

Helping Our Children Learn to Understand the Last Days

**Growing Godly Family Series
Manual 17**

By

Duane L. Anderson

Helping Our Children Learn to Understand the Last Days

**Growing Godly Families Series
Manual 17**

**Scripture taken from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982
by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved.**

**American Indian Bible Institute
Box 511
Norwalk, CA 90651-0511
www.aibi.org**

**Copyright © 2007, 2018 Duane L. Anderson, American Indian Bible Institute
This resource is available free of charge from aibi.org
ANY REPRODUCTION OF MATERIAL FOR RESALE OR PROFIT IS STRICTLY PROHIBITED
Updated 10/2018**

Growing Godly Families Series

The “Growing Godly Families Series” is the result of weekly topics which were prepared and e-mailed over a period of years. This series is especially designed for those who are already Christian leaders; to give them Biblical principles for the development of additional godly spiritual leaders. Because they give Biblical principles for growth in spiritual leadership, they are also helpful for Christians that want to grow and become godly spiritual leaders.

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.

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 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.’” 1 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 make your life count for eternity by bringing glory to God.

Table of Contents

	Page
1. Learning to Understand the Promises God Has Given to Us	1
2. Learning to Develop a Godly Life	4
3. Learning Why We Can Depend on the Word of God	7
4. Learning Why God Will Judge False Teachers	10
5. Understanding the Character of False Teachers	13
6. Understanding the Way False Teachers Try to Deceive	16
7. Learning Why People Ignore the Coming of Christ	19
8. Learning About the Day of the Lord	22
9. Learning to Walk in Love	25
10. Learning to Recognize Deceivers	28
11. Learning to Walk in the Truth	31
12. Learning About the Dangers of Pride	34
13. Learning About the Judgment of Sinful People	37
14. Learning About the Judgment of False Teachers	40
15. Learning How to Minister as Christians	43

1.

Learning to Understand the Promises God Has Given to Us

Today, we are beginning a new series of topics on the last days. Many times, both our physical children and our spiritual children will have questions about the future. The Lord wants every Christian to have a full understanding including an understanding of the things that are going to happen in the future. As a result, the Bible speaks about the future in many different books. In this series of topics, we will be looking at some of those books.

In 2 Peter 1:1-2 we read, “Simon Peter, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ: Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.” In this verse, we see that Peter begins this second letter with a somewhat different introduction than he did the book of 1 Peter. Here, we see that Peter gives his original name. John 1:40-42 says, “One of the two who heard John *speak*, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, ‘We have found the Messiah’ (which is translated, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus. Now when Jesus looked at him, He said, ‘You are Simon the son of Jonah. You shall be called Cephas’ (which is translated, A Stone).” The name Cephas (Peter) told what Simon was going to become as he followed Christ.

We also see a second difference from 1 Peter. We see that Peter described himself as a bondservant of Jesus Christ. The word that is translated “bondservant” was the word for a slave. One of the key characteristics of a good slave was his obedience to his master. Colossians 3:22-24 says, “Bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God. And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.” Peter made it clear that he wanted to please the Lord in all that he said and did.

Peter also describes those to whom this letter is written. He calls other Christians “those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ”. The word that is translated “who have obtained” means “*to receive by lot or by the appointment of God.*” Luke 1:9 says, “According to the custom of the priesthood, his lot fell to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord.” In this verse, Ananias was chosen to burn incense by the casting of lots. As a result, Peter makes it clear that we have received our faith by the will of God and not through our own efforts.

The word that is translated “like precious” means “equal in value, honor or position.” The first letter of Peter was originally written to Jews. From this word, we see that this letter was originally written to Gentiles because this word points out the fact that as Gentiles we have received a faith that is equal to the faith that the Jews received. This phrase has the same thought that Paul shared with the Galatians when he wrote in Galatians 3:27-28, “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” It is a joy to know that as Christians we have all received the same faith regardless of our background.

We have also received the same righteousness because the Father placed the righteousness of Christ on every Christian at the moment of salvation. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says, “For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

Christ had our sin placed on Him so that the Father could place the righteousness of Christ on us at the moment of salvation. We are also reminded that Christ is both our God and our Savior.

The word that is translated “knowledge” means “*to know thoroughly or to come to a correct knowledge and understanding.*” Ephesians 4:12-13 says, “For the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” Here, we see that we grow spiritually and come to spiritual maturity as we grow in our knowledge and understanding of Christ. Peter pointed out the fact that as we grow in that knowledge and understanding we experience both the grace and peace of Christ in a greater and greater way in our lives.

We go on to see this more fully explained in 2 Peter 1:3-4 where we read, “As His divine power has given to us all things that *pertain* to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption *that is* in the world through lust.” Here, we are reminded of the fact that the power of Christ is what works in our lives. Paul used the word translated “power” here twice in 2 Corinthians 12:9 where we read, “And He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.” Here, we see that the word speaks of the strength of Christ and the power of Christ.

It is that power of Christ that has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness. Here, we see that the power of Christ has given us everlasting life. John 5:24 says, “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.” In addition to the power of Christ giving us eternal life, the power of Christ also makes it possible for us to grow in godliness as we live here on this earth. In fact, 1 Timothy 6:6 says, “Now godliness with contentment is great gain.” We will learn much more in our next topic about growth in godliness.

Christ is the One that has called us to glory and virtue. All glory belongs to Christ. However, as we grow in grace and in the full knowledge of Christ, we understand more about that glory. 2 Peter 3:18 says, “But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him *be* the glory both now and forever. Amen.” As a result, we want to continue to grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ. The word that is translated “virtue” means “*moral goodness.*” The Father was satisfied with the moral goodness of Christ and showed that satisfaction by raising Christ from the dead. The death and resurrection of Christ from the dead was the main focus of Peter when he preached, beginning with his sermon on the Day of Pentecost. Acts 2:32 says, ““This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses.”” That is also the focus of all of his other sermons that are recorded in the book of Acts.

Peter reminded us of the fact that we have received exceedingly great and precious promises. The word translated “precious” means “*something of great value or price.*” 1 Peter 1:7 says, “That the genuineness of your faith, *being* much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” Here, we see that God says our genuine faith is more precious than gold. In the same way, the promises that we have been given in Christ are much more valuable than all of the gold in the world.

The promises of God make it possible for us to be partakers of the divine nature. The word that

is translated “partakers” means “*a companion or one who shares in anything.*” Paul used this word in Philemon 1:17 to describe his relationship with Philemon as he wrote Philemon asking him to forgive Onesimus. That verse says, “If then you count me as a partner, receive him as *you would me.*” As Christians, we become new creations with a new nature. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, “Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.” This means that we now have a desire to please God.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 says, “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.” Here, we see that we have been given the Holy Spirit, which makes it possible for us to now glorify God with both our body and our human spirit. We also have a promise that in the future we will be like Him. 1 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.” The fact that we share the nature of God means that when we get to heaven we will then be like Christ and will not sin any more.

In fact, we have already escaped the corruption (rotteness) that is in the world through lust. Our new nature means that at each moment that we are yielding our human spirit to the Holy Spirit the Holy Spirit makes it possible for us to have victory over sin. We see in Romans 7 that we fail and sin when we depend on our own strength. Then in Romans 8, we are reminded that we are able to have victory at each moment that we are depending on the Holy Spirit. Romans 6:13 says, “And do not present your members *as* instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness to God.” We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that because of the promises that God has given us they are able to please God at each moment that they are yielding to Him and allowing Him to work in and through their lives. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children understand the promises that God has given to us.

Learning to Develop a Godly Life

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand the promises that God has given to us. We saw that The Lord has given us the Holy Spirit so that at every moment that we are yielding to Him we are able to please God in our lives. In our topic today, we are going to see how to develop our spiritual lives so that we are learning to act in the power of the Holy Spirit instead of our own strength.

In 2 Peter 1:5-7 we read, “But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.” Because of the promises that God has given to us in verses 3 and 4, this is the reason we want to live to please the Lord. The word that is translated “diligence” means “*to put forth much effort to accomplish something or to do something in haste.*” The faith that we received was a gift from God. Ephesians 2:8-9 says, “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.” Our efforts are not the source of faith. The faith that we received was received as a gift from God.

However, God does tell us to add certain things to the faith and the promises that He has given to us. This is where we have the opportunity to be obedient to the Lord so that we carry out the will that He has for us. 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.” God created us for good works and the things we are to add are so that our lives reflect our faith and the promises that God has given to us as we carry out the works that God has prepared for us.

In these verses, we see that we are to add seven things. First, we are to add virtue to our faith. The word that is translated “virtue” means “*moral goodness.*” In verse three, we saw that Christ has called us to glory and virtue. Here, we see that moral goodness is the very first thing that we want to add to our faith. God has made this moral good possible because He gave us a new nature that has a desire to do good. As we yield our human spirit to the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit gives us the power to do those things that are pleasing to God. Second, we are to add knowledge to our faith. The word that is translated “knowledge” means “*knowledge and understanding of what is right.*” 2 Peter 3:18 says, “But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him *be* the glory both now and forever. Amen.” We have a desire to grow in our knowledge and understanding of Christ and how He wants us to live.

Third, we are to add self-control to our faith. The word that is translated “self-control” means “*we ask the Lord to give us His strength to master our sensual desires and passions.*” This word is only used two other times in the New Testament. Acts 24:25 says, “Now as he reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and answered, ‘Go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you.’” Then it is also listed in Galatians 5:23 as part of the fruit of the Spirit. Fourth, we are to add perseverance to our faith. The word that is translated “perseverance” means “*patient endurance in doing what is right.*” Hebrews 12:1 says, “Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares *us*, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.” Like a long distance race, we are to run with endurance.

Fifth, we are to add godliness to faith. The word translated “godliness” means “*to live in obedience and reverence toward God.*” 1 Timothy 6:6 says, “Now godliness with contentment

is great gain.” Sixth, we are to add brotherly kindness to faith. The word that is translated “brotherly kindness” means “*the love that Christians show to one another.*” 1 Thessalonians 4:9 says, “But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another.” Here, we see that God teaches us how to have this kind of love. Seventh, we are to add love to faith. John 13:34-35 says, ““A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”” Here, we see that we are to learn to love with the same love that Christ loves us.

Then 2 Peter 1:8 says, “For if these things are yours and abound, *you will be* neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” The word that is translated “abound” means “*to increase or to be in abundance.*” If the seven things mentioned in the previous verses are increasing and growing in our lives, we see that we will not be barren or unfruitful. The word translated “barren” means “*to be idle or to be lazy.*” The word translated “unfruitful” means “*to be without fruit.*” Titus 3:14 says, “And let our *people* also learn to maintain good works, to *meet* urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful.” The fact that are lives will not be barren or unfruitful means that our lives will be useful and bear fruit for the Lord because we are continuing to grow in our knowledge of Christ.

The word translated “knowledge” means “*to know thoroughly or to come to a correct knowledge and understanding of Christ.*” Colossians 3:9-10 says, “Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new *man* who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him.” As Christians, we have been given a new nature which makes it possible for us to grow and mature in our knowledge and understanding of Christ. The Holy Spirit gives us His power so that our lives can become more and more like Christ. As a result, every Christian has the potential to be fruitful as we learn to grow in Christ and follow His example in our lives through the power of the Holy Spirit.

In contrast, 2 Peter 1:9 says, “For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.” Here, we see a description of a person that is a carnal Christian or only a professing Christian that has never received true faith. The word translated “shortsighted” means that a person can only see what is very close. The word translated “blindness” can refer either to physical or spiritual blindness. Here, the word is talking about spiritual blindness. A carnal Christian is described in 1 Corinthians 3:1-3 where we read, “And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual *people* but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able *to receive it*, and even now you are still not able; for you are still carnal. For where *there are* envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like *mere* men?” Here, we see that a carnal Christian acts like a person that is not even a Christian. Such a Christian will continue to live in fear because that person is uncertain of his or her salvation.

A professing Christian is one that has never repented of sin and placed his or her faith in Christ. Such a person may go to church and spend time around other Christians. However, such a person has never received 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.” Since the person has not received spiritual life, that person is still a part of those who face eternal judgment.

That is why 2 Peter 1:10-11 says, “Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call

and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” Here, we see what those who are either carnal or professing Christians need to do. They need to really examine their lives so that they can know they have really responded to the call to salvation and placed their faith in Christ. 1 John 2:12 says, “I write to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake.” When a person matures spiritually beyond a carnal Christian and becomes a spiritual child instead of a spiritual babe, we see that such a person now knows that his or her sins are forgiven. Such people are adding the seven things mentioned in verses five through seven to their faith. This gives each Christian the assurance of salvation.

We see that Christians who are adding these things to their faith will not stumble. The reason for this is due to the fact that they have made it their goal to glorify the Lord by the things that they say and do. 1 Corinthians 10:31 says, “Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” We want to show our physical and spiritual children why it is important to learn to glorify God by all that they do and say so that they can experience assurance of their salvation.

Christians that are growing in their spiritual lives can look forward with great eagerness to their entrance into heaven because they will receive a great reward for their service as Christians. 1 Corinthians 3:11, 14 say, “For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ...If anyone's work which he has built on *it* endures, he will receive a reward.” All Christians that have faithfully served the Lord on this earth can look forward with great eagerness to the day when the Lord will take them to heaven and they will receive their rewards. Those rewards will be eternal and will be enjoyed in the presence of the Lord forever. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to develop a godly life.

3.

Learning Why We Can Depend on the Word of God

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to develop a godly life. We saw that the Lord is the One who gives us our faith as a gift. However, the Lord wants each Christian to add seven things to that faith as we grow in our spiritual lives. Then we will be able to look forward to eternal rewards. In our topic today, we are going to see how to help our children understand why we can depend on the Word of God to guide and lead us in our lives.

In 2 Peter 1:12-15 we read, “For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding *you*, knowing that shortly I *must* put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me. Moreover I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my decease.” The word translated “I will be negligent” means “*to be careless of or to neglect.*” Peter did not want to be careless and fail to remind the Christians of the things that they had learned. Here, we see the importance to regularly remind one another of the things that the Lord has taught us so that we will not begin to neglect those things in our lives.

As Peter pointed out in this letter, these were things that the Christians knew and that had helped them to become established in their understanding. Here, we see that Peter knew that the Christians knew these things but he wanted to them be strengthened and made firm in that knowledge. Peter was actually following the specific instructions that had been given to him by Christ. On the night before His crucifixion, Christ told Peter in Luke 22:31-32, “And the Lord said, ‘Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift *you* as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to *Me*, strengthen your brethren.’” Peter said that he was ready to die with Christ. Yet a few hours later, he acted out of fear and denied Christ three times. That is why the Lord told Peter specifically to strengthen the brethren even though they already knew certain things. That is also a part of our ministry to our physical and spiritual children.

Peter knew that he would soon die. However, he wanted to be obedient to the Lord right up to the moment of his death. That is why he said that as long as he was alive he wanted to remind the Christians of how the Lord had taught him so that he would be able to be strengthened in his own life. The word translated “to stir up” means “*to awaken or to stir up the mind.*” Paul wanted to stir up their minds by reminding them. In fact, this was such a great concern that he repeated the same thought in 2 Peter 3:1-2 which says, “Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in *both of* which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder), that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior.” Peter certainly did not want to neglect the instructions that the Lord had given him. In the same way, we want to continue to remind our children of what the Lord said.

Peter wrote this letter so that all Christians would continue to be reminded of these things because he knew that he would soon put off his tent (die). Paul shared a similar thought to describe our earthly body when he said in 2 Corinthians 5:1, “For we know that if our earthly house, *this* tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” Our earthly body is like a tent that is temporary. In contrast, our new body will be eternal and will last forever. Like Peter, we want to remind our physical and spiritual children that they have the Word of God to lead them and guide them after the Lord

takes us to heaven.

In 2 Peter 1:16-18 we read, “For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’ And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.” The word translated “cunningly devised” means “*to make wise, to gain understanding or to invent.*” The only other place this form of the word is used in the New Testament is 2 Timothy 3:15 where we read, “And that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” In Timothy, the word means “*to make wise.*” In 2 Peter, it means “*to invent ‘fables’*”. The word translated “fables” means “*a story that is made up or invented.*” Peter had not heard stories that had been invented or made up. Peter made it clear that what he taught about the power and the future coming of Christ had been learned directly from Christ.

When Peter spoke about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, he spoke as a person that was an eyewitness of the life and teachings of Christ. He was there and saw the things that Christ did and heard the words that He spoke. In fact, Peter was with Christ on the mountain when the Father spoke to Christ from heaven. Matthew 17:1 and 5 say, “Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves... While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!’” Peter did not hear a fable that someone else had invented. Instead, he had been an eyewitness of the actual event. Peter heard the Father give glory and honor to Christ.

As a result of being an eyewitness of the things that Christ had done and taught, Peter went on to give a key statement about the entire Word of God. 2 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.” Peter said that Christ had also confirmed the words that had been spoken by the prophets. Luke 24:44-45 says, “Then He said to them, ‘These *are* the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and *the* Prophets and *the* Psalms concerning Me.’ And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.” Peter knew it was even more important to focus on the things that Christ taught from the whole Old Testament and not just his personal experience when he was with Christ.

The word translated “to heed” means “*to pay attention to or turn your mind to.*” Hebrews 2:1 says, “Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away.” Peter wanted all Christians to learn to pay attention to the Word of God because the Word is a light that shines in a dark place. The world is a place that is filled with spiritual darkness. However, Psalm 119:105 says, “Your word *is* a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” The Word of God will lead us and guide us as we live in a world that is filled with spiritual darkness. John the Baptist prepared the way for the first coming of Christ. Luke 1:78-79 says, “Through the tender mercy of our God, with which the Dayspring from on high has visited us; to give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.” In the same way, the Word of God prepares us for the return of Christ when we will see Christ face to face.

Verse 20 begins, “Knowing this first.” The word translated “knowing” means “*to come to know*”

or understand.” The word translated “first” means “*something that is first in time, place or rank.*” We see that the Word of God has total priority over our words because it is first in rank. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says, “All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” Here, we are reminded that all Scripture comes from God and is first in rank over any words of humans. We see that the words of the false teachers that will be described in the next chapter cannot be compared to the Word of God because their teachings came from their own words and ideas instead of coming from God.

In fact, verse 21 says that prophecy never came by the will of man. Nothing that is written in the Word of God was written to teach the ideas of mankind. Instead, all that is written in the Scriptures has its source in God. 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.” Only the Word of God can reveal what is in our hearts.

In 1 Corinthians 14:24-25 we read, “But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an uninformed person comes in, he is convinced by all, he is convicted by all. And thus the secrets of his heart are revealed; and so, falling down on *his* face, he will worship God and report that God is truly among you.” “To prophesy” means “*to speak forth what is already written in the Word of God.*” The Word of God is able to reveal the secrets of the heart because the author of the Word of God is the Holy Spirit. Peter said that holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. The word translated “came” and “moved” is translated “came” in both verse 17 and 18 where it spoke of God speaking from heaven. This makes it clear prophecy did not come by the will of man. Instead, this verse says that the Holy Spirit moved men to write what they wrote. Here, we see that the real writer of the entire Word of God is God. We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that God used various men with their different gifts and personalities to communicate His message exactly as He wanted it written. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children understand why we can depend on the Word of God.

4.

Learning Why God Will Judge False Teachers

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn why they can depend on the Word of God. We saw that God used the different gifts and personalities of the writers to write exactly what He wanted written because God is the real author of the entire Word of God and men wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. The fact that God is the author is why the Word is always in agreement with itself even though God used at least 40 different writers over a period of 1,500 years or more. In this topic and the next, we want to help our children understand that false teachers speak their own words instead of speaking the Word of God.

In 2 Peter 2:1-3 we read, “But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, *and* bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber.” In the time of the Old Testament, there were many false prophets who worked to lead the people of Israel astray. In the same way, Peter warns us that there will also be false teachers who will try to deceive people in our day and age.

We see several characteristics of false teachers given in this chapter. Peter warned that these false teachers will introduce and bring in secretly destructive heresies. The word translated “destructive” means “*teachings that bring destruction and eternal judgment.*” Peter uses the word translated “destructive” six times in this chapter. The word translated “heresies” here means “*the lies or teachings that lead to division.*” 1 Corinthians 11:19 says, “For there must also be factions among you, that those who are approved may be recognized among you.” Here, the word is translated “factions” because these teachers were bringing division. Peter warned that there will be more false teachers who do this.

The teachings of these false teachers will even deny the Lord who bought them. Here, we see that many false teachers deny Christ. 1 Corinthians 6:20 says, “For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.” The price that Christ paid to purchase our salvation was His precious blood. 1 Peter 1:18-19 says, “Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, *like* silver or gold, from your aimless conduct *received* by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.” Today, many false teachers do not want to talk about the fact that Christ shed His blood to redeem us and buy us back from our sin. God says that such false teachers bring swift destruction upon themselves. That swift destruction is eternal judgment.

We also see that many people will follow the destructive ways of these false teachers. Since these false teachers often claim to be Christians, their followers also claim to be Christians. Matthew 7:21-23 warns, “‘Not everyone who says to Me, “Lord, Lord,” shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, “Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?” And then I will declare to them, “I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!”’” The fact that these people claim to be Christians even though they continue to follow their sinful ways is what causes the world to speak evil of Christians because the world thinks that such people are actually Christians.

We see that such false teachers are motivated by covetousness. The word translated “covetousness” means “*a greedy desire to have more.*” Later in this chapter, 2 Peter 2:14 speaks about such false teachers by saying, “Having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls. *They have* a heart trained in covetous practices, *and are* accursed children.” Such false teachers will speak their words in such a way that they can use those words for personal gain. God is not surprised by such false teachers. We see that He has planned their eternal judgment and is showing His patience by not bringing that judgment immediately.

God will bring judgment to these false teachers. Peter gave three examples of how God brought judgment in the past. 2 Peter 2:4-10a says, “For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast *them* down to hell and delivered *them* into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment; and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, *one of eight people*, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly; and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned *them* to destruction, making *them* an example to those who afterward would live ungodly; and delivered righteous Lot, *who was* oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented *his* righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing *their* lawless deeds)--*then* the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment, and especially those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise authority.”

This list begins by reminding us that God has judged the angels that chose to rebel and follow Satan. Jude 1:6 says, “And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day.” Here, we see that some of the fallen angels have already been sent to the place where they are waiting for the final judgment.

Peter mentioned a second judgment when he mentioned the judgment that came in the time of Noah. Genesis 6:5-7 says, “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. And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. So the LORD said, ‘I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them.’” God both judged the unrighteous and saved the righteous. Noah and his family, a total of eight persons, were saved when God brought the flood. All of the rest of the people were ungodly and were destroyed in that flood.

The third judgment that is mentioned is the judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah. Those cities were turned into ashes. The people in those cities were condemned to destruction on that day and will face eternal judgment in the future. God brought the destruction of those cities as a warning to all who would live ungodly in the future. Jude 1:15 says Christ is coming, “To execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.” The ungodly will not escape future judgment and that includes all of those who have been false teachers throughout history.

God also made a distinction and delivered righteous Lot just as He had delivered Noah and his family. Lot was tired and worn down as he observed the sinful conduct of the people living in the city of Sodom. Lot was living among the people of the city even though he was righteous. In fact, we see that the soul of Lot was tormented day after day as he heard and saw the evil of the people that lived in Sodom and Gomorrah. Even though Lot was troubled by the sinful living of the people of the city of Sodom, he really did not want to leave that city because his

own children had become a part of the sinfulness of the city. In his mercy, God did deliver Lot. Genesis 19:16-17 says, "And while he lingered, the men took hold of his hand, his wife's hand, and the hands of his two daughters, the LORD being merciful to him, and they brought him out and set him outside the city. So it came to pass, when they had brought them outside, that he said, 'Escape for your life! Do not look behind you nor stay anywhere in the plain. Escape to the mountains, lest you be destroyed.'" Lot was delivered but he lost his family. God will judge all those who continue to walk in sin when they come to the Day of Judgment.

2 Peter 2:10b-11 further describes false teachers by saying, "*They are* presumptuous, self-willed. They are not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries, whereas angels, who are greater in power and might, do not bring a reviling accusation against them before the Lord." "Presumptuous" means that false teachers are daring and rebellious. "Self-willed" means that false teachers are proud and are determined to get their own way. Peter warns that false teachers are so proud that they are quick to speak evil of angels including both the good and the evil angels. They forget that they face the same judgment as the evil angels that followed Satan.

Godly angels will not even speak evil of the fallen angels even though they have greater power. Jude 1:8-10 describes these false teachers who have such pride when those verses say, "Likewise also these dreamers defile the flesh, reject authority, and speak evil of dignitaries. Yet Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, 'The Lord rebuke you!' But these speak evil of whatever they do not know; and whatever they know naturally, like brute beasts, in these things they corrupt themselves." This reminds us that false teachers are filled with sinful pride. We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that the judgment of such false teachers will be as great as the judgment of the fallen angels. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children understand why God will judge false teachers.

Understanding the Character of False Teachers

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand the judgment that will come on those who are false teachers. We saw that false teachers will be judged just as the fallen angels will be judged. In our topic today, we are going to learn more about the character of false teachers. The lives of such false teachers are controlled by their sinful desires because they have chosen to reject Christ and teach their own false ideas instead.

In 2 Peter 2:12-13a we read, “But these, like natural brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed, speak evil of the things they do not understand, and will utterly perish in their own corruption, *and* will receive the wages of unrighteousness, *as* those who count it pleasure to carouse in the daytime.” Here, we see a very interesting description of false teachers as Peter compares them to natural brute beasts. The word translated “natural” means they “*follow their natural sinful instincts.*” The word translated “brute” means “*totally lacking in reason.*” “Beasts” means that they “*think and act like animals.*”

Jude gives a similar description when he says in Jude 1:10, “But these speak evil of whatever they do not know; and whatever they know naturally, like brute beasts, in these things they corrupt themselves.” False teachers speak with boldness about things that they do not even understand. In 1 Corinthians 2:14 we read, “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.” Here, we see that false teachers cannot understand spiritual truth because the things of God are foolishness to them due to their lack of spiritual understanding. The fact that they do not know God is the reason why they are facing eternal destruction.

We see that such false teachers will utterly perish in their own corruption. The word translated “shall utterly perish” means “*to be corrupted or depraved in the mind.*” The only other place this word is used in the New Testament is 2 Timothy 3:6-8 where we read, “For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts, always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. Now as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith.” Here, the word is translated “corrupt” while Peter says such teachers will “perish in their own corruption.”

Peter goes on to say that they will receive the wages of unrighteousness. 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12 says, “And with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. 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.” These verses talk about those who will be deceived by the antichrist who will perform signs and lying wonders through the power of Satan. As a result, we see that those who practice unrighteousness are still following Satan and will share in his eternal judgment.

Normally, people who practice evil want to do what they do in the darkness so that others will not see them. 1 Thessalonians 5:7 says, “For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night.” Here, we see that false teachers become so bold that they begin to carry out their sinful living in the daytime. 2 Peter 2:13b and 14 say, “*They are spots and blemishes, carousing in their own deceptions while they feast with you, having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls. They have a heart trained in covetous practices, and are accursed children.*” The word translated “spots” means “*moral*

blemishes.” The word translated “blemishes” speaks of people that are a disgrace to society. In contrast, the only other place “spot” is used in the New Testament is in Ephesians 5:27 where we read, “That He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.” Here, we see that Christ will present the church to Himself without spot or blemish.

False teachers carouse in their own deceptions. The word translated “carouse” means “*to live in luxury.*” At the same time, they think that they are able to deceive others because they even join Christians for love-feasts and the communion services that are a part of such love-feasts. Here, we see that false teachers do everything possible to make it look like their teachings are not false. 2 Corinthians 11:13-15 says, “For such *are* false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore *it is* no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.” False teachers say and do the things that they do because they are really following Satan.

We read that a common characteristic of false teachers is that they have eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin. Matthew 5:28 says, “But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” In addition to using their false teachings for self-gain, their desire is to also fulfill other sinful lusts of their hearts. In order to fulfill their sinful desires, we see that they entice unstable souls. Here, we see that false teachers will particularly try to deceive new or immature Christians. Ephesians 4:14 says, “That we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting.” The word that is translated “children” in this verse is a young child (toddler) that does not yet have the ability to speak clearly. This verse says that such individuals can be easily deceived by the trickery of men (especially false teachers).

Seeking financial self-gain is also a common characteristic of false teachers as we see that they have a heart trained in covetous practices. The word translated “trained” means “*to exercise either the body or the mind vigorously.*” The word translated “covetous practices” means a “*greedy desire to have more.*” This word was used in verse three of this chapter where we read, “By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber.” Here, we see that false teachers have trained their minds so that they can get unstable Christians to give money or possessions to them. As a result, God says that false teachers are accursed children. This is why they look for weak or unstable Christians.

Peter went on to give an Old Testament illustration of such a false teacher who was greedy for money. 2 Peter 2:15-17 says, “They have forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam the *son* of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; but he was rebuked for his iniquity: a dumb donkey speaking with a man's voice restrained the madness of the prophet. These are wells without water, clouds carried by a tempest, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.” Balak offered Balaam a large amount of money if he would curse the people of Israel. God told Balaam he was not to curse Israel. Then Balak offered even more money and honor. Hoping to get the money, Balaam went with the second group of men even though God said he was not to curse Israel.

Three times the Lord caused the donkey to try to turn aside. The third time Numbers 22:26-31 says, “Then the Angel of the LORD went further, and stood in a narrow place where there *was* no way to turn either to the right hand or to the left. And when the donkey saw the Angel of the LORD, she lay down under Balaam; so Balaam's anger was aroused, and he struck the donkey with his staff. Then the LORD opened the mouth of the donkey, and she said to Balaam, ‘What

have I done to you, that you have struck me these three times?’ And Balaam said to the donkey, ‘Because you have abused me. I wish there were a sword in my hand, for now I would kill you!’ So the donkey said to Balaam, ‘Am I not your donkey on which you have ridden, ever since *I became* yours, to this day? Was I ever disposed to do this to you?’ And he said, ‘No.’ Then the LORD opened Balaam's eyes, and he saw the Angel of the LORD standing in the way with His drawn sword in His hand; and he bowed his head and fell flat on his face.” Here, we see God spoke to Balaam through a donkey. Later, Balaam told Balak another way to destroy Israel. As a result, Numbers 31:8 says, “They killed the kings of Midian with *the rest of those who were killed*--Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur, and Reba, the five kings of Midian. Balaam the son of Beor they also killed with the sword.” Here, we see that God allowed Balaam to be killed with the kings of Midian for trying to destroy Israel.

Then, Peter used two word pictures to describe false teachers. Peter said that they were like wells without water or clouds carried by a tempest. In Israel and the surrounding nations there is often a shortage of water. As a result, Peter said that false teachers are like wells without water. They promise much but they provide nothing. He also said that they are like dry clouds blown by a storm. Instead of providing rain to water and cool the land, such clouds only cause the heat to increase.

As we understand what the character of false teachers is like, we see why it is important to help our physical and spiritual children learn to protect themselves from false teachers. We also want to help them know how to warn weak and immature Christians to protect them from false teachers. Otherwise, such false teachers will deceive immature Christians and take advantage of them for self-gain. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children to understand the sinful and deceptive character of false teachers.

Understanding the Way False Teachers Try to Deceive

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to recognize the character of false teachers. In this way, we are helping to protect them from false teachers and also equipping them to help weak and immature Christians so that they will not be deceived. Our topic today will be a continuation of that topic as we look at various ways that false teachers deceive themselves as they try to deceive others.

In 2 Peter 2:18 we read, “For when they speak great swelling *words* of emptiness, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through lewdness, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error.” Here, Peter helps us to understand the way that false teachers speak. The word translated “great swelling” means “*big words that make a person sound like the person has great knowledge and understanding.*” Jude 1:16 says, “These are grumblers, complainers, walking according to their own lusts; and they mouth great swelling *words*, flattering people to gain advantage.” Here, we see that they speak these words to flatter people and gain an advantage. The word translated “emptiness” means “*words that have no truth.*” Ephesians 4:17-18 says, “This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.” Here, the word is translated “futility.”

We also see that false teachers allure through the lusts of the flesh. The word translated “allure” means “*to catch by bait or to entice and deceive.*” The thing that false teachers use as their bait to deceive is the lusts of the flesh. The word translated “lusts” means “*a craving or desire for what is forbidden.*” The word translated “flesh” means “*the earthly nature of man without the influence of God.*” Galatians 5:19-21 says, “Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told *you* in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.” False teachers offer a religion which encourages people to satisfy their sinful desires. “Lewdness” means “uncontrolled lusts.” 1 Peter 4:3 says, “For we *have spent* enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles--when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries.” Here, we see the word is used to describe our life before Christ.

We see that false teachers often aim their teachings at those who are trying to escape from those living in error. Many people begin to get tired of their sinful lives and decide that religion may help them to develop a better life. 2 Peter 1:4 says that true Christians have escaped the corruptions of the world. That verse says, “By which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption *that is* in the world through lust.” Instead of telling people to repent and receive forgiveness of sins, false teachers offer a religion of self-effort that they say will help such people live a better life. The difference is that this better life is offered through self-effort instead of repentance and faith in Christ. We will see the consequences of this false religion in verse 20.

In 2 Peter 2:19-21 we read, “While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage. For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and

Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known *it*, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them.” Here, we see that false teachers promise liberty to those who follow their false teachings.

Galatians 5 gives us two warnings about the liberty that false teachers will offer. Galatians 5:1 says, “Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.” True liberty through Christ sets us free. Here, we see that false liberty entangles a person again in a new yoke of bondage. In the following verses, we see that this new yoke of bondage is keeping the law. Galatians 5:4 says, “You have become estranged from Christ, you who *attempt to* be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.” Here, we see that some false teachers will deceive those who are trying to escape from their sinful life by telling people that they can become acceptable to God by keeping either the Jewish law or certain rules that the false teachers teach. This is just a different yoke of bondage.

Galatians 5:13 says, “For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not *use* liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.” We have already seen that many false teachers encourage people to adopt a religion that gives them freedom to fulfill the sinful desires of the flesh. In contrast, this verse says that true liberty gives us the liberty to serve one another in love. We might use an illustration that helps us to understand true liberty. We could compare true liberty to a road with deep ditches on both sides. One ditch is the yoke of bondage of the Jewish law or the rules that false teachers teach. The other ditch is the religion of false teachers that tells people that they can continue to fulfill the sinful desires of the flesh. Both teaching are false so that is why they are like deep ditches.

True liberty begins when a person repents of his or her sin of unbelief and places his or her faith in the death and resurrection of Christ. We are able to walk in that liberty as Christians as we learn to walk in the Spirit and be led by the Holy Spirit. Galatians 5:16 says, “I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.” Here, we see that as we walk in the Spirit we will not be deceived by the teaching of false teachers that says that we can continue to fulfill the sinful desires of the flesh. Galatians 5:18 says, “But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.” Here, we see that once we come to Christ we are no longer under the law. Instead, we are able to walk by faith. 2 Corinthians 5:7 says, “For we walk by faith, not by sight.” As we learn to walk in the Spirit and be led by the Spirit, our lives will begin to bear the fruit of the Spirit. Galatians 5:22-23 says, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.” The fruit of the Spirit is the result of learning to yield to the Spirit.

We also see that false teachers promise others liberty when they are actually slaves of corruption themselves. The word translated “slaves” is the word for a bondsman. The word translated “corruption” is the same word used in verse 12 where we read, “But these, like natural brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed, speak evil of the things they do not understand, and will utterly perish in their own corruption.” This verse reminds us that they are slaves to sin and will experience eternal judgment because of their own sin. Certainly, they cannot help anyone else when they face eternal judgment. Their own sins have made them slaves to sin and the judgment that sin brings.

Many of those who are false teachers at one time turned to religion to try and get free from their own bondage to sin. They may even have heard what the Word of God says about Christ so that they had some knowledge of salvation. However, they chose to depend on their own works instead of turning to Christ in true repentance. Hebrews 10:26-27 says, “For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins,

but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries.” Such individuals become entangled in their own bondage because they often believe their own false teachings. As a result, they continue to face eternal judgment. We see that the end for such false teachers is worse than the beginning.

That is why verse 21 warns that it would have been better for them if they had not known that they needed to turn from their sin of unbelief than to make the choice to turn from the commandment of God. Hebrews 10:29 says, “Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?” Here, we see that such unbelief after hearing the Gospel is compared to trampling the Son of God underfoot and treating His blood as if it meant nothing.

2 Peter 2:22 goes on to say, “But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: ‘A dog returns to his own vomit,’ and, ‘a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire.’” Here, we see two vivid word pictures of the choice that describes false teachers who have heard the Gospel and rejected it. First, we see that they are like a dog that has returned to eat its own vomit. This is a quote from Proverbs 26:11 where we see that it is a description of a fool. Proverbs 26:11 says, “As a dog returns to his own vomit, so a fool repeats his folly.” Here, we see that a fool continues to repeat his folly. Second, we see that when a pig is given a bath that the first thing the pig does is go back and lays down in the mud. Both word pictures describe the fact that the condition of these animals is worse in the end than their condition was in the beginning. We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that false teachers work hard to deceive others and in the end they deceive themselves by their own lies. Their final judgment will be greater than if they had never heard the true Gospel. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to understand why false teachers try to deceive.

Learning Why People Ignore the Coming of Christ

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand why false teachers try to deceive. We saw that they try to deceive others. In the process, many of them come to believe their own lies and deceive themselves. As a result, either way they depend on their own works for salvation instead of coming to Christ by repentance and faith. Today, we are going to see why many people ignore coming to Christ even though they hear the Gospel explained clearly.

In 2 Peter 3:1-4 we read, “Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in *both of* which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder), that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior, knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, ‘Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as *they were* from the beginning of creation.’” In the previous chapter, Peter warned the Christians about false teachers. Here, we see that this chapter is written to those who are beloved or true Christians. Peter wanted to remind all true believers of certain things. Peter had done this in his first letter and now he reminded them again in his second letter. Because Peter was writing to true believers, he described their minds as pure minds.

Peter wanted to remind the Christians to recall the words spoken by the Old Testament prophets as well as the teachings of the commandments given by Christ to the apostles. Here, we see an important lesson for today. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says, “All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” As we grow as Christians, we all need to become familiar with the entire Bible including all of the Old and New Testaments. This is important to help each Christian grow to spiritual maturity and become equipped for every good work. The Old Testament writers wrote both about the coming of the Lord as well as the coming of judgment to those who reject the Lord.

The word translated “scoffers” means “*those who mock and scoff.*” Here, it talks about false teachers and others who scoff about the coming of Christ for those who have placed their faith in Him and scoff about coming judgment. Jude 1:17-18 says, “But you, beloved, remember the words which were spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ: how they told you that there would be mockers in the last time who would walk according to their own ungodly lusts.” Peter gave us some key characteristics of these scoffers that we have today as the last days covers the period from the return of Christ to heaven until He comes again to take us to heaven.

First, we see that these scoffers walk according to their own lusts. Jude 1:16 says, “These are grumblers, complainers, walking according to their own lusts; and they mouth great swelling *words*, flattering people to gain advantage.” Here, we see that those who walk after their own lusts do this by speaking with great and impressive words so that people think that they are great speakers. They flatter people so that they can take advantage of them. In actual fact, such false teachers are only thinking about the things that will benefit themselves and help them get what they want.

Second, these false teachers bring confusion to people by saying things like, “Where is the promise of His coming?” False teachers usually try to get people to think about the present

instead of looking to the future. Christ warned that such thinking is the thinking of fools. Luke 12:18-20 talks about the rich fool that had an abundance of crops. Those verses say, “So he said, ‘I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. And I will say to my soul, ‘Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, *and* be merry.’ But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?’” Here, we see that the rich fool left God out of his thinking and did not plan for the future. False teachers try to get people to do the same.

Third, false teachers expect things to happen the way that they have happened in the past but they willfully ignore some of the things that the Old Testament mentions about the past. They think that nothing has changed since the creation and conveniently ignore the judgment that came at the time of the flood. In contrast, Christ warned about the future in Matthew 24:37-39, “But as the days of Noah *were*, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.” False teachers are really like the people before the flood who did not prepare for the future.

2 Peter 3:5-6 says, “For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water, by which the world *that* then existed perished, being flooded with water.” The word translated “willfully” means “*to purpose or determine*.” Here, we see that false teachers determine to forget and deny two events in the Old Testament. They willfully forget the creation when God created the heavens and the earth. The very first verse in the Bible, Genesis 1:1 says, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” In our present day, false teachers have chosen to willfully forget that Christ spoke the word that brought the entire creation into existence. Instead, the world has accepted the ideas of false teachers who teach evolution, the “big bang” or some other theory that denies that God created all things.

The fact that false teachers choose to willfully forget both the creation and the flood from the past show that they do not want to face the fact that judgment is certainly coming. 2 Peter 3:7-9 says, “But the heavens and the earth *which* are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day *is* as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning *His* promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.” Christ is the One who spoke the heavens and the earth into existence. He is also the One who now holds all things together. Colossians 1:17 says, “And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.” The word translated “consist” means “*to hold together*.”

Just as there was judgment in the time of the flood, there will be a future judgment. Here, we see that the future judgment will be by fire. In 2 Thessalonians 1:6-8 we see that Christ will bring this future judgment by fire upon the earth. Those verses say, “Since *it is* a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, and to *give* you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.” False teachers have certainly troubled Christians since the time of Christ. Here, we see that the false teachers will be among those who experience this eternal judgment by fire. The word translated “perdition” means “*total destruction and talks of the eternal judgment*.” Revelation 20:15 says, “And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.” This judgment is eternal for all of the ungodly including all false teachers.

We also see that God looks at time in a different way than the people of the earth. As people on the earth, we think that a person has had a long life if a person reaches one hundred years of age. In contrast, God looks at time from the viewpoint of eternity. Even a thousand years is just a moment when compared to eternity. Psalm 90:4 says, "For a thousand years in Your sight *are* like yesterday when it is past, and *like* a watch in the night." This verse reminds us about the way that God sees earthly time.

Since God looks at time from the viewpoint of eternity, He is very patient with sinful man because He gives people a long time to repent. 1 Peter 3:20 says, "Who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while *the* ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water." Here, we see that God showed His patience by waiting the entire time that it took Noah to build the ark before bringing judgment. The word translated "slack" means "*to be slow or to wait a long time.*" Just as God waited a long time to judge people in the time of the flood, God is also waiting a long time to bring the final judgment.

The reason why God is waiting a long time to bring the final judgment is due to His longsuffering. The word translated "longsuffering" can also be translated "patient" as it is three times in James 5:7-8, "Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See *how* the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand." We also see why God is patient as He waits to bring the final judgment. God is waiting for the final person that He has chosen to come to repentance so that person can also have eternal life. This also means that false teachers are given a long time to repent but they will not.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand why false teachers and many other people ignore the coming of Christ. Such individuals have chosen to continue in unbelief instead of repenting of their sin of unbelief and showing their faith in Christ by asking Him to forgive them. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to understand why many people ignore the coming of Christ.

Learning About the Day of the Lord

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand why many people choose to ignore the coming of the Lord. We saw that false teachers influence many people with the result that many people become scoffers who choose to continue to walk after their own lusts. However, the day of the Lord will come when the Lord will judge the heavens and the earth as well as all those who have continued in their sin of unbelief. We will learn how to explain the Day of the Lord to our children in this topic.

In 2 Peter 3:10-13 we read, “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner *of persons* ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.” Here, we see that God must cleanse the present heavens and earth from the results of sin.

The Day of the Lord is the Day of Judgment. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 discusses the return of Christ to take the Christians to heaven. Then chapter five begins, in verses 1-2 by saying, “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.” Here, we see that the Day of the Lord will begin right after the Christians are taken to heaven. We see in that chapter that the first part of the Day of the Lord talks about the seven years of tribulation. Here, Peter talks about the final judgments that are also a part of the Day of the Lord. Revelation 20:7-8 point out the fact that the thousand-year period known as the millennium will happen between the first part of the judgment and the Great White Throne Judgment when all unbelievers will be cast into the eternal judgment of the lake of fire.

Just as the first part of the Day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, we see here in 2 Peter 3 that the final judgment will also come as a thief in the night. In addition to the judgment of all unbelievers, we see here in 2 Peter that the Day of the Lord includes the cleansing of the heavens and the earth. We see that the heavens will pass away with a great noise. The earth will burn up with a great heat. All of the buildings and other things that people have built will be burned. Here, we see that God will purify the heavens and the earth with fire. Revelation 21:1 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.” The present heavens and earth must be purified to remove the effects of sin.

We see that the future judgment of the heavens and earth gives us a reminder about the way that we should live as Christians as we live on this earth. We see that it should be our desire to conduct our lives in holy conduct and godliness. Paul wrote Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:12, “Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity.” Just as Timothy was to be an example to other believers by his conduct, we want to provide an example for our children of godly conduct in our lives.

We see that following the Day of the Lord, when sinful man will be judged, the Day of God will come. The day of man is the time from the first sin by Adam and Eve to the final judgment when all sin is judged. As Christians, we can eagerly look forward to when the Day of God will

come. 1 Corinthians 15:28 says, “Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.” Here, we see that Paul talked about a day when all things will be subject to the Father. As a result, the Day of God is the eternal state where all sin has been removed. That is why the heavens and earth must be dissolved so that everything that remains from sinful man is removed.

As Christians, we can look forward with great joy to the promise of God that there will be a new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. Isaiah spoke of the new heavens and new earth when he wrote in Isaiah 65:17, “For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered or come to mind.” The new heavens and the new earth will be filled with righteousness. As a result, we will not even think about or remember sin and the consequences of that sin.

Based on the fact that we can look forward to the new heavens and earth, 2 Peter 3:14-16 says, “Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless; and consider *that* the longsuffering of our Lord *is* salvation--as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable *people* twist to their own destruction, as *they do* also the rest of the Scriptures.” Here, we see that we want to be ready at every moment for the coming of Christ.

As Christians, we are to be looking forward to the new heavens and the new earth. If we are looking forward to the eternal future with Christ, Peter reminds us that it will affect the way that we live today. We want to be able to have peace at the moment that Christ comes to take us to heaven. Isaiah 26:3 says, “You will keep *him* in perfect peace, *whose* mind *is* stayed on *You*, because he trusts in *You*.” This statement was originally made to Israel. However, it certainly also describes the way that we will feel at the coming of Christ if our lives are without spot and blameless. “Without spot” means that we are without sin in the sight of Christ and “blameless” means that we have a reputation in the sight of the people of the world that cannot be rebuked. This will give us true peace. In addition, the longsuffering of Christ means we are given more time to share the message of salvation with those who have not yet repented of sin and placed their faith in Christ.

Peter went on to remind the Christians that Paul had written about these same things to them. Peter pointed out the fact that some of the things that Paul wrote are hard to understand. For the person who is an immature Christian, Hebrews 5:13-14 says, “For everyone who partakes *only* of milk *is* unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, *that is*, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.” Here, we see that immature Christians cannot understand most of the more difficult teachings of the Word of God. Then 1 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.” Here, we see that a person who is not a Christian cannot have spiritual understanding.

In contrast, 1 Corinthians 2:9-10 says, “But as it is written: ‘Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.’ But God has revealed *them* to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.” Here, we see that God wants us to understand the difficult things that Paul wrote. However, we are to ask the Holy Spirit to reveal those things to us because they will not be understood just through our human understanding because that is intellectual knowledge instead of spiritual understanding.

As a result, the unlearned (ignorant) and unstable wrest the difficult teachings. The word translated “wrest” means “*to twist or pervert.*” Here, we see that those who are not Christians will twist or pervert both those written by Paul and also the other Scriptures to their own destruction. In 1 Thessalonians 2:13 we read, “For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed *it* not *as* the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.” Those who are true Christians recognize and obey the Word of God but those who are not Christians twist and pervert the Scriptures.

The book concludes by saying in 2 Peter 3:17-18, “You therefore, beloved, since you know *this* beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him *be* the glory both now and forever. Amen.” Peter wanted the Christians that knew and loved the Lord to know these things in advance so that they would not be deceived by false teachers who would try to lead them astray. In the same way, we want to help our physical and spiritual children to know these things so that they will be steadfast (stand firm) in their spiritual lives.

We want to make it our goal to help our physical and spiritual children continue to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. We and our children grow in grace as we are strengthened in our spiritual lives. We grow in the knowledge and understanding of our Lord Jesus Christ as we ask the Lord to reveal His truth to us through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. As 1 Corinthians 2:10 says, “But God has revealed *them* to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.” God has given us the Holy Spirit as the down payment and guarantee of our eternal life. The Holy Spirit does many things for us in our lives. Here, we see that one of the things that He does is helps us to grow in our knowledge and understanding of the more difficult teachings of Scripture so that we can give glory to God. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children grow in their understanding.

Learning to Walk in Love

In our previous eight topics, we have looked at the things that Peter taught about false teachers. We see that such false teachers deceive themselves as well as deceiving others. John and Jude also wrote about false teachers and how they deceive themselves and others. In our topic today and the next topic, we are going to see that John tells us how to walk in love even toward false teachers, and at the same time protect others.

In 2 John 1:1-2 we see that John describes the people to whom this letter was originally written. Those verses say, “The Elder, to the elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth, and not only I, but also all those who have known the truth, because of the truth which abides in us and will be with us forever.” Here, we see that this letter was originally written to a particular lady and her family. This lady and her family must have been well-known among the Christians in the area in which she lived because of the things that are written in this introduction.

The focus of this letter is the importance of showing hospitality to those who are followers of the truth but not providing hospitality to those who deny the truth. As a result, we see that the word “truth” is mentioned three times in the first two verses and two more times in verses three and four. In two verses in the book of John, the writer defines who and what is meant by the word truth. In John 14:6 we read, “Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.’” Then as Christ prayed in John 17:17 He said, “‘Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.’” In these verses, we see that Christ and the Word of God are called truth. As a result, those who would deny the truth would include those who deny that the whole Word of God is truth or that Christ is the One who is truth.

We see that John wrote to a lady and her children in one of the churches. This woman must have been known for her hospitality to Christians who were traveling through her area because the second half of this book is a warning about false teachers who might come posing as Christians. Matthew 7:15-17 says, “‘Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit.’” Here, we see that false teachers will try to deceive so John wanted to protect this lady and her family from deception by false teachers.

John gave us much detail about the prayer of Christ the night before He was crucified. One of the key things that Christ prayed for all true Christians is that we might be one. John 17:20-21 says, “‘I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, *are* in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.’” Here, we see that Christ prayed that all true Christians would be one as Christ and the Father are One. Just prior to those verses we read in John 17:17, “‘Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.’” Here, we see that the basis for unity among true Christians is agreement about the fact that the whole Word of God is truth. As a result, it is only possible to have unity when that unity is based on truth.

That is why this letter about hospitality begins by focusing on the importance of truth. As we said when we began this topic, both the whole Word of God and Christ are truth so there must be agreement on those two points in order for Christians to have unity. However, we also see in these verses that truth dwells in us. In John 16:13 Christ promised, “‘However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own *authority*, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.’” Here,

we see why it is possible for us to have unity when that unity is based on Christ and the Word of God.

That unity is possible because of the fact that all Christians have the Holy Spirit dwelling in them. Galatians 5:17-18 says, “For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.” At any time that a group of Christians are being led by the Holy Spirit, there will be unity among those Christians. In any group where part of the people are not being led by the Spirit due to the fact that they are not yielding to the Spirit or if some are not Christians, then there will not be unity because that part of the group may be acting in the flesh. However, when all are Christians and are being led by the Holy Spirit, Acts 2:46 says, “So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart.” The early church was of one accord because they were being led by the Holy Spirit.

In 2 John 1:3-6 we go on to read, “Grace, mercy, *and* peace will be with you from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love. I rejoiced greatly that I have found *some* of your children walking in truth, as we received commandment from the Father. And now I plead with you, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment to you, but that which we have had from the beginning: that we love one another. 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.” John went on to tell the lady and her children that they would experience grace, mercy and peace as they walked in truth and love.

Ephesians 4:15-16 says, “But, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head--Christ--from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.” Here, we see that part of our growth as Christians is learning to speak the truth in love. As we learn to speak the truth (share the Word of God with one another) and speak the truth in love, we see that we will help each Christian to experience grace, mercy and peace.

John wrote to the lady who received this letter that he experienced great joy when he found some of her children walking in truth. Galatians 5:16 says, “I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.” As we help our children learn to walk in the Spirit, they will also learn to walk in truth. The Father is the One who commands us to walk in the truth. In fact, John 14:16-17 says, ““And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever--the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.”” Here, we see that the Father has given us the Holy Spirit and He is also called the Spirit of truth.

This is why John went on to plead with this lady that she walk in the truth. John realized that the Christian love that this lady had was great and that is why she was so quick to show Christian hospitality to travelers who claimed to be Christians. John realized that her love and concern was making it easy for deceivers to deceive her. That is why John went on to point out the fact that true love results in obedience to the commandments of the Lord. 1 John 5:2-3 says, “By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.” Here, we see that true love for God will cause us to love the children of God and at the same time also keep the commandments of God

The night before His crucifixion, Christ gave the disciples a new commandment. John 13:34-

35 says, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” The new commandment is to love one another as Christ loves us. This is why we are to recognize the teachings of those who are deceivers and false teachers. We will not show true love to weak Christians if we do not protect them from false teachers.

However, at the same time, we are also commanded to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. Any person who is not a Christian is our neighbor and so we are to speak with love even if a person is a deceiver or false teacher. However, as we saw earlier in this topic, we are to speak the truth in love. In order to speak the truth in love to deceivers, we are to warn them with love about the judgment that is coming. Christ modeled that love as He spoke from the cross and said in Luke 23:34, “Then Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.’ And they divided His garments and cast lots.” In the same way, we want to warn false teachers with love so that they are given the opportunity to repent and turn from their sin and turn to Christ.

Here, we see that learning to walk in love includes giving all people the opportunity to understand the love that Christ showed by paying the penalty for their sin with His blood on the cross. As Christ talked to the rich young ruler, Mark 10:21 says, “Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, ‘One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me.’” Jesus looked at this young man with love even though he was depending on his own works. In His love, Christ invited this young man to follow Him. In the same, we want to help our children learn to show love to false teachers by offering eternal life instead of offering hospitality.

Learning to Recognize Deceivers

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to walk in truth and love. We saw that the book of 2 John was originally written to a Christian lady and her family and saw that she apparently was a lady who showed great hospitality to traveling Christians. However, some of those who took advantage of her hospitality were deceivers or false teachers. As a result, in our topic today, we will see the instructions that John gave to this lady so that she would not be deceived by these deceivers and false teachers.

In 2 John 1:7-8 we read, “For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ *as* coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but *that* we may receive a full reward.” Here, we see that John begins to give his warning to this lady and her family about deceivers. The word translated “deceivers” means “*one who misleads or leads into error and is used four times in the New Testament.*” 1 Timothy 4:1-2 says, “Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons; speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron.” Here, we see that many deceivers depart from the faith and turn to deceiving spirits and false teachings. We also see that such deceivers sear their consciences so that it does not bother them to speak lies to deceive others.

We also see that there are many such deceivers. These deceivers have gone out into the world to spread their false teachings. The first thing that we see about such false teachers is that they do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. The Word of God teaches that Christ is fully God and fully man. 1 John 4:3 says, “And every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the *spirit* of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.” Here, we see that some false teachers teach that Christ was not truly a man. In John 10:30-31 we read, “I ‘and My Father are one.’ Then the Jews took up stones again to stone Him.” Here, we see that many try to deny that Christ is God and One with the Father. In this case, the Jews were ready to stone Christ because they understood that Christ was saying He was fully God and they did not want to accept that fact. Deceivers will either deny that Christ is fully God, fully man or both.

John says that such a deceiver is antichrist or against Christ. As a result, any religious leader that denies that Christ is fully God or fully man is antichrist because such teachings are against Christ. John told the lady and her family to look at themselves with understanding to see whether they were being deceived by such false teachers. John wanted this lady to enjoy her full eternal reward for her faithful ministry of hospitality and did not want her to miss out on part of that reward because part of those who enjoyed her hospitality were false teachers. 1 Corinthians 3:12-14 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.” Hospitality to true teachers would certainly be rewarded but hospitality to false teachers would be burned up like wood, hay and stubble and would not be rewarded. John wanted this lady to have a full reward.

2 John 1:9-11 says, “Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds.” The word translated “transgresses” means

“to depart, leave or turn from.” This word is used to describe Judas in Acts 1:25 where we read, “To take part in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.” We know from John 6:70 that Judas never had a true faith. Here, we see that such individuals do not abide in the doctrine of Christ.

The word translated “abide” means “to remain or continue.” Here, we see that those who do not continue in the doctrine of Christ do not have God. This means that such individuals never placed their faith in Christ. 1 John 2:23 says, “Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also.” As a result, these verses make it clear that a person claiming to believe in the Father but does not believe in the Son does not have the Father either. Such a person is not a Christian.

In contrast, the verse goes on to say that those individuals who continue in the Biblical teaching about Christ have a true faith in both the Father and the Son. The word translated “doctrine” means “the teaching about Christ.” In Matthew 22:31-33 we read, “But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.’ And when the multitudes heard *this*, they were astonished at His teaching.” Here, the word is translated “teaching” and includes the doctrine of the resurrection. In Mark 1:27 we read, “Then they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, ‘What is this? What new doctrine *is* this? For with authority He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him.’” Here, we see that the doctrine of Christ teaches that Christ has all authority over demons.

Christ also said in John 7:16-17, “Jesus answered them and said, ‘My doctrine is not Mine, but His who sent Me. If anyone wants to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or *whether* I speak on My own *authority*.’” Here, we see that Christ said His doctrine came from the Father. In Acts 5:28, we see that the apostles taught this same doctrine about Christ. In that verse the Jewish religious leaders said, “Saying, ‘Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man’s blood on us!’” A deceiver will not teach these doctrines of Christ.

John wrote to the lady and her family about teachers who do not teach these doctrines about Christ. The word translated “receive” means “to take to one’s self.” Paul told Agrippa in Acts 26:18 that Christ has sent him, “‘To open their eyes, *in order* to turn *them* from darkness to light, and *from* the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.’” Here, we see that “receive” means “to receive forgiveness of sins.” John shared with this lady and her children that they were not to invite these false teachers to stay in her home and provide hospitality for them.

The lady was also told not to bid these false teachers God speed. The word translated “God speed” means “to rejoice or give a greeting.” Since John was writing about false teachers that deny the basic doctrines about Christ, John said that it was not proper to rejoice and give thanks for their ministry or to give them a greeting. In fact, verse eleven says that such things would actually make a person a partaker in the evil deeds of such false teachers. The word translated “partaker” is from the same root word as “communion” and “fellowship” and means “to enter into fellowship or to become a partner.” Ephesians 5:11 says, “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose *them*.” When a false teacher denies the basic teachings of the doctrine of Christ, we are to share what the Word of God says about the things that the false teacher is denying so that people will know what the Word of God really says instead of being deceived by such false teachers and their teachings. This is a part of our ministry of protecting those who are weak or immature Christians.

The word translated “evil” speaks of things that are wicked or sinful in their nature. In fact, the word is used several times to describe Satan. Matthew 13:19 says, “When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand *it*, then the wicked *one* comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside.” Here, we see that Satan works to keep people from even understanding the Word of God. The word translated “deeds” speaks of actions or works that a person does. 1 John 3:8 says, “He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.” Evil deeds are the works of Satan and Christ came to destroy those evil works. As a result, those who encourage false teachers share in their evil works.

2 John 1:12-13 says, “Having many things to write to you, I did not wish *to do so* with paper and ink; but I hope to come to you and speak face to face, that our joy may be full. The children of your elect sister greet you. Amen.” Here, we see that John had many other things to write to this lady and her children. However, instead of writing those things in a letter, John hoped to come and visit this family and share those teachings face to face. He said that such sharing face to face would cause them all to experience a joy that would be full. The same is true in our own lives. As we share the Word of God with one another and encourage one another, it also brings great joy to our lives.

As we read this short letter, we see that John took time to write a letter to encourage a family of his spiritual children. In the same way, we want to encourage both our physical and our spiritual children by letters and visits to encourage them in their spiritual growth so that they will also continue to grow in their spiritual lives. John also sent greetings from the nephews and nieces of this lady. This indicated that John had the opportunity to know other members of her family as well. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your physical and spiritual children learn to recognize deceivers and false teachers.

Learning to Walk in the Truth

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand what John wrote about deceivers. That will help our children understand how to be obedient to God when they recognize by what a person says that the person is a false teacher. In this topic, we want to help our children understand more about learning to walk in the truth.

In 3 John 1:1-2 we read, “The Elder, to the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth: Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers.” John began this letter just as he began 2 John by calling himself the elder. Since John was close to 90 years old at this time, this may have been to describe his age or it could have been a way of saying that he was just one of the leaders of the church. In the New Testament, the word is used both as a title for those who are older and also as a title for those who are leaders in the local church.

John wrote the book of 2 John to a lady and her children to help her know when to avoid showing hospitality to those who were false teachers. This book is written to Gaius (a very common name in that culture) who was one of the leaders in a local church where John had ministered. As a result, John wrote to him as the beloved Gaius. Since John uses this word four times in this short book, we see that he had a great love and respect for Gaius. This is a good example for every Christian. We also need to develop a great love and respect for other Christian leaders and their ministries. John said that he loved Gaius in truth. 1 John 3:18-19 says, “My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth. And by this we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him.” Here, we see that we are not just to talk about love. Instead, we are to show that love by our actions and according to the truth of the Word of God.

We see that John prayed that Gaius would prosper in all things. The word translated “prosper” is used two times in this verse and means “*to be successful or to prosper.*” Here, we see that the spiritual life of Gaius was really blessed by the Lord and that the prayer of John was that the Lord would cause him to be blessed in all areas of his life. The word that is translated “health” can refer either to physical health or spiritual health. The word is translated sound in Titus 1:9 where we read, “Holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.” Gaius was prospering in his soul so John is saying that he is praying that the physical health of Gaius will match the spiritual health of Gaius. This gives us a good example as we seek to help our children develop strong spiritual health by growing to spiritual maturity.

3 John 1:3-4 says, “For I rejoiced greatly when brethren came and testified of the truth *that is* in you, just as you walk in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.” Here, we see why John could write that Gaius had strong spiritual health. Some of the other Christians had visited John. While they were talking with John these other Christians spoke about Gaius and mentioned that He was a man that spoke the truth. In addition, they said that he also walked in the truth.

Here, we see a key characteristic that we want to develop in our physical and spiritual children. We want to help them grow to spiritual maturity so that what they say and what they do are in full agreement with the truth of the Word of God. 1 John 1:6-7 says, “If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.” As we show our children how to walk in the light by

our example, they are learning to walk in the light so that their actions and words agree.

John expressed his personal joy to know that Gaius was walking in the truth. In fact, he said that he could have no greater joy than to hear that his children walked in the truth. Gaius was not a physical child of John. However, John had helped him to grow in his faith and his understanding and application of the truth. As a result, this verse has a very similar thought to the thought expressed by Paul about Timothy in 1 Corinthians 4:16-17 where we read, “Therefore I urge you, imitate me. For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church.” In the same way that Paul considered Timothy his faithful and beloved son in the Lord, John had the same attitude toward Gaius. The life of Gaius brought great joy to John in his life.

In 3 John 1:5-8 we read, “Beloved, you do faithfully whatever you do for the brethren and for strangers, who have borne witness of your love before the church. *If* you send them forward on their journey in a manner worthy of God, you will do well, because they went forth for His name's sake, taking nothing from the Gentiles. We therefore ought to receive such, that we may become fellow workers for the truth.” In these verses, we learn a little about the ministry of Gaius to other Christians.

The word translated “faithfully” means “*one that is faithful and can be relied on.*” 1 John 1:9 translates this word “faithful” when it says, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” We know that the Lord is faithful to forgive and cleanse us from all of our sins. The fact that John uses this word points out the fact that Gaius was a faithful servant of the Lord in whatever he did to serve other Christians. The faith that Gaius had in the Lord caused him to be faithful in his service to others. James 2:18 says, “But someone will say, ‘You have faith, and I have works.’ Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.” Here, we see that Gaius showed his faith by his works of service to other Christians including both the brethren and to Christians who were strangers.

The brethren would refer to other Christians that lived in his area. The word translated “strangers” were Christians who came from other areas or other ethnic groups. Both the brethren and these Christians from other areas had told John about the faithful ministry of Gaius. Hebrews 13:1-2 says, “Let brotherly love continue. Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so *doing* some have unwittingly entertained angels.” Here, we see that Gaius looked for opportunities to help traveling Christians as they came through the area where he lived. The one thing that was especially mentioned about Gaius was the love that he showed to these traveling Christians.

Traveling Christians would be especially quick to recognize the love of a Christian like Gaius because in that day many areas had no public places to stay. The fact that he invited people that were totally unknown to him and treated them with great love gives us an example for our own lives. When these traveling Christians left their homes to continue their ministry in other places, we see that Gaius sent them on their way in a manner worthy of God. The word translated “worthy” means “*in a manner worthy of or pleasing to.*” 1 Thessalonians 2:11-12 says, “As you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father *does* his own children, that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.” Paul had encouraged the Christians in Thessalonica to have that kind of a walk. Here, we see that whether from the encouragement of someone else or because of his own godly life, Gaius had the same desire to send visitors on their way in a way that was pleasing to God.

We see from the next statement that many of those who Gaius entertained were probably Christians that were traveling from place to place to share the Gospel with others. These people went out to take the Gospel to other areas without asking for any help from those who were Gentiles. The word “Gentiles” referred to anyone who was not a Jew. In the early church, it came to include any person that was not a Christian. Here, we see that those who traveled to other areas to share the Gospel did not expect those who were not Christians to supply their needs. In 2 Corinthians 11:7 Paul asked the question, “Did I commit sin in humbling myself that you might be exalted, because I preached the gospel of God to you free of charge?” Paul worked to provide for his own needs so that he did not need to ask those who were either new Christians or not yet Christians in Corinth to supply his needs. Many of these Christians went with the same attitude.

John said that such Christians provide an opportunity to show the love of God to others who are faithful in their ministry and service for the Lord. Gaius gave an example to all of the other Christians by the hospitality that he showed to traveling Christians who were faithful in teaching the truth about Jesus Christ. In 2 John 1:10-11, John warned against such a ministry to those who deny the truth. That verse says, “If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds.” However, Gaius recognized those who were teaching the truth about Christ and John commended him for this ministry.

John pointed out that such a ministry to Christians who are faithful in serving the Lord makes us fellow workers with them for the truth. The word translated “fellow workers” means “*those who are companions in ministry or partners in the work of the Lord.*” We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to apply 1 Corinthians 3:9 to their own lives as Paul and those with him did. That verse says, “For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, *you are* God's building.” We want to show our children by example and our ministry how to be fellow workers with God. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to walk in the truth.

Learning About the Dangers of Pride

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to walk in the truth. We saw that we also want to help them become fellow workers with those who are walking in the truth. In 2 John, we saw that we are not to become fellow workers with those who deny the truth. As a result, we see that it is very important to help our children learn to recognize those teachings that do not agree with the Word of God. In our topic today, we see that we want to help our children learn to deal with leaders who try to control others.

John had earlier written a letter to the church of which Gaius was a part. However, there was one of the leaders in that church named Diotrephes that did not accept the letter that had been written by John. 3 John 1:9-10 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.” We learn several characteristics of Diotrephes that help us to realize that we have some leaders in churches today that have the very same attitudes.

First, the word that is translated “loves to have the preeminence” means “*one that has a strong desire to be first or to be the most important person.*” 1 Peter 5:3 says that leaders in the church are to lead by example, “Nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.” They are not to seek personal power. In Mark 10:42 Christ told the disciples, “But Jesus called them to *Himself* and said to them, ‘You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them.’” Here, we see that there is a strong desire among many leaders who are in the world to bring others under their power so that they can exercise control over them. In contrast, Christ told the disciples in Mark 10:43, “‘Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant.’” Paul also warned that such leaders can arise in the church. In Acts 20:30 Paul warned the elders of the church at Ephesus, “Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.” Any leader that has this attitude is controlled by pride.

Second, we see that Diotrephes did not receive other church leaders including John even though John was one of the apostles. The word translated “receive” means “*to admit and show hospitality to.*” The word is used only twice in the New Testament and those two places are here in verses nine and ten. This is a characteristic of leaders who want power. They do not want to show hospitality to anyone that they think might try to question the things that they do.

Third, Diotrephes spoke against John with malicious words. The word translated “prating against” means “*to accuse a person falsely with evil words.*” The word translated “malicious words” means “*evil or wicked and is used several times to speak of Satan.*” 2 Thessalonians 3:2-3 says, “And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men; for not all have faith. But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard *you* from the evil one.” In these verses, we see the word is used twice: once to speak of wicked men and once to speak of Satan. As a result, in 3 John we see that Diotrephes was doing the work of Satan by his words about others.

Fourth, in addition to refusing to show hospitality to other Christians, we see that Diotrephes was forbidding the other people in the church to show hospitality to other Christians. This would be a direct violation of 1 Peter 4:8-9 where we are told, “And above all things have

fervent love for one another, for ‘love will cover a multitude of sins.’ *Be* hospitable to one another without grumbling.” This shows that love was lacking in the life of Diotrephes.

Fifth, Diotrephes was putting out of the church those who tried to show hospitality to other Christians. The word translated “putting” means “*to drive out, to cast out or to expel a person from a family or group.*” Acts 7:57-58 says, “Then they cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran at him with one accord; and they cast *him* out of the city and stoned *him*. And the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul.” In these verses, the Jewish religious leaders cast Stephen out of the city and stoned him to death. Diotrephes showed the evil in his heart by casting Christians out of the church if they showed hospitality to other Christians.

That is why 3 John 1:11-12 goes on to say, “Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. He who does good is of God, but he who does evil has not seen God. Demetrius has a *good* testimony from all, and from the truth itself. And we also bear witness, and you know that our testimony is true.” John did not want any Christians to imitate the evil example of Diotrephes. Here, we see that new leaders will often follow the example of other leaders. As a result, John wanted to make sure that no one would follow the evil example of Diotrephes. In fact, John went on to point out the fact that a leader who practiced such evil has not seen God. That means that such a person is not a Christian at all. Instead, such a person is a false teacher.

In contrast, we are also introduced to Demetrius who does provide an example for godly leaders to follow. John said to imitate the good instead of the evil. The word translated “good” means “*that which is upright and honorable.*” We see that the person that does good is a true follower of God. Acts 14:17 uses the word translated “good” to speak of God when that verse says, “Nevertheless He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good, gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.” Then, 1 Peter 2:15 tells us why we are to do good when it says, “For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.” Here, we see that it is the will of God for Christians to do good.

John wanted to make sure that Gaius did not follow the evil example of Diotrephes. As a result, John reminded Gaius of Demetrius and gave his life as an example to follow instead. Demetrius had a good report of all men. Paul used the word translated “good report” to describe godly widows when he said in 1 Timothy 5:10, “Well reported for good works: if she has brought up children, if she has lodged strangers, if she has washed the saints’ feet, if she has relieved the afflicted, if she has diligently followed every good work.” Here, we see that godly widows will have others speak about their good works because they are a godly example for others to follow.

John encouraged Gaius to follow the example of Demetrius because he had a good report of all of the Christians. He had this good report because He was obedient to the truth. This word translated “truth” is often used to speak of the Word of God. John 8:32 says, “And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” In John 14:6, this word is used to describe Christ when He said, “Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.’” Then in 1 John 5:6, we see that it describes the Holy Spirit when it says, “This is He who came by water and blood--Jesus Christ; not only by water, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is truth.” Like Demetrius, we will also have a good report as we are obedient to the truth. This will be the result of the fact that we are following Christ and the instructions that He gives in the Word of God as we yield our human spirit to the Holy Spirit.

John could also speak from his personal knowledge of the reputation of Demetrius and said that

he personally knew that Demetrius was faithful in following the truth. Christ told Nicodemus in John 3:21, ““But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.”” Demetrius was a good example of one whose deeds showed that they had been done in God. In the same way, we want to be that kind of an example to our children and to all others so that our lives can also be an example for others to follow. We want to be able to say as Paul said in 1 Corinthians 11:1, “Imitate me, just as I also *imitate* Christ.” When we can say that we imitate Christ, we provide a good example for others to follow.

3 John 3:13-14 concludes this short book by saying, “I had many things to write, but I do not wish to write to you with pen and ink; but I hope to see you shortly, and we shall speak face to face. Peace to you. Our friends greet you. Greet the friends by name.” John had many other things that he wanted to share with Gaius to help him in his spiritual growth and ministry for the Lord. However, instead of putting those things into a letter, John looked forward to the opportunity to see Gaius and to speak to him face to face. Here, we see the concern of a spiritual parent who wanted to encourage his spiritual son by having the opportunity to visit him and share Biblical principles with him to help him in his ministry for the Lord.

John wanted Gaius to experience the peace that comes from the Lord. Philippians 4:7 says, “And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” We want to have the same concern for our physical and spiritual children that John had for his spiritual children. John also wanted to send greetings to Gaius from the Christians with John. At the same time, John wanted to send his greetings to the other Christians in the church. Again, John gives us an example for our own lives and how to build relationships with other Christians. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to understand the dangers of pride.

Learning About the Judgment of Sinful People

The books of James, I and 2 Peter, I, 2 and 3 John and Jude are called the General Epistles. Our next three topics will be to help our physical and spiritual children learn some key lessons that Jude taught to warn younger Christians about false teachers. Since we still have many false teachers in our time, it is important for us to also help our children understand these lessons in order to help provide them with protection from false teachers that may try to deceive them.

Jude 1:1-2 begins, “Jude, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to those who are called, sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ: Mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you.” In this first verse, we see that Jude is the brother of James, the writer of the book of James. These two men were both half-brothers of Christ. Matthew 13:55 says, “‘Is this not the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary? And His brothers James, Joses, Simon, and Judas?’” These brothers did not recognize Christ as the Son of God during the earlier part of his ministry. John 7:3-5 says, “His brothers therefore said to Him, ‘Depart from here and go into Judea, that Your disciples also may see the works that You are doing. For no one does anything in secret while he himself seeks to be known openly. If You do these things, show Yourself to the world.’ For even His brothers did not believe in Him.” However, as they saw Christ minister these brothers came to recognize that Christ is God.

By the time Christ returned to heaven the brothers of Christ all recognized Him as God. Acts 1:14 says, “These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.” Here, we see that the brothers of Christ are included with those who gathered in the upper room after Christ returned to heaven. Both James and Jude recognized themselves as the bondservants of Christ as a result. James 1:1 says, “James, a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad: Greetings.” Since they knew that Christ is God and also the One that saved them from their sin, they referred to themselves as the bondservants of Christ.

This book is written to those who are set apart by the Father and preserved in Jesus Christ. The word translated “preserved” means “*to keep, to guard or to carefully take care of.*” 1 Peter 1:3-4 says, “Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you.” In these verses, we see that the word is translated “reserved.” We are preserved in Jesus Christ because He has reserved a place in heaven for us. Jude wanted all believers to fully experience the mercy, peace and love that Christ has shown to each one of us.

Jude 1:3-4 goes on to say, “Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.” Three times in this short book Jude refers to the “beloved”. The word translated “beloved” means “*those who are dearly loved or worthy of love.*” Here, we see that Jude had a great love and concern for other Christians. That was why he wanted to write to them about the common salvation that we all enjoy in Christ.

However, it had become necessary for him to write about the danger of ungodly people and false teachers to provide protection for those that he greatly loved. As a result, Jude encourages

Christians to contend earnestly for the faith. The word translated “contend earnestly” means “*to contend or compete as in a race or a gymnastic event.*” However, as Christians we are called to contend earnestly for the faith. Just as a person in a race makes an all out effort to win the race, we are to put that same kind of effort into protecting the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. 2 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.” God gave us the Word so that we can know the Word and protect the Word from ungodly men and false teachers.

Jude said that it is necessary for us to contend earnestly for the faith because certain people have crept into the church unnoticed to try and destroy that faith. The word “crept in unnoticed” means “*to enter secretly or to slip in without being noticed.*” Jude said that these certain people that have slipped into the church without being noticed are actually ungodly people that have been marked out for condemnation. Paul said in Galatians 2:4-5, “And *this occurred* because of false brethren secretly brought in (who came in by stealth to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage), to whom we did not yield submission even for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.” Here, we see that this had already begun to happen years earlier since Paul said that these were false brethren and not Christians at all.

False teachers that creep into the church in any period of time face eternal judgment because they are ungodly people that have never repented of their sin and placed their faith in Christ. In fact, Jude said that such false teachers turn the grace of God into lewdness. The word translated “lewdness” means “*unrestrained lust and immorality and speaks of those who openly commit immorality.*” Ephesians 4:19 says, “Who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.” Here, we see that such false teachers are only claiming to follow God as an excuse to satisfy their own sinful lusts. They are not Christians but instead use religion as a way to deceive weak Christians in an effort to satisfy their own sinful lusts. By their sinful actions, they are showing that they deny both the Father and the Son.

Jude 1:5-7 goes on to say, “But I want to remind you, though you once knew this, that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe. And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day; as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them in a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.” Here, we see that Jude went on to give several illustrations of judgment that came on those who did not believe and have their faith in the Lord.

Under Moses, God brought the nation of Israel out of the land of Egypt in order to fulfill His promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. However, most of the people did not really have faith in the Lord. Stephen quoted Amos in Acts 7:42-43 where we read, ““Then God turned and gave them up to worship the host of heaven, as it is written in the book of the Prophets: ‘Did you offer Me slaughtered animals and sacrifices during forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel? You also took up the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of your god Remphan, images which you made to worship; and I will carry you away beyond Babylon.’”” Here, we see that Israel continued to worship the false gods of Egypt throughout the time that they were in the wilderness. As a result, God destroyed the people in the wilderness and brought the next generation into the land of Israel.

We also see that God brought judgment on the angels that rebelled against God and followed Satan. In their rebellion, these fallen angels completely left their first home and joined Satan in his rebellion against God. Some of those angels are already experiencing judgment. Here, we see that God has placed those already experiencing judgment in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day when they will be cast into their eternal judgment. In Matthew 25:41, Christ described the judgment that has been prepared for the devil and his angels when Christ said, ““Then He will also say to those on the left hand, ‘Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.’”” This will be their eternal judgment.

The third illustration of those who have been judged is the people in the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities. The people of these cities had totally given themselves to sexual immorality and going after strange flesh. Genesis 19:4-5 says, “Now before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both old and young, all the people from every quarter, surrounded the house. And they called to Lot and said to him, ‘Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us that we may know them carnally.’” These men showed their rebellion against God by their own sin and rebellion. As a result, God brought immediate judgment on those cities. Genesis 19:24-25 says, “Then the LORD rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah, from the LORD out of the heavens. So He overthrew those cities, all the plain, all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground.” These three illustrations of judgment show the judgment that will come on all false teachers and all unbelievers.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that there are false teachers who creep into the churches today just as they did in the days of the New Testament. We want to help them realize that these false teachers are ungodly people that have never trusted in Christ. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn about the judgment of false teachers and sinful people in the past.

Learning About the Judgment of False Teachers

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand the judgment that God brought on sinful people and false teachers in the past. We saw that the unbelieving are being kept in everlasting chains under darkness until the judgment of the great day when they will be cast into the eternal judgment in the lake of fire and brimstone. In our topic today, we are going to learn more about the judgment of false teachers.

Jude 1:8-11 says, “Likewise also these dreamers defile the flesh, reject authority, and speak evil of dignitaries. Yet Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, ‘The Lord rebuke you!’ But these speak evil of whatever they do not know; and whatever they know naturally, like brute beasts, in these things they corrupt themselves. Woe to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit, and perished in the rebellion of Korah.” The dreamers (false teachers) that had crept into the early church in the time of Jude are described in three ways.

First, we see that they defiled the flesh. The word translated “defile” means “*to stain, pollute or contaminate.*” Titus 1:15 says, “To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled.” Here, we see that false teachers and others also defile their mind and their conscience as well as their flesh.

Second, we see that they rejected authority. The word translated “reject” means “*to do away with or to refuse to obey.*” The word translated “authority” means “*those who have power or dominion.*” 2 Peter 2:10 describes such false teachers when that verse says, “And especially those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise authority. *They are* presumptuous, self-willed. They are not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries.” False teachers consider themselves the authority.

Third, we see that they speak evil of dignitaries. As we saw in the previous paragraph, Peter included this statement as part of the description of false teachers. The word translated “speak evil” means “*to revile, rail or blaspheme.*” The word translated “dignitaries” means “*the things belonging to God, Christ or the glory belonging to Christ since He has returned to heaven.*” Here, we see that false teachers speak evil of the Father, Christ and other heavenly beings.

We also see that false teachers can be bolder than even Michael, the archangel. Instead of trying to contend with the devil and accuse him, Michael said, ‘The Lord rebuke you.’ In contrast, we see that false teachers are so bold that they are bold to speak evil about things of which they have no understanding. They cannot have understanding about spiritual things because 1 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.” Such false teachers are blinded by Satan. In 2 Corinthians 4:3-4 we read, “But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.” Here, we see that the minds of these false teachers are blinded by the god of this age.

The word translated “woe” means “*judgment.*” We are given three illustrations of people that received judgment. Cain received judgment because he depended on the works of his own hands. Balaam received judgment because money was his god. Korah was judged because he

offered strange fire before the Lord (had his own form of worship). However, false teachers face an equally severe judgment. Hebrews 10:26-27 says, “For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries.” Just like these men from the Old Testament, false teachers have had knowledge of the truth and have rejected it.

Jude went on to describe what these false teachers were like that had crept into the church secretly. Jude 1:12-13 says, “These are spots in your love feasts, while they feast with you without fear, serving *only* themselves. *They are* clouds without water, carried about by the winds; late autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, pulled up by the roots; raging waves of the sea, foaming up their own shame; wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.” Here, we see the true inner character of these teachers.

The word translated “spots” was the word used to describe a rock or reef under the water that caused many ship wrecks. The word translated “love feasts” was the word used to describe the dinners that were a part of their communion services. As a result, Jude warned that these false teachers were like hidden rocks and were trying to damage or destroy the faith of other Christians. Such false teachers are often bold in both their words and their actions because they are really only serving themselves.

Next, Jude said that such false teachers are like “clouds without water carried about by the winds.” 2 Peter 2:17 gives a similar description of false teachers when that verse says, “These are wells without water, clouds carried by a tempest, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.” Such clouds produce no rain to water the earth. When false teachers promise spiritual life, such men are making empty promises because they do not have spiritual life themselves.

Then, we see that they are like trees in the fall that have no fruit. The reason that they have no fruit is due to the fact that they are twice dead. A fruit tree that has died is unable to bear any fruit. However, when a tree has been chopped down or died and then the roots have been pulled out of the ground, it is impossible for anything good to come from that tree. It can only be burned. Instead of being fruitful, false teachers can only look forward to eternal judgment.

False teachers are also pictured as “raging waves of the sea, foaming up their own shame.” Raging waves are the result of a severe storm. Such a storm has great power but that power is used to destroy instead of bring blessing. Isaiah 57:20-21 says, “But the wicked *are* like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. ‘*There is no peace,*’ says my God, ‘for the wicked.’” Here, we see that the shame of false teachers is like the mire and dirt that are cast up by the waves.

Finally, false teachers are described as being like “wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.” A wandering star is like a meteor that shines brightly for a few seconds and then is gone forever. False teachers will deceive people for a short time but the day of their judgment will soon come.

Jude 1:14-15 says, “Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, ‘Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.’” Enoch was a man who walked with God before the flood. We see here that he had a ministry of warning others about the fact of coming judgment.

In 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10 says, “And to *give* you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed.” God led Enoch to write about coming judgment and later led Paul to give these additional details. When the Lord brings judgment, Revelation 20:13 says that every ungodly person will be judged according to his deeds. In addition, at that time they will also be judged for the harsh things that they have spoken against God throughout their lives. Then Revelation 20:15 says, “And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.” This will be the eternal judgment of all the ungodly because of their unbelief.

Jude 1:16 says, “These are grumblers, complainers, walking according to their own lusts; and they mouth great swelling *words*, flattering people to gain advantage.” Here, we have a summary of the actions of false teachers. The word translated “grumblers” means “*one who complains discontentedly against God.*” The word translated “complainers” means “*a person who complains about his own problems.*” We see that in addition to complaining about God and their own problems, these people walked according to their own lusts. We also see that such false teachers flatter others with very impressive words so that they can take advantage of those people. The word translated “advantage” means “*profit or self gain.*” Here, we see that whether it is words, actions or anything else that is done by false teachers, the things that they do are only to benefit themselves and not to help others.

As we help our physical and spiritual children to understand the goals and the judgment of false teachers, we help our children to realize why it is important not to be deceived by such individuals. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children to understand the final judgment of false teachers.

Learning How to Minister as Christians

In the last two topics, we have seen that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand the character of false teachers and the judgment that they will receive because of their ungodly lives. After warning about these false teachers, Jude concluded his short letter by writing about the way that we should serve the Lord as Christians so that we will carry out the ministry that the Lord has for us in this world. That will be the focus in this topic.

In Jude 1:17-19 we read, “But you, beloved, remember the words which were spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ: how they told you that there would be mockers in the last time who would walk according to their own ungodly lusts. These are sensual persons, who cause divisions, not having the Spirit.” Here, we see that the apostles had been warning the Christians that there would be mockers who would walk after their own ungodly desires. Peter wrote in 2 Peter 3:3, “Knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts.” John said in 1 John 2:18, “Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour.” Paul also had warned in Acts 20:29-30, “For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.” As a result, we see various apostles gave warnings.

We see several characteristics of these mockers. First, we see that they walk according to their own ungodly lusts. The word “ungodly” speaks of a lack of reverence for God. Romans 1:18 says, “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.” Here, we see that those who lack reverence for God face eternal judgment. The word translated “lusts” speaks of a desire or craving for what is forbidden. Ungodly people are focused on satisfying their own sinful lusts.

Second, we see that mockers are sensual persons. Here, we see that such people desire to fulfill their sinful desires. James 3:15 says, “This wisdom does not descend from above, but *is* earthly, sensual, demonic.” Third, such mockers cause divisions. The word translated “cause divisions” speaks of those who work to cause separations between other people. Such people enjoy seeing others in conflict. Fourth, we see that these mockers do not have the Holy Spirit. This statement makes it clear that such individuals are false teachers who were never Christians.

Jude 1:20-23 goes on to say, “But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. And on some have compassion, making a distinction; but others save with fear, pulling *them* out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh.” In contrast to false teachers, we see that John told these Christians whom he loved how they were to live and serve the Lord as Christians.

First, we are to build ourselves up on our most holy faith. In order to build on our faith, we must build on the right foundation. Matthew 7:24 says, “Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock.” Then 1 Corinthians 3:11 says about that Rock, “For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” We build ourselves up as we take root in Christ. Colossians 2:6-7 says, “As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it

with thanksgiving.” Here, we see that we become established in the faith as we are rooted and grounded in Christ.

Second, we are to pray in the Holy Spirit. Romans 8:26-27 says, “Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit *is*, because He makes intercession for the saints according to *the will of God*.” Here, we see that the Holy Spirit takes our prayers and brings them into agreement with the will of God.

Third, we are to keep ourselves in the love of God. Ephesians 3:17-19 says, “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.” This was part of the prayer of Paul for the Ephesians. We keep ourselves in the love of God as we are obedient to Him. Christ said in John 15:10, “‘If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.’” Our desire is to be obedient to God.

Fourth, we are to look for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ. The word translated “looking for” means “*to wait for or to receive*.” Titus 2:13 says, “Looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.” We can look forward to the return of Christ because of the fact that Christ showed us His mercy when He forgave our sins and placed His righteousness on us. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says, “For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” Christ became sin for us so that the Father could place the righteousness of Christ on us at the moment of our salvation. As a result, we have received eternal life.

We see that we are also called by God to help others experience this same mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ. The word translated “making a distinction” means to do something without doubting or to do it in such a way that it will make a difference. Peter said in Acts 11:12, “‘Then the Spirit told me to go with them, doubting nothing. Moreover these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered the man's house.’” We are to learn to make a distinction about the way that we present the Gospel to various individuals so that all have the opportunity to hear and understand.

With some people, we are to show compassion because they think that they are so sinful that Christ could never accept them. In John 4:17-18, Christ showed compassion to the Samaritan woman when He accepted her even though He knew all about her background. Those verses say, “The woman answered and said, ‘I have no husband.’ Jesus said to her, ‘You have well said, “I have no husband,” for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; in that you spoke truly.’” As a result of that compassion, we see that many Samaritans believed as John 4:39 says, “And many of the Samaritans of that city believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, ‘He told me all that I *ever* did.’” That compassion made a great difference in the life of the Samaritan woman.

In contrast, some people have been deceived and think that their own efforts will save them and they need to be saved by fear. Christ told Nicodemus in John 3:5-7, “Jesus answered, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, “You must be born again.”’” As a religious leader, Nicodemus was depending on his own good works and needed to be confronted with the fact that his own works could never save him.

We also see a third group. These are people who need to be pulled out of the fire because they are in total rebellion against God. Christ spoke to the scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 23:13 and said, “But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in *yourselves*, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in.” Here, we see that this group was in such rebellion against Christ that they were doing everything that they could do to prevent others from receiving eternal life. Saul was such an individual. Acts 9:1-2 says, “Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.” Even some from this group will be shown mercy as we see from the example of Saul.

Jude 1:24-25 concludes the book by saying, “Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present *you* faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to God our Savior, who alone is wise, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen.” Even though Jude warned the Christians that there were many false teachers who would try to deceive them, Jude also reminded those Christians that Christ is able to keep us from stumbling. In fact, we are reminded that when Christ presents us to the Father we will be faultless in His sight because of the fact that He is satisfied with the payment that Christ made for our sins. 1 John 2:1-2 says, “My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.” The word translated “propitiation” means “*that which satisfies and God is satisfied with the payment that Christ made for our sins because we accepted that payment by repentance and faith.*” This is a fact that we want to help our physical and spiritual children fully understand so they can look forward with great joy to that day when we will stand faultless before the Father because Christ placed His righteousness on us. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to minister effectively knowing God sees them as faultless.