

# **FOLLOWERS OF THE LAMB**

## **Part 2**

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## THE CLIMAX OF THE WAY OF THE LAMB

*Reading: Revelation 19:1-10.*

As we pursue our consideration of this matter of the followers of the Lamb, we come to the part which relates to the climax of that path, the climax of the way of the Lamb — the climax of the Cross. But here it becomes necessary and helpful to widen our outlook, taking in the whole compass of things. It is a well-known and often-stated fact that the book of Genesis, being the book of beginnings, contains the first intimation of everything which we find subsequently in the Word of God. We can trace back what we find in all the rest of the Scriptures to some germ in the book of Genesis: that is, the Scriptures as a whole are the opening up and the opening out, the development, of all the beginnings found in that book. The book of the Revelation, being the book of consummations, takes all that up and gathers it into itself in a spiritual way. What we have in the book of Genesis in an earthly and temporal and material way, in a typical, symbolic, prophetic way, we have in the book of the Revelation in spiritual consummation. It is therefore of very great importance to know how to interpret the book of the Revelation, and, although I am quite familiar with the attitude of opposition toward what is called spiritualizing the Scriptures, I nevertheless make bold to affirm that the book of the Revelation has got to be interpreted, if not altogether, almost altogether, spiritually, and you will be entirely in a fog unless you do so. Indeed, you will be occupied with an interminable, impossible task. This is the book of consummations of all things in a spiritual way.

What do we find in the Old Testament beginning with the

book of Genesis? We find two kingdoms coming into evidence: the kingdom of God, and a kingdom against God. As we see the development of the kingdom of God, we are able to discern that that kingdom is developing with a very definite plan, and we find that before we are at the end of the first five books it has taken very definite shape. A cameo, a microcosm, of the kingdom of God has been presented — yes, in imperfection, because it is only typical, that is, it is only a type, a figure; but its lines are capable of clear apprehension.

A country is marked out. That country has its distinct frontiers and is in its turn divided up, with inter-frontiers. The whole of that country is apportioned as an inheritance to tribes, and right at the centre — although not literally geographically so — but as the very heart and centre of the whole scheme is a city, and there is a place where God is met. Some of these parts of the kingdom, by sovereign divine appointment, are in closer proximity to the heart of things than others. Some are nearer to, some are farther from, that centre, but that centre — the place where God is — governs all. And then around that inner, special kingdom there are many other kingdoms and nations, and they are learning much from what is going on inside there, deriving a very great deal — according to their attitude, of course, whether good or evil. That is, this kingdom of God is affecting all kingdoms. Being an earthly kingdom, and being set in the conditions of a disrupted world and humanity, and this other, spiritual kingdom being also in evidence, there are both good and evil represented: that is, there are available to the nations that walk in the light thereof both good and evil. That is perfectly clear at the beginning.

But that is only a section. You pass to the next part of the Bible, into what is called the historical section, where kingship is introduced, kingship through priesthood, and you find things are beginning to take another form, come into another realm. You are passing on to a higher level of things. You are moving away from the earth, you are coming nearer heaven, and when you close that combination of kingly and prophetic movements, or when you see the close in the book of the prophet Ezekiel, you begin to see a heavenly country. The end of the prophecies of Ezekiel is a whole country reshaped as an inheritance, and

now in a new way it is the temple which governs everything, and it is the ideal temple such as has never been before or since the days of Ezekiel, a heavenly one, a spiritual one; a heavenly temple in a heavenly city in a heavenly country: for things have moved away from the earth, the earthly has been forsaken; now it is heaven. You ought to read those last chapters of Ezekiel again and note these two things — the shaping of the kingdom and the placing of the temple and the city, and then the relationship to the nations around. We just mention that — it is far too big and detailed a matter to occupy us now.

When you come to the book of the Revelation, you are right in the spiritual side of that whole kingdom of God. What I want to point out in connection with the spiritual interpretation of the book of the Revelation is this. In the first place, you have to recognize that the kingdom of God is a very great dominion, but that it is divided up into many regions. You find yourself, in different places in the book of the Revelation, in different places where the throne is governing. There is the earth and there is the heaven, but you speak about earth and heaven as though it were a duality. It is not; it is a multiplicity. There are heavens and heaven of heavens. Paul said he was caught up into the third heaven (2 Cor. 12:2). So heaven has various regions, departments, sections — upper, lower, perhaps middle.

And then you come to this remarkable thing, that the redeemed are also divided up into sections in different places. The Lord Jesus said, “In my Father’s house are many abiding-places” (John 14:2). (Get rid of that word “mansions”. There are not streets of mansions — at any rate, that is not what He referred to.) “In my Father’s house are *many* abiding-places”. There is the first heaven, second heaven, third heaven, heaven of heavens, and people are located accordingly, in relation to the throne. There is this company right in the throne. There is that company around the throne. There is another company and another. The nations, redeemed nations, on the outer circle deriving values, now not good and evil, but deriving their good from what is there in the centre. The kingdom of the heavens is plural, not singular.

## **A company in closest spiritual proximity to God**

Now you are wondering why all that. For this reason: that we are occupied now with God's fullest intention for His people, as represented in the hundred and forty-four thousand of chapter 14. God's fullest intention is to have His people as near as near can be to Himself, in the closest spiritual proximity to Himself. This matter of position, of disposition, of distinction and of inheritance is a spiritual matter. Dismiss your geographical ideas and mentality. We need not worry ourselves to try to decide where heaven is. We could spend the rest of our days trying to find where heaven is and we should not get an answer. Some have tried to tell us which of the planets is heaven, but no one has come to tell us if they are right. But you see this is a matter of spiritual proximity. It is just possible, just gloriously possible, that, wherever we are, with a very gracious visitation of the Lord, we should find ourselves in heaven without leaving our present location, and we would say — "This is just wonderful; nothing could be more glorious and blessed and perfect than this". Perhaps you have never experienced this. It is possible! Being rid of all that other encompassment and embodiment and impingement that is of the kingdom of death — we need not bother about geographical locations — we may just have a foretaste of divine glory, even in this scene and in these circumstances.

It is a matter ultimately not of going somewhere but of being something. It is not that we are not going to heaven, but mainly and primarily it is not a matter of some *place*, literally, actually. It is being in a certain state that makes heaven; and the heaven of heavens, the highest place, the most utter place, is that where God has His fullest satisfaction in a life. There is nothing that can surpass the knowledge that God is as satisfied as He can be, being God, in any life; that He has got what His heart has been set upon; and I suggest to you that that can be tested all along the way here, in measure. If you and I ever have a difficulty over God the Lord having His place or His way in relation to something very costly, something very dear to us, something that we hold very precious, that we very much would have and it is so difficult to contemplate being without it, and then we get to

the Lord after much battle and conflict and suffering and travail and we get through on that thing, there comes in such a peace and joy and rest, such a sense of the Lord, that it is a touch of glory. God has got His place, and when He gets that it is glory in the heart where He has it. Only in small ways do we prove that now. But let that be complete, final, utter, with no more conflicts, obstacles, struggles, questions, at all; the thing is all over, God has reached His full, final, consummate end: then you will sing as these people here were singing — the hundred and forty-four thousand, who were singing with such a voice that it sounded to the apostle like the sound of many waters. It is the glory of the Lord having His utter place in a people. That is the spiritual interpretation.

So forget henceforth the number one hundred and forty-four thousand in the matter of so many people singing round the throne. I am not saying that it will not be like that, but it is what it means that is the important thing, and it is just going to be the measure in which the Lord gets His satisfaction which will be the measure of our approximation to the heart of things eternally. That means it is the measure in which the Cross has accomplished its purpose, or, to use the other figure, the measure in which we have “followed the *Lamb* whithersoever He goeth”. That, in other words, means the measure in which the Lamb has overcome in our natures, in our hearts. *That* is the measure of our approximation to the centre of things eternally, and the measure of eternal glory, because it is the measure of the satisfaction of God.

### **The spiritual interpretation of the Revelation**

May I touch parenthetically upon this matter of interpreting spiritually. You must go through the book and ask yourself questions. I find myself, as a somewhat questioning kind of person, up against difficulties all the time. I see the Lamb making war and overcoming, and I see saints with Him making war and overcoming. I have asked many questions: what does that mean? I wonder what your mentality is about it. Is it a Doré Bible mentality, with pictures of all these things? You see one picture: Christ literally, personally, coming, with a sword literally in His

hand, and a whole host of saints behind, with swords, going literally to slay and make devastation and spill blood all over this earth. Is that your mentality when you read about the wars of the Lamb? Did He do that in the first days of the church? Did He overcome? Did He overcome the Roman Empire which set itself to destroy Him and His testimony in the earth? Did He come out from heaven literally with a drawn sword and angels and shedding of blood upon the earth? How did He do it?

Well, how has He ever done that sort of thing? He has been making war all through these centuries. It has been a sorry lookout for peoples who have lifted their heads against the Lamb. It is a sorry lookout for those nations today who are deliberately lifting their heads against the Lamb. Do not have any doubt about what the issue is going to be, as to what is going to be the end of the great red dragon. (That phrase, that term, has some meaning now — great *red* dragon.) Do not have any doubt. “I have set my king upon my holy hill of Zion”; “He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision” (Ps. 2:6,4). That is the position; it has been like that. If we could read the spiritual history of nations and kingdoms from Nebuchadnezzar’s day onwards, we should see the wars of the Lamb, something working mightily unto devastation, but unseen; a spiritual force at work. And these wars of the Revelation are spiritual wars. There may be an acceleration of the process, may be sudden things happening in the collapse of these opposing forces, but it will be, so far as you can see, a common explanation. You may say that this and that worked to bring it about. But you have to get to the ultimate. When you get to the ultimate, you see it is in the wars of the Lamb. You see what I mean. It is very important to get your spiritual vision of this book.

### **Overcoming in relation to God’s eternal purpose**

So we are brought here to this matter of the differences and distinctions on spiritual grounds. It is not a thing of a general character, a wider nature, that I want to say. What we have in the book of the Revelation is not something new to the New Testa-

ment, it is not really a new order of things at all. I have before pointed out that when you come to the beginning of this book and you have the messages to the seven churches in Asia, you have the risen Lord speaking to the churches that were raised up through the instrumentality of the apostle Paul. Paul was used in Asia for the bringing into being of those churches, either personally or indirectly, and it was through Paul that the full revelation of God's eternal purpose was given to the churches in Asia. Look at Ephesus, and remember that the letter to the Ephesians was not specifically for the Ephesians, but was a circular letter for Laodicea as well as Ephesus. This full revelation of God's eternal purpose in its fulness was given to those churches, and then the risen Lord comes back to those churches to bring them to judgment — for what? He is standing in the midst of the seven golden lampstands, those churches, for what purpose?

It is to deal with them on the basis of the full revelation of His eternal purpose. There are plenty of things that are less than the Lord's purpose, and while He commends everything that is good — He has to condemn much that is wrong, but He commends what is good — in effect He says, "But that is not all I revealed to you, this is not all I have shown you; I have given you to see My eternal counsels in fulness — read the letters that are in your hand. Now to judgment! Not that you are wholly and utterly bad and corrupt, not that there are lacking all signs of goodness, not that there is not something that is quite commendable about you — but what about this full revelation that has been given to you? That is the point and that is going to determine the issue". "He that overcometh..."; not just he that overcometh certain sins, faults, failures, weaknesses, but he that overcomes everything that gets in the way of full purpose. The hundred and forty-four thousand are the overcomers. And what are the overcomers? They are those who have come into the value and meaning of the whole revelation of God's eternal purpose, and they are nearest to His heart. It is a spiritual matter.

### **The marriage of the Lamb**

Does that impress you? If we do not see it in that light, I do



not think we have the key to the whole book. This book, you see, stands apart. God is dealing with everything in the light of His full revelation of eternal counsels. Then, when we have seen that, we are ready, prepared, to come to this matter which is the centremost thing of the whole book — the grand consummation, the marriage of the Lamb. It is like a mighty climax when you come to this — “And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunders, saying, Hallelujah: for the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigneth. Let us rejoice and be exceeding glad, and let us give the glory unto him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.” The marriage of the Lamb is the climax, there is nothing beyond that. God’s end is reached in the marriage of the Lamb. God’s heavenly thought about marriage is identity, such a oneness of heart and spirit and constitution that the two are one. “This mystery is great: but I speak in regard of Christ and of the church” (Eph. 5:32). It is oneness, utter oneness, with Him as the Lamb. She has come to such identity with Himself. She is like Him, she answers to Him in every way. When that end is reached there will be the supreme “Hallelujah” in heaven, for the Lord will find the satisfaction toward which He has been working all along — “*His wife hath made herself ready*”.

How? “*It was given unto her that she should array herself in fine linen, bright and pure: for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints*” (Rev. 19:8). This is something far ahead of imputed righteousness. Imputed righteousness is for every believer. It is only another phrase for justification by faith. But this is something as to character, as to transformation, as to something inwrought, the practical side of righteousness in the life: “the righteous acts of the saints”. It is conformity to His image. *That is the bride, the wife of the Lamb, and when the Lord gets that, He is satisfied; He is satisfied indeed, and all heaven is satisfied.*

### **The bride’s love for the Lamb**

There are, as has been mentioned, approximations to that represented by different companies in different positions in re-

lation to the centre and heart. This one is nearest, that one is not so near, and the other is still less near, and it is all a matter of the measure of Christ as the Lamb. That is, of course, just a statement of truth. But do note that this discrimination is not an arbitrary one. It is not just that God sovereignly appoints that it shall be so, and that if you are meant to be of the hundred and forty-four thousand group you will be because you are meant to be, and if you are not meant to be it is no use your trying to be — you never will be. It is not like that at all. When you come to the question of the Lamb and His bride it is all a love matter. It corresponds to chapter 12, the great red dragon, the woman and the man child, the man child caught up to heaven, and the great declaration — “And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb, and because of the word of their testimony; and they loved not their life even unto death”; they loved not their own souls unto the death. *For Him* they loved not their own souls unto the death. It is a love matter, and you know you cannot force love, you cannot compel love, you have to leave love alone, and if it is not love you can do nothing about it. But if it is, well, it is spontaneous and it will go all the way; it is a love matter. And so it is here. *The bride* — it is just this whole question of love for the Lord and how far it will take us, how strong and deep that love for the Lord is, and whether we will just follow Him to the measure of love, unconstrained, uncompelled love, spontaneous devotion to our Lord; self-forgetting, self-denying, self-yielding; all of self being set aside *for Him*.

Do you not feel that this is something that we must face in a new way? We are so continually weighing things up in the light of how they affect us. We are so governed by the effect that situations and circumstances have upon us and our interests. It is really the root of most of our trouble, if not of all of it. We are so earthbound, so time-bound; this life does mean so very much to us, this world does mean so very much to us. Heaven and eternity are not as real as this world is. If only we could get the heavenly vision and the heavenly sense! If only it could really take hold of us that eternity is real, that everything is as real in eternity and in heaven as it is here, and far more so, just as spiritual things can be more real than temporal things even now. If only we could get the sense of that, would we not be more

ready to let go — to let go those things which take such a large place with us here, in this life; should we not be much more prepared to let them go? It is a matter, after all, of heart-relationship to the Lord, and that is what the Lord is trying to work to all the time, to get us there. Every conflict, every battle that we come into, is really circling round one issue, if we recognized it. Right at the heart of everything is this question of love for the Lord, whether we are going on with the Lord. It is like that.

We have said that this is not some new issue in the book of the Revelation. We are right back in the rest of the Bible, and we are particularly back in those letters of Paul. At the end it is a matter of having reached those counsels, those purposes of God from eternity which are revealed in the letters of Paul. Then, when these have been revealed in the first chapters of the letter to the Ephesians, when we have been taken back there and shown the greatness of God's purpose concerning this elect people, Paul goes on, not in a sense of an anticlimax but as so much a part of the whole: "Walk worthily of the calling wherewith ye were called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love". Is not that the Lamb coming in there? Is not that walking in the way of the Lamb in relation to the eternal purpose? It is so clear. "With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love."

Now do you see the three movements? There is the revelation of the purpose in chapters 1, 2 and 3 of Ephesians. There is the walk according to the Lamb. Where do you arrive at the end of the letter? "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself up for it; that he might sanctify it, having cleansed it by the washing of water with the word, that he might present the church to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing." "The marriage of the Lamb is come." That is only saying in figurative language that God has reached that purpose in a company who have gone the way of the Lamb, walked the way of the Lamb, followed the Lamb, and now they are presented to the Lamb as His bride. "The marriage of the Lamb is come."

And that, may I say again, is the explanation of the particular pains that God takes. It may sound a frightening thing to

say that the more we love the Lord the deeper will He take us, the more utter you mean to be for God the more utter will He require you to be. It is like that; that is a fact: and He takes infinite pains with those whose hearts are really set upon Him; He spares them nothing, He works very deeply and very intensely. He has His opportunity when we say that we mean to be all for Him, but do not let us think that the measure of our devotion to the Lord is going to be the measure of His delivering us from trouble. It will work out the other way. All through it has been like that. The most devoted to the Lord have been the greatest sufferers, but God is taking pains. This ought not to discourage us; it ought to explain to us a great deal. If the Lord really gets hold of us, He is going to do a very deep, thorough work, and we shall have an unusual experience of the way of the Cross, the way of the Lamb. It will be applied at all points, but the issue — nearness to His throne. The issue is that which satisfies Him most and serves His interests most, for out from that, as we may see later, is fulfilled a marvellous vocation to all regions through eternal ages.

## THE GOVERNMENT OF LOVE

*Reading: Revelation 21 and 22.*

We have now reached the end, with this symbolic or pictorial presentation of what constitutes God's end: and it is surely very impressive, and a very significant thing, that, as we come to the end and are given to see the city, the phrase "the Lamb" touches everything. Seven times in connection with the city that phrase occurs. Everything is based upon the Lamb. The Lamb gives character and meaning to everything. When the angel said, "Come hither", he might just as well have said, "I will show you the Lamb"; for it is all the fruit of the Lamb, and that sums up everything in the Bible. As we have been seeing, the Lamb reaches right back to what God purposed and intended — a people answering to the heart and mind of God — and the Lamb has secured it. Here it is, secured, and this is what it is like. That people is here represented as "the holy city, new Jerusalem", and identified as "the Lamb's wife" — such a mixture of similes that we are compelled to draw back, and say, "Well, it can only mean that that people is characterized by two things in one: the city ever and always stands for government, the seat of government; the wife, according to God's mind, always stands for love: put those two things together and you have the sum of the whole history — it is the government of love." And that is the meaning of the Lamb, the Lamb of God.

Then that inclusive truth, the government of love, is analysed for us, in the sevenfold reference to the Lamb. Without anything like a full or exhaustive study of the content, we just light upon a single point in each reference.

## The foundation and wall of love

You notice, then, to begin with, the first mention of the Lamb after being presented in connection with the bride — that is, after the statement, “I will show thee the bride, the wife of the Lamb”. The first reference to the Lamb after that comes in verse 14: “And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb”. I am not going to touch upon the phrase “the apostles of the Lamb”. The foundations bear the inscription of the Lamb. But what is this wall? What does it stand for? Well, many of you know quite well that a wall is that which includes and excludes and declares that within this demarcation a certain state of things obtains, while a different state of things obtains without. We speak of it as a “testimony”, the wall of testimony. Here is a “wall great and high”, and when you look at the dimensions of this city wall, you find that it is very great in extent, as well as in height. It just speaks of the fulness of Christ in terms of love. It is a big area — there is a lot inside; and it surely does correspond, as we were saying in our previous meditation, to Paul’s words in his Ephesian letter (3:17-19) — “That ye... may be strong to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge” — “the knowledge-surpassing love of Christ”. That is the wall — “the knowledge-surpassing love of Christ”. This people, then, to pass from the typology and symbolism and imagery — this people, this redeemed people, is the embodiment of the knowledge-surpassing love of Christ.

The length: it takes us back to eternity past, to the Beloved of the Father — so beloved that the Father gave Him a mighty inheritance: through Him, by Him, unto Him, were to be all things created (Rom. 11:36; Col. 1: 16). He, says the apostle, was “heir of all things” (Heb. 1:2). The Beloved; the first-begotten of the Father; the heir of all things — “that he might fill all things” (Eph. 4:10); and the purpose was to sum up all things in Christ. That is the measure of the Father’s love for the Son. The Father speaks of Him as “My beloved Son”. All the mighty vast extent of the love of God is centred in Christ. That is the length of it — from eternity to eternity. And then “his

grace, which he freely bestowed on us *in the Beloved*” (Eph. 1:6); that is, He made us heirs of that same love, so that the very love which He has for His Son is transferred to us. We were “chosen in him before the foundation of the world”, and on into the ages of the ages to come. That is the length of His love.

Its depth is seen in its being redeeming love — cutting deep down under and beneath the uttermost iniquity.

The height — “and hath seated us together with him in the heavenlies” (Eph. 2:6).

And the breadth — “Whosoever”: “...his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life”.

You see the mighty, all-embracing love of Christ — and at last there is a people found in that. The foundation of everything is the Lamb, as embodying God’s great, redeeming love, and in the end there will be this great testimony to the greatness of God’s love. It is a strong foundation. Sometimes you may be tempted to despair — and well might we despair of ourselves; and perhaps we might despair of others too. Sometimes we might wonder if ever we shall get through and come out at the end all right. Many questions, indeed, arise in us, forced up by the power that is against us, the strength of everything, of all that we have to meet both within and without. Yes, it is tremendously strong, but His love is stronger. There is a foundation here that cannot be shaken. It is mighty redeeming love, as suggested by this very name — the Lamb: a mighty foundation. Well, if we are there at last in the city — and do not objectify that: we *are* the city, by grace — if we are components of that, we shall never be able for one moment to say anything about it but: Oh, the strength of His love! It is a deep and mighty foundation. That is very simple, but very blessed. It is the beginning.

### **His cleansing love**

And then you notice in verse 27 — “There shall in no wise enter into it anything unclean, or he that maketh an abomination and a lie: but only they that are written in the Lamb’s book of life”. Leave the last word for a minute and get the value of the other. Here is access into the city, or having a place in this: and

how do we have a place? Yes, by His love — but oh, by His *cleansing* love! Really there is nothing that can cleanse and purify more mightily than true love. The Lord is dealing with us in chastening, yes, disciplinary suffering, but we are told quite definitely that it is because He loves us. And here His love must work in a cleansing way. You notice that these are the things that are not according to the Lamb — unclean, abomination, lie. These are the things that the Lamb of God destroyed. The “unclean” — He is a Lamb without spot and without blemish. He destroys in Himself everything unclean and unholy; and by His mighty, mighty work of the Cross He will present this Bride to Himself “not having spot or blemish or any such thing”. — “Abomination”: that is a word that would take us through a very great deal of the Bible, and we dare not stay at the moment with it. It is that which God abhors: an abomination to God. What is it? If pride is an abomination to God, if pride was the thing that commenced all the mischief — when pride was found in Lucifer’s heart and all the trouble came from that proud conception — we can understand that pride is the root-sin and that everything of pride is an abomination to God. And the Lamb is just the opposite — emptied of all self, all pride. You find the Lamb is the synonym for meekness, not pride. He by His own blood would purge us of that abominable thing. — “That maketh a lie”: yes, it was a lie that started the course of iniquity from the “liar from the beginning”. Everything untrue, everything false, everything that is not absolutely clear and transparent, open, capable of standing the searching eyes of Him whose eyes are as a flame of fire: all that is dealt with by the Lamb. A state of purity is brought about. “Having the glory of God: her light was like unto a stone most precious, as it were a jasper stone, clear as crystal”; absolutely clear.

So then, this access, this franchise of the city, this right to be there, comes by the sanctifying work, the continuous cleansing, of His precious Blood, and the deepening application of His Cross to all that falsehood and pride and uncleanness that there is in us. It is His sanctifying love.



## Life from the throne

*“He showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb” (Rev. 22:1).* Life from the throne. What throne is this? It is of God, yes, and of the Lamb. We have seen through the pages of the book of the Revelation the Lamb in the midst of the throne; the Lamb as the centre of worship, of adoration; the Lamb in the place of supremacy, of dominion. What is this supremacy?

We are dealing with principles, not with figures. Sometimes the figurative and symbolic gets in our way. We cannot help getting a certain kind of mentality which visualizes things. It would be ridiculous to literalize here. To talk about a wife being a city and a city being a wife is absurd. But, you see, you are dealing with principles, and here you have a throne, which speaks of government, dominion, power, authority, victory; and life coming out of that — life coming from the victory of the Lamb.

How can I make that helpful? Perhaps in this way. We are concerned in these meditations with the followers of the Lamb, those who “follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth”. This means that, if we in fellowship with Christ are baptized into His death, as an experience, not once nor twice, but ever more deeply, so that there is being brought about a continuous decrease of ourselves, in painful death-experiences of many kinds, in order that we may know the power of His resurrection proportionately, that is bringing us into a place of great strength, great power, great authority. This power of His resurrection, working in life triumphant over death, does put us in a strong place. If you know what it is to be taken into a very desperate situation where, but for God, it is the end, it is death, and then God comes with the power of resurrection, you have a tremendously strong position. You are able to say, “Now I know: this is no theory with me, no fiction, no mere doctrine: I know beyond any question the power of His resurrection, the power of His life as triumphant over death”. That is governmental. You can never govern in a really spiritual way by just having a doctrine of resurrection. It does not bring you personally into any place of power to believe in resurrection as a matter of truth, but go

through it, know it in your own experience through desperate situations, and you are established. That is the principle of the throne — coming to know life as triumphant.

You will recall that Ezekiel saw this river — and wherever that river came, death was overcome, life triumphed. Right down even to the Dead Sea, wherever the river came everything lived. It is the mighty power of life, His life, the life of the Lamb imparted to us, a tremendous thing. Simple as a statement, but not simple when it comes to going through the experience to know it. But it is a very powerful position to be in when you are able to say to other people, “Look here, I have been in your desperate plight; I have more than once been in the place where it seemed to me to be an utter end; and I have known the coming in of the Lord to bring me right up out of that, right back into life”. That is a powerful position to be in. It will have very great influence and weight, be of the greatest value. The river comes out of the throne, and it is the throne of the Lamb; that is, it is the government of a life laid down and raised again. I am only talking about the rest of the New Testament. God raised Him from the dead, and that is something you cannot get over, that is a mighty thing, that is the impact of the throne. *“I am ... the Living one; and I became dead, and behold, I am alive unto the ages of the ages, and I have the keys of death and of Hades”* (Rev. 1:17,18, R.V.M.). That is the throne, authority in the power of resurrection life, and that is found here in the people at the end, a mighty thing that God is doing now.

### **Light through suffering**

Then we pass back again to chapter 21:23 — *“And the city hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine upon it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the lamp thereof is the Lamb”*; the margin says, “and the Lamb, the lamp thereof”. It does not matter which way you put it; it means the same. What we have said about life is also true about light. Light is a governmental thing, it governs. But what is meant here is that you come into light through suffering. You come to possess light and radiate light by way of the Cross. “The Lamb is the lamp”. Light

is not a mental thing: that is to say, it is not just a matter of having a store of mental knowledge. That is not light. It is possible to have an enormous amount of doctrine and truth and never be luminaries, that is, never register impact upon darkness. Real light is experimental: that is to say, it is the fruit of experience, the experience of suffering.

How have you children of God come to know what you do know of the Lord, that real kind of knowledge of the Lord which is so precious to us, which means so much and which makes you in that measure of value to others? It is through suffering, it is through the difficult way the Lord has led you, it is through the work of the Cross that He has wrought in you. "The Lamb is the lamp" — suffering leading to knowledge, to light, to understanding. It is the only way. These people at the end will be in the good of a great and wonderful revelation which has come by their fellowship with Christ in His sufferings. It is very true. It may not be too comforting from one standpoint, but it is true; and it ought to help us to realise this: that the Lord, in the way in which He is dealing with us, in the sufferings which He allows to come upon us, is really seeking our education, that we may have a knowledge of Himself which can only come that way, and which is a peculiar kind of knowledge of tremendous value to us and through us to others. We do not learn in any other way. It is the Lamb, always the Lamb-principle, the way of suffering and sacrifice and self-emptying, that brings us into the knowledge of the Lord. "The Lamb is the lamp thereof"; and, just as it is deeper death unto fuller life, so it may often be deeper darkness unto fuller light.

The Lord seems to lead us in a way where we are less and less able naturally to understand Him. He gets us altogether out of our natural capacity, beyond our capacity for interpreting His ways. We just do not know what the Lord is doing, or why He is doing what He is doing; yet it is the way by which we come to a very real kind of inward knowledge of Himself. It may not be capable of explanation in words to anybody, but we know, somehow or other we know, and that is a mighty thing, a mighty power of knowledge. It is light through the Cross.

## **The wife of the Lamb**

*“Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the wife of the Lamb”* (Rev. 21:9). These people answering at last to God’s deepest desire and fullest intention must be a people in the good of the preciousness of Christ. I think that is what is meant by the wife of the Lamb. Peter puts it this way: “For you therefore that believe is the preciousness” (1 Peter 2:7) — the old version is, “he is precious” — the preciousness of Christ, an apprehension of how Christ is to be desired above all others. And this preciousness has been wrought inwardly. He has, indeed, seen a preciousness in her — “Christ... loved the church, and gave himself up for it” (Eph. 5:25) — preciousness as of a pearl of great price. But somehow or other with these people that has been turned the other way, and they have come to such an appreciation of His love for them that He has become endeared to them unto an uttermost abandonment to Him. “For this cause” — and this is the heavenly law of marriage — “for this cause” to leave everything else for the one, means just this: such an apprehension of the preciousness of Christ that all is for Him, with no reserve whatsoever. That is the principle of the wife. What the Lord would seek to produce in us, in growing measure, is that apprehension of His value which draws us out to Himself ever more deeply and fully, in this wonderful relationship of unre-served abandonment to Him as our Lord.

## **The Lamb the temple**

*“And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God the Almighty, and the Lamb, are the temple ihereof”* (Rev. 21:22). What is a temple for? Well, the temple is the immediate seat of God, just where you expect to find God — and the Lamb is the temple. We shall find God in Christ crucified, Christ offered for us, Christ our Lamb. It is in Him as such that we shall ever meet the Lord. There are many people who are trying to find God without and apart from Jesus Christ crucified, and they cannot do it and they never will. Oh, what pathetic and tragic cases there are like that. We have heard them. “Yes, I believe in God; I pray to God”. “What does that mean to you?” “Oh, well, it

means a lot to me to believe that God is; it helps me to think about God”. “But what is the effect in your character? Does that really mean victory over sin, does it really mean salvation?” “Oh, now you are talking about things that I do not know anything about”. “Where does God’s Son come in, and His work on the Cross — His atonement for sin?” “Oh, no, I cannot accept that”. And so, with all their believing in God, they are walking either in the darkness or in the shadows; for there is no way to God but by Christ crucified. You will never come to God’s end in any other way. He is the one in whom alone you will find God. Christ crucified, Christ your atonement, your sacrifice: that is the meeting place of God with your heart and of your heart with God. God’s place is there. “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself” (2 Cor. 5:19); and you will never find God or reconciliation anywhere else. These people are the ones who have found God, and they have found Him in Christ and they know that the Lamb is the temple.

### **The throne of the Lamb**

*“And there shall be no curse any more: and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be therein” (Rev. 22:3).* We have spoken about the throne and what it means — governing; but, again, how far-reaching and comprehensive is this truth, that it is Christ crucified who solves all problems, who really governs all the situations. We are carried back to Paul’s letter to the Corinthians, back, indeed, to that terrible situation amongst the believers in Corinth. What a deplorable state of things existed there. It was a condition that might take the heart out of any man. You might say, “How can we handle a situation like this? How can this be cleared up?” And Paul had to sit down with the whole situation and think it out and pray it over, and then he arrived at one conclusion. *“I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified” (1 Cor. 2:2).* Then see how he applies that. He applies Christ crucified to their divisions, to their lawsuits, and to the whole situation, and then he resolves it all into one word — love (1 Cor. 13). That can solve it, and that will solve it. Every problem, every situation, can be cleared up by that love of God in Christ Jesus expressed

in the Cross. Yes, the Cross governs. It is the throne.

When we have said all that, and it is only so very little, what do we arrive at as the ultimate meaning? I think it is in verse 24 of chapter 21. "*And the nations shall walk amidst the light thereof: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory into it*". Here we have the secret and principle of service. (And do remember that, when you are dealing with principles, you are not dealing with past, present and future. This picture must not be wholly referred to the future. All this must not be regarded merely as something yet to come. The consummation may be future, but the principles are eternal, they are always present.) The principles of service, of others being ministered to, others deriving profit and benefit — is that it is only possible as the Lord's people are in fellowship with the Lamb *as the Lamb*: that is, in fellowship with Him in His sufferings, in the way of His Cross. That is the only way to be of value to anyone else. You can never really serve other people's spiritual life by study, by the accumulation of knowledge, or by any technical means whatever. The measure in which other people are benefited or helped by you will be just the measure in which you know the Lamb-life, the way of the Cross.

And again I come back to this that has been said so often in these studies. It will be the measure in which we follow the Lamb, as the *Lamb*, and what that word means in all its content, that will be the measure of our present and eternal value to God in others — just that measure. Therefore, if the Lord seems to be taking you more than ordinarily into sufferings; if it does seem that yours is an unusually hard way, and the Lord's hand seems to be very heavily upon you: do interpret in the light of this ultimate issue in the whole book of God, that others are to get benefit, others are to come into some good through the way He is taking you.

That really is the way of service. The principle of service is suffering: you cannot get away from it. And the measure of value is the measure of your fellowship with Him in His sufferings. I repeat, that we cannot get away from this — it is true. Perhaps some are now able to recognize this, and to see quite clearly that, if the Lord has been able to use them, it has been because of the deep way in which He has led them — and that is

the justification of it. It is the Lamb everywhere, stamped upon everything, and ultimately it works out in value. “The nations ... walk by the light thereof”: they derive their value from this thing which, wherever you look, from circumference to centre, has the Lamb on it. God is going to impress and stamp His people with the Lamb, and so He will secure that instrument, that vessel, that channel of universal blessing, upon which He has set His heart.