

# Session 9: Environment for End Times & Eternity

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## I. The End Times, Eternity, and the Eternal Purpose Church

1. The ideas of the end times and eternity are both essential issues about which the eternal purpose church must focus.
  - a. The goal of this session is to shine light on two more very important issues for which a spiritual environment must be created if we are to build a church based on God's eternal purpose. The two issues are: 1) preparing a people for the end times and 2) preparing a people to stand before the judgment seat of Christ so as to be fully prepared for the age to come and eternity.
  - b. Both the end times and eternity are integrally connected to God's eternal purpose and the environment that an eternal purpose church must promote. Let's see why.
2. First, God's *prepared bride* will be forever used throughout eternity in partnership with Christ as the Father's representative throughout the creation.
  - a. As we have repeatedly stated, the primary purpose of the church age is to prepare a people for the Lord. It is to prepare a people as mature sons for the Father and as an equally yoked bride for the Son to live in a temple for the Holy Spirit. Said another way, God's eternal purpose for this age is to prepare a corporate man who will function *eternally* as Christ's bride/body—that is, as His representative for the ages throughout the vastness of God's creation. This remnant will dwell in great intimacy with Christ and partner with Him forever in the expansion of His never-ending kingdom.
3. Second, those who are being prepared now will also be used in unique and powerful ways in the end times.
  - a. The church age will end when God has prepared a people in accordance with God's eternal purpose for the church age, that is, as mature sons for the Father and an equally yoked bride for the Son. Even though we do not know the timing of the end of the church age, the age will end when God has accomplished His objective for this age. Christ's second coming will not be dependent on the coming of the antichrist and the darkness that will surround his reign in the earth; instead, it will depend upon God fulfilling His objective for the church age. When He has completed His "to do list" for this age, the transition will begin toward the next age with the casting down of the dragon to earth and the beginning of the last 3 ½ years of this age.
  - b. As we have stated many times in Lifeschool, the end-time church will not be merely spectators as end-time events unfold, they will be participators. Not only in the last 3 ½ years of this age but as we approach the end of the age, the prepared bride will be used in unprecedented ways to transition the earth and God's people into the age to come.
  - c. Those who are being prepared now will be used greatly in the end times. Many of our Lifeschool classes focus on a variety of end-time events and we will not attempt to go into detail here of all that will occur and every way God's remnant might be used in these events; but, there is an unprecedented work of God that has been ordained for the eternal purpose church in the end times.
  - d. It is essential that leaders of an eternal purpose church create a spiritual environment to accomplish these two objectives: 1) to prepare a people for the end times and 2) to prepare a people to stand

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blameless before Christ at His judgment seat so as to be prepared for eternity. We will focus first on the end times and then on eternity.

## The End Times

### II. Understanding God's End-time Calendar

#### 1. The end times are upon us now.

- a. Before we delve into how God will use the prepared remnant in the end times, let's first define what we mean by the end times. When we use the phrase "end times" we are not referring only to the last 3 ½ or even the last 7 years of the church age, but also to the last generation and possibly even multiple generations which will climax with the second coming of Jesus.
- b. In Lifeschool, we sometimes refer to three distinct prophetic timeframes in the end times. They are: 1) the beginning of birth pangs, 2) worldwide peace and safety, and 3) the Day of the Lord. These three distinct seasons encompass a much greater time period than the seven years most frequently spoken of in the context of the end times. Mike Bickle, a leader in the body of Christ in America, states this about the end times,

In my opinion [*Bickle's opinion*], we are in the early days of the generation in which Jesus will return. I believe it is possible that there are people alive today who will see His return. It may be those who are currently twenty years old or those who are two years old. I do not know with any certainty. My opinion is based on observation of the biblical signs of the times, not on personal revelation such as prophetic dreams.<sup>1</sup>

- c. We believe that we are living now in the timeframe referred to as the beginning of birth pangs (Mt. 24:8). Therefore, as we refer to the end times, be aware that we are speaking of days that have already begun and will lead to the events of the periods of worldwide peace and safety, the Day of the Lord, the second coming of Jesus Christ, the millennial reign of Jesus as the King of the earth, and ultimately the new Jerusalem coming down from heaven. In other words, as we define the end times, we are living in them now.

#### 2. Said another way, the world is on the verge of the coming of the seventh kingdom referred to in Revelation 17.

- a. The apostle John wrote the following about the great harlot which will come upon the earth in the end times, "Here is the mind which has wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman [*the harlot*] sits, and they are seven kings; five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; and when he comes, he must remain a little while. The beast which was and is not, is himself also an eighth and is one of the seven, and he goes to destruction" (Rev. 17:9-11).
- b. Many conservative commentators believe the phrase "the seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits" are symbolic of seven world-wide, antichrist kingdoms throughout history. Most of these scholars agree that the first six are historical kingdoms: 1) Egypt; 2) Assyria; 3) Babylon; 4) Media-Persia; 5) Greece; and 6) Rome. The real debate is around the seventh and eighth kingdoms. There is much disagreement on who the seventh and eighth kingdoms are. Some think they have already come; some think they are both related to a restored Roman empire; and others think they are both related to Islam, its historical rule over Israel, and its restoration in our day.

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- c. Our view at Lifeschool even though we hold this view loosely and are willing to change as God speaks more clearly is that the seventh kingdom is a coming global movement many call “a new world order”. The new world order will combine a global economy, global government, and a unified global religion intertwined into a new order directed, controlled, and dictated by a small group of global elite. We will leave the support for this view to other classes; however, this is our view at this point.
- d. Our view is that the eighth kingdom, which will be the antichrist kingdom, will be rooted in radical Islam. We believe this kingdom will come against the seventh kingdom in an attempt to place the entire earth under Shariah law as dictated by the antichrist who will be a Muslim.
- e. The point for now is that the world is in the midst of the coming of a new world order. God has given the church a little extra time to get ready, but make no mistake the new world order will come at some point. The forces behind it are too strong and the scriptures confirm its coming.

## 3. In truth, the birth pangs of the seventh and eighth kingdoms have already begun.

- a. Like we said earlier, the birth pangs of these two kingdoms have already begun. Much like a woman in labor, these events begin with infrequent and not too serious events but intensify and become more frequent.
- b. As we all know, the new world order has not yet evolved to the point that there is an official one world government, economy and religion, nor has radical Islam begun to rule nations beyond several Islamic nations mostly centered in the middle east. However, realizing that both groups have as their goal world domination, the birth pangs of both of these movements have already begun.
- c. Therefore, it is crucial that the eternal purpose church get ready and do so quickly for the coming seventh kingdom is at hand. When it comes, it may usher in peace and prosperity for the masses at least for a short period, but it will not do so for Christians and the church. The one world religion that will be an integral part of the new world order will exclude conservative Christianity that holds to the belief that Christ is the way, truth, and life and the one and only way to the Father and salvation. *In this intense environment, the eternal purpose church is intended to stand strong, resist the antichrist system, operate in great power and authority, and lead many to victory.*
- d. With this background, let’s now look at several unique aspects that affect the eternal purpose church in the end times.

## III. Issues Specific to the End Times

- a. In this section, we will share several issues specific to the end times of which the eternal purpose church will be involved. The topics listed in this section are issues that are *unique* to the end times and more specifically to the days in which we live as the seventh kingdom begins to unfold before us. Of course, other issues discussed in previous sessions still apply to the end times. For example, we are to still be about the preparation of a worthy bride for Christ and overcoming mature sons for the Father.
- b. What we mention here are issues that in the direct context of the end times. As leaders of an eternal purpose church, we must create a spiritual environment to address these end-time issues.

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1. Prepare a people to stand strong as faithful witnesses of truth in the midst of a corrupt and compromising culture and an antichristian system.
  - a. We live in a progressively immoral, self-seeking, and anti-christian culture which is deteriorating and rapidly becoming more and more opposed to the standard of biblical truth. Many Christians are compromising with the culture, and in an attempt to be relevant to this post Christian world, much of the church has drifted far from the uncompromising Word of God as its standard for life and godliness.
  - b. As the seventh kingdom arises—the new world order—the contrast between Biblical Christianity and the global culture will only intensify. There is a tremendous need for a church who will be a faithful witness of truth and uphold a standard of righteousness based on the uncompromised truth of God’s Word. In Jesus’ message to the church at Pergamum, He referred to Antipas as a faithful witness writing, “I know where you live-where Satan has his throne. Yet you remain true to my name. You did not renounce your faith in me, even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was put to death in your city-where Satan lives” (Rev. 2:13, NIV).
  - c. At Pergamum, there was intense pressure on the church there to worship false gods and participate in the evil practices that took place at the city’s pagan festivals. Some were seduced into participating, others did not participate but taught that it was acceptable to participate due to the intense pressure that resulted from not participating. But some opposed these activities, stood against them, and taught others to stand strong against them. The third category were the believers who stood firm in their faith and like Antipas would not deny the faith, would not worship at the temples of the false gods or the emperors, and would not approve others doing so—regardless of the consequences. To this third group, Christ referred to them as faithful witnesses.
  - d. The faithful witness is the one who stands firm on the Word of God without compromise and speaks boldly into the lives of others in the midst of a global church drifting toward compromise. In the end times, there will be an ever-increasing need to stand as faithful witnesses of truth. The eternal purpose church is called to be such faithful witnesses in the end times in the deteriorating days in which we live. As such, there will be four traits that must characterize the eternal purpose church so as to stand firm upon the uncompromising word of God no matter the consequences.
  - e. The call to become faithful witnesses will lead the eternal purpose church to four major categories of activities in the end times: 1) preach and proclaim the needed message, 2) pray fervently, 3) disciple an army, and 4) stand firm against all opposition. Much could be said about all of these, but we will only mention a few points so as to highlight the need to build an eternal purpose church that will stand and flourish in the end times.

## Preach and proclaim the needed message

1. Revelation 14 gives us clues about the message needed in the days ahead.

- a. Note this passage,

And I saw another angel flying in midheaven, having an eternal gospel to preach to those who live on the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people; and he said with a loud voice, "Fear God, and give Him glory, because the hour of His judgment has come; worship Him who made the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of waters." And another angel, a second one, followed, saying, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she who has made all the nations drink of the wine of the passion of her immorality." Then another angel, a third one, followed them, saying

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with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, he also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger; and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb (Rev. 14:6-10).

- b. If you read the passage closely, the messages of the three angels highlight three aspects of the message that must be preached and proclaimed by the eternal purpose church as we approach the coming of the seventh kingdom.
- c. The first aspect of the message is the eternal gospel. In other words, all that we have been speaking of in this class—the eternal purpose gospel—must be proclaimed to all who live upon the earth and to every nation, tribe, tongue and people.
- d. The second aspect of the message is to call people out of any and all agreement with the Babylonian harlot system. As we stated, the seventh kingdom will be the harlot of Revelation 17 and it will ultimately fall along with all who are with it and in it. Here is the call to God's people in the context of this coming event, "I heard another voice from heaven, saying, 'Come out of her, my people, so that you will not participate in her sins and receive of her plagues; for her sins have piled up as high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities'" (Rev. 18:4-5). The global church right now is very much entangled in the Babylonian culture that permeates the earth. This system will fall and all involved in it will receive of her plagues. In the end times, the eternal purpose church must call people out of this system.
- e. The third component of the end-time message will be to warn people not to partake of the mark of the beast and not to participate in the antichrist system as it arises in the earth for if anyone worships the beast and his image by taking the mark of the beast, he or she will forever be destined to be tormented with fire and brimstone.
- f. In addition to these three themes, the message of the eternal purpose church must include other things.

## 2. Prepare messengers to announce to the church and world that Christ's coming is at hand.

- a. One end-time function of an eternal purpose church is to announce that the second coming of Christ is near and call people to get ready for His coming. As we know, John the Baptist was a forerunner empowered by the spirit and power of Elijah and was used to prepare the way for Christ's first coming. As the book of Malachi states, a similar function will emerge as we approach the second coming of Christ (Mal. 4:5-6). Much of Isaiah 40 refers to John the Baptist's call *to announce the coming of Christ*. Phrases like "a voice is calling out", "lift your voice mightily", and "say to the cities of Judah, here is your God!" fill the chapter with the idea of announcing Christ's coming. John did just that. Prior to Jesus' coming on the scene of Israel, John went into the wilderness of Judea and proclaimed the following, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 3:2). The Greek word translated "is at hand" is the Greek word *engizoo* which means to draw or come near or to approach.<sup>2</sup> So, John the Baptist announced to all who would listen that the kingdom of God was drawing near.
- b. We live in a day much like the days of John the Baptist. During the days of John, the people of Israel were expecting their Messiah to come in a very different way than He did. They were expecting a mighty deliverer to come to set them free from Roman oppression. In this environment John announced Jesus as the Lamb who takes away the sin to the world (Jn. 1:29). Today, many people are

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expecting the Lord to return in a very different way than what the scriptures teach. The second coming of Jesus is portrayed by many as a day in which the church will have been raptured before life gets too hard on earth. Others say there will not even be a second coming (Session 3 addresses several incorrect scenarios). Much like the days of John, many have preached Christ's coming represents a day of deliverance from our oppressors. Whereas this is true, it will also be a day of difficulty, persecution, and spiritual conflict. It will be a great day as the church age transitions into the Millennial kingdom age, but also a hard day to endure for all on the earth.

- c. Therefore, there is a need for heralds to announce that the second coming of Jesus is quickly approaching; that it will be different than most anticipate; and that people must get ready for His coming. The second coming of Christ and the events surrounding His coming will take place in a much different way than has been widely preached, and there is an urgent need for the eternal purpose church to produce messengers who will proclaim truth to the world, to invite all to the wedding feast, and to call the church to wake up and get ready for the most difficult period in world history.

### 3. Provide knowledge and insight into the specific issues connected to the end times.

- a. Speaking again of the role that John the Baptist played in Jesus' first coming, Luke 1:77 reads, "To give to His people the knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of their sins." Another task of the eternal purpose church in the end times is to give people knowledge of what to expect as the days of His coming draw near and what they must do to flourish in those days. Like Daniel wrote about the days of the antichrist, "and those who have insight among the people will give understanding to the many" (Dan. 11:33).
- b. John the Baptist gave people knowledge of Christ's coming and the nature of how Jesus would minister so as to clarify His mission. By so doing, people were much more prepared to receive Christ than they otherwise would.
- c. The knowledge provided by John about Christ was essential to prepare people for Christ's coming on the scene of Israel. The same is true as we approach the second coming of Jesus. Many, many people have a false view of what the end times will be like. Most are trusting that because they have received the gift of righteousness through faith in Christ that their justification is sufficient to prepare them to endure the tribulations that are coming upon the earth and to prepare them to receive the maximum eternal reward when they stand before the judgment seat of Christ.
- d. Just as John provided knowledge of salvation, the eternal purpose church must provide knowledge of the issues surrounding the second coming so that people can be made ready. For example, teaching is needed that clarifies the errors of escapism, preterism, and dominion theology; teaching is needed on the bride of Christ making herself ready; teaching is needed on the need to be an overcomer; and teaching is needed to prepare people for the persecution that will hit Christians in the end times. All of these teachings provide knowledge that will lead people to be ready for what is coming to the earth and what they need to do to be ready.

### 4. Proclaim Christ and Him crucified in the midst of the coming harvest

- a. The scriptures teach that there will be a great harvest of souls at the end of the age (Mt. 13:39). It will be a harvest of lost souls unto salvation and also believers unto maturity. As the pressures of the end times intensify in the earth in the coming days, God's glory will manifest in great power and many will

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come to the Lord. It will be much like the book of Acts happening all over again but this time on a worldwide basis—and in much greater power for Jesus has saved the best wine for last.

- b. The eternal purpose church is to be prepared now to participate in the harvest bringing soul after soul into the kingdom and helping them grow toward maturity. There is much that could be said about this, but there is one point I want to make in this section. The point is that the message that the eternal purpose church must proclaim in order to reap the harvest is the message of Christ and Him crucified. As I look through advertisements for conferences, I regularly see promotion for revival conferences. In most of them, the preaching emphasis is everything but Christ and Him crucified. The topics were things like breakthrough, personal prophetic ministry, deliverance, and a believer's unique destiny, or some mystical subject that no one even understands. In all of this, the topic of Christ and Him crucified is sorely missing from most gatherings in today's church. If you delve a little into the harvest that the New Testament Church led, the message was simple and clear. It was Christ and Him crucified (Acts 2:36; 4:10; 1 Cor. 1:23; 1 Cor. 2:2). Paul, one of God's greatest revivalists wrote these words about the message of harvest, "For indeed Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor. 1:22-24).
- c. We have talked a lot about Christ and Him crucified in this class, so we won't elaborate other than to say that this is the message that must be preached in order to be used in the second Pentecost that is coming in the end times. It must become the message of the eternal purpose church and a distinctive of its end-time message.
- d. Now, on to the next of our four end-time activities.

## Pray Fervently

### 1. Fill the heavenly golden altar with the prayers of the saints.

- a. Much of the ministry of the eternal purpose church in the end times will come through the ministry of intercession and spiritual warfare. But not just any type of intercession; more specifically, intercession that ascends to the heavenly golden altar. Note the following passage from Revelation 8:1-5,

When the Lamb broke the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them. Another angel came and stood at the altar, holding a golden censer; and much incense was given to him, so that he might add it to the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, went up before God out of the angel's hand. Then the angel took the censer and filled it with the fire of the altar, and threw it to the earth; and there followed peals of thunder and sounds and flashes of lightning and an earthquake (Rev. 8:1-5).

- b. There is also another verse that accompanies the one just listed, "When He had taken the book, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each one holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints (Rev. 5:8)."
- c. The next session will be devoted entirely to the subject of prayer that ascends to the golden altar. Therefore, we will not go into detail here other than to say that prayer that ascends to the golden altar or said differently golden altar prayer is a unique and critical function of the eternal purpose church in the end times. Please note this one very important point from the above quoted verses—

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when the full measure of prayer has been lifted to the golden altar both the seal and trumpet judgments are activated. From this we see that end-time events are activated in great measure by the prayers of the saints. Thus, prayer that ascends to the golden altar is an essential end-time activity of the eternal purpose church.

- d. In many churches, corporate prayer is focused almost totally upon the personal needs of the people or in some cases upon the national interests of the nation in which people live or in a few cases on Israel. The New Testament does call us to pray for the needs of people and for kings, for those in authority, and Israel. So we are not saying it is wrong to pray into these issues. We are to pray for our families, our nation, those in leadership, and these types of things. These are all needed prayer topics, but for the most part these topics do not comprise prayer that ascends to the golden altar as described in Revelation 5 and 8. Only prayer that is consistent with God's eternal purpose ascends to the golden altar in this manner. Therefore, the eternal purpose church must fulfill an end-time function by creating a spiritual environment and ministry structure so that this type of prayer can be facilitated.
- e. We have developed two prayer modules entirely focused on interceding before the golden altar. In these we highlight three major categories of prayer that will ascend to the golden altar: 1) prayer for the arising of the corporate man in fullness, 2) praying for the nations from a heavenly perspective, and 3) spiritual warfare. The end-time church must learn and participate in these types of intercessory functions and to do so with fervency as the world spirals more and more out of control.

## 2. Participate in spiritual warfare to confront the spirits of antichrist and the harlot.

- a. There is yet another dimension of the eternal purpose church's golden altar intercession and that is to resist in spiritual warfare the spirits of antichrist and the great harlot. The scriptures allude to this activity in several places. Notably Paul's exhortation in Ephesians, "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Eph. 6:12). As it relates specifically to the war against the harlot, "Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath judged *your judgment* on her" (Rev. 18:20, Douay-Rheims Translation). We see from this verse that God acts against the harlot in response to the judgment on her executed by the saints through their prayer and spiritual warfare. As it relates to the spirit of antichrist, "For the mystery of lawlessness [*related to the spirit of antichrist*] is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way" (2 Thess. 2:7).
- b. As a way of illustrating, we note the spiritual warfare conducted by Elijah. Elijah prayed but he also confronted the spirits of antichrist and the harlot of his day as manifested through Ahab and Jezebel. He confronted their prophets, called fire from heaven, and defeated them. As the spirit and power of Elijah arises on the eternal purpose church in the end times, God will do a similar thing. Possibly even a smaller group than those offering Golden Altar Prayer, God is and will continue to raise up a band of mighty warriors who will confront the enemy in spiritual warfare in the end times. This will be part of the work of the eternal purpose church in its end-time assignment.
- c. Terry Bennet put it this way in a message spoken in Lancaster, California in February of 2014,

The Lord is not going to finish off the demonic powers except that He uses the bride to do so. I want you to think of the irony of that statement for a moment. It was the bride [*Eve, italics mine*] who Satan [*the serpent of old, italics mine*] attacked. And it is the bride [*the man-child, italics mine*] who will put the final touches to his defeat in place.<sup>3</sup>

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- d. There is a lot we must learn about spiritual warfare before we get involved in it, and we must be very careful as we enter into the battle; however, it is one of the unique assignments of the eternal purpose church in the end times.
- e. Now about discipling believers to become an army.

## Disciple an army

### 1. The church must be discipled into maturity as the manchild of Revelation 12.

- a. Many people, even multitudes, will accept the message of the eternal gospel and will come to Christ in the coming harvest. These new converts must be matured and turned into a mighty army. Session 11 is devoted to the topic of becoming an army in the end times; therefore, we will not dwell on it here other than to say that the eternal purpose church must not only lead people to Christ but to mature them as sons for the Father and as a bride for Christ.
- b. The corporate man must be birthed out of the womb of the church through golden altar intercession, and once birthed must be brought to maturity before the events of Revelation 12 will take place. This will require an intense effort of discipleship, but not just any discipleship—making disciples in accordance with God’s eternal purpose.

## Stand firm against all opposition

### 1. Leaders of an eternal purpose church must train their church to stand strong in the midst of strong opposition.

- a. As the book of Revelation records about the conflict in the end times, the two witnesses will stand firm and in great authority in Jerusalem,
- b. And I will grant authority to my two witnesses [*one of which, many commentators refer to as Elijah*], and they will prophesy for twelve hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth. And if anyone wants to harm them, fire flows out of their mouth and devours their enemies; so if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this way. These have the power to shut up the sky, so that rain will not fall during the days of their prophesying; and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood, and to strike the earth with every plague, as often as they desire (Rev. 11:3-6).
- c. The book, *Babylon*, by Peter Herder explains that whereas the two witnesses will be operating much like Elijah in great authority in Jerusalem, a company of Elijah’s will operate in the spirit and power of Elijah throughout the earth,

We are also a chosen generation. God has called us to a specific task in the end times. The final generation of this age carries a unique mandate to be forerunners who prepare the way for the return of the Lord. The Bible promises that before the day of the Lord comes, the prophet Elijah will be sent. We know that this prophecy pointed to John the Baptist as the Elijah of his generation (Matt. 11:14, 17:12). We also know that this prophecy will have a dynamic fulfillment in Jerusalem in the end times...While the coming of Elijah will have its most dynamic fulfillment in Jerusalem through the two witnesses, the promise will also have a global expression through the end-time Church. Like He did with John the Baptist, God will empower end-time forerunners, the final generation of this age to call the nations to repentance and announce the second coming.<sup>4</sup>

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- d. In the late 1990s, Rick Joyner was taken to heaven and many incredible things were revealed to him. One of the things that he reports that Jesus said to him, which he recorded in his book *The Call*, was this:

I am about to release My last-day apostles. I will have many like Paul, John, Peter and the others. To prepare them, I am sending many like John the Baptist who will teach them devotion to Me and lay the foundation of repentance in their lives. These apostles will also be like John the Baptist. Just as the chief joy of John's life was to hear the voice of the Bridegroom, these will have one devotion—to see My bride made ready for Me. Because of this, I will use them to build highways through the wilderness and rivers through the deserts. They will bring down the high places and raise up the lowly.

- e. Although we are not at all sure how or what will happen as God raises up His end-time apostles empowered by the spirit and power of Elijah, we know the end-time church will be used in authority and is to stand strong against the antichrist system. We are not to be passive or apathetic about it. There will be conflict between the church and the antichrist government and false religion. Therefore, God's people must be prepared to stand in increasingly intense pressure. The call to stand firm leads us to one more important end-time issue.

## 2. Prepare a people to love not their life even unto death.

- a. Jesus spoke these words about the coming days, "Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name. At that time *many will fall away* and will betray one another and hate one another. Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many. Because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved" (Matt. 24:9-13).
- b. As the birth pangs of tribulation intensify as they are now doing, many in the church will be seduced to fall away from the faith. Others will become offended, growing bitter toward God and the church because they have been taught that they will be raptured before things get bad or have been taught a compromised gospel that has promoted a lukewarm, passive attitude in believers' hearts. The vast majority of the church is not ready for what is coming. Most have no belief structure to accept the truth that it may be God's will for them to live through the times of persecution, calamity, and the judgments of God coming to the earth. The idea that in the end times many believers will even be martyred for their faith is totally foreign to most western Christians. The result will be that many believers will do as Jesus prophesied. They will become offended at God and fall away from the faith. They will become bitter at God because He has allowed these things to happen. They will be offended at the church for teaching a prosperity or hyper-grace gospel (Matt. 24:10, NKJV). Their love for God and for the church will grow cold. Many will be deceived and many will take the mark of the beast resulting in eternal damnation to hell.
- c. Therefore, it is absolutely crucial in our day that there be a church who will prepare people for what is coming so that they do not fall away from the faith. The church must be prepared to stand strong without compromise in the increasing difficulties and pressures of the end times. They must be prepared so they will not compromise, not become offended at God or the church, and not fall away from the faith.
- f. Now, let's move on to the second topic of this session—the judgment seat of Christ and eternity.

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## The Judgment Seat of Christ and Eternity

### IV. The Bride Throughout the Ages

1. God's eternal purpose carries with it a purpose for God's prepared people for every age throughout eternity.

a. Let's begin our examination of the importance of being prepared for eternity with a brief review of how the bride is to be positioned and to be used throughout eternity. We will draw from some of the points made in Session 2. In Session 2, we stated,

Isaiah wrote these famous words prophesying about the government of Christ, "There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this" (Isa. 9:7). As Isaiah wrote, there will no end to the increase of His government...forevermore! This brief statement virtually impossible to comprehend is packed with life transforming meaning. First, there will be no end to God's rule over and throughout His creation. His creation is vast. The furthest known universe is about 13.3 billion light years from earth. That is a long way, and as the scriptures tell us there will be no end to the increase of His government. I am not sure what that means to be honest; however, two things I do know from this verse is that Christ's rule and reign will never end and it will always be expanding, and this will take place forever, never to end.

b. Heaven will not be a place where we are to sit on a cloud and play a harp for eternity. The scriptures tell us that there will be ages upon ages. We know very little about coming ages at this point. We do know of the church age, the Millennial Kingdom age and a brief glimpse of the new Jerusalem descending to the earth with a new heaven and earth. However, we do know from scripture that there will be an infinite number of ages to follow—forever!

c. In the eternal council of the Godhead before the foundation of the world, God determined the plan for every age. Each age carries with it a specific purpose which was determined before the foundation of the world. Please note this very important point. *The primary purpose of the church age is to prepare a people for the Lord to be used in partnership with Him forever.* It is to prepare a people as mature sons for the Father and as an equally yoked bride for the Son to live in the temple for the Holy Spirit. That is the purpose of this age, not to get rich, or to walk in health, or to have our own kingdom ministry. It is not to take dominion over the seven mountains of culture or to restore Jewish practices. It is not to get us from one week to another through the counsel and wisdom of man—it is to prepare a bride who can live in full union with Christ in passionate love, radical pursuit, full nature and character so as to be equally yoked with Christ. That is the primary purpose of this age.

d. In God's ever-expanding work, His prepared bride is to be at His side in an intimate relationship and to be His eternal representative in His eternal work--forever. Throughout the next age, God's eternal purpose is to use the prepared bride in an intimate partnership with the Lord to take dominion over the earth. Called the Millennial Kingdom reign of Christ, God's purpose is to subdue the earth under Christ's Lordship and eventually present the earth to the heavenly Father. Other ages will have different purposes of which we do not yet have revelation. What we do know is that according to God's eternal purpose, the prepared bride/son/body will be by the Lord's side in partnership and intimacy. This will never end and will be ever expanding.

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- e. The book of Ephesians tells us that Christ will be given a glorious inheritance in the saints (Eph. 1:18).<sup>5</sup> To put it simply, Christ's inheritance in the saints is to have this prepared bride to partner with forever. His inheritance includes a bride who will sit with Him on His throne, dwell eternally with Him in the new Jerusalem in the closest of intimacy, and to be forever in partnership with Him to ever expand the kingdom of God. This is Christ's inheritance. Our full eternal inheritance in Christ is to become those people who enjoy the maximum reward of this relationship because the scriptures tell us that not every believer will become Christ's inheritance to this degree (Eph.1:14). Thus, the inheritance of Christ in the saints and the bride's inheritance in Christ become one in the fullness of time as all things become summed up in Christ (Eph. 1:10).
- f. The eternal rewards promised to overcoming believers are the attributes the bride needs to enjoy Christ fully and to partner with Him in fullness throughout eternity.
- g. In several of our Lifeschool classes, we refer to eternal rewards being categorized into three major areas: 1) eternal intimacy with the Godhead, 2) eternal authority in partnership with Christ, and 3) eternal glory upon our resurrected bodies. We will share a few points here about these three aspects of eternal rewards, but for a lot more detail please review Session 8 of our Lifeschool class, *God's Eternal Purpose*.
- h. Concerning eternal intimacy, God's ultimate intention is for the equally-yoked wife of Christ to dwell forever in the new Jerusalem and to enjoy a corporate and individual union with our heavenly Bridegroom. The prepared bride is destined to enjoy forever what the Godhead has forever enjoyed. Namely, the bride is invited into the circle of the Trinity, where she will experience the same fellowship, intimacy, and union with the Godhead that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit have enjoyed for all eternity.
- i. Concerning eternal authority, God's ultimate intention is for us to be kings who rule the universe with His Son. Before the creation of the world, God destined us to be kings in His kingdom who partner with Jesus to expand His government through the vastness of creation throughout the eternal ages. In the age to come, as Christ takes full dominion over the earth, our destiny is to rule and reign with judicial responsibility and kingly oversight, bringing justice and righteousness into the sphere of authority entrusted to us. Whether that is being "in authority over ten cities" or "five cities," our destiny is to rule in a literal sense in partnership with Christ. Our eternal inheritance in Christ is to partner with Him to expand God's kingdom into the vastness of creation in each unique age throughout eternity (Isa. 9:7).
- j. As it relates to eternal glory, our heritage is to be a priestly bride who has the capacity in our resurrected and glorified bodies to encounter God in intimacy, to minister to Him as a priest forever in the depths of His glory and to be fully clothed with the glory of Christ so that we can function in the fullness of Christ as God's eternal representative to the creation. The eternal glory upon the bride will be her eternal garments that reflect Christ in fullness and allows her to minister to the Lord in intimacy and to minister to the creation as a representative of Christ in fullness.
- k. Therefore, rewards are the tools we need to effectively function in partnership with Christ in His eternal ministry.

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## 2. The promise of eternal rewards is to those who make themselves ready during their life on the earth.

- a. As we examine the indescribable promises of eternal rewards, realize that these are part of God's predestined plan for you and me. These promises are Christ's loving and passionate invitation to us into God's eternal purpose, which the Godhead determined in the eternal council before time and creation. These incredible promises describe the inheritance reserved for those who have devoted their life as a believer to making themselves ready as a prepared bride/overcoming son. *You have been destined for eternal intimacy, eternal authority, and eternal glory. However, these promises are not automatic for every believer. They come as a result of a lifestyle of pursuing Christ with radical abandon, growing in intimacy with Him, and being transformed into His image in fullness. We know that our assignment for our life on earth and in fact for the entire church age in accordance with the eternal purpose for this age is to take on the nature and character of Christ in fullness so that His life can come through us so as to be made ready for the ages to come.*

## 3. Our eternal position and role will be determined at the judgment seat of Christ.

- a. The scriptures are clear that every believer will stand before Christ at His judgment seat and give an account of how they lived their life. We are not referring here to those who never received Christ as their Savior, but to true believers. Every believer will stand before Christ and give an account. The epistles are filled with this idea and a few major references are listed as follows,

But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. For it is written, "AS I LIVE, SAYS THE LORD, EVERY KNEE SHALL BOW TO ME, AND EVERY TONGUE SHALL GIVE PRAISE TO GOD." So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God (Rom. 14:10-12).

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad (2 Cor. 5:10).

For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire (1 Cor. 3:11-15).

Now after a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. The one who had received the five talents came up and brought five more talents, saying, "Master, you entrusted five talents to me. See, I have gained five more talents." His master said to him, "Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master" (Matt. 25:19-21).

When he returned, after receiving the kingdom, he ordered that these slaves, to whom he had given the money, be called to him so that he might know what business they had done. The first appeared, saying, "Master, your mina has made ten minas more." And he said to him, "Well done, good slave, because you have been faithful in a very little thing, you are to be in authority over ten cities" (Luke 19:15-17).

- b. As you will observe from the above verses, rewards are associated with the judgment seat of Christ. I would explain it this way. The judgment seat of Christ is not to determine whether we go to heaven

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or hell. That is determined by whether we truly accepted Christ as our Lord and Savior surrendering our life to Him and trusting Him for our salvation in faith. The judgment seat of Christ is for believers only and is to determine the eternal rewards they will receive.

- c. Over my years of walking with the Lord, I have myself believed and heard many times from many people that rewards are not that important. Many people, myself included, have thought of them as merit badges in heaven. They have been thought of as something that sounds to us like something to produce pride in our lives. We also have connected them to crowns that we will cast before the Lord. In contrast to what many think, rewards are not something to make us feel better than someone else in heaven. They are tools that will empower us to effectively partner with Christ throughout the ages to come.
- d. Therefore, rewards are something that are to be greatly desired and pursued. One caution though. Just recently I realized that a major part of my personal motivation for seeking rewards was so I would have the greatest intimacy and role I could have with the Lord. Although I don't think that is a bad thing, a greater motive for seeking rewards is so that Christ would have His bride to partner with Him forever. In other words, it is not about me as much as it is for Christ and His good pleasure.

## 4. As a side note here, it is important to discuss the outer darkness referred to in the scriptures.

- a. The following is an excerpt from our Lifeschool class, *The Overcomers*. That class discusses thoroughly the idea of the eternal outer court and the fact that those who do not overcome will be destined to dwell there forever and not be used in the eternal purpose of the Godhead that is to transpire throughout the ages. The excerpt follows,

Consider what Jesus taught in the parable of the talents. Jesus said that He gave talents to "his own slaves and entrusted his possessions to them" (Matt. 25:14). Since Jesus referred to all three slaves as "his own," this means that each of them were born again. Nevertheless, the unfaithful slave who buried his talent was escorted "hand and foot" and thrown "into the outer darkness," where "there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. 22:13). Baffled about the idea of "outer darkness" in heaven, some teachers try to explain this away by saying the unfaithful slave, by his actions, proved that he was not truly born again. But Jesus' own words destroy that argument, for He clearly called all three of them "his own slaves." Each of these slaves belonged to Him because they were justified by His blood and regenerated by His Spirit. Other Bible teachers claim that the lazy slave who buried His talent lost his salvation for His unfaithfulness. But that is not a very convincing argument either. Can a true believer lose their salvation for not using the gifts and talents God entrusted to them? Because there is not comprehensive scriptural support for this argument, I don't think so.

The best way to interpret the "outer darkness" is to view it as the outer court of heaven's tabernacle. Michael Huber from Dallas Theological Seminary, in his article *The Concept of the Outer Darkness*, said, "The term 'outer darkness' appears nowhere else in the New Testament outside of the three verses mentioned (Matthew 8:12; 22:13; 25:30). However, it does occur 20 times in the Septuagint version of the Bible [the Hebrew Old Testament translated into Greek] and *it's always in relation to Ezekiel's Temple or God*" (emphasis mine).<sup>94</sup> Huber continued, "Most significantly, the term is used 15 times in Ezekiel to describe the Outer Court of the temple (10:5; 40:19-20; 41:15,17; 42:1,3,6,7,8,9; 44:19; 46:20-21). It may be noteworthy, considering the

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eschatological imagery of the subject of the parable that the *dominant use of the term is in relation to the Millennial Temple* (emphasis mine).<sup>95</sup>

Here is what this means in practical terms. To us twenty-first-century westerners, the term "outer darkness" is perplexing and unnerving. But this was not the case for Jesus' Jewish audience, who were intimately acquainted with the tabernacle and temple. They would have basically heard Jesus say, "Take the unfaithful slave who buried his talent and send him to the outer court." Jesus' Jewish audience would have immediately connected this statement with the outer court of the temple. Also keep in mind that the phrase "outer darkness" is only used in the Gospel of Matthew, a book that most Bible scholars believe was written primarily for a Jewish audience, confirmed by the numerous quotes of Old Testament prophecy. In all likelihood, Matthew decided to use the phrase "outer darkness" three times in his gospel because he knew that his Jewish audience would understand its meaning without further explanation.

In the parable of the marriage feast, Jesus also taught about the "outer darkness," saying that the man who was not dressed in wedding garments, which we know are the bridal and priestly garments of fine linen, would be thrown "into the outer darkness" where "there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. 22:13). Now put yourself in the Jewish audience when Jesus told this parable. Knowing what we now know about the Zadok priesthood, the priestly garments of fine linen, and the outer darkness as a synonymous term for the outer court of the temple, can you see the clear statement that Jesus was making? He was basically saying, "Those who are justified but not sanctified will be saved, but they will spend eternity in the outer court of heaven's tabernacle."

Not only must the bride make her own wedding dress, but in so doing, she is also making her priestly garments that are mandatory for holy-of-holies ministry to the Lord. All who neglect this vital requirement for priestly ministry will not be allowed into the throne-room to minister to the Lord. They will be like the unfaithful Levitical priesthood from Ezekiel 44, who are allowed to minister to the people in the outer court, but are unable to minister to the Lord in the holy of holies. Only the spiritual sons of Zadok, who remain faithful to the Lord, who overcome what Jesus stipulated in Revelation 2-3, and who work out the salvation in their spirit into their heart and soul, will have the priestly garments of fine linen that grants them admittance into the holy of holies for all eternity.

With everything considered, the overcomers will dwell in the holy of holies of the new heaven and new earth, which is the new Jerusalem. Those who don't overcome will be still be saved, but they will be relegated to the outer court for all eternity. That is one reason why both Jesus and the author of Hebrews exhorted us to pursue holiness, for without it, we will not see the face of the Lord (Matt. 5:8; Heb. 12:14).<sup>6</sup>

## 5. At the judgment seat of Christ, believers will be judged on the degree to which Christ has filled their life.

- a. Revelation 19:7-8 in stating that the bride has made herself ready notes that "it was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints." The idea of righteousness or righteous acts in this passage most likely refers to Jesus' messages to the seven churches in Chapters 2-3 of Revelation and suggest not what we often connect with works but rather with an overcoming lifestyle. In other words, the bride has overcome and, thus, is clothed fully with bright, fine, clean linen which in essence that she has been clothed with Christ.

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- b. At the judgment seat of Christ, every believer will be judged on the degree to which Christ has filled their soul and body in accordance with God's eternal purpose for the church age. Remember how Paul concluded the chapter about God's eternal purpose, "which is His body, the fulness of Him [*Christ*] who fills all in all" (Eph. 1:23). As believers live for Christ, die to self and allow Christ to fill them with His love, character, heart, actions, and righteousness, they will be prepared to stand before the judgment seat of Christ.
- c. This is a serious issue and why Paul and others write exhortations like, "So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, *work out your salvation with fear and trembling*; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure...so that you will prove yourselves *to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation*, among whom you appear as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life, *so that in the day of Christ [which includes the judgment seat of Christ]* I will have reason to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain" (Phil. 2:12-16).

## V. Preparing the Church for the End Times and Eternity

### 1. Leaders in the body of Christ must prepare people for the end times which is at hand.

- a. Concerning the end times, Jesus said in Matthew 24:37-44:

For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and *they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away*; so will the coming of the Son of Man be. Then there will be two men in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one will be left. *Therefore be on the alert [watch]*, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming. But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into. *For this reason you also must be ready*; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will (emphasis mine).

- b. There were two groups in Noah's day. First there was Noah and his family. They had prophetic insight into God's plans for the earth. They prepared themselves for what was coming. They built an ark specifically for the Lord's prophetic agenda. They worked tirelessly for 120 years despite the ridicule of those around them. They prepared for what had never happened in history. They warned their community of God's prophetic plans, even though no one listened. Noah and his family were true forerunners. Then there was the multitude. They lived as if nothing would ever change. They were consumed with the routine of normal life—eating, drinking, and marrying. They had no clue what was around the corner. Jesus said that they "did not understand until the flood came and took them all away."
- c. There will also be two similar groups when the Lord returns. There will be a remnant with understanding of the end times who will prepare themselves, prepare their families, and will build "an ark" that can sustain the coming end-time pressures, trials, and tribulations. Like Noah, this will all come out of an intimate, personal relationship with the Lord. In contrast to the above group, multitudes will live with no understanding. They will just accept what is handed down to them by the ruling elite. They will naively receive the narrative and propaganda delivered by the media and politicians, having no revelation or insight into the unfolding of what God's prophets foretold. The

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masses will be caught up in the affairs of everyday life—eating, drinking, and marrying. They will not understand until it is too late. They will be swept away by the coming flood of trials and pressures.

- d. Jesus concluded this teaching with two exhortations. He said that we are to watch and be ready. As we approach the coming of the Lord, the eternal purpose church must be alert to end-time events as they unfold, pursue being prepared and as the Holy Spirit leads partner with God in these unique times.
- e. In view of these mandates regarding the end times, those in leadership must prepare those entrusted to their leadership to be ready for what is at hand. Leadership cannot be complacent, ignorant, or uninterested in the end times. They are upon us and as we said earlier in the session there are several unique tasks in which the eternal purpose church is to participate in the end times. It is the responsibility of those in leadership to learn about the end times and the assignment of the church in the end times and alert a people to the end times and make them ready for them.

## 2. Leaders of the eternal purpose church must also help people prepare to stand before the judgment seat of Christ so as to be ready for the eternal ages.

- a. As it relates to the judgment seat of Christ, there are two specific tasks for the fivefold ministry. The first is to prepare a people to stand before Christ at His judgment seat. Let's quote again this familiar passage directed to the fivefold ministry highlighting several key phrases for our purposes in this session,

*And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith [in accordance with God's eternal purpose], and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ (Eph. 4:11-13).*

- b. Those highlighted phrases represent tasks for the fivefold ministry that if we do them faithfully and successfully will prepare a people to be filled unto fullness with Christ, be conformed into His image and be ready to stand before the most important appointment of our life—to stand before Christ at His judgment seat.
- c. In my experience there is also as second task for the fivefold ministry and that is to make people aware of the truth about the judgment seat of Christ. There has been much neglect in the church of this very vital subject. Most leaders have totally ignored the topic and others who have mentioned it have made it seem like it makes little to no difference in how a believer will spend eternity. Because they don't understand the significance of the purpose of the ages and the need to get ready for this during their time on the earth, they do not radically pursue making themselves ready for the judgment seat of Christ.
- d. We must make them aware by repeatedly explaining and reminding the people about the judgment seat and explaining to them how to get ready for it—that is to be conformed into the image of Christ in fullness—and to repeatedly exhort them to make themselves ready.
- e. So, let's be used as a friend of the Bridegroom and prepare the church for the end times and for eternity.

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<sup>1</sup> Mike Bickle, Study Notes, *Knowing the Signs of the Times*, [www.mikebickle.org](http://www.mikebickle.org), p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Thayers, Strong's 1448

<sup>3</sup> Terry Bennett, Warrior Spirit Teaching Series, Spoken at Shekinah Worship Center, Lancaster, CA, February, 21, 2014, Message 1, Warrior Spirit. Terry Bennett Ministries, Terry Bennett Ministries.com.

<sup>4</sup> Peter Herder, *Babylon* (Kansas City, MO: Forerunner Publishing, 2009), pp. 219-220.

<sup>5</sup> The book of Ephesians also tells us that we have access to an inheritance in Christ (Eph. 1:14). Our Lifeschool class, *Understanding Your Inheritance in Christ*, focuses almost entirely on the believer's inheritance in Christ as they receive salvation and walk with the Lord in faith. We will not attempt to repeat those wonderful blessings that we are given in this life. They are great and well worth learning about and walking in as we go through life. Things like intimacy with the Lord, health and healing, provision, guidance, and protection are promised to us as our inheritance in Christ.

<sup>6</sup> Lifeschool Class, *The Overcomers*, p. 129.