

Week 52

December 24 - December 31

1 John 1-5; 2 John; 3 John; Jude; Revelation 1-22

This week is Christmas and we remember the birth of a special child, Jesus Christ. In our passage this week we will focus on the children of God. We will look at what it means to be a child of God and how it affects our life now and 10,000 years from now. You have much to celebrate as you come to the end of the Bible and this year's commitment you made to walk through it. And as we think of the end, the last few day's readings will center on the end of time. Child of God, may you be encouraged by this week's passages.

December 24th

1 John 1:1-4:6. "A Child of Who?"

We are enthralled by famous people. We cherish their autographs, mementos, pictures, books, and even their children. It's something special to be the son or daughter of so-and-so. Imagine being a foster child who is one day adopted by someone famous. It would instantly make you famous.

It is an unfortunate thing but the children of God run the risk of taking their celebrated adoption for granted. You are not the child of a famous speaker, actor or politician, but a child of the God of the universe, your Heavenly Father who loves you tremendously.

Although somewhat hard to grasp but true, is that a child represents his/her parents. For instance, when the child of a prince or president makes a mess, we will soon hear about it through the media. There is a certain expectation and obligation that should attempt to be met. As a child of God we also have an obligation to live as a child of God should ("not living in spiritual darkness" 1:6, "obeying His commands" 2:4; 3:10, "loves other Christians" 2:10; 3:11, "keep themselves pure" 3:3).

December 25th

1 John 4:7-5:21; 2 John 1; 3 John 1. "What Kind of Love"

God's love for us could never be displayed greater than by what we remember at Christmas; God sending His Son.

This morning I was reading about another new world religion. It is called the Temple of Love. The followers believe all religions and peoples can unite under just the auspice of love. First John 4:8 intentionally reads "God is love" not "love is God." Our world has so perverted and misinterpreted love. It is to them something that makes the world go around and makes it all happy and right. However, the love they describe is selfish, often freeing them from any kind of obligation or principle. God is not that kind of love. "Real love is like God, who is holy, just and perfect. If we truly know God, we will love as he does" (Life App.). So, if we are a child of God who is love what does it look like to love as He asks? God's love is holy, sacrificial and pure of motive. His love looks for ways to bring about our best; maturity, provision, protection, etc. So, as we love one another we are also to reveal that same kind of love.

December 26th

Jude 1; Revelation 1:1-2:29. "Hold Up the Light"

I am intrigued by the messages to the seven churches (Rev. 2-3). Each message has similar parts. Each message begins with an expression similar to "I know all your works." Each message also begins with an introduction describing the Lord Jesus, yet in ways as are fitting to the message. Each message also offers a promise to "everyone who is victorious" or "overcomes." Each message concludes with a sentence similar to "anyone who is willing to hear let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." The letters contain words of warning as well as words of promise. Yet note how the churches are first described; as lamp stands (1:12,20).

David called the Lord his "lamp" (2 Sam. 22:29). God's Word is also identified as a "lamp" (Ps. 119:105). In Matthew five Jesus describes Christians as "lights" that should shine in our world. Therefore, I can't think of a better description of the church, God's people, than a "lamp stand." Perhaps an appropriate question to ask would be; how effective are we at holding high God's shining light in the world?

December 27th

Revelation 3:1-6:17. "Worship in Heaven"

I love to imagine the scene in Heaven as God is worshiped. John describes it in so many places in this passage. Try and picture some of these scenes: "Day after day and night after night they keep on saying, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty ...they fall down and worship ...and they lay their crown before the throne and say, You are worthy, O Lord our God, to receive glory and honor and praise ...then I looked again, and I heard the singing of thousands and millions of angels around the throne ...and they sang in a mighty chorus ...then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea. They also sang ...fell down and worshiped God and the Lamb."

Scripture describes our worship of God most often with falling down before Him or with our heads bowed. The scene we will witness will be so much beyond what we can imagine that we will surely be overwhelmed by God's glory and the scene of millions around us, all in worship of the Father.

December 28th

Revelation 7:1-10:11. "Praise God!"

Everyone needs praise for his accomplishments, but few people make the need known quite as clearly as the little boy who said to his father: "Let's play darts. I'll throw and you say 'Wonderful!'"

The visions of Revelation often describe a great multitude in heaven "too great to count" (7:9) shouting their praises to God and the Lamb (Christ). In a similar way, as the little boy throwing darts, we offer praise to God for His accomplishments, but they are not vain or empty praises as we consider who He is and what He's done.

Some Sunday mornings we've sang a song called Who Am I, by Casting Crowns. The bridge to the chorus says, "Not because of who I am, But because of what you've done. Not because of what I've done, But because of who you are."

I would encourage you to read Psalm 103. It expresses God's love for us and how what He does for us lets us know what He is really like. Just from this psalm you will have enough reasons to shout your praises to God for a very long time.

December 29th

Revelation 11:1-14:20. "Harvest Time"

Jesus said, "I assure you, those who listen to my message and believe in God who sent me have eternal life. They will never be condemned for their sins, but they have already passed from death into life" (John 5:24).

The picture at the end of Revelation 14 of Christ swinging the sharp sickle over the earth is a solemn one. At that point it will be "harvest time." In the Gospel of John, chapter four verse 35, there is a Gospel harvest explained: "The fields are white and ready to harvest." A continual harvest of people ready to be saved by the Gospel is out there waiting to hear from us. However, there is a time limit, an expiration date. And that is when this next harvest arrives; the harvest of judgment: "The harvest is the end of the age" (Matt. 13:39). For the believer this harvest takes us home. For the unbeliever it is every bit as grim as it sounds. "God will come ...with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, bringing judgment on those who don't know Him ...they will be punished with eternal destruction, forever separated from the Lord and from his glorious power" (2 Thes. 1:8-10).

December 30th

Revelation 15:1-18:24. "Babylon"

The Tenth of Tevet is one of the four fast days that commemorate dark times in Jewish history. The Tenth of Tevet marks the onset of the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, the King of Babylonia, and the beginning of the battle that ultimately destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple of Solomon, and sent the Jews into the 70-year Babylonian Exile. Saddam Hussein pronounced himself as the reincarnation of Nebuchadnezzar, and dreamed of restoring the Babylonian empire to its former size and glory. If that was his desire, God gave him a similar outcome; driven out of his kingdom hiding in a hole. In fact, Saddam Hussein was hanged on the 9th of Tevet, the eve of the Jewish fast day.

Revelation 17 and 18 discuss the end of Babylon. Chapter 17 deals with Babylon as spiritual entity and chapter 18 deals with it as a political entity. The idea of a world religion is fast upon us as complacency and tolerance take root among us. We're afraid to even discuss the differences between a nice works-based cult and the evangelical church. Truth is truth, and compromise and tolerance only makes us vulnerable to lies.

December 31st

Revelation 19:1-22:21. "The End ...Not Really"

You have just finished reading through the entire Bible. You have read of the history of Israel, the history of the church, the account of Christ and the cross, the prophets and their devotion, instructions for believers and an enormous number of other things. Yet the ending of the book only shows us that there's more to come; an eternity more.

As Heaven dawns I'm going to have to find a new line of work. There won't be a need for pastors and evangelists in Heaven. Satan will be defeated. Sin will be no more. In fact, there will be no more tears, sorrow, death, pain, sickness, hunger, judgment or night. God's children will live forever in the presence of our Father, and of the Son and the Holy Spirit. It's a place of beauty, holiness, unity, perfection and joy. It can't get any better than that.

If you're a believer I pray you are greatly anticipating Heaven, stirred about being in the presence of our Lord, and excited about the future: We have reason to be, because we know the ending.

General Questions for each day:

Summarize the day's Bible passage in your own words.

What thoughts, actions, attitudes or beliefs are addressed in the passage?

How is the Holy Spirit leading you to apply this passage to your life today?

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Bible Discussion Guide:

What does it mean to be a child of the God of the universe?

Describe the world's definition of love.

Describe God's definition of love.

Which of the messages to the seven churches can you relate most with this week?

What does it mean to be a "light?" I recently heard another believer tell me that we can shine too brightly and should be tolerant and careful not to offend anyone. Do you agree? Did Jesus say the world would agree with us?

What does worship look like?

How many things could you praise God for? Seriously try and think through a list like this.

If you knew "Harvest Day" (the final judgment of the world) was just one month away, what would you do differently?

Among other things, Babylon represents false religions of the world. Do you feel comfortable with what you understand about the differences between what you believe and what some of the false religions around you do?

What does the end look like for you? You can KNOW that Heaven is your destination. If you don't know that then make sure, because there is only one other option.