

Helping Our Children Learn to Explain the Future Part I

**Growing Godly Family Series
Manual 35**

By

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Growing Godly Families Series

This series of manuals is the result of a series of weekly e-mail topics that have been prepared and e-mailed over a period of years. They originally started out as a one page topic that gradually grew to the point where most topics are about three pages in length.

This series is especially designed for those who are already Christian leaders to give them Biblical principles for the development of godly physical and spiritual families. Because they give Biblical principles for developing godly families, they are also helpful for new Christians that want to grow and become godly families.

Mark 10:43-45 says, "Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." In these verses Christ taught that godly spiritual leaders do not have the attitudes of leaders in the world. Worldly leadership is based on power and authority and is designed to benefit the leader and place him above others. In contrast, godly spiritual leadership is designed to help every Christian reach their full potential in Christ. The following three statements give a summary of three styles of leadership. The purpose of this series is to help every family develop their full potential as godly families.

If we drive people, we will drive them until they can get out of our way.

If we lead people, we will be able to lead them as far as we have gone ourselves.

If we serve people, we will help each person develop their full God given potential and equip each person for the ministry that Christ has prepared for every Christian.

In the world people often measure success by the amount of things that they accumulate in this world before they die. However, they are unable to take any of those things with them when they die. Mark 8:36-37 says, "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" Success produces rewards until we die but it produces nothing for eternity.

In contrast, God measures effectiveness by our faithfulness and obedience. Matthew 6:19-21 says, "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." Effectiveness produces eternal rewards. Mark 10:29-30 says, "So Jesus answered and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel's, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time--houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions--and in the age to come, eternal life." I Corinthians 10:31 says, "Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." The Growing Godly Families Series is designed to help your family life count for eternity by bringing glory to God.

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1.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

In this topic we are beginning a new series of topics on the future from the book of Revelation. Our desire is to help you learn to explain to your physical and spiritual children what the book of Revelation teaches about the future. In the first two chapters of Genesis we see what life was like before there was sin on the earth. In the last two chapters of Revelation we will see what life is like when there is no more sin.

Revelation 1:1-2 says, “The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified *it* by His angel to His servant John, who bore witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, to all things that he saw.” The word translated “revelation” means to reveal something that has previously been unknown or hidden. This means that in this book God has chosen to show followers of Christ things that were previously unknown. We also see that God has chosen to reveal these things to His servants and not to every person. As a result, many people cannot understand what this book teaches because they are not followers of Christ and many become fearful instead of seeing the glory of Christ. Christ came the first time to die for sin. He will come the second time to rule over the earth for one thousand years in all of His glory.

We see that the things that are revealed about Christ and future events will be fulfilled soon. Christ said in Revelation 22:12-13, “And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward *is* with Me, to give to every one according to his work. I am the Alpha and the Omega, *the* Beginning and *the* End, the First and the Last.” We see that Christ is coming quickly so that He can reward everyone according to his work. The Lord sent an angel to bring this message to John. The angel was to explain what would happen in the future so that John could write these things in a book. We see that John was to give witness of three things as He wrote this book.

First, John was to bear witness to the Word of God. When John wrote the book of John he was an eyewitness of most of the things that are written in that book. In contrast, the things written in the book of Revelation were revealed to him by the angel because he did not see these things because most of them are still future. The word translated “bear witness” means to be a witness or to know because it was taught by divine revelation or inspiration. II Peter 1:19-21 says, “And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke *as they were* moved by the Holy Spirit.” In this case John was given revelation from God revealed to John through the ministry of the angel.

Second, John was to bear witness to the testimony of Jesus Christ. John had spent most of his life telling others about the teaching, suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. However, we see that John was given a picture of Christ as He moves among the churches in all of His glory. Third, John was to bear witness of the things that he saw. The things that John saw are defined in Revelation 1:19 where we read, “Write the things which you have seen, and

the things which are, and the things which will take place after this.” The things that John had seen and which he wrote in chapters one through three. The things which will be in the future are the things that John wrote about in the rest of the book of Revelation.

John went on to talk about those who will be blessed. Revelation 1:3 says, “Blessed *is* he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time *is* near.” In this verse we see how all Christians including ourselves can be blessed. First, we see that we will be blessed as we read the words of this prophecy. Acts 15:21 says, “For Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath.” The people had heard the books written by Moses and also the prophets but they had not understood. In II Corinthians 3:14-16 we read, “But their minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the *veil* is taken away in Christ. But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart. Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.” Most of the people could not understand the Scriptures because they lacked spiritual life. In contrast, the Holy Spirit can give understanding to every true Christian.

Second, we see that those who hear of the words of this prophecy will be blessed. The word translated “hear” means to hear so that there is understanding. II John 1:6 says, “This is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, that as you have heard from the beginning, you should walk in it.” In this verse we see that God wants us to hear so that there is understanding and obedience to this command. Third, the word translated “keep” means to attend to carefully and to keep or obey. Paul illustrated the meaning of this word when he said in II Timothy 4:7-8, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.” Paul could look forward to the reward because he had carefully obeyed the Lord.

Revelation 1:4-6 goes on to say, “John, to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him *be* glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.” In these verses we see the prayer of John for the readers of this book. We see that the original readers were the seven churches which are in Asia (today this would be the western part of the country of Turkey).

The word translated “grace” means the kindness shown to us by God that brings us joy because of the salvation that has been given to us as a free gift. The word translated “peace” speaks of the inner peace that we have because of the right relationship that we have with the Lord and with others. First, this peace comes from the Father (the One who is and was and is to come. Second, this peace comes from the Holy Spirit. His sevenfold ministry is described in Isaiah 11:2 where we read, “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 of the fear of the LORD.” Third, this peace comes from Jesus Christ. Christ said in John 14:26-27, “But the

Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you. Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” This peace is a peace that passes all human understanding. In this verse we see that this peace comes from all three members of the Trinity.

We also see that these verses tell us five things about Christ. First, Christ is the faithful witness. Hebrews 2:1-3 says, “Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus, who was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also *was faithful* in all His house. For this One has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as He who built the house has more honor than the house.” Christ is the faithful witness to the Father. Second, Christ is the firstborn from the dead. Christ was the first to receive a resurrection body that will last for eternity. Because Christ has defeated death He will also give us new bodies that will last for eternity. I Corinthians 15:54 says, “So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.”

Third, Christ is the ruler over the kings of the earth. In Matthew 28:18 we read, “And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. This authority includes authority over all of the kings of the earth. Fourth, Christ is the One who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood. Revelation 5:9 says, “And they sang a new song, saying: ‘You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation. We see that it is the blood of Christ that has redeemed to God so that we become His children. Fifth, Christ made us kings and priests to His God and Father. Revelation 5:10 says, “And have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth.” We will one day rule with Christ. In addition, as priests we can enter into the presence of the Father through Christ to bring our requests to Him.

We see that all glory and dominion belongs to Christ forever and ever. Glory is the honor resulting from a good opinion. I Corinthians 10:31 says, “Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” As Christians, we are called to do all that we do in a way that will bring glory to the Lord. Dominion speaks of the strength or power with which one rules. In Matthew 28:18 we read, “And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.’” Here in Revelation we see that the authority that has been given to Christ will last forever. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to bring glory to Christ and recognize His authority in all that that they say and do. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children by your example how to bring glory to Christ.

2.

Christ is the Beginning and the End

In our last topic we saw that we want to show our physical and spiritual children by our example how to bring glory to Christ in all that they say and do. We also saw that all dominion belongs to Christ. In this topic we will see that Christ is the One who is the Beginning and the End.

In Revelation 1:7-8 we read, “Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen. ‘I am the Alpha and the Omega, *the Beginning and the End,*’ says the Lord, ‘who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.’” As we read these verses we see that they are talking about the Second Coming of Christ to rule on this earth. This is not the rapture of the church which will happen at the end of the church age which concludes at the end of chapter three. The Christians will see Christ at that time. That time will happen very suddenly but only involve the Christians. I Corinthians 15:51-52 says, “Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.”

In contrast, this verse says that Christ is coming in the clouds and every eye will see Him. This time is described in Revelation 19:11-13 where we read, “Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him *was* called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes *were* like a flame of fire, and on His head *were* many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. He *was* clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God.” Then Zechariah 14:3-5 adds, “Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations, as He fights in the day of battle. And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, from east to west, *making* a very large valley; half of the mountain shall move toward the north and half of it toward the south. Then you shall flee *through* My mountain valley, for the mountain valley shall reach to Azal. Yes, you shall flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Thus the LORD my God will come, *and* all the saints with You.” Here we see that the saints will come with Christ.

We see that when Christ comes and every eye sees Him that all of the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Revelation 19:20-21 says, “Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh.” The nations will mourn because this will be a time of judgment for them.

This will be the time when Christ will establish His rule on earth as described in Revelation

20:3-9. Daniel 7:13-14 also speaks about this time. Those verses say, “I was watching in the night visions, and behold, *One* like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion *is* an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom *the one* which shall not be destroyed.” In Revelation 20 we see that Christ will rule on earth for a thousand years. However, in Daniel we see that the rule on earth will be the beginning of an eternal kingdom.

Christ is called the Alpha and Omega. Alpha is the first letter in the Greek alphabet in which the New Testament was originally written. Omega is the last letter in the Greek alphabet. Then we see that Christ is called the Beginning and the End. Christ is the One who is and who was and who is to come. In Exodus 3:14 we read, “And God said to Moses, ‘I AM WHO I AM.’ And He said, “Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’” Christ repeatedly calls Himself “I AM” in the book of John. These verses point out the fact that Christ has always existed. John 1:1 says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” The fact that Christ will have an eternal kingdom shows that He will always exist. The title “Almighty” is used ten times in the New Testament and nine are in Revelation. Revelation 11:17 says, “We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was and who is to come, because You have taken Your great power and reigned.” As a result, we see that all of these titles are given to Christ.

John goes on to tell us that Christ is the One who told Him to write this book. Revelation 1:9-11 says, “I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet, saying, ‘I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last,’ and, ‘What you see, write in a book and send *it* to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea.’” We see that John was told to write to the seven churches that were in Asia. Revelation 1:19 says, “Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this.” This verse actually gives an outline of the book of Revelation as well as telling John to write. Chapter 1 is about the things that he was going to see. Chapters 2 and 3 talk about the churches – the things that are. Chapters 4 through 22 talk about the things which will happen in the future after the churches (all Christians) are taken to heaven.

John uses two words to describe himself to the churches. First, John describes himself as a brother. Second, John describes himself as a companion. The word translated “companion” means a joint partner or someone who participates with others in anything. During the time that John wrote this letter the churches were experiencing much opposition and persecution from the Roman government. As a result, we see that John spoke about being a brother and companion in tribulation. John was on the island of Patmos and that name means “my killing”. This was an island that was rocky and barren and about ten miles long and six miles wide at the widest point. The Roman government used it as a place to dump prisoners because they felt that none would be able to escape from the island. As a result, this meant that John had been a prisoner of the Roman government and they had dumped him off on the island and left him to eventually die.

The Romans had dumped John on that island for two reasons. First, they dumped him there because he was teaching the Word of God. Instead of the Roman plan being carried out, we see that God was going to carry out His plan. Revelation 1:19 says, “Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this.” Here we see that John was going to write what would become the final book of the Bible while he was on that island. Second, the Romans dumped John on this island because of His testimony about Jesus Christ. In the following verses we will see that John received information that would add to his testimony about Christ. We will see that John had the opportunity to see Christ in all of His glory.

Romans 8:28-29 says, “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to be* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.” The Romans thought that they could make John suffer on this bare rocky island. He probably did experience physical suffering. However, God chose this time of suffering on this island to give all Christians the opportunity to learn about the things that are going to happen in the future. The things that John learned helped him to become more conformed to the image of Christ and have helped millions of Christians since that time become more conformed to His image.

We see that John said that He was in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day. The Lord’s Day is Sunday. It is the day that Christians all over the world gather together to remember the death and resurrection of the Lord. Acts 20:7 says, “Now on the first *day* of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight.” Then I Corinthians 16:2 adds, “On the first *day* of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come.” In both of these verses we see that Sunday had become the day that the Christians gathered together to remember the death and resurrection of the Lord.

Even though John may not have had any other humans with him on this day, He was not alone but was able to enjoy fellowship with Christ because He was walking in the Spirit. The promise given to Joshua in Joshua 1:5 is also given to all Christians in Hebrews 13:5 where we read, “*Let your conduct be* without covetousness; *be* content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you.’” John was not alone. Christ spoke to John with a loud voice and told him to write a book (scroll) and send it to the seven churches in Asia. John was to write this book and the Lord would make sure it got off the island to the seven churches in Asia. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand what John wrote so that they can teach others about the things that are going to happen in the future. The Lord will use them to share what John wrote just as He used John to write the book. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children understand the book of Revelation.

3.

Christ is Described in All of His Glory

In our last topic we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand the book of Revelation so that they can help others learn to understand this book. In our topic today we will see that John had the opportunity to see Christ in all of His glory as Christ appeared to him and told him to write this book.

John had heard a loud voice behind him. Revelation 1:12-16 says, “Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the seven lampstands *One* like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. His head and hair *were* white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; His feet *were* like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters; He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance *was* like the sun shining in its strength.” In these verses we that John turned to see the One who was speaking.

We see that he saw seven golden lampstands when he turned. Revelation 1:20c says, “The seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches.” In the middle of the seven golden lampstands he saw One like the Son of Man. Christ used the title “Son of Man” eighty-one times in the Gospels to describe Himself. This title came from Daniel 7:13 which says, “I was watching in the night visions, and behold, *One* like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him.” While Christ was on this earth only the three disciples with Jesus saw Christ in all of His glory on the mountain. Here we have a description of the glory that Christ now has in heaven.

We see that Jesus had on a robe that went down to His feet. Around His chest Christ had a golden band (belt or sash) like the Jewish High Priest wore in the Old Testament. This clothing shows that Christ is our Great High Priest. Hebrews 7:25-27 says, “Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens; who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people’s, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself.” Then Hebrews 4:14-16 adds, “Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast *our* confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all *points* tempted as *we are*, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” His appearance to John speaks of His ministry for all Christians.

We also have a description of the rest of His appearance. We read, “His head and hair *were* white like wool, as white as snow.” Isaiah 1:18 says, “‘Come now, and let us reason together,’ says the LORD, ‘Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.’” Christ is holy and without sin and so can judge sin.

Next, “His eyes like a flame of fire.” Christ is able to see into the hearts and examine the thoughts of the hearts. “His feet *were* like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace.” Brass was used to cover the altar of burnt offering where sacrifices were offered to cover sin. We will see that Christ is going to examine the churches in the next two chapters and point out the sins that would bring judgment to the churches. Next we read, “His voice as the sound of many waters.” Christ has been given all authority and He will speak with authority as He judges the sins of the churches.

We see that in His right hand Christ has seven stars. Revelation 1:20b says, “The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches.” Here we see that the stars are the messengers of the churches. Next we see, “out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword.” In Revelation 2:14-16 we read, “But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality. Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate. Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth.” Here we see the sword will judge false teachers in the church. Then Revelation 19:15 adds, “Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.” In this verse we see that Christ will use this sword to judge the nations at His second coming. We also see that the appearance of Christ was so bright that it was like the sun shining in its strength.

Revelation 1:17-18 says, “And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, “Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. I *am* He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death.” Here we see that when John first saw Christ in all of his glory that He fell at the feet of Christ like a person that had died. We see that Christ then laid His right hand on John and spoke to him and told him several things. First, Christ told John not to be afraid. John wrote I John 4:18 which says, “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.” This was a message that told John that Christ had come to him in love. He did not need to fear because of the perfect love of Christ for him.

Second, Christ told John, “I am the First and the Last.” This is similar to the title that Christ gave Himself in Revelation 1:8. In that verse Christ called Himself the Alpha and the Omega which are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet in which the New Testament was originally written. Third, Christ went on to speak of His death and resurrection when He said, “I *am* He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen.” The message of the angels to the women who came to the tomb on the third day after the crucifixion was, “He is risen.” Christ is the One who lives. As Christians our faith is based on the fact that Christ died and rose again. I Corinthians 15:20-21 says, “But now Christ is risen from the dead, *and* has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man *came* death, by Man also *came* the resurrection of the dead.” It is His resurrection that makes it possible for Him to raise us from the dead. We are reminded that He is alive forevermore. That is why we can look forward to eternal life. However, Christ added one more word. When we say amen, it means let it be so. When Christ says “Amen”, it means, “It is and it shall be so”.

Fourth, Christ said “I have the keys of Hades and of Death.” The word translated “Hades” refers to the place of the dead. The word “Death” refers to the condition of death and especially the death of those who are not followers of the Lord. Ephesians 2:1 says, “And you *He made alive*, who were dead in trespasses and sins.” Physical death speaks of the separation of the body from the soul and spirit. Spiritual death speaks of the separation of man from God. Revelation 20:13-15 says, “The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.” This is the judgment of those who are spiritually dead.

Christ then gave John instructions about what he was to do in Revelation 1:19-20 where we read, “Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this. The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches.” Here we see the outline of the book of Revelation. First, John was to write about the things that he had seen – chapter one. John had just seen Christ in all of His glory in chapter one. Second, John was to write about the things that are. John was to write to the seven churches in Asia and about the things that were happening in the churches – chapters two and three. Third, John was to write about the things that would happen in the future – chapters four through twenty-two.

One of the greatest questions that many people have is, “What is going to happen in the future?” Once the church is taken out of the world we see that there will be a seven year period known as the tribulation. The main events of the tribulation period are described in Revelation chapters 4 through 19. Then in Revelation 20:1-9 we have the description of the one thousand year period known as the millennium. Revelation 20:10-15 goes on to describe the final judgments that will happen to Satan and all of those who continue to follow him. Finally Revelation 21:1-22:21 describe eternity when Christ will rule forever and ever. Revelation 21:3-4 says, “And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them *and be* their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.”

Many physical and spiritual children do not have a clear understanding about what is going to happen in the future. The Lord wanted all Christians to be able to explain the main events that are going to happen in the future. As a result, Christ told John to write this message to the seven churches so that those churches and all future Christians could learn to explain what is going to happen in the future. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to understand and explain what will happen in the future.

4.

The Message to the Church at Ephesus

In our last topic we saw that John saw Christ in all of His glory. We also saw that Christ wants all Christians to have an understanding of the main events that are going to happen in the future once the church is taken to heaven. In this topic we are going to begin looking at the message that Christ gave to each of the seven churches of Asia.

In the next several topics we will be looking at the letters to the seven churches of Asia. These churches existed at the time this book was written. These churches also give us a picture of seven common kinds of churches that we can find today. In addition, they also give us a picture of a majority of the churches that existed at a particular time in the history of the church. Revelation 2:1-3 says, "To the angel of the church of Ephesus write, 'These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands: "I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary.'" The Lord began by talking about the good characteristics of the church in Ephesus.

We see that Christ was walking among the churches so that He could personally examine each church. This was a church that had many good characteristics. First, this was a church where they worked hard as they served the Lord. Second, the word translated "labor" speaks of hard and tiring work. I Thessalonians 2:9 says, "For you remember, brethren, our labor and toil; for laboring night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, we preached to you the gospel of God." In this verse we see that Paul, Silas and Timothy worked both day and night to help the Christians in Thessalonica grow. Third, the word translated "patience" in the New Testament is the characteristic of one who does not turn from God's purpose for him even when experiencing great trials and suffering. James 1:2-4 says, "My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have *its* perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing." In these verses we see that patience is developed through trials and testing.

Fourth, they could not bear those who are evil. The word translated "evil" means of a bad nature, troublesome, destructive or injurious. I Corinthians 15:33 says, "Do not be deceived: "Evil company corrupts good habits." The church at Ephesus refused to listen and follow those who encouraged them to sin. Fifth, they tested those who say they are apostles and not – can be used in either a good or bad sense. In a good sense, it means to test one's character and faith to see if it is true and genuine. II Corinthians 10:18 says, "For not he who commends himself is approved, but whom the Lord commends." Then II Corinthians 11:13 says about these individuals, "For such *are* false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ." Here we see that the word is used in a bad sense it speaks of those who are false and not genuine.

Sixth, the word translated “persevered” means to carry something that is a burden or a heavy load. Galatians 6:2 says, “Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. The church at Ephesus served the Lord even when it meant carrying heavy loads. Seventh, they had patience. This is a repeat of characteristic three. Their patience was so great it was mentioned a second time. Eighth, they had labored for My name’s sake. This is another form of characteristic two and means to labor to the point of growing tired. In Luke 5:5 the word is translated “toiled”. That verse says, “But Simon answered and said to Him, ‘Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing; nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net.’” Ninth, the word translated “become weary” means to become tired, weary or sick. Hebrews 12:3 says, “For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.”

However, in spite of all these good characteristics, there was one sin in the life of the church at Ephesus that could destroy the church. Revelation 2:4-6 says, “Nevertheless I have *this* against you, that you have left your first love. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent. But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.” Here we see that the one thing the Lord had against the church at Ephesus was that they had left their first love. Notice that it says they left not that they lost their first love.

The word translated “left” means to forsake, to send away or to let go because it is no longer important. This word is used in a good sense in I John 1:9 where it is translated “to forgive”. That verse says, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” The word is used in a negative way in Romans 1:27 where we read, “Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due.” In this verse in Revelation it is used in a negative way and speaks of leaving their first love because it was no longer important to them.

Their first love was their love for Christ. Paul had thanked the Lord for the faith and love of the Ephesian church in Ephesians 1:15-16 where we read, “Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers.” Then he prayed that this love might continue to grow in Ephesians 3:17-19 where we read, “That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what *is* the width and length and depth and height— to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.” Paul said that they were rooted and grounded in love and prayed that they might continue to grow in their understanding of the love of Christ for them.

Here John said that this leaving of that first love could result in their removal as a church even though they had sound doctrine, godly character and were hard working. Then Christ gave three things for any church to do when they realize that they have left their love. First, remember from where you have fallen. This means to remember the love that they had for Christ when they first became Christians. Second, repent! Christ said repent twice or warned them that He would come and quickly remove their lampstand from its place. I Thessalonians

1:9-10 defines repent when those verses say, “For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, *even* Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.” Even good things can become idols when they cause us to leave our first love. Third, repeat (do) the first works. This means to do what we do because we love Christ.

Christ said that they did have one very important thing right in what they were doing. They hated the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which Christ also hated. The word “Nicolaitans” comes from two Greek words. “Nikao” means to conquer. “Laos” means the people. This is also the word from which we get the word “laity”. Diotrephes was such a leader. III John 9-10 says, “I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us. Therefore, if I come, I will call to mind his deeds which he does, prating against us with malicious words. And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who wish to, putting *them* out of the church.” According to church history, Nicolas was a similar leader. However, he led many people astray into immorality and other evil actions.

Revelation 3:7 concludes the message to the church at Ephesus by saying, “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.” Only those who have spiritual life can really hear what the Spirit says to the churches. I Corinthians 2:14 says, “But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned.” This verse makes it clear that spiritual understanding must be given by the Holy Spirit.

Those who have come to the Lord in repentance and faith do become overcomers. I John 5:5 defines an overcomer when that verse says, “Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?” In this verse we see that all Christians have become overcomers. In our verse in Revelation we see that the reward for those who become overcomers is the privilege to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.” Revelation 22:2 says, “In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, *was* the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each *tree* yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree *were* for the healing of the nations.” Once Adam and Eve sinned they were taken out of the Garden of Eden and no longer allowed to eat of the tree of life. Genesis 3:24 says, “So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.” This was necessary so that humans would not eat of the tree of life and live with the consequences of sin forever. However, once we enter heaven we will no longer have sin and will be able to enjoy the tree of life forever.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand and explain why God warned the church at Ephesus to remember, repent and repeat the first works so that they would not be removed. That same thing is true for each of us today in our lives. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain these things.

5.

The Message to the Church at Smyrna

In our last topic we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain the one warning that Christ gave the church at Ephesus. We saw that Christ warned that church to remember, repent and repeat the first works so that they would not be removed. In our topic today we will be looking at the letter to the church in Smyrna. We will see that this is one of only two churches to which Christ did not give a warning.

We are going to see that the Lord had nothing negative to say about the church in Smyrna. Revelation 2:8-9 says, “And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write, these things says the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life: “I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich); and *I know* the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but *are* a synagogue of Satan.” This is the only place that the city of Smyrna is mentioned in the Bible. Smyrna was a city about thirty-five miles north of Ephesus and was a seaport. It was very loyal to Rome and the worship of the Roman emperor was very strong in Smyrna. It was considered the most beautiful city in that region and had become a center for medicine and science. It also had a large Jewish population and these things all had an impact on the church in that city.

To this city Christ said that He is the First and the Last. Isaiah used this name several times to refer to the Lord. Isaiah 41:4 says, “Who has performed and done *it*, calling the generations from the beginning? ‘I, the LORD, am the first; and with the last I *am* He.’” Then Isaiah 44:6 adds, “Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: ‘I *am* the First and I *am* the Last; besides Me *there is* no God.’” Finally Isaiah 48:12-13 adds, “Listen to Me, O Jacob, and Israel, My called: I *am* He, I *am* the First, I *am* also the Last. Indeed My hand has laid the foundation of the earth, and My right hand has stretched out the heavens; *when* I call to them, they stand up together.” To both the Jews and those who worshiped the Roman emperor, this was a clear statement of the fact that Christ is God and is the Creator who alone deserves all worship.

Christ went on to say that He “was dead, and came to life.” This was a clear statement about the death and resurrection of Christ. The Jewish chief priests had tried to deny the resurrection. Matthew 28:11-15 says, “Now while they were going, behold, some of the guard came into the city and reported to the chief priests all the things that had happened. When they had assembled with the elders and consulted together, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, saying, “Tell them, ‘His disciples came at night and stole Him *away* while we slept.’ And if this comes to the governor’s ears, we will appease him and make you secure.” So they took the money and did as they were instructed; and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.” The Christians in Smyrna experienced tribulation from those who worshiped the Roman emperor. They were also experienced tribulation from the Jews because many Jews turned against the Christians.

At the same time Christ said that He knew their works. The word translated “works” can relate

to the business or work in which we are employed. It can also relate to our works of service for Christ. Ephesians 2:10 says, "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." Then II Timothy 2:21 adds, "Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work." Christ knew the works of the Christians in the church at Smyrna because those works were pleasing to Him.

Christ also knew about the poverty of the Christians in the church at Smyrna. Among the early Christians there was much poverty due to the seizing of their goods by both the Roman government and the Jews. I Peter 4:12-13 says, "Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy." Then Hebrews 10:32-34 says, "But recall the former days in which, after you were illuminated, you endured a great struggle with sufferings: partly while you were made a spectacle both by reproaches and tribulations, and partly while you became companions of those who were so treated; for you had compassion on me in my chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven." This may have been the reason for the poverty of the Christians in Smyrna. However, God said that they were rich. Matthew 6:19-21 says, "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." The Christians in Smyrna were laying up spiritual treasure.

Christ said, "*I know* the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but *are* a synagogue of Satan." In Matthew 23:15 we read, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves." The scribes and Pharisees were physically Jews but spiritually they were far from God. Many of the Jews in Smyrna had the attitudes toward the Christians that the scribes and Pharisees had toward Christ. A synagogue could refer either to the building where the Jews worshiped on the Sabbath or to a gathering of Jews. Here it is used to speak of Jews who opposed the Christians.

Christ went on to say in Revelation 2:10, "Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw *some* of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life." Here Christ made it clear that the church in Smyrna was about to experience additional suffering and persecution. We also see the source of persecution against true Christians when Christ said, "Indeed, the devil is about to throw *some* of you into prison." That is why Ephesians 6:12 explains, "For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*." In these verses we are reminded of the fact that Satan is the one who is really fighting against Christians. His goal as he fights against Christians is to keep Christians from sharing the Word of God with those who are not Christians. His goal for those who are not Christians is given in John 10:10 where we read, "The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may

have life, and that they may have *it* more abundantly.” His goal is always to destroy others before they can come to Christ.

Christ went on to point out to the Christians in Smyrna that they would have tribulation for ten days. During the first three hundred years of the church there were ten major efforts by the Roman emperors to destroy Christians and the church. Three of these times of severe persecution were in the first century, two in the second century and five in the third century. Christ told the disciples the night before His crucifixion in John 16:33, “These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” In the same way we can expect tribulation and persecution in our own day because Satan knows that his time is short and he wants to do everything possible to hinder the spread of the Gospel to any additional people. However, we can be joyful when facing persecution because of the fact that we know that Christ has overcome the world.

Christ told the church at Smyrna to “Be faithful unto death.” Here we see the key characteristic that Christ looks for in the lives of those who follow Him. I Corinthians 4:2 says, “Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful.” Then Luke 16:10 adds, “He who *is* faithful in *what is* least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in *what is* least is unjust also in much.” Paul provided an example by his life of faithfulness. II Timothy 4:7 says, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.” We also see that Christ gives a promise to those who are faithful when He said that He will give “the crown of life”. James 1:12 says, “Blessed *is* the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.” In this verse we see that the crown of life is the reward for endurance.

Revelation 3:11 says, “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.” In this verse we see again the encouragement that was given in the final verse to the church in Ephesus. Christ encourages the church at Smyrna to really hear what the Holy Spirit is saying to their church. We saw that all Christians have become overcomers. That is due to the fact that Christ had complete victory over Satan and we are in Christ. We see that as Christians we do not need to fear the second death because we will not be hurt by the second death. Revelation 20:6 says, “Blessed and holy *is* he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.” Here we see that the second death has no power over us when we are in Christ. In addition, we will reign with Him for a thousand years.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children recognize that they do not need to be fearful even if they face tribulation or persecution in the future. We may experience physical death but Christ says that we never will need to worry about spiritual death because the second death has no power to hurt us. May the Lord richly bless you as you equip your children to experience peace in any tribulation.

6.

The Message to the Church at Pergamos

In our last topic we saw that we want to prepare our physical and spiritual children for tribulation and persecution. We want to help them learn to be faithful until death even if it means dying for their faith in Christ. In this topic we will see that Christ gave John a message to write to the church at Pergamos.

In Revelation 2:12-13 we read, “And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write, ‘These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword: I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan’s throne *is*. And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas *was* My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.’” In these verses we see Christ pictured as the One who has the sharp two-edged sword. This means that we are going to see that Christ judges certain things in this church. We also see that Christ knew the works of this church and what the church had to deal with at that time because of what was located at Pergamos. The fact that the Lord knew their works shows that they worked hard to serve the Lord.

We also see that Christ said that Pergamos was the place where the throne of Satan was located. In Pergamos there was a large throne-shaped altar to the Greek god Zeus. There were also other Greek gods closely associated with this city. I Corinthians 10:20 says, “Rather, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons.” Here we see that the worship of demons is really a worship of Satan. The fact that Christ described this as the place where Satan’s throne is makes it clear that at any given time Satan has to have a place from which to center his activities because Satan can only be at one place at a time. This meant that the Christians in that city faced much opposition.

Christ also said that the church at Pergamos held fast to His name. The word translated “hold fast to” means to have power or to hold. Hebrews 4:14 says, “Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast *our* confession.” Just as we are to hold fast our confession about Christ, the Christians were holding fast to the name of Christ. They were not turning away from the Lord in spite of the great opposition which they regularly faced from Satan.

The faith of these Christians was certainly put to the test when Antipas was put to death for his testimony about Christ. We see that he had been a faithful martyr who had been put to death for his faithful witness about Christ. Even though the other Christians also realized that their lives were in danger, they did not deny their faith and the fact that they were followers of Christ. Paul wrote in Philippians 1:21, “For to me, to live *is* Christ, and to die *is* gain.” Here we see that Paul was ready to die for his testimony about Christ. By the time that John wrote this book Christians in many different places had also been put to death for their faith in Christ. The Christians in Pergamos were willing to stand fast in their faith even though they knew that their lives were in danger as a result of the fact that their city was the center for the activity of Satan.

We go on to read in Revelation 2:14-16 about the things that Christ had against the church in Pergamos even though they had stood firm in their faith in Christ. This church had people who held to the doctrine of Balaam who taught two ways for Balaam to put a stumbling block in front of Israel to get them to turn away from the Lord and turn to sin. First, Balaam told Balak to get the people of Israel to eat things sacrificed to idols. Numbers 25:2-3 says, "They invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods. So Israel was joined to Baal of Peor, and the anger of the LORD was aroused against Israel." In these verses we see that part of the people of Israel ate the sacrifices that were offered to the idols. Then they bowed down and began to worship those idols. Balaam knew that God would judge Israel if the people turned and started worshipping idols.

Second, Numbers 25:1 says, "Now Israel remained in Acacia Grove, and the people began to commit harlotry with the women of Moab." Then Numbers 25:6-8 says, "And indeed, one of the children of Israel came and presented to his brethren a Midianite woman in the sight of Moses and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who *were* weeping at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. Now when Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw *it*, he rose from among the congregation and took a javelin in his hand; and he went after the man of Israel into the tent and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her body. So the plague was stopped among the children of Israel." Here we see that Balaam had suggested that Moab and Midian encourage the people of Israel to commit immorality with them so that God would judge the people of Israel. We see that as a result of this sin that 24,000 people of Israel died so many people of Israel got involved in both idol worship and immorality.

The church at Pergamos also had people in the church that held to the doctrine of the Nicolaitans. We saw in the letter to the church at Ephesus that the word "Nicolaitans" comes from two Greek words. "Nikao" means to conquer. "Laos" means the people. This is also the word from which we get the word "laity". We also saw that Nicolas led many people astray into immorality and other evil actions. Here we see that in the church at Pergamos that there were people who had these doctrines of the Nicolaitans and were trying to control the people and lead them into immorality and other evil actions. Today we also have many false spiritual leaders who do these same things to satisfy their own evil desires and lead people astray.

Christ said that He hated the doctrine of the Nicolaitans and said He would judge those who taught this doctrine. Galatians 6:7-8 says, "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life." These verses point out that God will not be mocked. The Nicolaitans and all those who follow their evil actions will one day reap the consequences for their actions if there is no true repentance in their lives.

That is why Christ told the Nicolaitans to repent. In I Thessalonians 1:9 where we read, "For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God." An idol is anything that is more important to a person than God. True repentance means that a person turns from that thing and

comes to God through Christ. All who come in true repentance have a desire to serve Christ. II Corinthians 7:9-10 says, "Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance. For you were made sorry in a godly manner, that you might suffer loss from us in nothing. For godly sorrow produces repentance *leading* to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death." The sorrow of this world is sorrow by a person that was caught in his sin. Such a person is sorry that he got caught instead of having sorrow for the sin. In contrast, true repentance causes a person to have sorrow for the sin. Such sorrow causes the person to come to God in repentance and leads to forgiveness.

Christ said that if there was no repentance that He would come quickly and fight against the Nicolaitans with the sword of His mouth. The sword of Christ's mouth is the Word that goes out of His mouth. Hebrews 4:12 says, "For the word of God *is* living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." Here we are reminded of the fact that Christ and the Word both expose the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Christ then gave a promise to all those who are overcomers (Christians). Revelation 2:17 says, "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives *it*." This verse reminds us of the importance of really listening to the lessons that the Holy Spirit is trying to teach to the churches since they are also for all Christians. In this verse we see that the Lord has two promises for those who really listen to what the Holy Spirit is teaching. First, the Lord promises to give us some of the hidden manna to eat. In the Old Testament the Jews were given manna to eat for the forty years that they were in the wilderness. In contrast, John 6:51 says, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world." In this verse we see that Christ is the living bread that comes down from heaven.

Second, the Lord promises to give us a white stone. In the Olympics and other games in that period, a white stone was given to each one that won a race. That stone gave them the right to enter into the victory celebration for all winners. Luke 10:20 says, "Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven." The fact that our names are written in heaven means that we have the right to enter into the eternal victory celebration in heaven. We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand the greatness of these two blessings that we have as Christians. At the same time we also want to help our children learn to understand and explain the doctrine of the Nicolaitans so that they can warn others not to be deceived by that doctrine. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain these things to others.

7.

The Message to the Church at Thyatira

In our last topic we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain why Christ said that He will judge those who follow the doctrine of the Nicolaitans. We also saw that we want to help them explain the blessings promised to the true followers of Christ. In this topic we will see that Christ gave John a message to write to the church at Thyatira.

In Revelation 2:18-19 we read, “And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write, ‘These things says the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass: I know your works, love, service, faith, and your patience; and *as* for your works, the last *are* more than the first.’” We begin these verses by seeing that Christ has eyes like a flame of fire. This makes it clear that Christ can see and know the thoughts and intents of the heart. I Samuel 16:7 says, “But the LORD said to Samuel, ‘Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For *the LORD does not see* as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.’” In addition, His feet are like fine brass. In the Old Testament the altar where Israel offered their sacrifices was made of bronze (brass). The sacrifices offered on that altar were a covering for sin. As a result, brass speaks of judgment.

Christ began by speaking about the things that were good in the church at Thyatira. First, we see that Christ knew their works. The word translated “works” talks about business, employment, acts or deeds that a person does. Matthew 5:16 says, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.” Christ looked at the works of the church at Thyatira and saw that they were good works. Second, Christ saw that the church was a church that had a real love. I John 4:7 says, “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.” Love was shown by their actions toward one another. Third, Christ saw the service of the church at Thyatira. The word translated “service” means ministry or service to others. Colossians 4:17 says, “And say to Archippus, ‘Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it.’” The Christians in Thyatira were carrying out the ministry that the Lord had given to them.

Fourth, Christ saw the faith of the church at Thyatira. Faith is the conviction that God is the provider of all things or that Christ is the only One who can provide eternal salvation for us. I Thessalonians 1:3 says, “Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father.” The faith of the Christians at Thyatira was faith in both the Father and the Son because Christ recognized their faith. Fifth, Christ saw the patience of the church at Thyatira. The word translated “patience” means endurance or patience especially under suffering. James 1:3-4 says, “Knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have *its* perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.” Sixth, their works are mentioned a second time so their works were increasing.

Then Christ began to warn about the sins of the church at Thyatira. Revelation 2:20-23 says, “Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent. Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds. I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works.” Here we see that many in the church were being deceived by a false prophetess.

This false prophetess was named Jezebel which may have been her real name or may have referred to the fact that she was like the Old Testament Jezebel in I Kings 16 through II Kings 9. This woman was guilty of trying to get the Christians in Thyatira to commit the same sins that Jezebel in the Old Testament tried to get Israel to commit. Here we see that she was working “to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols.” In a letter to the Gentiles in Acts 15 following the Jerusalem Council the church at Jerusalem wrote in Acts 15:28-29, “For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well.” Blood and things strangled would go back to Genesis 9:4-6.

However, sexual immorality and idol worship are a violation of the first two principles mentioned in Genesis. Genesis 2:24 says, “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.” This principle was given to Adam and Eve who had no father or mother to leave so it was a principle for all future generations. Any form of sexual immorality is a violation of this principle. That is why I Corinthians 6:18-20 says, “Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit *who is* in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.” We are to be different than the world and flee immorality because we are the temple of the Holy Spirit. That is why Romans 12:2 says, “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” The greatest testimony that we can have for Christ in this world is to live our lives differently than the world especially in these two areas.

Genesis 4:3-5 says, “And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the LORD. Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the LORD respected Abel and his offering, but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.” Cain became the first idol worshiper and brought the result of his own works as an offering to God. God made it clear that we cannot worship God by offering our own works to Him instead of coming by faith. II Corinthians 6:15-18 says, “And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: ‘I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will

be their God, and they shall be My people.’ Therefore ‘Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the LORD Almighty.’” False teachers try to get Christians to violate one or both of these principles.

God gave this false prophetess time to repent of her own sexual immorality but she did not repent. God said that he will judge all those who follow her teachings and her ways unless they repent. Those followers of these teachings and ways when Christ comes for the church will experience the great tribulation because they are not true believers. Christ searches the minds and the hearts. As unbelievers they will experience eternal separation and judgment because they will be judged according to their works.

Christ then gave promises to those who have not known the depths of Satan. Revelation 2:24-29 says, “Now to you I say, and to the rest in Thyatira, as many as do not have this doctrine, who have not known the depths of Satan, as they say, I will put on you no other burden. But hold fast what you have till I come. And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations—He shall rule them with a rod of iron; they shall be dashed to pieces like the potter’s vessels— as I also have received from My Father; and I will give him the morning star. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” Christ said that those who have followed the ways of this false prophetess have known the depths of Satan and will be judged with Satan. However, those who are true followers of Christ are set free from their burdens.

Christ said that all true followers are to hold fast until He comes. Christ gave a promise to those who overcome and carry out the works of Christ until the end. Christ said that He will give them power to rule over the nations. This is delegated power from Christ. Matthew 28:18 says, “And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.’” Christ is the One who will rule with a rod of iron. Revelation 19:15 says, “Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.” When Christ came the first time He came as the Savior. When Christ comes the second time He will come to judge the nations. In Revelation 2:28 we see that this power has been delegated to Christ by the Father. As a result, Jesus will be carrying out the will of the Father.

To each one who have kept His works, Christ promises that He will give him the morning star. In Revelation 22:16 we read, “I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star.” All believers have received Christ as our Lord. Here we see that we will have Christ as our Savior and Lord throughout eternity. He will be the One who gives us Light for all eternity. Christ then concludes this message just as He has concluded the message to each of the other churches. Christ says that we are to hear what the Spirit says to the churches. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain the lessons that Christ taught about the church in Thyatira. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain the lessons we can learn from each of the churches.

8.

The Message to the Church at Sardis

In our last topic we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain what lessons Christians can learn for our lives today from each of the churches. We still have three more churches as we come to Revelation 3. Each of these churches will have additional lessons for us to learn and teach.

In Revelation 3:1-2 we read, “And to the angel of the church in Sardis write, ‘These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God.’” Here we see that Christ has the seven Spirits of God that are given in Isaiah 11:2. In Luke 4:14 we read, “Then Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and news of Him went out through all the surrounding region.” During the time that Christ was living on the earth, we see that He ministered in the power of the Holy Spirit. Here we see that Christ continues to carry out His ministry in the power of the Holy Spirit. That is an illustration of the fact that the Trinity always works in unity.

We see that Christ had carefully observed the works of the church in the city of Sardis. This church claimed to be alive and many people probably thought of it as a church that was alive because of its activity. However, Christ said that this church was dead. Activity can mean that there is physical life but it does not mean that there is spiritual life. Ephesians 2:1-3 says, “And you *He made alive*, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.” Until Christ gives spiritual life, a person or a church is spiritually dead. In these verses from Ephesians we see that churches can be dead in trespasses and sins.

A dead church is a church that lives physically just like the world. Instead of a dead church being a light in the world, a dead church has no light for itself or for the world. As a result, it is still a part of the world. The people in such a church are still under the control of the prince of the power of the air (Satan). The people in a dead church are still the sons of disobedience. Such people conduct themselves according to the lusts of the flesh. They also fulfill the evil desires of the flesh and of the mind. A person who is spiritually dead has a sin nature but no new nature. The people in such churches are described in II Timothy 3:1-8. II Timothy 3:5 says, “Having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!” That is why they are called the children of wrath. A “church” name does not mean that the people have spiritual life.

However, even a dead church can have a few individuals in it that have spiritual life. As a result, Christ gave instructions to this small remnant of true Christians. First, Christ told them to be watchful. The word translated “watchful” means to pay close attention to or to watch

carefully. The few true Christians were to pay close attention so that they could strengthen the things that remain. The word translated “strengthen” means to make firm or to make stable. The true Christians in this church were very discouraged and probably had a hard time even doing any works for the Lord. As a result, the few works that they were doing were ready to die. In addition, their works had not been perfect before God. The word translated “perfect” is usually translated fulfill or to fill up. This means that their works were not all fulfilling the will of God.

Revelation 3:3-4 says, “Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you. You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy.” Here we see that the church was to think about and remember the things that they had received and heard. Like all of the churches, this church had originally received the message of the death and resurrection of Christ. They had been taught the teachings of Christ and the rest of the Word of God. At once time they had heard and understood those things but they had not kept them in their minds.

Acts 2:42 tells us the things that the first church did when that verse says, “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.” It was these basics that were no longer even in the minds of the people in the church at Sardis. The word translated “hold fast” means to keep, to guard or to obey. Christ is here urging the church to guard these things and repent. Christ also gave a warning if there was no repentance and a failure to watch or guard the things that were no longer even in their minds. Christ said that would result in Him coming to them like a thief. A thief never sends an advance notice to let others know that he is coming.

Luke 12:39-40 says, “But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.” In the following verses Christ made it clear that His coming would be sudden for both the believers and the unbelievers. In these verses Christ is talking about the fact that He will come to judge the church at Sardis. There will be no time to repent or get ready when Christ comes. That is why Christ warned the church at Sardis that it would not know the hour at which he would come to judge that church.

Christ then went on to talk about those at Sardis who had a true faith when He said, “You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments.” We see that Christ said three things about these true believers. First, we see that they had not defiled their garments. The word translated “defiled” means to contaminate, pollute or defile. Revelation 14:4 says, “These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from *among* men, *being* firstfruits to God and to the Lamb.” Here we see that they had not committed any form of immorality. I Corinthians 8:7 says, “However, *there is* not in everyone that knowledge; for some, with consciousness of the idol, until now eat *it* as a thing offered to an idol; and their conscience, being weak, is defiled.” In this verse the word talks about people defiling their conscience by

eating things offered to idols. In the previous topic we saw that these were the two sins Jezebel used to deceive the church.

Second, Christ said that the true believers would walk with Him in white. Isaiah 1:18 says, “‘Come now, and let us reason together,’ says the LORD, ‘Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.’” In this verse we see that white speaks of being purified from all sin. Then Revelation 19:8 says, “And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.” In this verse we see that white linen speaks of the righteous acts that we do as saints. True believers will walk with Christ in white because their sins are forgiven. In addition, all of our works that are righteous will be rewarded.

Third, Christ said that the true believers are worthy. The word translated “worthy” speaks of something having weight, value or worth. Revelation 4:11 says, “You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created.” In this verse we see that Christ is worthy to receive glory, honor and power. We also see that Christ has placed His infinite value on all believers so that we are worthy to walk with Him.

Then Christ went on to explain the blessings that all overcomers will have for all eternity. First, we will all be clothed in white garments. We saw in the earlier verses that this includes having all of our sins blotted out so that we stand in the righteousness of Christ. We also saw that the fine linen speaks of the righteous acts of the saints. I Corinthians 3:14 says, “If anyone’s work which he has built on *it* endures, he will receive a reward.” Here we see that those who walk in fine linen can also look forward to eternal rewards. Second, as overcomers we are assured that Christ will not blot out our name from the Book of Life. The fact that Christ promises that our names will not be blotted out of the Book of Life is a promise that has an eternal result. Revelation 20:15 says, “And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.” Since our names will never be blotted out of the Book of Life this is another assurance of our eternal salvation.

Third, Christ says that He will confess our names before the Father and before His angels. This particular word translated “confess” means to thank, to confess or to acknowledge joyfully. Christ used this same word when He said in Luke 10:21, “In that hour Jesus rejoiced in the Spirit and said, “I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from *the* wise and prudent and revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight.” In this verse we see that Christ thanked the Father for revealing truth to His disciples. In the same way Christ will joyfully confess the names of all true believers before the Father and all of the angels.

Christ concluded the letter to the church at Sardis in the same way that He concluded the letter to each of the churches, “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” We want to help our physical and spiritual children really hear and understand the message that was given to each of the seven churches so that they will be equipped to explain and apply these messages to others. May the Lord richly bless you as you equip your children to explain these messages to the churches.

9.

The Message to the Church at Philadelphia

In our last topic we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain and apply the messages that are given to the churches in the book of Revelation. In this topic we will be looking at the message that Christ gave John to the church at Philadelphia. We will see that Christ had nothing negative to say about this church.

We see that Christ set an open door before the church of Philadelphia. Revelation 3:7-9 says, “And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write, ‘These things says He who is holy, He who is true, “He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens: I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name. Indeed I will make *those* of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie—indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you.” Christ chose to use several words to describe Himself to this church. Those words are directly related to the message to this church.

First, Christ described Himself as holy. The word translated “holy” means that which is most holy or a saint. This name is used in the New Testament most often as a description for the Holy Spirit or saints to refer to Christians. In this verse we see that it refers to Christ. Second, Christ described Himself as true. In the book of John Christ is called the true Light, the true bread and the true vine. Revelation 19:11 says, “Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him *was* called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war.” As a result, Jesus is called True several times in the New Testament.

Christ also said that He has the key of David. This is taken from Isaiah 22:22 where we read, “The key of the house of David I will lay on his shoulder; so he shall open, and no one shall shut; and he shall shut, and no one shall open.” With this key Christ can open and no one can shut. Christ can shut and no one can open. Christ went on to say that He knew their works. As a result of their works, Christ said that He had set before the church at Philadelphia an open door. This statement tells us that the works of the church at Philadelphia were pleasing to the Lord. II Thessalonians 2:16-17 says, “Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us and given *us* everlasting consolation and good hope by grace, comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work.” The church at Philadelphia was established in good works.

Three things are recognized about their works. First, you have a little strength. This church did not depend on its own strength but the power of the Holy Spirit. Paul said in Romans 15:19, “In mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God, so that from Jerusalem and round about to Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.” The Lord can do a lot through our lives when we depend on the power of His Spirit. Second, this church had kept (obeyed) the Word of God. James 1:22 says, “But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.” They were doers of the Word and not just hearers. They did what they

taught. Third, they had not denied the name of Christ. Acts 4:13 says, “Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.” This is an example of not denying Christ.

Christ said that he would make those who were of the synagogue of Satan recognize the true followers of Christ. Revelation 2:9 says, “I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich); and *I know* the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but *are* a synagogue of Satan.” The Jews who had rejected Christ as the eternal Son of God were just as guilty of false worship as any other false religion under the control of Satan. Romans 9:30-31 says, “What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness of faith; but Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness.” Israel tried to get righteousness by their works instead of faith. In a future day Israel will finally turn to the Lord and no longer be a synagogue of Satan. That day is described in Romans 11:26-27 which says, “And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; for this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins.”

God gave a great promise to the church at Philadelphia. Revelation 3:10-11 says, “Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.” The church at Philadelphia had been faithful to the Lord. As a result, Christ gave this church a promise about the future. Christ said that He would keep them from the hour of trial. The word translated “trial” means temptation, testing or trial. James 1:2 says, “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials.” James 1:12 uses the same word when it says, “Blessed *is* the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.” Then I Peter 4:12 says, “Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.”

However, Revelation 3:10 is different than any of these verses because it speaks about the hour of trial that will come on the whole world rather than personal trials and tests. The only time when severe trials will affect the entire world will be during the time of the tribulation. Here Christ promised that He would keep this church from that time of world tribulation which will be described in chapters 6-19 of Revelation. In fact, Revelation 7:14 describes the second half of this period as the great tribulation. That verse says, “And I said to him, ‘Sir, you know.’ So he said to me, ‘These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.’” These are tribulation saints and not a part of the church that will be taken to heaven at the Rapture. That tribulation will test all those who dwell on the earth.

Christ also told the church of Philadelphia that He is coming quickly. That is due to the fact that Christ promises to come and take the church to heaven at the Rapture before the tribulation. In I Thessalonians 4:15-17 we read, “For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we

who are alive *and* remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.” The tribulation is the first event of the day of the Lord and it is mentioned beginning in I Thessalonians 5:2 where we read, “For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night.”

Then Christ told the church at Philadelphia, “Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.” In Revelation 2:10 the crown of life is the reward for faithfulness. Revelation 3:12-13 goes on to say, “He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And *I will write on him* My new name. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” The temple of my God is the throne of God in heaven. Revelation 7:15 says, “Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them.” Overcomers will be in the temple of God which is the eternal presence of God.

The fact that the temple of God is in heaven is illustrated in Revelation 11:19 where we read, “Then the temple of God was opened in heaven, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple. And there were lightnings, noises, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail.” In addition to being a pillar in the temple of God, overcomers will also have the name of God written on them along with the name of the city of God which is the New Jerusalem. Abraham was looking for this heavenly city. Hebrew 11:10 says, “For he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker *is* God.” Then Hebrews 12:22-23 adds, “But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn *who are* registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect.”

In these verses we see that God will make us perfect for all eternity. That is why Christ will write His new name on every overcomer. In the Old Testament the name was often used to speak of character. This is a reminder that we will have the character of Christ throughout all eternity. I John 3:2 says, “Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.” Christ concluded the message to this church by saying, “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand and be able to clearly explain why this church reminds us that we will be kept from “the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world.” This is a tremendous promise to all true believers who are a part of the church. We do not have to fear the tribulation because we will be taken to heaven before it begins. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain these things.

10.

The Message to the Church at Laodicea

In our last topic we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain why true believers in Christ do not need to fear the tribulation because Christ promised that believers would be kept from that hour which will test the whole earth. In our topic today we will see the church in Laodicea had pushed Christ out of the church.

Revelation 3:14-17 says, “And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, ‘These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God: I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. Because you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—” The church at Laodicea apparently had some who were teaching the same false teaching that had been taught in Colosse since both the letter to the Colossians and this letter show that Christ is the Creator.

This letter shows this fact by the names given for Christ. First, Christ is the Amen. When men say amen, it means, “Let it be so.” When God says Amen it means, “It is and it shall be so. Colossians 1:14-16 says, “In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.” Christ is the Amen because He is the Creator of all things. Second, Christ is the Faithful and True Witness. Revelation 1:5 says, “And from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood.” John 14:6 says, “Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.’” These verses tell us He is the Faithful and True Witness.

Third, we see that Christ is the Beginning or Originator of the creation of God. John 1:1-3 says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.” Christ said that He knew the works of the church at Laodicea. He also said that they were neither hot nor cold. There were hot springs a few miles from Laodicea. The Laodiceans had made a waterway to bring that water to the city. By the time it reached the city the water had cooled and was only lukewarm. As a result, the people did not want to drink this lukewarm water. Christ said that water described the church at Laodicea. Like lukewarm water, Christ said He would vomit them out of His mouth. Christ made it clear He would reject them.

Christ went on to tell them why they would be rejected. The church in Laodicea thought that they could depend on their riches. The city had experienced an earthquake and they did not even accept help from other parts of the Roman Empire because the city felt that they were rich

enough to rebuild the city without help. Here we see that the church in that city had the same attitude. They were depending on worldly riches instead of heavenly riches. Matthew 6:19-21 says, “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” The hearts of most of the people in the church at Laodicea were in this world.

As Christ examined the church at Laodicea He had a very different view. He saw them as wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked. The only other place where wretched is used is in Romans 7:24 where we read, “O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?” The only other place where miserable is used is in I Corinthians 15:19 where we read, “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.” (most miserable) Galatians 4:9 says, “But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how *is it that* you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage?” In this verse the word is translated beggarly. These verses show some were Christians who were very weak.

However, much of the church was described by the last two words. Matthew 15:13-14 says, “But He answered and said, “Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted. Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch.” In this verse Christ was talking about the Pharisees who were spiritually blind. Matthew 22:11-13 says, “But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment. So he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?’ And he was speechless. Then the king said to the servants, ‘Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast *him* into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’” Here we see that those who are spiritually blind and naked are facing eternal judgment.

That is why Revelation 3:18-19 says, “I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, *that* the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.” The city of Laodicea had gained much of their wealth by three major businesses: gold, wool and eye salve. As a result, Christ used these three major businesses to show the church what it should really seek. First, Christ said they should buy from Him gold refined in the fire. I Corinthians 3:12-16 says, “Now if anyone builds on this foundation *with* gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one’s work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one’s work, of what sort it is. If anyone’s work which he has built on *it* endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone’s work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.” When our works are tested by fire, anything that has eternal value will endure like gold, silver and precious stones. This is true riches.

Second, instead of clothes made of wool which only have worldly value, we are to seek the robe of righteousness. Revelation 3:5 says, “He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My

Father and before His angels.” We saw that all true believers are overcomers and here we see that we will receive white garments. This way the shame of our sin has been replaced by the righteousness of Christ. Third, instead of the physical eye salve that only relates to physical eyesight, we are to anoint our eyes with the spiritual eye salve that gives us spiritual sight. Christ told the Pharisees in John 9:41, “Jesus said to them, ‘If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you say, ‘We see.’ Therefore your sin remains.’” In contrast, the man formerly blind had said in John 9:38, “Then he said, ‘Lord, I believe!’ And he worshiped Him.” That day he received both physical and spiritual eyesight. Christ encouraged the people of Laodicea to make that same choice when He said, “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.” Christ loves even those who continue to reject Him.

Most of the people in the church at Laodicea had never come to Christ and were still facing eternal judgment. As a result, Christ gave an invitation to each individual. Revelation 3:20-21 says, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” Here we see that Christ was outside the door of the church at Laodicea. The church as a whole was so busy enjoying the things of this world that most of the people did not even think of Christ. II Timothy 3:1-5 says, “But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: for men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!”

This description describes many churches today. We see that they love three things instead of loving God. These verses say that they love self, love money and love pleasure. The entire description fits I John 2:15-16 which says, “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that *is* in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.” We see that this church has pushed Christ out of the church because of their love for the world. Christ will continue to knock until He comes to take the church so that those individuals who want to have fellowship with Him have the opportunity to come to Him in repentance and faith and enjoy fellowship with Him. Christ has a promise for even one who comes to Him and becomes an overcomer. Here we see that each one who comes will have the privilege of ruling with Christ when He returns to the earth to set up His kingdom.

Christ concludes His message to the churches with the same word that He has spoken to each of the other churches, “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand, explain and apply the messages that are given to each of the churches. In this way they can serve the Lord by helping individuals come to Christ for that fellowship. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain these things.

11.

The Throne Set in Heaven

In our last topic we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand, explain and apply these messages to the churches so that they can help other individuals come to Christ to enjoy fellowship with Him. In this topic we see that we will move from the messages to the churches to the throne that is set in heaven.

Chapter three concluded with the messages to the churches. As we come to chapter four Revelation 4:1 says, "After these things I looked, and behold, a door *standing* open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard *was* like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, "Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this." Here we see that John is invited to come to heaven and see the things that will happen immediately after the time of the churches. The next mention of the church is in Revelation 9:7-10 where the church is called the wife of Christ instead of the bride. The only other future mention of the churches in this book is in Revelation 22:16 where we read, "I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star." This event in Revelation 4:1 begins the time of the Day of the Lord.

In I Thessalonians 4:13-18 we have the Rapture of the Church. The next two verses in I Thessalonians 5:1-2 say, "But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night." The "Day of the Lord" was used in the Old Testament both to describe judgments during that time and also the future judgments. Joel 2:30-31 says, "And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: blood and fire and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD." Here we see that the Day of the Lord will affect both the sun and the moon. This time will come on the world like a thief in the night immediately after the Christians are taken to heaven in the Rapture described in I Thessalonians 4:13-18.

In addition, God had already said that four of the churches would remain until the coming of Christ. God had given such a promise to the church in Philadelphia in Revelation 3:10 which says, "Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth." In this verse we see that the church in Philadelphia was promised that they would be kept from the hour of trial which would come on the entire world. The seven years of tribulation will be a great trial for the entire world. Those who have never heard and turn to Christ and become tribulation saints during the tribulation period will be killed by the antichrist because of the anger of Satan against God.

The "Day of the Lord" describes the period from the Rapture of the church to the final judgments given in Revelation 20:10-15. Here we see that the churches will be kept from that hour of trial that will come on the whole world. The Lord told John that He would show John the "things which must take place after this." The Lord gave John the outline for Revelation in

Revelation 1:19 which says, “Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this.” We saw that the things which are described the period of the churches in Revelation 2-3. Then we saw that the things which are after this begin with Revelation 4 so this invitation to John shows that we are moving from the time of the churches to the things after this.

Revelation 4:2-3 says, “Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and *One* sat on the throne. And He who sat there was like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance; and *there was* a rainbow around the throne, in appearance like an emerald.” In this verse we see that John is in the Spirit. John was taken by the Holy Spirit to heaven so that he could actually see the things that he was told to describe. The first thing that John saw in heaven was a throne set in heaven. We will see that John mentions this throne set in heaven a total of 45 times in the book of Revelation. In fact, 17 of those times will be found just in chapters 4 and 5. In Isaiah 6:1 we read, “In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His *robe* filled the temple.” In this verse we see that the throne in heaven speaks of the authority of the One who sits on that throne. This same thing is true in the book of Revelation. We see that the Lord is the One who exercises this authority.

We are given a description of the appearance of the Lord in these verses as well. The word translated “like” means similar or resembles and is used a number of times in Revelation to use something that is known to describe something that John could not describe as he wrote this book. Here we see that the appearance of the Lord was like a jasper and a sardius stone. Revelation 21:10-11 describes a jasper stone by saying, “And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. Her light *was* like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal.” Here we see that the word used for a jasper stone describes a very precious stone that was as clear as crystal so it may be like a diamond. The second stone is called a sardius which was named for the city near which it was found and so was blood red like a bright ruby.

We also see that there was a rainbow around this throne. The first rainbow is described in Genesis 9:12-13 where we read, “And God said: “This *is* the sign of the covenant which I make between Me and you, and every living creature that *is* with you, for perpetual generations: I set My rainbow in the cloud, and it shall be for the sign of the covenant between Me and the earth.” Here we see that the original rainbow was a sign of the covenant that God gave to Noah and all who would live on the earth in the future. This rainbow would indicate that God will be faithful in keeping all of the promises that He has made for eternity. We see that this rainbow is compared to an emerald in its appearance. An emerald is green so the green color was the main color in this rainbow.

Revelation 4:4-5 says, “Around the throne *were* twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads. And from the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices. Seven lamps of fire *were* burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.” We see that around the throne of the Lord there are 24 more thrones with elders sitting on these thrones. In Revelation 3:5

Christ promised, “He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.” We see that all overcomers will be clothed in white garments. We will see that these white robes are robes of righteousness.

Those sitting on these thrones cannot be angels because angels are not given robes of righteousness. It is not Israel because most of the nation of Israel has not yet turned to Christ. Romans 11:25-26 says, “For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: ‘The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob.’” Israel as a whole will finally turn to Christ at the end of the tribulation so that is still future in most of the book of Revelation.

However, Revelation 19:7-8 says, “‘Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.’ And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.” In these verses we see that the fine linen robes are the righteous acts of the saints in the church. As a result, we see that the twenty-four elders represent the church which will be taken to heaven at the Rapture before the start of the tribulation. In addition to the robes of righteousness we see that the saints have crowns of gold on their heads. Paul wrote in II Timothy 4:7-8, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.” Crowns are given as rewards.

We see that three things were coming from the throne: lightnings, thunderings and voices. The word translated “voices” can refer either to words, to a language or to sounds from musical instruments. These things speak of the fact that judgment will come on the earth from the Lord. Revelation 8:5 says, “Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and threw *it* to the earth. And there were noises, thunderings, lightnings, and an earthquake.” Then the following verses speak of the trumpet judgments. We see the same thing during the seventh bowl judgment. Revelation 16:18 says, “And there were noises and thunderings and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such a mighty and great earthquake as had not occurred since men were on the earth.” This is followed by the judgment of Babylon.

We also see that there are seven lamps burning before the throne. These are the seven Spirits of God. These seven ministries of the Spirit are given in Isaiah 11:2 where we read, “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 of the fear of the LORD.” The seven Spirits of God are the Spirit of the Lord, the Spirit of wisdom, the Spirit of understanding, the Spirit of counsel, the Spirit of might, the Spirit of knowledge and the Spirit of the fear of the Lord. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain each of the things mentioned in these verses from the Word of God. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain these things.

12.

The Message about the One on the Throne

In our last topic we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain the things that are in this chapter from the Word of God. This is very important throughout the Bible but especially in the book of Revelation because many people give their own opinions instead of letting the Word of God interpret itself. In this topic we will see that the saints worship the Lord who sits on the throne.

Revelation 4:6-7 says, “Before the throne *there was* a sea of glass, like crystal. And in the midst of the throne, and around the throne, *were* four living creatures full of eyes in front and in back. The first living creature *was* like a lion, the second living creature like a calf, the third living creature had a face like a man, and the fourth living creature *was* like a flying eagle.” In heaven the street of the city is pure gold. Revelation 21:21 says, “The twelve gates *were* twelve pearls: each individual gate was of one pearl. And the street of the city *was* pure gold, like transparent glass.” However, the area in front of the throne is like a huge piece of crystal instead of gold.

The only other place this word is used is in Revelation 22:1 where we read, “And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb.” Here we see that the crystal speaks of the fact that the river is a pure river of water of life. Everything that comes from Christ is pure and that is what makes it eternal. Christ explained this living water to the woman at the well. John 4:13-14 says, “Jesus answered and said to her, ‘Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.’” We see that we will enjoy that pure water forever because it gives eternal life.

We have the phrase “in the midst of the throne”. This phrase is also used in Revelation 5:6 where we read, “And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth.” In Acts 7:56 we read, “and said, ‘Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!’” This verse shows us that the Father is on the throne and the Son is in the midst of the throne.

John also saw four living creatures around the throne. We see that each of these creatures was full of eyes. This meant that nothing escaped their notice. Ezekiel saw similar creatures in a vision from God given to Ezekiel by the River Chebar. Ezekiel 1:10 says, “As for the likeness of their faces, *each* had the face of a man; each of the four had the face of a lion on the right side, each of the four had the face of an ox on the left side, and each of the four had the face of an eagle.” Here we see the same four faces but in a somewhat different order. These living creatures worship with the saints that are gathered around the throne.

In the Old Testament when Israel was in the wilderness there were three tribes on each side of

the tabernacle. Judah was the leader of the three tribes on the east and their symbol was the lion. Ephraim was the leader on the west and their symbol was the ox. Reuben was the leader on the south and their symbol was a man. Dan was the leader on the north and their symbol was the eagle. In the New Testament Christ is presented in four different ways that go along with these four animals. Christ is called the Lion of the tribe of Judah and Matthew presented Him as the King. An ox (or calf) was their animal that carried heavy loads and Mark presented Christ as the Servant. Luke presented Christ as the Son of Man. John presented Christ as the Son of God. Exodus 19:4 says, "You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and *how* I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself." Then Isaiah 40:31 adds, "But those who wait on the LORD shall renew *their* strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint." As the Son of God, Christ brought us to the Father and gave us life when we repented of our sin of unbelief and believed on Him.

Revelation 4:8 goes on to say, "*The* four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying: 'Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!'" In Ezekiel 10 the creatures mentioned in Ezekiel 1:10 above are called cherubim. Ezekiel 10:15 says, "And the cherubim were lifted up. This *was* the living creature I saw by the River Chebar." Then Isaiah 6:1-2 says, "In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His *robe* filled the temple. Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew." As a result, these living creatures around the throne are either cherubim or seraphim and both groups are angels.

We see that these living creatures (angels) do not rest but continually speak about the holiness of the Lord. Isaiah 6:3 goes on to tell us what the cherubim said in the vision given to Isaiah. That verse says, "And one cried to another and said: 'Holy, holy, holy *is* the LORD of hosts; the whole earth *is* full of His glory!'" One of the names of Christ in the Old Testament is the Lord of hosts. In fact that name is used 245 times in the Old Testament with 24 of those uses in the book of Malachi. Malachi 3:1 says, "'Behold, I send My messenger, and he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight. Behold, He is coming,' says the LORD of hosts." Christ makes it clear that this is talking about Him when He said to John in Revelation 1:8, "'I am the Alpha and the Omega, *the* Beginning and *the* End,' says the Lord, 'who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.'" Christ is the Lord God Almighty who was and is and is to come. That is why we see that the living creatures worship Him continually.

The statement "Who was and is and is to come" speaks of the eternal existence of Christ. John emphasized that same thought repeatedly as he wrote the Gospel of John. John 1:1-3 and 1:14 say, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." In these verses we see that Christ spoke all creation into existence. Each of the "I AMs" in the book of John speaks of the eternal existence of Christ. John 8:58 says, "Jesus said to them, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.' Then they took up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by."

The reason that the Jews took up stones to stone Him was due to the fact that they knew Christ was claiming His eternal existence and they refused to believe in Him.

We also see that the saints will join with the living creatures by worshiping the Lord. Revelation 4:9-11 says, “Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying: “You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created.” First we see that the worship of the living creatures includes giving glory, honor and thanks to the Father as He sits on the throne. The verse quoted earlier from Revelation 5:6 shows that the Son is also in the midst of the throne. In addition, that verse says He has the seven Spirits of God.

Thus the whole Trinity is present and receives the worship of the living creatures and the saints. Philippians 2:9-11 says, “Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” In these verses we see that it will bring glory to the Father when every tongue confesses that Jesus Christ is Lord. We see that the saints will cast their crowns before the throne as they speak of the fact that the Lord is worthy to receive glory, honor and power.

We also see that the whole Trinity has always worked in perfect unity. In the creation in Genesis 1:1-3 we read, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form, and void; and darkness *was* on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light.” Verse one tells us that God the Father willed the whole creation. Verse two tells us that God the Holy Spirit was hovering over the face of the waters. Verse three together with John 1:1-3 tell us that Christ is the One who actually spoke and created all things and caused them to come into existence. John 1:1-3 says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.” That is why the worship given in these verses in Revelation will include the fact that the Lord is the Creator of all things and that it is by the will of the Lord that all things exist and were created.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain why the Lord is the One who deserves all worship. Truly the Lord is worthy to receive all glory, honor and power because of the fact that He created all things and it by His will that all things exist and were created. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to understand and explain these things.

13.

The Search for Someone to Open the Scroll

In our last topic we saw that the entire Trinity will receive our worship as we stand before the throne of God. We saw that the Lord is worthy to receive all worship because He is the Creator of all things and by Him all things exist. In our topic today we are going to see what happens as a search is made for someone to open the scroll.

In Revelation 5:1-3 we read, “And I saw in the right *hand* of Him who sat on the throne a scroll written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals. Then I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, ‘Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?’ And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll, or to look at it.” In the Old Testament contracts were written out on a scroll. These contracts could be for many different things such as marriage, wills, lease agreements and especially in the Old Testament the redemption of land by the owner. Ruth 4:4-5 talks about such a redemption of land when those verses say, “And I thought to inform you, saying, ‘Buy *it* back in the presence of the inhabitants and the elders of my people. If you will redeem *it*, redeem *it*; but if you will not redeem *it*, *then* tell me, that I may know; for *there is* no one but you to redeem *it*, and I *am* next after you.’ And he said, ‘I will redeem *it*.’ Then Boaz said, ‘On the day you buy the field from the hand of Naomi, you must also buy *it* from Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to perpetuate the name of the dead through his inheritance.’”

In the time of the New Testament the Romans sealed their wills with seven seals. This scroll with seven seals is in heaven but we are going to see that it is the title or deed to the earth. This scroll needed someone who was qualified to open the seals. In the case of Ruth the close relative had to be both willing to redeem the land and able to redeem the land. The book of Ruth shows that the closest relative was unwilling to redeem the land because he did not want to mar his inheritance. Ruth 4:6 says, “And the close relative said, ‘I cannot redeem *it* for myself, lest I ruin my own inheritance. You redeem my right of redemption for yourself, for I cannot redeem *it*.’” Here in Revelation we see that a strong angel asked a very important question, “Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?” We will see that the seals on the scroll describe the various judgments that must come on the earth before the rule of God will be reestablished over the entire universe which has been marred by the consequences of sin.

The angel was looking for someone who was worthy to open the scroll. This meant that the person had to be both qualified and willing to open the scroll. John saw what happened when the strong angel asked this question. At first it seemed like there was no one in heaven, on the earth or anywhere in the entire creation that was qualified to open the seals of the scroll and look at what was written on the scroll. We see the reaction of John when it seemed that no one was qualified to break the seals and open the scroll. Revelation 5:4-5 says, “So I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open and read the scroll, or to look at it. But one of the elders said to me, “Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals.” John was filled with sorrow and wept

a great amount when it seemed that no one could be found who could open the scroll. No one was even able to see (gaze upon or to have the power to understand) the scroll.

In fact to John it seemed that there were three things that no one could do. He thought no one was worthy to open the scroll, to read the scroll or even to look at the scroll with understanding. Suddenly one of the elders that was seated around the throne spoke to John. This elder told John not to cry or weep. He told John that there was One who could take the scroll, open it and read what was written on the scroll. The elder used two Old Testament names to describe the One who was able to open the seals. The first name given was “the Lion of the tribe of Judah”. In Genesis 49 Jacob gathered His sons together to tell them what was going to happen in the last days. Then he spoke about each of his sons.

In Genesis 49:8-10 we read, “Judah, you *are he* whom your brothers shall praise; Your hand *shall be* on the neck of your enemies; Your father’s children shall bow down before you. Judah *is* a lion’s whelp; from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He bows down, he lies down as a lion; and as a lion, who shall rouse him? The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh comes; and to Him *shall be* the obedience of the people.” In these verses we have the first reference to the fact that one of Judah’s descendants will rule in the future. We also see that this descendent is described as a lion. Christ is the One who is the Lion of the tribe of Judah.

The second name is the Root of David. David was promised that one of his descendants would sit on the throne forever. Revelation 22:16 says, “I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star.” Here we see that Jesus is identified as the One who is the Root of David. He is the One who will fulfill all of the promises that God gave to David about the descendent that would come from his family. These passages make it clear that the One who is able to open the scroll is Christ. We will also see that Christ was willing to open the scroll.

We go on to read in Revelation 5:6-7, “And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth. Then He came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne.” Here we see that John turned and looked and saw a lamb in the middle of the throne, the four living creatures and the elders.

The word translated “Lamb” was the word for a little pet lamb. In Exodus 12:3 and 6 we read, “Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying: ‘On the tenth of this month every man shall take for himself a lamb, according to the house of *his* father, a lamb for a household...Now you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month. Then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it at twilight.’” Here we see that the Jews were to have the lamb for four days before it became the lamb for the Passover. Then Isaiah 53:7 says, “He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth. John the Baptist introduced Jesus in John 1:29 by saying, “The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, ‘Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!’” Christ is our Passover Lamb.

The Jews also offered a lamb each year on the Day of Atonement as a covering for sin. Hebrews 9:11-15 says, “But Christ came *as* High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.” When John turned, He saw that the Lion of the tribe of Judah is also the Lamb of God who paid the penalty once for all to become the Mediator of a new covenant.

We see that the Lamb of God had seven horns and seven eyes which are the seven Spirits of God. Isaiah 11:1-4 says, “There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots. 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 of the fear of the LORD. His delight *is* in the fear of the LORD, and He shall not judge by the sight of His eyes, nor decide by the hearing of His ears; but with righteousness He shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked.” Seven is the number of completeness or perfection in the Bible. Horns in the Bible always speak of power. Christ has been given all authority. His eyes speak of the fact that He sees and knows all things. From these verses in Isaiah we see that Christ has the Spirit of the Lord on Him, the Spirit of wisdom, the Spirit of understanding, the Spirit of Counsel, the Spirit of might, the Spirit of knowledge and the Spirit of the fear of the Lord.

We also see that Christ will judge the earth in righteousness and destroy the wicked. The seven seals in Revelation are judgments that will come upon the earth to destroy the wicked. That is why we read that the Lamb came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne. Once the Christians are taken to heaven the antichrist will be revealed to lead the rebellion of the earth against God. II Thessalonians 2:7-8 says, “For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains *will do so* until He is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming.” This rebellion will be judged through these judgments as a part of redeeming the earth from the consequences of sin. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain to others why this judgment is necessary. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain these things.

14.

The Lamb is Worthy to Open the Scroll

In our last topic we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain why John wept when he thought that there was no one worthy to open the scroll that would redeem the earth from the consequences of sin. Then he learned that the Lamb of God would open the scroll. In this topic we will see that all in heaven and the creatures of the earth will rejoice for the fact that Christ is worthy to open the scroll.

In Revelation 5:8-10 we read, “Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song, saying: “You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth.” We saw in an earlier topic that the twenty-four elders are the church after it is taken to heaven. Here we see that the four living creatures will be joined by the church as we fall down together to worship Christ, the Lamb of God.

We see that the church will have two things as we fall down in worship of Christ. We will have harps and golden bowls of incense. This verse immediately explains that the bowls of incense are the prayers of the saints. Harps were used in the Old Testament by the Jews as they sang songs to the Lord. Psalm 33:1-3 illustrates the fact that the Jews sang Psalms of praise to God accompanied by the harp. Those verses say, “Rejoice in the LORD, O you righteous! *For* praise from the upright is beautiful. Praise the LORD with the harp; make melody to Him with an instrument of ten strings. Sing to Him a new song; play skillfully with a shout of joy.”

The prophets also played harps at times when they prophesied. This is illustrated in I Samuel 10:5-6 where we read, “After that you shall come to the hill of God where the Philistine garrison *is*. And it will happen, when you have come there to the city, that you will meet a group of prophets coming down from the high place with a stringed instrument, a tambourine, a flute, and a harp before them; and they will be prophesying. Then the Spirit of the LORD will come upon you, and you will prophesy with them and be turned into another man.” This prophecy was fulfilled later that same day as I Samuel 10:10 says, “When they came there to the hill, there was a group of prophets to meet him; then the Spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied among them.” In these verses in Revelation and several times later in the book we see that the songs will be songs of praise for the fact that the Lord has answered our prayers.

Here the four creatures and the church will sing a song speaking about the fact that Christ is worthy to take the scroll and open its seals. This song also tells why Christ is worthy. He is worthy to open the seals because He was killed to purchase our salvation by His blood and bring us back into relationship with the Father as His children. This large group that will be rejoicing in song will include people from every tribe, language (dialect), ethnic group and nation. We also see that Christ made us kings and priests (a kingdom of priests). I Peter 2:9-10

says, “But you *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once *were* not a people but *are* now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.” As a royal priesthood we have the right to enter into the presence of God. We also see that we will reign with Christ on the earth.

We see the rejoicing of angels as they join the singing and worship. Revelation 5:11-12 says, “Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice: ‘Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing!’” The word translated “ten thousand times ten thousand” means innumerable or beyond what can be counted by man. That is the way the word is translated in Hebrews 12:22 where we read, “But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels.” They could not sing about the fact that Christ was slain for them but they certainly could join in singing about the fact that He is worthy.

We see that as they join together with the church that we, together with the angels, will sing about seven things that Christ is worthy to receive. First, Christ is worthy to receive praise for His power. In Hebrews 1:3 we read, “Who being the brightness of *His* glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.” Here we see that Christ holds all things together by the word of His power. Second, Christ is worthy to receive praise for His riches. Ephesians 1:7 says, “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.” Here we see that the riches of Christ are very different from the riches of the world. His riches are shown by His grace.

Third, Christ is worthy to receive praise for His wisdom. I Corinthians 1:30 says, “But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.” Then James 3:17 adds, “But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.” His wisdom is perfect. Fourth, Christ is worthy to receive praise for His strength. I Peter 4:11 says, “If anyone speaks, *let him speak* as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, *let him do it* as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.” In this verse we see that we serve in the strength (ability) which God supplies through Christ Jesus.

Fifth, Christ is worthy to receive honor. I Timothy 1:17 says, “Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, *be* honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.” Sixth, Christ is worthy to receive glory. II Corinthians 3:18 says, “But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.” Here we see that Christ is transforming us into His image. Seventh, Christ is worthy to receive blessing because He has blessed us with all spiritual blessings. Ephesians 1:3 says, “Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ.”

We go on to see that this rejoicing is going to come from every creature in heaven and on earth. Revelation 5:13-14 says, “And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: “Blessing and honor and glory and power *be* to Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, forever and ever!” Then the four living creatures said, ‘Amen!’ And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever.” Here we see that the whole creation of God is looking forward to the fact that Christ is worthy to set the creation free from the results of sin.

Genesis 3:17 says, “Then to Adam He said, ‘Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, ‘You shall not eat of it’: ‘Cursed *is* the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat *of* it all the days of your life.’” Here we see that everything in the creation of God was affected by the sin of man. As a result, the creation and every creature has been waiting for the One who would redeem the world from the consequences of sin. Romans 8:20-22 says, “For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected *it* in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.” This is why every creature will join in the rejoicing because Christ is worthy to redeem His creation.

We then see the length of time that this rejoicing will continue. We see that it will continue forever and ever. This speaks of an unbroken rejoicing that will last for all eternity. Here we see that the angels, the church along with the whole creation are looking forward to the time beyond the return of Christ to rule on the earth and the final judgments. We see that they are looking to eternity when the results of sin will no longer be present. Revelation 21:1-4 says, “Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, ‘Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them *and be* their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.’” Here we see that all of the consequences of sin will be removed for all eternity.

This is why we can look forward to the time beyond the final judgments. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand why Christ is worthy to open the seals and the eternal results of His redemption. We also want to help our children learn to explain to others why Christ is worthy. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain these things.

15.

The First Four Seal Judgments

In our last topic we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain why Christ is worthy to open the seven seals on the scroll. We also saw what the eternal results will be of His redemption. In this topic we are going to learn about the judgments that will come on the earth from the first four seals.

We see that there are seven seals. The seventh seal will have seven trumpet judgments in it. The seventh trumpet judgment will have seven bowl judgments in it so these seven seals will have all of the judgments through the end of chapter 19. Revelation 6:1-2 says, "Now I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals; and I heard one of the four living creatures saying with a voice like thunder, 'Come and see.' And I looked, and behold, a white horse. He who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer." Here we see that the Lamb opened the first seal. Then one of the living creatures spoke to John and told him to come and see what was revealed when this first seal was opened.

When the first seal was opened John saw a white horse and a rider. This rider has a bow but no arrows. We see a crown was given to the rider. We also see that the horse and rider went out to conquer. Since Christ is the One who opened the seals, we see that this cannot be Christ. We will see that the rider on this white horse is actually the antichrist. Before the time of the coming of the antichrist Mark 13:5-8 says, "And Jesus, answering them, began to say: 'Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am *He*,' and will deceive many. But when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be troubled; for *such things* must happen, but the end *is* not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be earthquakes in various places, and there will be famines and troubles. These *are* the beginnings of sorrows.'" From the time that Christ returned to heaven there have been many that have claimed to be the christ and they have deceived many people. There have also been wars and rumors of wars. Christ said that these things must happen before the coming of the antichrist.

A white flag has always been a sign of surrender or a sign of peace. The white horse points out the fact that the antichrist will gain power by promising peace. This is further shown by the fact that he will have a bow but no arrows. The word translated "crown" is not the crown of a king. Instead it is a crown of reward (for Christians) or a crown of victory for the world. I Corinthians 9:25 says, "And everyone who competes *for the prize* is temperate in all things. Now they *do it* to obtain a perishable crown, but we *for* an imperishable *crown*." The crown of the antichrist will be a very perishable crown because he will conquer by making false promises of world peace. After the rapture of the church in I Thessalonians 4:13-18 we read in I Thessalonians 5:3, "For when they say, 'Peace and safety!' then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape." The antichrist will deceive the world by promising peace but it will only be temporary.

The rider on the first horse is the same rider on the following three horses. Revelation 6:3-4

says, “When He opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, ‘Come and see.’ Another horse, fiery red, went out. And it was granted to the one who sat on it to take peace from the earth, and that *people* should kill one another; and there was given to him a great sword.” The red horse speaks of war and bloodshed. Here we see that once the antichrist has gained world control by promising peace that the temporary peace comes to a sudden end. We see that there will be conflict throughout the earth because these verses say that he will take peace from the earth. This is shown by the fact that instead of a bow and no arrows that this time he is given a great sword.

We see that people will kill one another. Genesis 6:5 and 6:11 tell us, “Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth, and *that* every intent of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually... The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence.” Then Luke 17:26 adds, “And as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man.” The antichrist will gain world power by promising peace but that peace will soon be replaced with violence throughout the world. This verse in Luke shows us that the violence is compared to the violence that was present in the time of Noah. We see that in his time that the earth was filled with violence. There are several things that go along with violence that will also be present throughout the world during the time of the antichrist.

Revelation 6:5-6 says, “When He opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, ‘Come and see.’ So I looked, and behold, a black horse, and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, ‘A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not harm the oil and the wine.’” One of the consequences of war and violence is the destruction of much food. That is the result that we see in these verses and we see that famine is pictured by a black horse. In the Old Testament the city of Samaria experienced great famine when it was under siege by the army of Syria. I Kings 6:24-25 says, “Then the king said to her, ‘What is troubling you?’ And she answered, ‘This woman said to me, Give your son, that we may eat him today, and we will eat my son tomorrow.’ So we boiled my son, and ate him. And I said to her on the next day, ‘Give your son, that we may eat him’; but she has hidden her son.” In Samaria this famine became so bad that these women were eating their own children.

Here in Revelation we see that the rider on the black horse has a scale in his hands. During the time of New Testament a denarius was the wage for a full day of work. A quart of wheat will provide enough bread or other food for one person for a day. In that day barley was normally food for the animals because it was cheaper than wheat. As a result, a person will be able to buy three quarts of barley for a full day’s wage. Here we see one of the results of violence and war. In order to feed a small family a person will need to buy barley instead of wheat in order to have enough food for that small family for a day. This third seal points out the fact that there will be a lack of food for most of the people. As a result, there will be hunger throughout the earth.

At the same time this hunger will not affect all of the people because the last phrase of these verses says “and do not harm the oil and the wine.” Oil and wine were part of the basics for the poor because oil was used to make bread and wine was used to purify water. However, in the

time this book was written the rich would use expensive oils to make perfume and lotions. They would use the wine to make expensive liquors. As a result, during the early part of the tribulation the small percentage of rich will still be able to live in luxury even though the great majority of the people will experience need due to a lack of food. This would indicate that the rich will have no concern for the poor.

Revelation 6:7-8 brings us to the opening of the fourth seal where we read, “When He opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, ‘Come and see.’ So I looked, and behold, a pale horse. And the name of him who sat on it was Death, and Hades followed with him. And power was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, with hunger, with death, and by the beasts of the earth.” The word translated “pale” speaks of something that is green or yellow. Here we see that the opening of this seal brings Death and Hades to the earth.

We see that Death comes first and it is followed by Hades. The word translated “Hades” was used to speak of a dark dismal place in the depths of the earth. Christ used this word when He told about the rich man and Lazarus. Luke 16:22-24 says “So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham’s bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. Then he cried and said, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.’” Here we see that Hades is the place where unbelievers go and are there until the final judgment. Revelation 20:13-15 says, “The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.”

We see that although the antichrist will promise peace that he will actually come with the goal of destruction of as many people as possible. Through these first four seals we see that one-fourth of the population of the world will be destroyed. In these verses we see death will come to people in a variety of different ways. Many will be killed by other people. In the time of Noah the earth was filled with violence and the people were unprepared for the judgment that God brought on the earth. Luke 17:26 says, “And as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man.” Many will die as a result of hunger and starvation. Some will be killed by the wild animals. These verses make it clear that most will not die from sickness, disease or other natural causes of death. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain that the antichrist will try to deceive the world by promising to bring world peace. However, instead of peace this passage makes it clear that death and judgment will come on those who believe his lies. May the Lord richly bless you as you equip your children to warn others about this future judgment.

16.

The Fifth and Sixth Seal Judgments

In our last topic we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn how to use the Word of God to warn people of the coming future judgment which God is warning about in the book of Revelation. We will see that there are many additional judgments. In this topic we will learn about the fifth and sixth seal judgments.

In Revelation 6:9-11 we read, “When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, ‘How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?’ Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both *the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed.*” In the previous seal we saw that one-fourth of the people on the earth will be killed in various ways by the antichrist and his followers. In these verses we see that some of those who will be killed will be those who have learned about Christ during the tribulation and have become tribulation saints. The antichrist will make every possible effort to destroy all tribulation saints.

When the fifth seal was opened, John saw under the altar the souls of those who been slain. We see that there are two reasons why the antichrist will kill these people for their faith. First, we see that they will be killed because they have been faithful to the Word of God. In Revelation 1:9 we see that John had been placed on the island of Patmos for being faithful to the Word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. That verse says, “I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.” Second we see that the tribulation saints will be put to death by the antichrist because of the fact that they will remain faithful to the witness that they have given. We see that Satan will have the same goal as he works through the antichrist that he had at the time that John was placed on the island of Patmos.

These tribulation saints will want to know when the Lord will judge those who have put them to death. We see that they will recognize that the Lord is holy and must judge sin. Christ finished paying the penalty for sin at the moment that He said as He hung on the cross, “It is finished!” All those who have come to Christ and will come to Him in the future including the tribulation saints have accepted that payment of Christ for them. In contrast, all those who continue to reject that payment will be judged and sent to join Satan where they will experience eternal judgment. Revelation 20:10 says, “The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet *are*. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.” Then Revelation 20:14-15 says, “Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.”

We see that Christ will give each of these tribulation saints a white robe which speaks of the

robe of righteousness and receive the same promise that we have received in Revelation 3:5 which promises, “He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels. This will be fulfilled for us by the time of Revelation 4:4 where we read, “Around the throne *were* twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads.” In these verses we see that the tribulation saints are also give robes of righteousness. However, they are told that they must wait a little longer before their death is avenged and they are raised back to life. The Lord will tell them that there are still some more who must believe later in the tribulation until the number who will become tribulation saints has been completed.

This brings us to the sixth seal which we read about in Revelation 6:12-14 which says, “I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood. And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind. Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place.” Here we see that when the sixth seal is opened that it will have a large effect on the whole universe. First, we see there will be a great earthquake that will affect the earth. Luke 21:11 says, “And there will be great earthquakes in various places, and famines and pestilences; and there will be fearful sights and great signs from heaven.” This particular earthquake will be much greater than these other earthquakes because it will affect the entire earth.

Second, we see that the sun and the moon will be affected. We read that the sun will become black as sackcloth of hair and the moon will become like blood. Matthew 24:29-30 says, “Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.” The darkening of the sun and the changing of the color of the moon may be the result of many volcanoes erupting in various parts of the earth at the same time as the great earthquake. This would fill the skies with ash and debris from the volcanoes that would so fill the sky that it would cause the sun to become dark and the moon to become red like the color of blood.

Third, we see that the stars of heaven will fall on the earth like the figs of a fig tree that is being shaken by a very strong wind. Winter figs grow after the leaves have fallen off the fig tree so there is nothing to protect them when a strong wind blows. Fourth, we see that the sky will recede like a scroll when it is rolled up. Isaiah speaks of this time of judgment of the earth when he wrote in Isaiah 34:4, “All the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled up like a scroll; all their host shall fall down as the leaf falls from the vine, and as *fruit* falling from a fig tree.” Here we see that there will be a complete change in the sky. Fifth, we see that every mountain will be moved out of place. Revelation 16:20 says, “Then every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.” The result of the worldwide earthquake shows us that the islands and even the continents of the earth may be moved so that as a result of the earthquake the earth will have the islands and continents move large distances.

We go on to see how the people of the earth will react as they see these things happening on the

earth and in the heavens. Revelation 6:15-17 says, “And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, ‘Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?’” Here we see that these things that will happen on the earth will fill everyone with total fear. No one will be able to avoid the results of these things happening on the earth.

The kings and the rulers of the earth can normally depend on their power and their position to protect them. However, we see that they will be no safer than any other person on the earth. The rich will use their money to live life as normal during the judgments of the first four seals. However, their money will mean nothing when the earth is shaken by the great earthquake and all of these other things happen throughout the earth. Those in the military will not be able to find any protection from their military weapons when this great shaking comes upon the earth. The same thing is true for every other person on the earth whether a person is a slave or a free man. There will be no escape for any of the people on the earth from the consequences of this judgment.

Instead we see that the people will try to hide themselves. Some will look for caves where they can hide. Others will look for places in the rocks of the mountains where they can hide. The people will even seek suicide as they ask the mountains and the rocks to fall on them to hide them from the judgment that God is bringing on the earth. In every major earthquake in the area where we live I have personally known individuals who have turned to God in repentance and faith immediately after the quake or within a few days. Instead of crying out to God for mercy in this great earthquake we see that the unbelief of the people will cause them to either hide or seek death. This shows how rebellious the hearts of the people will be the time of the tribulation. Jeremiah 17:9 describes well what their hearts will be like when that verse says, “The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked; Who can know it?” The people will realize that this judgment comes from God and that they are experiencing the wrath of the Lamb against their sin but most of the people will be unwilling to repent of their sin of unbelief.

In fact the people will say, “For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?” Here we see that the people will realize that this worldwide earth quake and the things that will follow it show that the day of God’s wrath has come on the earth. Since this earthquake has a worldwide impact, the people will not be calling it a natural disaster. Instead they will ask the question, “Who is able to stand?” That question will be answered in the next chapter. We see that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn how to explain how the opening of each of these seals will affect the earth. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain these things.

17.

The Sealing of the 144,000

In our last topic we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain each of the seal judgments that will come upon the earth. We see that the world will recognize the judgments of the fifth and sixth seals as the wrath of God but it will not cause them to repent. Instead they will ask the question, “Who is able to stand?” That question will be answered in Revelation 7 as we see two groups who will stand.

Revelation 7:1-2a says, “After these things I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, on the sea, or on any tree. Then I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God.” All of the future judgments that will happen during the rest of the tribulation will be a part of the judgments of the seventh seal so we see the two groups that will still stand at the end of the tribulation. The first group will stand throughout the entire tribulation and the second group will be raised back to physical life at the end of the tribulation.

As we begin this chapter we see that God told John that there are four angels who will hold the winds that blow in the four different directions. The winds from these four directions reach the entire earth and influence the heavens as well. Mark 13:27 says, “And then He will send His angels, and gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest part of earth to the farthest part of heaven.” Here we see that suddenly the winds will stop blowing throughout the entire earth. Since the winds affect both the earth and the heavens, this will have a tremendous impact on the weather throughout the entire earth. The air in many of the large cities will quickly become very polluted because there is no wind or rain to remove the pollution from the air. This stopping of the wind will also have its effects on the seas and oceans. These changes will cause every person on the earth to be affected in one way or another.

Then John saw another angel coming down from heaven. He saw that this angel had the seal of the living God. II Timothy 2:19 says, “Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: ‘The Lord knows those who are His,’ and, ‘Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity.’” In this verse we see that this seal shows that God knows those who belong to Him. Satan knows that he cannot touch those who have the seal of God unless God allows him to do so. Job 1:9-10 says, “So Satan answered the LORD and said, ‘Does Job fear God for nothing? Have You not made a hedge around him, around his household, and around all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land.’” We are going to see that this angel places the seal of God on certain people so that Satan cannot touch them throughout the remainder of the tribulation.

We see that this angel calls to the angels that hold the four winds. Revelation 7:2b-4 says, “And he cried with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea, saying, ‘Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.’ And I heard the number of those who were sealed. One hundred

and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel were sealed.” In these verses we see that when the angels stop the four winds that it is going to bring harm to earth, the sea and the trees. The angel tells the four angels not to stop the winds until he has sealed the servants of God on their foreheads. This seal placed on the foreheads of the servants of God will also protect them from any of the harm that will be caused by the stopping of the winds. The four angels of the four winds were not to stop the winds until the servants of God were sealed.

We also see that the stopping of the winds is going to bring harm to the earth, the sea and the trees. We will see some of the ways that the earth, the sea and the trees will be harmed when we come to the trumpet judgments in Revelation 8. Then when we come to chapter nine we will see that God stops the judgments on the earth, sea and trees and God allows Satan to hurt the people with locusts that come out of the bottomless pit. Revelation 9:2-6 says, “And he opened the bottomless pit, and smoke arose out of the pit like the smoke of a great furnace. So the sun and the air were darkened because of the smoke of the pit. Then out of the smoke locusts came upon the earth. And to them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power. They were commanded not to harm the grass of the earth, or any green thing, or any tree, but only those men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. And they were not given *authority* to kill them, but to torment them *for* five months. Their torment *was* like the torment of a scorpion when it strikes a man. In those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will desire to die, and death will flee from them.” Here we see that the harm to the green things on the earth will stop and the people who are in rebellion against God will begin to experience such great pain that they will wish that they could die.

We also learn more about the servants of God who will receive the seal of God on their foreheads. A key thing to notice is that they are called “servants of God.” Earlier in the New Testament God speaks about three groups of people. I Corinthians 10:32 says, “Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God.” These “servants of God” cannot be the church because we saw that the church was already taken to heaven in the Rapture which will happen at the beginning of Revelation 4. These cannot be the Gentiles because there are no servants of God on the earth once the Christians are taken to heaven. As a result, in Revelation 11:3 we read that God will send His two witnesses during the first half of the tribulation to be His witnesses. That verse says, “And I will give *power* to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth.” These “servants of God” will be the first 144,000 to respond to the message of the two witnesses.

We see that these servants of God are from the various tribes of the children of Israel. There are going to be sealed by God and protected from Satan and the antichrist so that they can take the Gospel to the people of all nations that have not heard and rejected the Gospel before Christ takes the Christians to heaven. God is going to fulfill all of the promises that He made to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and the nation of Israel in the Old Testament. This will happen during and after the tribulation. Romans 11:25-26 says, “For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: ‘The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness

from Jacob.” These “servants of God” are the firstfruits of the people of Israel that will be turned to God during and at the end of the tribulation.

This is the beginning of the fulfillment of the promise given to Israel in Zechariah 12:10. That verse says, “And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for *his* only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn.” In this verse we see that God promised the Jews that the time would come when the people of Israel would all turn to Him. That is why Hebrews 8:8-12 quotes Jeremiah 31:31-34 when those verses say, “Because finding fault with them, He says: ‘Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah— not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the LORD. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.’”

Revelation 7:5-8 goes on to give us the number sealed from the twelve tribes of Israel, “of the tribe of Judah twelve thousand *were* sealed; of the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand *were* sealed; of the tribe of Gad twelve thousand *were* sealed; of the tribe of Asher twelve thousand *were* sealed; of the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousand *were* sealed; of the tribe of Manasseh twelve thousand *were* sealed; of the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand *were* sealed; of the tribe of Levi twelve thousand *were* sealed; of the tribe of Issachar twelve thousand *were* sealed; of the tribe of Zebulun twelve thousand *were* sealed; of the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand *were* sealed; of the tribe of Benjamin twelve thousand *were* sealed.” In these verses we notice a few key things. Joseph had two sons Manasseh and Ephraim. Manasseh and Joseph are both mentioned here as those were two of the twelve tribes of Israel. Levi was not one of the twelve tribes of Israel because they were the Levites who assisted the priests but they are mentioned here.

The tribe of Dan is not mentioned because they were the first tribe as a tribe to begin worshipping idols. Judges 18:30 says, “Then the children of Dan set up for themselves the carved image; and Jonathan the son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh, and his sons were priests to the tribe of Dan until the day of the captivity of the land.” As a result, this tribe will not have the privilege of having some of its members among the 144,000. This is just a reminder that sin can have a long term effect on our descendants. In contrast, we want to help our physical and spiritual children commit their lives to Christ and learn to explain to others what the Word of God teaches. From this chapter we want to help them explain why the 144,000 witnesses will come from the nation of Israel. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain these things.

18.

The Great Multitude of Tribulation Saints

In our last topic we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain why God will give the 144,000 from the nation of Israel the privilege of being the witnesses of the death and resurrection of Christ during the tribulation. In this topic we will see the result of their faithful witness during that time.

John had been given a vision of the 144,000 who would be sealed. Revelation 7:9-12 says, “After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, saying, “Salvation *belongs* to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!” All the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying: “Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, thanksgiving and honor and power and might, *be* to our God forever and ever. Amen.” Here we see that later John saw a large gathering of people. We will see that the people of this great multitude are the tribulation saints who received the witness of the 144,000 and came to God in repentance and faith.

This gathering of people is so large that no one can count the number. These people come from every nation. All of the tribes of the world are represented in this large multitude. Every people group on the earth is included in this gathering. Every dialect from within each people group is also included. These verses make it very clear that no group of people from the entire earth will be left out of this group. This large group of people will all be gathered in heaven in front of the Lamb (Christ). Each person gathered in this huge group of people will have a palm branch that he or she is waving. This was often done in the Old and New Testaments to celebrate a special event. John 12:12-13 says, “The next day a great multitude that had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took branches of palm trees and went out to meet Him, and cried out: ‘Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD! The King of Israel!’” In John it was to celebrate the arrival of Jesus in Jerusalem.

This huge celebration in heaven will be in front of the throne of God. This entire crowd will be shouting with loud voices saying, “Salvation *belongs* to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!” Salvation speaks of deliverance from the eternal consequences of sin. Today each Christian receives this deliverance at the moment of salvation. We will see in a few verses when this huge group will receive that deliverance. In these verses we see that this great multitude of people will recognize the source of their deliverance. This multitude will realize that the Father who sits on the throne is the One who willed this salvation. They will recognize that the Lamb of God was the One who shed His blood in order for them to receive that salvation.

Suddenly this great multitude will be joined by an even greater crowd who will join in this time of celebration. These additional worshipers will include all of the angels. The entire church

represented by the elders along with the four living creatures will join in this worship. They will all fall on their faces before the throne and worship God. This entire group will then join together and express their worship by saying, “Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, thanksgiving and honor and power and might, *be* to our God forever and ever. Amen.” Here we see that all blessing belongs to God. The same is true for all glory and wisdom. Everyone will express their thanksgiving to God and to the Lamb for their salvation. They will all recognize that all honor, power and might will belong to God forever and ever. This will be a huge celebration of worship to God.

Revelation 7:13-14 shows that John will be asked two questions. “Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, ‘Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?’ And I said to him, ‘Sir, you know.’ So he said to me, ‘These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.’” Here we see that one of the elders asks John a question. However, the questions and the answers given really are for us because John said that the elder knew the answer to the questions. The first question was, “Who are these arrayed in white robes?” The answer that the elder gave John was that these were the very large number of people who will become saints during the tribulation.

Here we see that during the time of the tribulation God will make certain that people from every nation, language and ethnic group will have the opportunity to believe in Christ because they will not have heard and chosen to reject Him before the tribulation began. In II Thessalonians 2:11-12 we see that this is not a second opportunity for those who heard the Gospel of salvation and rejected it. Those verses say, “And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” Here we see that all who rejected the message of salvation will believe the lies of the antichrist and will not repent during the tribulation.

The second question was, “Where did they come from?” We see that these are tribulation saints that have come out of the great tribulation. We also see how they became tribulation saints. We read that these saints, “Washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” Here we see that the tribulation saints will receive salvation in the same way that every believer throughout history has received forgiveness of sins. Hebrews 9:22 says, “And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission.” The word translated “remission” is translated forgiveness in several verses. Ephesians 1:7 says, “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.” It is through Christ that we have forgiveness of sins. The same thing will be true in the tribulation. Here in Revelation we see that the tribulation saints will have robes that are washed and made white through the blood of Christ.

We go on to read about the ministry of this great multitude. Revelation 7:15-17 says, “Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them. They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat; for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.” Here we see that the tribulation saints will be before the throne of

God. This looks forward to the time at the end of the tribulation when the tribulation saints will serve the Lord on this earth during the one thousand year reign of Christ on the earth called the millennium.

The reason that we can know that this is during the millennium is due to the fact that this multitude serves God day and night in the temple. Revelation 21:22 says, “But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.” Then Revelation 22:5 says, “There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever.” Together these verses show us that in heaven there will be no temple and there will be no night. As a result, the verses here in Revelation 7 look forward to the time when Christ will be ruling on earth for a thousand years.

During the reign of Christ on the earth we see that the tribulation saints who were put to death for their faith will have the privilege of serving Christ and rule with Him during the time that He reigns on the earth. We see that the throne of God will be in His temple. This service will be both day and night. Revelation 20:4 says, “And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then *I saw* the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received *his* mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.” In addition, in I Corinthians 6:2 we read, “Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters?” Here we see that the church will also have the privilege of ruling with Christ during this time.

One of the greatest blessings of this time is that the One who sits on this throne in the temple (Christ) will dwell with us. John 1:14 tells us what it was like when Christ came to dwell on this earth during His ministry on earth. That verse says, “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” Throughout this thousand year period we will have the opportunity to behold His glory. During that time all of the followers of Christ will be protected from hunger, thirst, and the burning heat. We see that during this time the Lord will also shepherd the nation of Israel. Ezekiel 34:11-13 says, “For thus says the Lord GOD: ‘Indeed I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out. As a shepherd seeks out his flock on the day he is among his scattered sheep, so will I seek out My sheep and deliver them from all the places where they were scattered on a cloudy and dark day. And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land; I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, in the valleys and in all the inhabited places of the country.’” Christ will also lead them to the living waters and wipe every tear from their eyes.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand and learn to explain that Christ will keep all of the promises of God to Israel and also gather tribulation saints from every nation, people and tongue. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain these things to others.

19.

The Opening of the Seventh Seal

In our last topic we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain who the great multitude is that will come out of the great tribulation. In this topic we will see what happens when the seventh seal is opened. Within this seven seal will be all of the other judgments.

We saw in an earlier topic that the Lamb (Christ) was both able and willing to open the seven seals. In this topic we see that He will open the seventh seal which will contain all of the other judgments that will come on the creation. Revelation 8:1-3 says, “When He opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets. Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense, that he should offer *it* with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.” Here we see that there was complete silence in heaven for about half an hour when the seventh seal was opened. This silence shows that there will be amazement as those in heaven see what the judgments that are coming on the earth will be like.

In this chapter and the next we will see the first six of the trumpet judgments. We see that seven angels come and stand before God. Then each of these angels is given a trumpet. They will each take their turn to blow their trumpet. As each trumpet is blown it will announce the next judgment that will come on the earth. However, before any of the angels sounded their trumpets, John saw another angel come that has a golden censer in his hand. John saw this angel come and stand in front of the altar. This angel had a golden censer. In the Old Testament a censer was a pan used by the priest to carry incense into the tabernacle and later the temple to burn on the altar of incense each morning and evening. Leviticus 16:12-13 says that on the Day of Atonement, “Then he shall take a censer full of burning coals of fire from the altar before the LORD, with his hands full of sweet incense beaten fine, and bring *it* inside the veil. And he shall put the incense on the fire before the LORD, that the cloud of incense may cover the mercy seat that *is* on the Testimony, lest he die.” On that day the High Priest would start with coals of fire from the burnt altar and add incense before he went into the Holy of Holies.

Here in Revelation we see that the angel will have a golden censer. We see that he will be given much incense. We see that the angel will offer incense with the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar which will be in front of the throne. One of the prayers of the tribulation saints is given in Revelation 6:9-11 where we read, “When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, ‘How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?’ Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both *the number of* their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they *were*, was completed.” The various trumpet judgments will be a part of the judgment that the Lord will bring on those who have killed the tribulation saints.

Revelation 8:4-5 goes on to give the introduction to those judgments when those verses say, “And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel’s hand. Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and threw *it* to the earth. And there were noises, thunders, lightnings, and an earthquake.” Here we see that the prayers of the saints are mixed with the incense that is offered to God by the angel. Then the angel filled the censer with fire from the altar and threw this fire to the earth. In this way God illustrates that the judgment that is about to come on the earth is His judgment because of the many tribulation saints who will be killed for their faith. Galatians 6:7-8 says, Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.” During the tribulation God will judge all sins against His saints.

God will respond to this fire thrown to the earth by causing three things to happen to introduce the trumpet judgments. Normally thunder is followed by lightning. Here we see the order reversed. The thunders will come before the lightnings. This reversal shows that God is the one who is in control. The judgments that will follow will show that God is carrying out His purpose to judge those who have sown to the flesh by their sins against the tribulation saints. The thunder and the lightning will be followed by an earthquake. We read about a great earthquake in the sixth seal judgment. Revelation 6:12-14 says, “I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood. And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind. Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place.” The earthquake mentioned here will probably be at least as severe as that earthquake.

The early trumpet judgments will affect the entire creation. Then the later trumpet judgments will affect the people. These judgments will come quickly one after another so that the people of the earth will be forced to realize that God is the One who is bringing these judgments. Revelation 8:6-7 says, “So the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound. The first angel sounded: And hail and fire followed, mingled with blood, and they were thrown to the earth. And a third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up.” Here we see that the seven angels will each sound their trumpets. The sound of each trumpet will cause a new form of judgment to come.

We see that several things follow the earthquake when the first trumpet is sounded. Then we see the impact that these several things together will have on the earth. First, we see that the first thing that will follow the earthquake is hail. When God judged the land of Egypt with ten plagues before Pharaoh allowed Moses and the people of Israel to leave the land of Egypt we are given just a tiny picture of what this hail will do to the entire earth. Exodus 9:25-26 says, “And the hail struck throughout the whole land of Egypt, all that *was* in the field, both man and beast; and the hail struck every herb of the field and broke every tree of the field. Only in the land of Goshen, where the children of Israel *were*, there was no hail.” This verse shows that the hail had a huge impact on the nation of Egypt. Only the area where the people of Israel lived was spared. However, this hail in Revelation will be hail that strikes all parts of the earth with great destruction.

In Egypt we see that certain other things brought destruction to Egypt in addition to the hail. Some of these same things will happen in Revelation. Second, we see that there will be fire along with the hail just as happened in Egypt. Exodus 9:23-24 says, “And Moses stretched out his rod toward heaven; and the LORD sent thunder and hail, and fire darted to the ground. And the LORD rained hail on the land of Egypt. So there was hail, and fire mingled with the hail, so very heavy that there was none like it in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation.” In Egypt the hail broke the plants and trees and then the fire caused them to be burned. This same thing will happen when the first trumpet sounds with the result that there will be great destruction on the earth.

Third, we see that blood will be mingled with the hail and the fire. In Egypt we saw that any animals and people that were out in the fields when the hail and fire struck were killed. This caused blood to become mixed with the hail and the fire. The same type of judgment will come on the earth during the first trumpet judgment because the result will be that there will be that the hail and fire will be mingled with blood. These things together will have a severe impact throughout the earth as we see that there will be two major consequences to the earth itself from this hail, and fire mixed with blood.

The first consequence that we see is that one-third of all of the trees on the earth will be burned. This destruction will include all of the different kinds of trees on the earth including one-third of the trees that produce fruit, nuts and other forms of food. This will quickly lead to food shortages throughout the earth. One-third of the forests will also be burned. Most people have seen the destruction caused by a large forest fire. Hundreds and even thousands of acres of trees are destroyed in such fires. However, this will be worldwide and will mean that one-third of all of the forests in the world are destroyed. Such destruction on the trees of the earth will also mean that the skies in most parts of the world will be filled with smoke. This will make it difficult for people to breathe

The second consequence that we see is that all of the grass throughout the earth will be destroyed. Like the destruction of the trees, this will also have a great impact on the earth. There will be no food for the animals. Since all grass is destroyed, this will also bring destruction to the vegetables, grains and other small plants. This will result in the loss of additional food throughout the earth. In addition to the trees and grass, every person on the earth will be directly affected by the results of this judgment because of the shortages of food that will be created throughout the earth.

In these verses we see that the entire earth will feel the impact of this first trumpet judgment. This is just the beginning of a series of judgments. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand and explain how this judgment will affect every person that will be alive on the earth at that time. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to understand and explain these things.

20.

The Messages of the First Four Trumpets

In our last topic we saw that we wanted to help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand and explain how the judgment of the first trumpet will impact all of the people on the earth. In this topic we will see the judgments that will come on the creation when the second, third and fourth trumpets are sounded.

We saw that seven angels were given seven trumpets. In the last topic we saw the judgment that will come on the earth when the first trumpet is sounded. Now we go on to read about the judgment that will come when the second trumpet is sounded. Revelation 8:8-9 says, “Then the second angel sounded: And *something* like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea, and a third of the sea became blood. And a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.” Here we see that this judgment is going to particularly affect the seas and oceans and the things that are related to them.

John did not know how to describe the judgment that came when the second angel sounded his trumpet. As a result, he said it was something like a great mountain burning with fire that was thrown into the sea. This could be something like a huge meteor that burns up and breaks up as it enters the atmosphere and lands in the oceans because it will have an impact on the seas and oceans throughout the earth. We see that this will affect the oceans and the things on or in the oceans in three ways. First, we see that one third of the water will turn to blood. The first plague in Egypt gives us a tiny illustration as God turned the water of the Nile River into blood. Exodus 7:20-21 says, “And Moses and Aaron did so, just as the LORD commanded. So he lifted up the rod and struck the waters that *were* in the river, in the sight of Pharaoh and in the sight of his servants. And all the waters that *were* in the river were turned to blood. The fish that *were* in the river died, the river stank, and the Egyptians could not drink the water of the river. So there was blood throughout all the land of Egypt.” However, this judgment will be much greater because one-third of all of the water in the oceans will be turned to blood.

Second, we see that one-third of all of the living creatures in the sea will die. Genesis 2:21 says, “So God created great sea creatures and every living thing that moves, with which the waters abounded, according to their kind, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that *it was* good.” We see that God created great sea creatures, fish and all of the other things that live in the oceans. In this trumpet judgment we see that one-third of all of these fish and other creatures that live in the sea will die. Third, we see that one-third of all of the ships in the ocean will be destroyed. Today there are thousands of ships traveling in the various oceans of the world. Whether the number will be the same or greater at the time of the second trumpet, one-third of all of the ships will be destroyed. This will include all of the people that are on those ships.

Revelation 8:10-11 goes on to tell us what will happen when the third angel sounds his trumpet. Those verses say, “Then the third angel sounded: And a great star fell from heaven, burning like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water. The name of the star is

Wormwood. A third of the waters became wormwood, and many men died from the water, because it was made bitter.” This time we see that a great star or meteor from heaven will fall into the atmosphere and it will burn like a torch. This will cause it to disintegrate and it will be scattered over one-third of the fresh waters throughout the world. The remains of this star will fall into rivers, lakes and streams in various parts of the earth and cause them to become polluted.

We see that the name of this star is called Wormwood. Wormwood is described as something that is very bitter. Proverbs 5:3-4 says, “For the lips of an immoral woman drip honey, and her mouth *is* smoother than oil; but in the end she is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword.” Here we see that an immoral woman speaks words of sweetness but her heart is controlled by bitterness. Deuteronomy 29:18-19 says, “So that there may not be among you man or woman or family or tribe, whose heart turns away today from the LORD our God, to go *and* serve the gods of these nations, and that there may not be among you a root bearing bitterness or wormwood; and so it may not happen, when he hears the words of this curse, that he blesses himself in his heart, saying, ‘I shall have peace, even though I follow the dictates of my heart’—as though the drunkard could be included with the sober.” Here we see God warned the nation of Israel that a heart filled with bitterness toward God might turn to serve the gods of the nations because of that bitterness. We see that the star called Wormwood will pollute the fresh water.

One-third of all of the fresh water on the earth will be polluted and turned to wormwood by the remnants of this star as it falls in various rivers, lakes and springs around the earth. When Israel was in the wilderness, the Lord showed Moses what to do to make the bitter water sweet. Exodus 15:23-26 says, “Now when they came to Marah, they could not drink the waters of Marah, for they *were* bitter. Therefore the name of it was called Marah. And the people complained against Moses, saying, ‘What shall we drink?’ So he cried out to the LORD, and the LORD showed him a tree. When he cast *it* into the waters, the waters were made sweet. There He made a statute and an ordinance for them, and there He tested them, and said, ‘If you diligently heed the voice of the LORD your God and do what is right in His sight, give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians. For I *am* the LORD who heals you.’” Here we see God healed the waters and promised to prevent the diseases of Egypt if the people were obedient.

In contrast, we see that most of the people in the time of the tribulation will be in full rebellion against God. As a result, God will bring judgment on their drinking water just as He did to the land of Egypt in the plague where He turned the water into blood. Exodus 7:20-21 says, “And Moses and Aaron did so, just as the LORD commanded. So he lifted up the rod and struck the waters that *were* in the river, in the sight of Pharaoh and in the sight of his servants. And all the waters that *were* in the river were turned to blood. The fish that *were* in the river died, the river stank, and the Egyptians could not drink the water of the river. So there was blood throughout all the land of Egypt.” This polluted water caused many diseases to spread among the Egyptians. The polluted water in the tribulation will do much more than just cause diseases. We see that many people will die from the water polluted by the wormwood because the wormwood will cause the water to become bitter and kill many people.

That brings us to the judgment that comes when the fourth angel sounds his trumpet. Revelation 8:12-13 says, "Then the fourth angel sounded: And a third of the sun was struck, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of them were darkened. A third of the day did not shine, and likewise the night. And I looked, and I heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, "Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!" Here we see that the sounding of the fourth trumpet will affect the entire universe. This trumpet judgment will affect the sun, moon and stars.

Matthew 24:21-22 and Mark 13:19-20 say almost the exact same thing about this time. Mark 13:19-20 says, "For *in* those days there will be tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the creation which God created until this time, nor ever shall be. And unless the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake, whom He chose, He shortened the days." Here we see that the Christ promised that these days would be kept short for the sake of the tribulation saints. If Christ had not promised to shorten those days we see that no flesh would be saved.

Here in Revelation we see that a third of the sun, a third of the moon and a third of the stars will be darkened. This will have a dramatic impact on the earth. Some of this impact is described in Luke 21:25-26 where we read, "And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken." These changes in the sun, moon and stars will cause distress of the nations. It will cause people throughout the earth to be perplexed. Most of all this judgment of the heavens will cause the heart's of men to fail them because of their fear and expectation of things that are yet to come on the earth. No one will be able to ignore what is happening.

At this time another angel will fly through the midst of heaven. This angel will cry out with a loud voice, "Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!" The word translated "woe" or "alas" is an exclamation of grief. Here we see that there will be three woes. Revelation 9:1-11 describes the fifth trumpet judgment. Then Revelation 9:12 says, "One woe is past. Behold, still two more woes are coming after these things." Then Revelation 9:13-11:13 describes the judgment of the sixth trumpet. Then Revelation 11:14 says, "The second woe is past. Behold, the third woe is coming quickly." The seventh angel sounds his trumpet in Revelation 11:15 and the seventh trumpet judgment will include all of the following judgments through the end of Revelation 18. Revelation 18:16 and 18:19 both use the word "alas" (woe) twice as the trumpet judgments finish.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain the judgments that will come on the earth as God judges the rebellion of mankind. God will bring His judgment in His time and that is why we are not to try to judge others ourselves. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain these judgments.

21.

The Message of the Fifth Trumpet

In our last two topics we saw the results of the first four trumpet judgments that will come on the earth during the tribulation. In this topic we will see what happens when the fifth angel sounds his trumpet. This will be the first of the three woes that will come upon the people of the earth.

Revelation 9:1-3 says, “Then the fifth angel sounded: And I saw a star fallen from heaven to the earth. To him was given the key to the bottomless pit. And he opened the bottomless pit, and smoke arose out of the pit like the smoke of a great furnace. So the sun and the air were darkened because of the smoke of the pit. Then out of the smoke locusts came upon the earth. And to them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power.” Here we see that something much different happens when the fifth angel sounds his trumpet. We see that a star falls from heaven to the earth. This may be the time when Revelation 12:7-9 is fulfilled. Those verses say, “And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.” If so, it means that Satan will be temporarily allowed to let additional demons loose so that they can torment the people on the earth.

The bottomless pit is mentioned seven times in the book of Revelation. Revelation 20:2-3 says, “He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is *the* Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while.” Here we see that the bottomless pit is not the place of eternal judgment. Instead it is the place where some of the demons are held prior to the final judgment. In fact these verses show that Satan will be held there a thousand years. When Christ cast the demons out of the man with the legion of demons, the demons begged not to be sent to this place at that time. Luke 8:31 says, “And they begged Him that He would not command them to go out into the abyss.” In that case Jesus allowed the demons to go into the pigs.

We see that when the bottomless pit is opened that dense smoke will come up out of the pit. This smoke will be like the smoke of a very large furnace. There will be so much smoke coming out of the bottomless pit that it will cause the sun and the air to become dark. Demons in the form of locusts will come out of the smoke and they will torment the people of the earth with the power that they will be given. We see that their power will be like the power of scorpions. We see that their power will be limited so that they cannot do anything to those who have the seal of God on their foreheads.

Revelation 9:4-6 says, “They were commanded not to harm the grass of the earth, or any green thing, or any tree, but only those men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. And

they were not given *authority* to kill them, but to torment them *for* five months. Their torment *was* like the torment of a scorpion when it strikes a man. In those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will desire to die, and death will flee from them.” First, we see that these demons cannot harm any of the plants of the earth. Second, they will not be able to do anything to those who have the seal of God. Third, they will not have the power to kill those who are in rebellion against God. However, they will have the power to torment those in rebellion for a period of five months.

This is a reminder of the fact that Satan and his demons can only do what God allows them to do. Job 1:9-11 says, “So Satan answered the LORD and said, “Does Job fear God for nothing? Have You not made a hedge around him, around his household, and around all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. But now, stretch out Your hand and touch all that he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face!” These demons will not be able to do anything to the tribulation saints because they have the seal of God. In fact there are even limited to what they can do to those who are in rebellion against God because they will not be allowed to kill them.

However, they will cause those in rebellion to experience great torment. A scorpion gives a very painful sting when it strikes a person. Here we see that these demons will be given the power to give stings at least as painful as the stings of scorpions. In fact it will probably be even more painful because we read that those who are struck will wish that they could die. This is an indication that many will have thoughts of committing suicide and many may even try to commit suicide but they will not succeed. However, they will not be able to die in order to escape their pain. Instead we see that death will escape them. They will not realize that their suffering will be even worse when they die. Luke 16:22-24 says, “So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham’s bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. “Then he cried and said, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.’” Here we see that the suffering in future judgment will be even worse.

We are also given a description of these demons that look like locusts. Revelation 9:7-12 John wrote, “The shape of the locusts was like horses prepared for battle. On their heads were crowns of something like gold, and their faces *were* like the faces of men. They had hair like women’s hair, and their teeth were like lions’ *teeth*. And they had breastplates like breastplates of iron, and the sound of their wings *was* like the sound of chariots with many horses running into battle. They had tails like scorpions, and there were stings in their tails. Their power *was* to hurt men five months. And they had as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in Hebrew *is* Abaddon, but in Greek he has the name Apollyon. One woe is past. Behold, still two more woes are coming after these things.” John could not fully describe these demons so he compared them to things that we might understand.

First, we see that the shapes of these demonic locusts are like horses that are ready to take their riders into battle. Second, on their heads they have crowns. These crowns look something like gold crowns but are not gold. Third, they have faces like men. Fourth, they have hair like women’s hair. Fifth, they have teeth that look like the teeth of lions. Sixth, they have

breastplates that look like they are made of iron. A breastplate covers the part of the body from the neck to below the ribs and was worn as a form of protection. Seventh, their wings make a sound like the sound of many chariots being pulled by horses as they run toward a battle (very loud). Eighth, they have tails like scorpions. Ninth, they have stings in their tails. Here we see that these demons will be very easy to recognize because of the way that they look. However, those in rebellion against God will not be able to protect themselves from these demons.

We see that these demons will be allowed to hurt the rebellious people of the earth for only five months. For people who are feeling good five months seems to go very quickly. However, for people who are in extreme pain five months seems like a very long time. Five months is the normal length of life for locusts as most of them are born in the spring, live through the summer and die in the fall. The fact that God will limit the time that these demonic locusts are able to be freed from the bottomless pit to five months will actually be an act of compassion for the rebellious.

We also see that these locusts will have a king over them. Regular locusts do not have a king. Proverbs 30:27 says, “The locusts have no king, yet they all advance in ranks.” However, these locusts will have a leader that will lead them when they come out of the bottomless pit. We see that this king over these demonic locusts is called the angel of the bottomless pit. We are given the name of this demon who serves Satan as the king of the angels in the bottomless pit. In fact his name is given in both Hebrew and Greek. In Hebrew the name is Abaddon. In Greek the name is Apollyon. In English both of those names mean “destroyer”. This is a reminder that all of the demons who serve Satan have the same goal as Satan. Jesus contrasted Himself with Satan and his goal when he described Satan as a thief in John 10:10 where we read, “The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have *it* more abundantly.” The goal of Satan and all of his demons is to steal, to kill and to destroy.

Revelation 8:13 says, “And I looked, and I heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, “Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!” In this verse we see that the angel announced that there would be three woes that would come upon the people of the earth. Here in Revelation 9 we see that verse 12 says that the first of these three woes is past. This means that the fifth trumpet judgment will only last for these five months and then it will be complete. However, we have seen that this time will be a very painful time for the rebellious of the earth.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain what this judgment will be like. That will help them to understand the importance of regularly sharing the message of the Gospel with those who are not yet Christians so that they will have the opportunity to place their faith in Christ and escape any future judgment. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain these future judgments.

The Message of the Sixth Trumpet

In our last three topics we saw the results of the first five trumpet judgments that will come on the earth during the tribulation. In this topic we will see what happens when the sixth angel sounds his trumpet. The earlier judgments affected the earth and the heavens or caused great pain to the people of the earth. This judgment will be directed at the people of the earth as one third of the population of the world will be killed.

Revelation 9:13-15 says, “Then the sixth angel sounded: And I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, ‘Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates.’ So the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, were released to kill a third of mankind.” Here we see what will happen when the sixth angel sounds his trumpet.

We see that John heard a voice that came from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God. We were introduced to that altar in Revelation 8:3-4 when we read, “Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense, that he should offer *it* with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel’s hand.” In this verse we see that this altar is the place where incense is burned with the prayers of all of the saints. Here we see that this altar has four horns and that a voice comes from the four horns. In the Old Testament the altar of incense in the tabernacle and later in the temple had four horns on the four corners of the altar.

The voice that spoke from the golden altar told the angel who blew the sixth trumpet to release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates. The Euphrates River flows through the middle of the modern country of Iraq. The ancient city of Babylon which was known for “The Hanging Gardens of Babylon”, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, was located on the banks of this river. The Old Testament prophet, Daniel, was taken as a captive to this city as a young man where he served under the rule of King Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel later read the handwriting on the wall of the palace after Belshazzar became the king. That handwriting on the wall predicted the end of the Babylonian kingdom because of the sins of the leaders of Babylon. Daniel 5:30-31 says, “That very night Belshazzar, king of the Chaldeans, was slain. And Darius the Mede received the kingdom, *being* about sixty-two years old.” It is in that general area that these four angels are bound that will be released. These four angels and the judgment they will bring are bound until that time were prepared for this very hour, day, month and year. Their goal will be to destroy many people.

Like the demonic angels that came out of the bottomless pit when the fifth trumpet sounded, these demonic angels have also been bound until they are released for this very hour. We see that their goal is to go out and destroy one third of the people that are on the earth. They also have an army of demons that are released with them to help them destroy these people. Revelation 9:16-19 says, “Now the number of the army of the horsemen *was* two hundred

million; I heard the number of them. And thus I saw the horses in the vision: those who sat on them had breastplates of fiery red, hyacinth blue, and sulfur yellow; and the heads of the horses were like the heads of lions; and out of their mouths came fire, smoke, and brimstone. By these three *plagues* a third of mankind was killed—by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone which came out of their mouths. For their power is in their mouth and in their tails; for their tails *are* like serpents, having heads; and with them they do harm.”

We see that this army of demons that follow their four demonic leaders numbers two hundred million. We see that the Lord also gave John a vision of the demonic horses and described the appearance of those who sat on them. These riders who sat on the horses had breastplates of three colors. The first color was fiery red. The second color was hyacinth blue. The third color was sulfur yellow. The demonic horses had heads that were like the heads of lions. It was what came out of the mouths of these horses with heads like lions that would kill one third of the people on the earth. We see that three things will come out of their mouths. Those three things are fire, smoke and brimstone. Brimstone is melted rock. These three things are the things that usually come out of volcanoes. In the area of the Dead Sea there is a yellowish sulfuric rock that when it turns to brimstone produces a gas that can cause suffocation.

However, instead of coming out of a volcano or rock catching fire in the area of the Dead Sea, we see that this fire, smoke and brimstone will come out of the mouths of these demons. These demons will also have heads on their tails. This will make it possible for these demons to breathe out this fire, smoke and brimstone in two directions at the same time. It is by this combination of fire, smoke and brimstone that one third of the population of the earth will be killed. John 10:10 says, “The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have *it* more abundantly.” This is another example of the fact that the goal of Satan is always to steal, to kill and to destroy. His desire is to destroy every person before that person repents of their sin of unbelief and come to God through Christ. That is also the goal of these demons that will destroy one third of the people on the earth.

These demons will have power in both their mouth and their tail. This power will be used to do harm to the people on the earth. Here we see that the focus of these demons is the destruction of the people of the earth and so we do not read about any impact that these demons will have on the vegetation of the earth or any other thing. We go on to read how the remaining two thirds of the people will react when they see the destruction of one third of the people. Revelation 9:20-21 says, “But the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk. And they did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.” Here we see that the rest of the people will not repent of their actions or their false worship.

We just saw in the previous verses that the demons will destroy one third of the people of the earth. Here we see that that instead of repenting because of the destruction by the demons that the people will choose to worship the demons. The Lord warned the early church in I Corinthians 10:19-21, “What am I saying then? That an idol is anything, or what is offered to idols is anything? Rather, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons

and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the table of demons." Here we see that people living today offer sacrifices to demons. We see that people will continue to worship the demons even though they see that the goal of demons is to destroy.

We also see that during these judgments that the people will continue to worship idols of gold, silver, brass, stone and wood. That will be true even though such idols cannot see, hear or walk. God describes the idols of man in Psalm 115:4-8 where we read, "Their idols *are* silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they do not speak; eyes they have, but they do not see; they have ears, but they do not hear; noses they have, but they do not smell; they have hands, but they do not handle; feet they have, but they do not walk; nor do they mutter through their throat. Those who make them are like them; *so is* everyone who trusts in them." These verses show us that those who make the idols are like the idols that they make. Those idols cannot bring them to God.

Then we are given some of their works that the people in the tribulation will not repent of in their rebellion against God. First, we read that they will not repent of their murders. In the time of Noah, Genesis 6:11 says, "The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence." Here we see that the earth will again be filled with violence during the time of the tribulation. Second, we see that the people will not repent of their sorceries. The word translated "sorceries" is the Greek word "pharmakeia" from which we get our English word "pharmacy". In the time of the New Testament drugs were used to help a person get his or her mind into an altered state so that he or she could practice witchcraft and other similar false religious practices. Third, we read that they did not repent of their sexual immorality. Throughout history sexual immorality is one of the things that Satan has used to destroy nations and peoples. Paul warned the church in Corinth in I Corinthians 6:18, "Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body." Here we see that Satan uses immorality to destroy the lives of individuals. We see this happening in our own society but Satan will certainly use sexual immorality during the tribulation to destroy. Fourth, we see that the people will not repent of their thefts.

Here we see that the rebellious did not repent of rebellious deeds. When we get to the bowl judgments we see a picture of the blasphemy of the rebellious against God. Revelation 16:9 says, "And men were scorched with great heat, and they blasphemed the name of God who has power over these plagues; and they did not repent and give Him glory." In this verse we see that instead of repenting of their works that they will choose to blaspheme the name of God. We also see that they will refuse to repent and give God the glory. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain why people will not repent of their evil deeds during the tribulation. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain these things.

The Message of the Little Book

In our last topic we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain how the demons showed that their goal is the same as the goal of Satan – to steal, to kill and to destroy. In this topic we will see that John was told to review the judgments that have happened up to this point in Revelation before writing about the judgments that will come after those about which he had already written.

Revelation 10:1-4 says, “I saw still another mighty angel coming down from heaven, clothed with a cloud. And a rainbow *was* on his head, his face *was* like the sun, and his feet like pillars of fire. He had a little book open in his hand. And he set his right foot on the sea and *his* left *foot* on the land, and cried with a loud voice, as *when* a lion roars. When he cried out, seven thunders uttered their voices. Now when the seven thunders uttered their voices, I was about to write; but I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, “Seal up the things which the seven thunders uttered, and do not write them.” In these verses we see that John saw another mighty angel. This angel came to tell John about the seven thunders judgments.

First we are given a description of this mighty angel. We see that he is clothed with a cloud. This means that a cloud covered the main part of his body. However, his head could be clearly seen. We see that a rainbow was on his head. Genesis 9:16 says, “The rainbow shall be in the cloud, and I will look on it to remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that *is* on the earth.” This angel is bringing judgment to the earth but the rainbow is a reminder that God had made an everlasting covenant that He would never again destroy the earth with a flood. We have seen that demons were released and allowed to carry out the previous judgments. Now as God prepares to judge directly He gives this reminder that He will keep His covenant.

We also see that the face of this angel is as bright as the sun. In addition, his feet are like pillars of fire. Nehemiah 9:19 explains the purpose of the pillar of fire in the Old Testament when that verse says, “Yet in Your manifold mercies You did not forsake them in the wilderness. The pillar of the cloud did not depart from them by day, to lead them on the road; nor the pillar of fire by night, to show them light, and the way they should go.” Then Exodus 14:24 says, “Now it came to pass, in the morning watch, that the LORD looked down upon the army of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and cloud, and He troubled the army of the Egyptians.” These pillars of fire may have been an indication of the fact that God will bring judgment on the rebellious while at the same time remembering His mercy to the tribulation saints.

In Revelation 5:2 we saw that a strong angel asked, “Then I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, “Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?” Later in that chapter we saw that Christ opened the scroll. Now we see that this mighty angel has a little book open in his hand. This is the scroll that Christ opened and we saw in Revelation 5 that this is the title or deed to the earth. The mighty angel places his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land because after the judgments that are coming Satan and his followers will be

judged and the creation that God created will then be ruled only by Christ. This mighty angel will speak with a loud voice that is like the roaring of a lion and there will be seven thunders. These seven thunders are a set of seven judgments that God will bring on the earth. John was about to write about these seven judgments when he heard a voice from heaven telling him not to write what will happen in these judgments. God will reveal these judgments when they happen.

Revelation 10:5-7 says, “The angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised up his hand to heaven and swore by Him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and the things that are in it, the earth and the things that are in it, and the sea and the things that are in it, that there should be delay no longer, but in the days of the sounding of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, the mystery of God would be finished, as He declared to His servants the prophets.” Here we see that as the mighty angel stands with one foot on the sea and the other on the land that he will raise his hand toward heaven to make an oath. Daniel 12:7-9 shows us that this is the way that a person or angel makes an oath before God. That verse says, “Then I heard the man clothed in linen, who *was* above the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand to heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever, that *it shall be* for a time, times, and half *a time*; and when the power of the holy people has been completely shattered, all these *things* shall be finished. Although I heard, I did not understand. Then I said, ‘My lord, what *shall be* the end of these *things*?’ And he said, ‘Go *your way*, Daniel, for the words *are* closed up and sealed till the time of the end.’” Daniel heard about these same events but was not given understanding of them.

However, in these verses in Revelation we see that the mighty angel said there should be delay no longer. This means that the rest of the judgments in the book of Revelation are going to come quickly. The mighty angel said that the seventh angel is ready to sound his trumpet. Once the first six trumpet judgments are complete there will no longer be any delay. We see that once the seventh trumpet begins to sound that the mystery of God will be finished. These things were a mystery to Daniel and the other Old Testament writers because they were not revealed to them. However, John is told that there will no longer be any delay so that all of the judgments of God against Satan and those who follow Him can be completed. Every judgment mentioned in the Old Testament will be completed by the end of Revelation 20. This means that the final plagues of the Day of the Lord will be fulfilled and the prayers of the saints will be answered.

Revelation 10:8-11 says, “Then the voice which I heard from heaven spoke to me again and said, ‘Go, take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel who stands on the sea and on the earth.’ So I went to the angel and said to him, ‘Give me the little book.’ And he said to me, ‘Take and eat it; and it will make your stomach bitter, but it will be as sweet as honey in your mouth.’ Then I took the little book out of the angel’s hand and ate it, and it was as sweet as honey in my mouth. But when I had eaten it, my stomach became bitter. And he said to me, ‘You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings.’” Here we see that John was instructed to eat the little book.

John was instructed by the voice that spoke from heaven to go and take the little book that was open in the hand of the angel. As mentioned earlier, the little book was the scroll with the

seven seals that John was told that Christ was worthy to open in Revelation 5. John went to the angel and asked the angel to give him the little book. The angel then told John that he was to take the little book and eat it. The angel also told him that the little book would make his stomach bitter. However, when he first ate the little book it would be as sweet as honey to his mouth. John took the little book and ate it. Just as the angel had said, it was as sweet as honey in his mouth. However, after he had eaten it, the little book became bitter in his stomach.

Two of the Old Testament prophets help us to understand what happened when John ate the little book. Jeremiah was suffering persecution for speaking the Word of the Lord to the people. Jeremiah 15:15-16 says, “O LORD, You know; remember me and visit me, and take vengeance for me on my persecutors. In Your enduring patience, do not take me away. Know that for Your sake I have suffered rebuke. Your words were found, and I ate them, and Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart; for I am called by Your name, O LORD God of hosts.” Jeremiah was being persecuted for speaking for God. He wanted God to judge those who were persecuting him. Then Jeremiah says that he ate the Word of God and the Word brought rejoicing to his heart because he was reminded that He was called by the name of the Lord. That Word will always bring joy.

Ezekiel was also told to eat a scroll. Ezekiel 3:1-4 says, “Moreover He said to me, ‘Son of man, eat what you find; eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel.’ So I opened my mouth, and He caused me to eat that scroll. And He said to me, ‘Son of man, feed your belly, and fill your stomach with this scroll that I give you.’ So I ate, and it was in my mouth like honey in sweetness. Then He said to me: ‘Son of man, go to the house of Israel and speak with My words to them.’” The message that Ezekiel was given was as sweet as honey when he first ate it. However, later in the chapter God said that his own people, Israel, would refuse to listen and make their hearts hard. John was also given a message that he was to write. This message gave hope to the tribulation saints. However, it warned of judgment for those who would reject. The scroll contained the seal, the trumpet, the thunder and the bowl judgments. That part made his stomach bitter as he thought about what would happen to those who rejected the Lord.

The voice from heaven also told John, “You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings.” Here we see that John was to prophesy again. This was to give mankind one final warning and opportunity to repent. In Revelation 7:9 we see that there will be a great multitude that have never heard that will repent during the tribulation. That verse says, “After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands.” We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand and explain that God will continue to offer mercy until the last moment. Even though many will choose to reject that message, many will also repent. May the Lord richly bless you as you encourage your children to continue to invite people living now to repent.