's understanding, and allowed him to see His good and glorious intentions toward him, even in the midst of great tribulation! He used this negative situation, and this negative "channel" to accomplish His higher objective in Paul's life, and for the furtherance of the Gospel. Therefore, Paul said, "Most gladly therefore WILL I RATHER GLORY IN MY INFIRMITIES, THAT THE POWER OF GOD MIGHT REST UPON ME. THEREFORE I TAKE PLEASURE IN INFIRMITIES, IN REPROACHES, IN NECESSITIES, IN PERSECUTIONS, IN DISTRESSES FOR CHRIST'S SAKE: FOR WHEN I AM WEAK, THEN AM I STRONG" (vs. 9b & 10)! Was Paul some sort of strange sadist, who enjoyed pain and punishment?

Had his much learning really made him mad? Of course not! But now he understood more perfectly how God sometimes uses adversity as a channel or doorway, to reveal the

power and glory of the indwelling Christ. And beloved, he discovered that patient endurance is the key! (This kind of preaching does not go over well with the "name it and claim it" folks, who want to make God their "Sugar-Daddy", but it's the truth anyhow)! Be it known that Christ is not interested in immediately delivering us out of all our troubles, answering all our requests, or catering to our many whims and wishes... but in producing a chaste, virginal character in His Bride! This takes first priority! He is developing and perfecting a company of OVERCOMERS; that is, a mature people, who have learned to "COME OVER" the many obstructions set before them! And, thank God, AT HIS OWN DISCRETION He will use any means necessary to perform this work of perfection and purification, until the work is absolutely complete!

May we also take this opportunity to say that though your trying circumstances may not make much sense to you now, while you "see through a glass darkly", rest assured that FATHER KNOWS BEST; in due season He will cause you to see things clearly as they are, not as they may appear (from the "traducer's" point of view)! The hour will come when the heavens will open to you, and you shall see things from His divine perspective; then you will be able to say along with Paul, "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time ARE NOT WORTHY TO BE COMPARED with the glory which shall be revealed IN US" (Rom. 8:18)! Note carefully that Paul was not experiencing the "manifest glory" when he wrote this; it was yet to be revealed. He was still enduring the "sufferings of the present time"! But he UNDERSTOOD what was going on, that God was "working in him mightily"; and that made all the difference! And beloved, you can be likewise confident of this: whatever is happening in your life, He has your best interest in mind! You can trust Him without reservations!

Please allow us to strengthen our subject with one more thought before we leave here. In this passage from II Cor. 4:15, it is to be noted that while all things serve as a channel for the act of God's abundant grace, there is no redounding of glory to God save it come "THROUGH THE THANKSGIVING OF MANY". In other words, the attitude we take toward our circumstances, and toward God's gracious activities in our lives will determine whether or not He is glorified in us! For this cause it is written, "REJOICE EVERMORE. PRAY WITHOUT CEASING. IN EVERYTHING GIVE THANKS: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (I Thess. 5:18)! Both words, THANKS and THANKSGIVING, originally come from the same Greek word: "EUCCHARISTOS". It refers to saying grace at a meal; of expressing gratitude for the provisions set before us. Further, it bespeaks of taking communion with Him; "eating" His flesh, and "drinking" His blood! It is much more than simply eating a wafer (like one of the more visible expressions of the "Mother Harlot" promotes), or of eating crackers and grape juice! It is joyously receiving ALL THINGS from the "table" He has set before us in the presence of our enemies (Psa. 24:5); recognizing His Presence in EVERY DETAIL OF LIFE! We can know of a certainty that as we willingly accept ALL THINGS from His hand without murmuring or disputing, drinking from the same cup He drank from, becoming partakers of the sufferings of Christ, we will likewise be partakers of the glory to follow! We have His Word as the guarantee!

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Now we return to our meditations from our last segment in this series, "The Valley of Achor --- Place of Regathering". As we climaxed last month, we were considering John's unique experience while he was IN THE SPIRIT on the isle of Patmos. As we have previously stated, it was while John was "a companion in tribulation", enduring much hardship "for the Word of the Lord, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ" (in his own personal "Valley of Trouble"), that "a DOOR WAS OPENED IN HEAVEN"! He was enabled to behold the activities going on behind the veil, to see things that were transpiring by the Spirit! He had a "front-row seat" in the heavenlies, highly honored to watch THE RAVE REVIEWS OF REDEMPTION'S PLAN! What a unique privilege this was! And though some of the characters which he beheld were quite frightening (to say the least), it was not meant to be a horror story; actually, it's THE LOVE STORY OF THE LAMB! His vision was not centered on the negatives, such as the "Dragon or the "Beast", or the "False Prophet", or "Babylon". These were but a part of the cast. The

spotlight was on Him who sat upon the throne, executing His righteous reign over all the earth! It was (and is) THE REVELATION, or "APOKALUPSIS" ("unveiling or disclosure") OF JESUS CHRIST! He is THE CENTRAL FIGURE in this unfolding drama, THE LEADING ACTOR, AND THE STAR OF THE SHOW! All the other characters and their roles serve as CHANNELS FOR HIS CLIMATIC ACT TO FOLLOW! He is "Alpha and Omega", the First and Last, the Beginning and the End; He it is that spake the prologue, the first "line" of the script (Gen. 1:2), and He it is that shall pronounce the epilogue of eternity, to the standing ovation of the whole creation! HE SHALL HAVE THE LAST WORD!

Talk about excitement! Talk about action! Why, the wildest imaginations in Hollywood could never touch this! And just think; this biographical documentary on the conquering life of Christ is being enacted on two major locations simultaneously... first, on a large-scale manner throughout history, dispensationally performed to the corporate Bride-to-be; and secondly, presently, within the hearts and lives of every individual believer. It's more than we can fathom! As Paul so accurately stated, "Now unto Him that is able to do EXCEEDING ABUNDANTLY ABOVE ALL THAT WE ASK OR THINK, ACCORDING TO THE POWER THAT WORKETH IN US, unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end" (Eph. 3:20-21); He is performing a work of sanctification so deep, so vast, so intimately personal, IT IS INFINITELY BEYOND ALL HUMAN EXPECTATIONS, OR EVEN OUR ABILITY TO IMAGINE IT... and yet it is according to "THE POWER THAT WORKETH IN US"! Praise God! Because He now dwells in the omnipresent glory of the Father, He is able to be "on location" in literally hundreds of thousands of hearts ALL at the same time, working 1'ALL things after the counsel of His own will", ALL according to the same set of principles! The faces may change, the conditions may differ, and the times may vary from one generation to another, but the rules remain the same! That's what makes Him LORD OF ALL!

There are many today who would look upon this ongoing and yet personal perspective of Revelation as heresy. This should not surprise us, since most modern views of the Book are so radically confined to futurism (beginning and ending within the time-frame of their choosing, exclusive to their particular generation). What should surprise us, however, is that this popular approach to interpreting the Book of Revelation is only about two hundred years old! From the time that John "mailed out" the first scrolls, up until the French Revolution in 1790, Revelation was generally considered by the clergy to be a message written specifically to the persecuted saints of the first century. With Caesar personifying the spirit of "antichrist", reprobate Jerusalem being "Babylon", the harlotrous wife of Jehovah, and the Roman Empire being the "Beast" she rode upon, the interpretation seemed to be in order. The Jewish historian Josephus gives the detailed account of that which took place during those days, and the dramatic fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. Interestingly enough, taking into account the poetic language He employed, the prophetic events Jesus foretold (recorded in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21) which parallel Revelation came to pass in a very rapid and unusual succession! "Verily I say unto you, THIS GENERATION shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled" (Matt. 24:34). True enough, from the time Jesus spake these words in 33 A.D., until the time of

their fulfillment was just within the Biblical definition of a generation (40 yrs.) ! It only makes sense, therefore, that this letter written by John to the seven churches in Asia should be relative to their generation, pertinent to their problems, giving them the hope of glory in their time of great tribulation. If Revelation means only what our twentieth century theologians have assigned to it, how could that have possibly edified the early church? Contrarily, It would have only served to confuse them! They needed help and encouragement then; not two thousand years later!

On the other hand, if everything was fulfilled in the first century persecution, what does this Book hold for us today? That was the question Madame Jeanne Guyon asked herself in 1683. In her day, Revelation had become an antiquated book, mere history, dead as far as it's current relativity was concerned. This was what prompted her to write what might be the most radical and highly controversial commentary on Revelation ever published, "Christ our Revelation". Incidentally, it was done while she was literally fleeing persecution from the Catholic Church because of her outspoken insights! What a perfect setting to write from (another of her books, "Experiencing the Depths of Jesus Christ", stirred such controversy in France that it was banned, and publicly burned! No greater compliment could have come from her critics)! In the editor's preface of her commentary it is written, *"When Jeanne Guyon wrote this book, it was one hundred years before any clear ground rules for approaching Revelation had been laid down. Consequently, she has a very original view! Guyon saw Revelation as a record of the believer 's soul and what the soul must pass through to be transformed. All the beasts, dragons, plagues, etc. are forces that launch themselves against the truly pious Christian (that is, the Christian following what Guyon calls "the inward way"). Guyon explains these assaults as experiences the soul must pass through on it's way to total transformation. As the soul passes through these dangers and catastrophes, it is purified. These plagues of Revelation, she says, may be terrible, originating from evil men or dark forces, but nonetheless necessary -- and allowed by God -- for the sake of dealing with and changing the believer's soul. To put it another way, this book is not an interpretation of Revelation... not as we understand that term in our day. It is, rather, an almost allegorical pilgrimage of the Christian soul, with Revelation's drama as the setting" --- end quote.* And to this we would wholeheartedly agree! We may not agree with all of the particulars of her views throughout the book, in all of the finite details, but her basic approach and perspective set a precedent for us to follow!

Therefore, this is the ideology we embrace; while the Revelation was certainly given for the edification of the early church, in regard to their struggles with the tremendous forces of opposition in their day (giving them the assurance that Christ would ultimately be triumphant in every sphere of life), it also serves as a pattern for all saints everywhere, who are in similar straits! The principle still applies, that as the Captain of our salvation was made perfect through sufferings (Heb. 2:10), we also "must THROUGH MUCH TRIBULATION enter into the Kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22)! We are persuaded therefore, that when Jesus said, "this generation shall not pass, until all these things be fulfilled", He was speaking in a much broader sense than just of those living at that time. More accurately, He was referring to the entire "generation" of the first man Adam, those of whom his unruly "offspring" of attributes and characteristics are manifested in; He was

speaking to all in whom the image and likeness of Adam's corruptible nature is evidenced, throughout the whole world! In light of this, Christ's words take on a more personal flavor; and in them there is hope for us all! For when all the things He had mentioned are totally executed according to His expectations, perfectly fulfilled to His satisfaction, THEN THAT "GENERATION" WILL PASS AWAY, and ONLY THOSE OF "THE REGENERATION" SHALL FILL THE EARTH! Praise God! This is personally taking place NOW in a "firstfruits" people, who are experiencing a purging of Adam's identity from their "earthen vessels"; but will ultimately be the state of the entire earth! Christ is "replenishing the earth with His Own Kind", as the wicked are taken away (Psa. 37, Prov. 10:30; 2:21-22; Isa. 13:9; etc.)! This is the salvation Peter said was "ready to be revealed in the last time" (I Pet. 1:5); and the hope Paul spoke of: "Even as we have borne THE IMAGE OF THE EARTHLY, we shall also bear THE IMAGE OF THE HEAVENLY" (I Cor. 15:49)! Then, not only will "the old man" be dead, but his lineal "expressions" in the earth will cease to be! His "posterity" will be completely cut off, "the ax laid to the root of the tree", so that his NAME (nature) will not be remembered, nor come into mind! Hallelujah!

Let's go back to our narrative. When John received his highly unusual visitation, he was actually in three places: PHYSICALLY~ he was in the isolated "isle which is called Patmos". He was cut off, on the most part, from fellowship with the saints. EMOTIONALLY, we may say that he was "in tribulation". But SPIRITUALLY, he was "in the Kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ..." (1:9)! If you can identify with John, you know that just being "in the Kingdom" compensates for anything else we may have to experience!

As we read this passage, however, the Spirit magnified the word "patience" to our attention. This particular word is used SEVEN TIMES throughout the Revelation (1:9; 2:2; 2:3; 2:19; 3:10; 13:10; & 14:12), and means, "CHEERFUL ENDURANCE; PATIENT CONTINUANCE; FORTITUDE; PERSEVERANCE: to stay under, undergo, or bear trials"! This is an excellent description of John; and it is the perfect definition of THE ATTITUDE OF AN OVERCOMER! For he is not one who merely ENDURES great testings and trials "for the word of the Lord, and the testimony of Jesus", but has come to bear them CHEERFULLY! IN EVERYTHING he gives THANKS, patiently partaking with "eucharistos" the provisions set before him! He has learned the secret that whenever he enters into a time of tribulation, Christ stands at the door knocking (Rev. 3:20); and as he immediately OPENS UP TO HIM, AND LETS HIM IN ON THE SITUATION, then Christ COMES IN TO HIM, TO SUP WITH HIM in intimate communion. The overcomer then gets to know Him "in the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death"! He discovers how important it is to lose his "identity" in Christ. And as a result of his willingness to become ONE with Him, "an entrance is ministered unto (him) abundantly into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (II Pet. 1:10-11)! This is His way of escape... the avenue into the Wedding Chamber! Praise God! With every challenge comes a victory; and with every victory, there comes a new dimension of dominion, and an ascending upward "from glory to glory", until finally, we are made to sit with Christ in HIS THRONE (Rev. 3:21)! But keep in mind it takes AN "OPENNESS" TO CHRIST on our part, before a

"door of hope" is opened to us! He must be allowed to share the sufferings with us, if we are to share in the glory with Him!

Another thing that becomes obvious from the scripture under consideration (as well as the nature of the entire book) is that TRIBULATION IS, AND ALWAYS HAS BEEN INEVITABLE FOR THE BELIEVER. It is one of God's means of transforming us from HARLOTRY TO VIRGINITY! If there is anything to the present relativity of Revelation, this one indisputable fact stands out! It was not peculiar to the first century saints, and it will not be negated by the last. It stands to reason that as "iniquity abounds", and conditions grow darker and darker in this present evil world, persecution shall increase, and tribulation will surely intensify. BELOVED, WE ARE GOING TO GO THROUGH GREAT TRIBULATION; but in doing so, we shall wash our "robes", and make them white in the blood of the Lamb (7:13-14)! This shall produce a purified people, who are perfectly prepared for the "Marriage of the Lamb"! The idea that the Lord would "rapture" His Church before tribulation begins would be in contradiction to His own prayer: "I pray NOT that Thou shouldest take them OUT OF THE WORLD, but KEEP THEM FROM THE EVIL" (Jn. 17:15). Tying this in with what He had previously said, "IN THE WORLD YE SHALL HAVE TRIBULATION; but be of good cheer; I HAVE OVERCOME THE WORLD" (Jn. 16:33), it should be clear to any thinking person that He intended to leave His own IN THE WORLD... A WORLD WHERE THEY WOULD DEFINITELY HAVE TRIBULATION. But they could be of good cheer; because as He had overcome the world, IN HIM they could do the same! They were not without hope! And lest anyone should say that this prayer was solely and specifically offered in behalf of His disciples, He further petitioned, "Neither pray I for these alone, but FOR THEM ALSO WHICH SHALL BELIEVE ON ME THROUGH THEIR WORD; that they all may be one..." (vs. 20-21)! There is that certain affinity between all "companions in tribulation"! The fact of the matter is, TRIBULATION HAS ALREADY BEGUN around the world; which in and of itself should be proof enough that this "pretribulational airlift" idea is faulty (try preaching it to the saints in China, or Somalia, or Kosovo)! To be sure, it is a western message, preached from the pulpits of "Babylon", wholly fashioned to appeal to the leisurely "American" church crowd, who have been taught to believe that God is somehow a respecter of persons! If the "great escape" is to precede "great tribulation", then obviously God must be behind schedule!

Let us reiterate; the thought of tribulation should not cause us to panic, or be afraid; for "God has NOT appointed us unto WRATH, but TO OBTAIN SALVATION by our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Thess. 5:9)! His eternal purpose is not to destroy us, as an appointment to wrath, but to perfect us! And while there may be stubborn, rebellious, deep-seated areas in our lives which require a pouring out of "the vials of wrath" (in order to bring us back into fellowship with Him), He will see to it that we ultimately obtain SALVATION TO THE UTTERMOST! This is our divine appointment! "For when Thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness" (Isa.26:9)!

We read in I Cor. 10:13, "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who hath promised, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye

are able, but will with the temptation also make a way of escape, that ye might be able to bear it"! The words "tempted" and "temptation" (# 3985 & 3986) carry the meanings of: *"to test, try, or endeavor; to scrutinize, examine, or discipline; A PUTTING TO PROOF (BY EXPERIMENT OF GOOD, AND EXPERIENCE OF EVIL); ADVERSITY"*. Of a truth, God is proving us, trying us, and experimentally testing us FOR GOOD... through our exposure TO and experience WITH EVIL. However, He carefully monitors the effects, scrutinizing the reactions, so that we are not called upon to endure more than our capacity permits, BEFORE HE FAITHFULLY MAKES A "WAY OF ESCAPE"! His supply is ALWAYS right on time, in direct proportion to the need! Please notice, beloved, He never promised us an escape route, in the sense of removing us from our trying situation, or evacuating us from our tribulation. This "door of hope" He offers is not an exit out of our trial, but a means by which WE ARE ENABLED TO BEAR IT! As we have previously stated, it is "CHRIST IN YOU, THE HOPE OF GLORY" that puts us over, that takes us through! As we accept the strength of the Lord, "the power of HIS might", His indwelling Spirit empowers us to "withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand" (Eph. 6:10, 13)! Therefore, we are without excuse! When we come to the end of our strength, His is more than sufficient to meet the demand; and He makes Himself available to all who will open themselves to Him! Hallelujah! We are able "to do ALL THINGS through Christ which strengtheneth us" (Phil. 4:13)!

We would point out that the entire book of Revelation is structured around the Throne; as a matter of fact, it's mentioned FORTY SIX TIMES! This is the focal point that the letters to the seven churches conclude with in chapter 3; and this is how chapter 4 commences. As we have said, the emphasis throughout the book is primarily on THE PERSON OF CHRIST as seen in His Divinity, in the glory of the Father: "He who sits upon the Throne". But the Throne speaks of A POSITION. It is a position which reveals His DOMINION; the realm from whence HIS RIGHTEOUS RULERSHIP PRECEDES. Much could be said concerning this subject, but suffice us to say that this unquestionably shows that He is not just "the soon-coming King", as He is so often referred to; but HE IS PRESENTLY REIGNING. .. HE IS ALREADY RESIDING AS SOVEREIGN POTENTATE OF THE UNIVERSE! He is NOT in a power-struggle" anywhere, with anybody; for ALL POWER in heaven and in earth belongs to Him (Mt. 28:18)! He presently controls the forces of nature (Nah. 1:3), powers and principalities (Col. 2:10), and the destinies of men, ruling the nations with a rod of iron (Psa. 2:9)! Every activity that occurs anywhere is merely BY HIS PERMISSION... including Satan's (Job 1:6-12)! In fact, according to Rom. 13:1, "there is NO POWER but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God"! Why is it so important that we understand this? Because it gives us the blessed assurance that He will not allow ANYONE OR ANYTHING to come our way that would interfere with His plan for our lives! He has the power to stop the processing whenever He chooses, to remove the circumstances as soon as they have thoroughly and constructively served His purpose!

Were He to decide to, Christ could immediately bring an end to all human suffering; He could stop all wars, all injustices, and all things that offend. He could even annihilate the Devil, if He wanted to! But obviously, this is not His intention. His age-during objective would not be accomplished, and we would never become all that He has ordained us to

be. For the time being, He is using adversity in the world to perfect a people, to produce a company of overcomers. But thank God, we have the promise, "But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. To Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen" (I Pet. 5:1)! When He has thoroughly removed everything in us that would threaten to interfere with our eternal well-being, every hidden thing that might be hurtful or destructive to us, then the waters will settle, the roilings shall cease, and He will justify the means by the end!

Reading verse 6 from chapter 4, we find that BEFORE THE THRONE there is "A SEA OF GLASS, LIKE UNTO CRYSTAL". While the "THRONE" speaks to us of a POSITION, this "SEA OF GLASS" refers to a CONDITION. It speaks of THE STATE OF MIND Christ possesses, the sure and steadfast disposition from whence He executes His word. The fact that it is "clear as crystal" not only speaks of purity, but also that it is free from any obstructions. IT IS TRANSPARENT! It corresponds to the "brazen laver" (also known as the "molten sea") found in the Tabernacle of Moses, which was before the Ark of the Covenant, and the Mercy Seat (the "Throne"). It was the place where the priests washed themselves before approaching God. Thus we find comfort in the fact that EVERYTHING that proceeds from the Throne, "lightnings, thunderings, and voices", yea, even "the book sealed with seven seals", all come by way of THE CRYSTAL CLEAR MIND OF GOD... where there is no indecisiveness, no confusion, no obstructions, nor any such thing. There is absolutely nothing in all of His unbounded universe that can disturb His resolve, nothing that can cause so much as a ripple in His "waters"! He is perpetually the same "YESTERDAY, TODAY, AND FOREVER"! He is never surprised, shocked, or caught "off guard" by anything; He is settled, determined to perform His good work in us, and there is NOTHING that can distract Him from accomplishing "His eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord"! There is a quality of smoothness denoted in the SEA OF GLASS which speaks of "THE PEACE OF GOD, which passeth all under-standing..." (Phil. 4:7). And it is from that peaceful, confident state of mind that He goes forth to execute His total Lordship over us! HE IS OUT TO WIN ALL OF US TO HIM, so that we may experientially say, "AS HE IS, SO ARE WE IN THIS WORLD"! He has ordained to bring us through our troubled waters into that same unchangeably peaceable state!

This is where Christ begins His conquest... "conquering, and to conquer"! Note that as He approaches the Throne (in His humanity) via the "sea of glass", He does so in the meekness of "A LAMB as it had been slain" (5:6); for this is what qualifies Him "to open the book, and loose the seals thereof". He could completely identify with the process, and those so processed, having now passed through the same. HE FULLY UNDERSTOOD WHAT IT WAS LIKE. He had experienced every temptation known to man, every trial and testing sufferable. The "mark of sacrifice" was in His flesh, for He had offered Himself a living substitute for the sins of the entire world. And it is in this gentle LAMB NATURE that He initially finds His way into our hearts. Therefore, when He unveils "the revelation of the righteous judgments of God" (Rom. 2:5), He may do so in the aggressiveness of a bloodthirsty LION (5:5); but He maintains the appearance of A SLAIN LAMB! Beloved, HE WILL IN NO WISE SPARE THE FLESH; but will

exercise the utmost care not TO WOUND THE SPIRIT! He can still be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and moved with compassion at our cry! HE CAN RELATE TO US! He is ever so mindful to minister in mercy, knowing that once the LION'S work is completed, and the flesh has been consumed, He shall present unto Himself a perfected people for THE MARRIAGE OF THE LAMB!

Another point that should be considered, is that not only is there this "sea of glass" before the Throne, but also "SEVEN LAMPS OF FIRE BURNING BEFORE THE THRONE, WHICH ARE THE SEVEN SPIRITS OF GOD" (4:5). This type is repeated in the description of the Lamb, "having SEVEN HORNS AND SEVEN EYES, WHICH ARE THE SEVEN SPIRITS OF GOD SENT FORTH INTO ALL THE EARTH" (5:6). There can be no confusing what is portrayed here: it is the same SEVEN SPIRITS Isaiah referred to in describing THE FULLNESS OF GOD'S SPIRIT: "And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the spirit of WISDOM and UNDERSTANDING, the spirit of COUNSEL and MIGHT, the spirit of KNOWLEDGE and THE FEAR OF THE LORD; and He shall make Him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord: and He shall not judge after the sight of the eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of His ears: but WITH RIGHTEOUSNESS shall He JUDGE the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and He shall smite the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips shall He slay the wicked... They shall not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain: FOR THE EARTH SHALL BE FILLED WITH THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE LORD, AS THE WATERS COVER THE SEA" (Isa. 11:2-4, 9)!

There is great joy in knowing that He has spared nothing; HE HAS EMPLOYED EVERYTHING IN HIS SPIRITUAL ECONOMY TO BRING US TO OUR INTENDED DESTINY! He has sent forth THE FULLNESS OF HIS SPIRIT into all OUR "EARTH", as "tutors and governors", so to speak, to deal with and discipline us in the ways of the Kingdom; rooting out of us every negative attribute, educating us in divine principle, so that our "earthen vessels" will ultimately be "filled with the knowledge of the Lord", as thoroughly as "the waters cover the sea"! Hallelujah! We are being "groomed" for the Throne!

Beloved, this is no minor operation to Him; this project is "the apple of His eye"! He is pursuing His agenda with great energy and investment, knowing that His labors will soon pay off! And though there may be pain in the process, in the end, it will be worth it all; He shall have a comparable Bride with whom to share His most intimate feelings, and we shall have a Husband whom we have come to fully understand and appreciate! This requires maturity on our parts; but He is producing the conditions necessary to bring it to pass! "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord..."! His designs for us are glorious!

Dear saint, we mustn't be intimidated by the lying accusations of the "Dragon". . . or overwhelmed by the monstrous "beasts" which rise up out of our "earth and sea". The Traducer would distort their size, overemphasize their importance, and cause us to see only the "innumerable evils which compass us about" (Psa. 40:12). His intentions are to cast us down, to cause us to give up without a fight. We would certainly not question the

reality of their presence, or belittle their potential to destroy (for it is God who has allowed them to come to our attention); but know of a surety that GOD IS FOR US; He has not left us alone! He "who has BEGUN this good work in us", and is "working all things after the counsel of His own will", will see to it that He subdues ALL OUR ENEMIES under our feet! Yea, though "many are the afflictions of the righteous... the Lord delivereth them out of them ALL" (Psa 34:19)! Hallelujah!

to be continued...