



Seven Visions of St. John

by Granny Vee

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“In the LAND of the OLIVE TREES” Series

Seven Visions of St. John

In ancient days, in the land of the olive trees, lived two prophets, Daniel and John. These two prophets lived at very, very different times. Daniel lived about 600 years before Yeshua the Messiah was born on earth. But John lived at the time of the Messiah. Yeshua appointed Saint John to be one of His Apostles.

A prophet hears clearly from the LORD. The LORD God is the great “I AM” who has time in His hands. He knows the past, the present, and the future. The future is told to the prophets of the LORD. These prophets were also called seers (see + ers). They “see” in the spirit. They both saw that the Kingdom would be given to the Messiah, the Savior of the world.

Two of these prophets lived in the land of the olive trees before they were exiled. Daniel was forced to go to Babylon as a teenager. The Apostle John, when he was older and after the Messiah died for our sins, was made to go to the isle of Patmos because he testified that Yeshua is resurrected and alive! But there, God used him to write the Book of Revelation!

The First Vision

The Seven Churches: Revelation 1:10- 3:22

CHAPTER ONE - ANGELS and THE DRAGON

THE DISTANT PAST

In ancient Babylon, more than 2,500 years ago ...

“Sealed till the time of the end.”

That was the instructions from the heavenly being. Daniel had recently woken up from his very deep sleep. He had no strength within him for the distressing vision had taken all. But he must record these scenes from the future ... and for a future generation!

Daniel 10:9; 12:4,9



Photo: A portion of the Book of Daniel preserved for two thousand years! The Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered in the Judean caves of Israel in 1947. The cave and dry desert climate preserved the scrolls, the fragile bits of parchment or papyrus. The Essenes, a Jewish religious group, may have hidden them there to protect them from the Roman military.

THE DISTANT PAST

On the isle of Patmos in the Mediterranean Sea, about 2000 years ago ...

“Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book,” the angelic messenger told him.

Waking up from this trance, the beloved apostle was totally transfixed. “Don’t seal the words?” thought Saint John out loud.

His head was spinning with all the strange sites he had seen in these visions of the Spirit: the magnificent throne room, the angels, the nasty dragon; and most wondrously, the Son of God!

The prophet bowed down to pray: “Oh Adonai, Abba Father, I pray that these visions will be a great encouragement to your people, knowing that they have the ultimate victory! Now the persecution of your holy saints is rampant throughout the Roman Empire. Reveal to your chosen, that they are the real over-comers!”

Then the LORD communicated to him, in his spirit, through a thought deep in his heart, that this was not just for the persecution of this current government. These visions shall be for all times. These visions shall give hope and comfort to the people of God throughout time. These visions are truly for every age and every generation!

“Wow! Abba Father, You are truly amazing!” spoke the saint. “Please reveal this message to future believers! Give them the faith that overcomes the world!”

Today in Texas ...

First Night - Introduction to the Book of Revelation

“You missed it!” John called to his gangly cousin.

Joshua was carefully running to retrieve the ball. “Well, this isn’t the ideal place to throw a baseball! It’s too uneven and bumpy and stones are everywhere!”

“You’re probably right. Let’s go back.”

“But first, help me find this ball. It may be in with the trees.”

They both looked. “I got it!” John cried. “It was under that ol’ cedar. ”

They returned to the campfire where the other happy youths were huddled, speaking joyously as they hadn’t seen their cousins for a month. John and Joshua joined in their animated chit-chat.

Then John had an idea. “Hey, how about we tell a ghost story?” The teenager was looking forward to a spooky tale. “Before Grandpa and Granny get back with the other kids. Anyone have a good one?”

“A ghost story?” The aging gentleman overheard as he approached. John’s back was towards him or he would have seen his grandfather. “Well, we could tell a *Holy* Ghost story! We’ll be talking about visions and angels ... and a really horrid dragon.”

“Why do you always talk about the Bible?” John half-heartedly complained. He had been to this special summer camp twice before, held at his grandparents’ home in the country.

Grandpa smiled, remembering his days as a youth. “That’s what we’re here for!”

The man had been a part-time preacher at his church until he retired. However, he was a full-time Christian and a full-time Grandpa, always making sure his grandchildren were learning what they needed to know, especially spiritually, before entering the big, bad world. He was always happy to have the youths participate in the lesson. He encouraged them to ask questions!

“The Bible is a great book!” Grandpa exclaimed. “Number one best seller of all time!”

“The very best!” came a voice from a distance. “There’s layers and layers to it so you can read it for life. At my age, I’m still learning!” The grandmother drew near the campfire with three children. “Does everyone here know Rosa, Anna, and James? They’re new at this camp. They live nearby. On the next hill.”

John, being a rather funny person, rose and took an exaggerated bow. But he already knew the neighbors.

“Oh, yes!” Jeanette and Lynette, the teenage twins cried. “We’re good friends with Rosa! We see her when we visit you, Granny!” Jeanette said. “And Anna, you have your very favorite bunny!”

Anna stroked her fluffy stuffed rabbit. “Meet Bows. Bows the Bunny! Look at her many purple bows!”

“Now, don’t you get her dirty out here!” the grandmother warned. She then pulled out of her big bag the makings of a special treat. “Marshmallows, graham crackers ...”

“S’mores!” exclaimed the youths.

“You must have chocolate, right?” questioned Gracie. At fourteen, she was the oldest girl here.

“Oh, do I!” replied Granny. “They wouldn’t be s’mores without chocolate!”

As they sat round the campfire enjoying their sweet treat, Granny spoke of what they would be doing: “So, what will we do here all week? Get up bright and early. Get ready for the day. At breakfast, we will start the day with prayer and a short Bible study. Then there’s free time. During the day, we will go swimming, archery and hiking and such. Oh, there’s lunch in there, too. And after dinner, we will close it with a Bible study around the campfire. By the way, are you enjoying the s’mores?”

“Yeah!” the youths yelled.

“I hope you will have fun and learn what Grandpa is teaching you!” Granny smiled at the youths, most of them her grandchildren. It was a very special time, this camp. “He’s going to teach you about the battle of the ages, the battle between good and evil. And the good guys win in the end! HalleluYAH! So, now, I’m going to the house to prepare things for the morning. Ta-ta!”

Little Patty, a ten-year old, got up to hug the grandmother. She and her brother Peter were adopted by Granny's son and his wife. The other children also echoed their 'good-byes'.

"Well, where were we?" Grandpa resumed. "Oh, the Holy Ghost story ..."

"So ..." John had an idea. "Can we just read the very last book of the Bible? Then we'll know how it all turns out!"

"Funny. That's what I did!" stated Grandpa. "I skipped to the end! Yes, I wanted to know how it turns out. So I read the very last book which is the Book of Revelation! Lots of interesting stuff in there! Myriads of angels ... and a dreadful dragon!"

"A dragon? And angels?" responded little Anna, fixing her stuffed bunny upon her lap. "It sounds like a fairytale!"

"This dragon was mean as mean can be," declared their teacher Grandpa. "He represents evil. He is the wicked Satan. Satan hates God and the good guys, the real believers who obey God's commands. But God and His saints will win! God always wins! In the end, ol' Satan is defeated. Actually, now he *is* defeated. The cross of Christ defeated him. Satan is a defeated foe!"

"And he goes to hell!" Joshua poked at the campfire, thinking about the flames of hell.

"A final destination. Satan has been an awful blight to the human race," Grandpa explained. "He or his evil spirits sneak around trying to deceive us or trying to get us to

relinquish our faith in Christ! The Scripture says that we should resist him. By knowing the Scriptures, you won't be as easily deceived by this evil dragon!"

"Is he a real dragon?" asked Donny, the youngest grandson there.

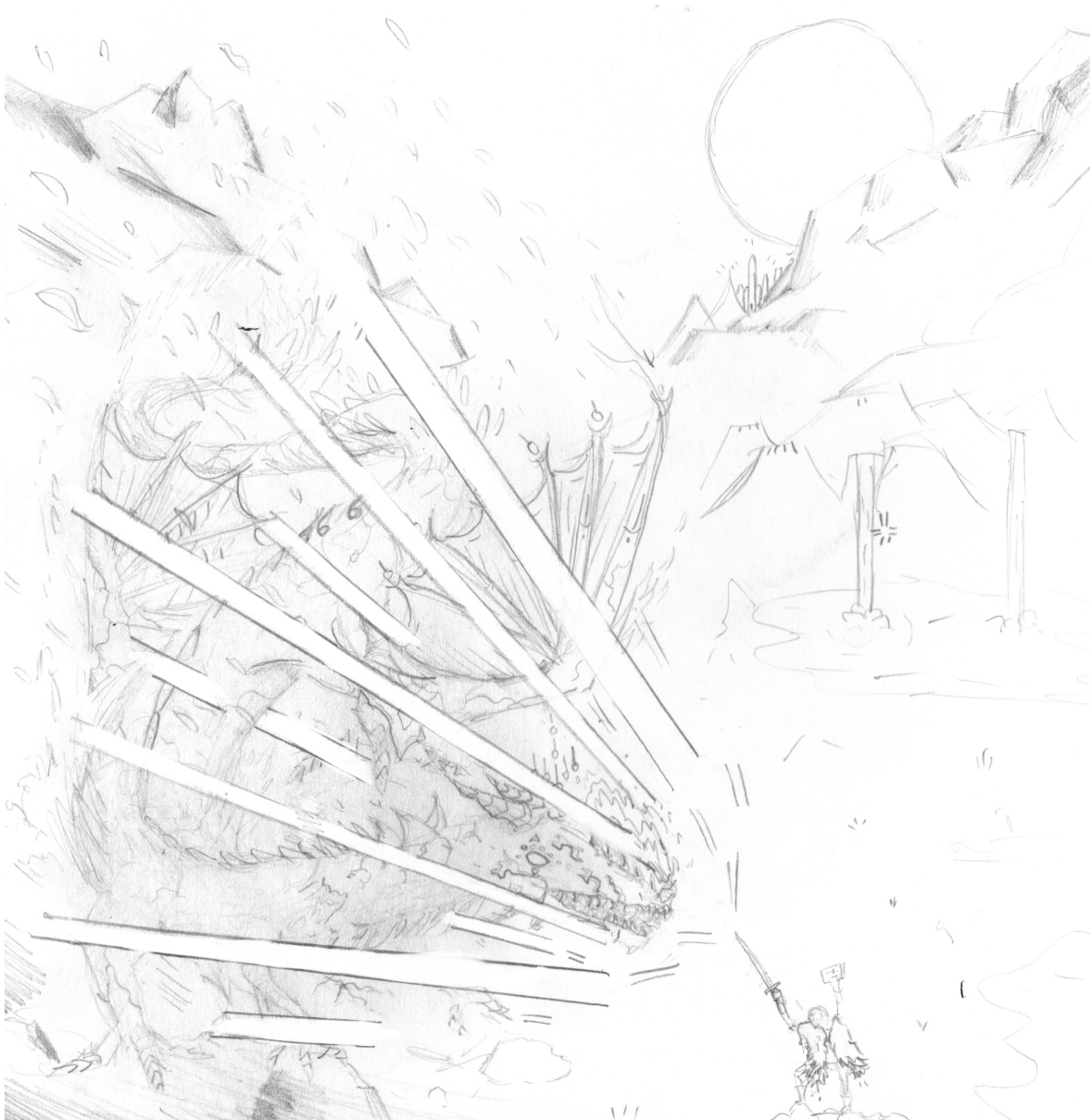
"Actually, no!" answered Grandpa. "Satan is portrayed as a dragon as he appeared in St. John's visions. Yet, then again, in Satan's normal appearance, he is an angel, a fallen angel. But Satan can also shape-shift!"

"Wow! And super wow!" cried Donny.

"Shape-shift?" Anna was baffled.

James, an eleven-year old, responded to his sister. "Shapeshifting. Haven't you seen any science fiction shows? Shape-shifters can change from one shape to another shape!"

"Satan was a serpent back in the Garden of Eden," Grandpa added. "But the devil can appear as an angel of light! He is so very, very tricky! He's slick. He makes you think he's good and fine, and means you no harm, but it's a lie. Why he breathes out destructive fire with his deceptive lies! In that way, he is like a fire-breathing dragon!"



Drawing by John C. Venable, age 13

“the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” from Ephesians 6:17

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

John 1:5

“Does this fire-breathing dragon fly?” asked Joshua. He had recently turned ten. Guests could not be at this particular summer camp if they were under ten years. They needed to be self-sufficient and the studies were geared to the double-digit age.

“He does! As all angels fly,” their grandfather-teacher responded. “But I will tell you something about this book. Much of it is written with symbols. Satan is portrayed as a dragon. St. John saw these symbols in his vision. He saw Satan as a dragon. But that is enough about this ol’ dragon for the time being! Now we’ll go on to the hero of our story!”

Colossians 2:15

And [Christ] having disarmed the powers and authorities, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

CHAPTER TWO - OUR HERO

Today in Texas ...

First Night - Introduction to the Book of Revelation

“A hero!” Joshua blurted out enthusiastically. “I like heroes. If I were a super hero, I'd be the Awesome Aluminum Man.” He paused. “Then my superpower would be foiling the bad guys!”

The youths began to laugh.

“Well, this hero does so much more!” Grandpa expressed.

“You said something about St. John,” James said. “Is he the hero?”

“Nope!” The teacher would now tell them about the man who had these visions. “St. John was one of the LORD’s Apostles. Some years after, actually decades after the LORD had been resurrected, St. John was banished to the Isle of Patmos. He was exiled.”

“Exiled? What’s that mean?” asked Peter, another twelve-year, the older brother of Patty.

“‘Exiled’ means that he was barred from going anywhere,” replied the gent. “He was kind of ‘in jail’ on this island.”

“Sounds like an adventure to me!” John exclaimed. “All alone on an island. Wouldn’t that be cool?”

“But this was not a lovely paradise as you see in many photos,” Grandpa explained. “This island was where they put criminals.”

“But he was a saint!” observed the pretty Rosa with her wavy, black hair. The thirteen year-old spoke Spanish well, as her ancestry was Mexican. “What could he have done?”

“He was there for preaching the gospel,” their instructor stated. “Can you imagine that! The powers-that-be didn’t like what he was saying, preaching about the One True God. The Romans had many false gods and they treated Caesar as a god. So St. John was banished to the isle of Patmos. There, circumstances were hard and difficult. But did St. John complain? I don’t know - maybe he complained just a little bit, in his moments of weakness! We all have moments of weakness! We doubt our faith, but the Messiah is always praying for us! So, we, with His help, can overcome those moments of doubt, those moments when our faith is weak, when we want to stop believing in a God who has our best interests at heart. Yet the LORD, in the whole big picture of life, turns bad things that happen to saints into good in the end! St. John’s exile turned out to be a blessing for all of us!”

“How did God do that?” questioned James, always inquisitive.

“That’s where he wrote this Book of Revelation,” Samuel piped in. At fourteen, he was the oldest boy there and very familiar with the Bible. Of Asian descent, he was the first to be adopted by Grandpa’s son and his wife. The couple had done such a fine job in raising these three children, raising them to love the LORD.

“Yep. And that’s been a blessing for us!” Grandpa picked up His Bible. “This book reveals the future of mankind and that’s what we’ll be studying this week. And I do hope

that it will be a blessing for y'all! Incidentally, there are seven blessings in the Book of Revelation! Do you want to be blessed?"

"Of course!" replied Lynette. "Who doesn't want to be blessed?"

"Bien sur!" Jeanette frequently used little French sayings, just to keep in practice!

"The first is a blessing for just reading ... and doing," explained the gent as he opened his Bible. "The Scripture reads in Revelation 1:3 : 'Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near.'"

"HalleluYAH!" cheered Patty. "That's great! Just a blessing for reading it!"

The grandfather cautioned, "And doing 'those things which are written in it'. Don't forget that part!"

"Yes. That's okay! HalleluYAH!" The little girl repeated her praise to God again. "My Gramma told me that I shouldn't miss an opportunity to say 'HalleluYAH!'"

"Do you know what it means, Patty?" asked Gracie.

"Of course I do! It means 'Praise the LORD!'"

"Good for you, Patty!" the teacher applauded. "Now back to the hero of this story. In St. John's vision, he saw 'One like the Son of Man ...and 'out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword.' Now, back in the olden days, swords were indispensable weapons.

They symbolize strength, power, and the means to conquer and overcome enemies. So I told you about this nasty dragon. Who will overcome him?"

"Jesus!" All the youths were in agreement.

"Yes, Jesus!" Grandpa concurred. "His name in Hebrew is Yeshua which means 'YaHWeH saves'. So, the enemies of God will make war with Yeshua, the Lamb of God, and the Lamb will conquer them. Can you imagine being overcome by a Lamb? A Lamb versus the dragon! But the Lamb of God wins!

The 'Lamb' is symbolic, just as the 'dragon' is symbolic. Lambs were sacrificed in the Old Testament to God. Yeshua is the Lamb of God, whose blood was shed on the cross to take away the sin of the world. But when He returns - and I hope soon - He is coming back as a lion, the Lion of Judah! Judah is His tribe. The 'lion' is symbolic, too. As the Lion of Judah, He will defeat His enemies. Yeshua is the Lord of Lords and the King of Kings. Yes, Yeshua is the hero of Revelation. See, I've read the end of the book!"

Revelation 17:14

These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful."

CHAPTER THREE - VISIONS OF THE SON OF MAN

DISTANT PAST

In ancient Babylon, more than 2,500 years ago ...

Daniel wrote and wrote...

“I was watching in the night visions,
And behold, One like the Son of Man,
Coming with the clouds of heaven!
He came to the Ancient of Days,
And they brought Him near before Him.”

He paused to express his wonder. “Wow! The Son of Man! The glorious Son of Man!
Who am I to behold such a vision! Extraordinary!”

He fell at his feet to worship YaHWeH, the Revealer of Mysteries. Eventually, he arose
and continued to write:

“Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom,
That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him.
His dominion is an everlasting dominion,
Which shall not pass away,
And His kingdom the one
Which shall not be destroyed.
And His kingdom the one
Which shall not be destroyed.”

Daniel 2:47; 7:13,14

DISTANT PAST

On the isle of Patmos in the Mediterranean Sea, about 2000 years ago ...

St. John fell at his feet. The vision that he saw was mind-blowing!

“Glory to God! The Son of Man!”

He recalled what he had seen in the Spirit. The LORD’s holy countenance shown like the sun. “And His eyes! A flame of fire in his eyes! But what was this out of His mouth? A sword, a double-edged sword! Will the LORD use this sword? Against whom?

I must write this vision. These things which I’ve seen. Praise be to God! I’ve seen Yeshua the Messiah! Oh, HalleluYAH!”

But Yeshua didn’t look like He did when He was here on earth. The vision was inexplicable! “But I know it was the LORD! It *was* the Messiah: all glorious, all heavenly, all radiant!”

And what did the LORD tell him? “Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this.” That also seemed puzzling.

He meditated on this. “What is going on now?”

He concluded. “It must be the churches - all seven of them! That is what is happening now. Persecution and trials ... and infiltrators! Why, Adonai, do you allow this to happen?”

Revelation 1:16

The Church had been infiltrated by people who were not true believers! “Certainly, what the LORD prophesied about the Church has come to pass, even in so few years! Didn’t He say that when the tree is full grown that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches? We are beginning to see this!”

St. John stopped to pray for the Church. “These infiltrators change the doctrines that the LORD has given us! ‘They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us.’ But we must contend for the Truth! Yeshua is the Truth!”

He then thought about the other phrase: ‘the things which will take place after this’.

“This must be about the end of the age. Then the Messiah will return. The earth will know peace, true peace! But before that ... Oh, my! The tragedies that occur! LORD, take care of your elect, the churches, your Church! Let them hear what your Spirit is saying to them!”

Revelation 1:13

and in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band.

Matthew 13:31-32; 1 John 2:19; Revelation 1:19

CHAPTER FOUR - THE ETERNAL ONE

Today in Texas ...

First Night - Introduction to the Book of Revelation

Anna was curious. “Since you’ve read the end of the book, tell us the end. Were there angels in the end, Grandpa?” Although Anna was only a neighbor, the children all called him by this title.

“Oh, there are always angels around,” spoke the gent. “You’ll have to wait till the end of the week to know the end. But let’s get back to the beginning of the book. Let’s see.... John the Apostle ... He had a vision while he was there on the Island of Patmos.”

“A vision?” asked Donny. “What’s that?”

“Well, that’s kind of hard to describe,” pondered the old man. “A ‘vision’ is something one ‘sees’ supernaturally. It’s almost like a dream ... but not quite. But like a dream. It has many symbols in it. In the Vision of St. John, Yeshua appeared as the Lamb of God, and also the Lion of Judah. Also, a vision can be ‘seen’ in the spirit but it processes through your brain, yet it comes through the spirit. A vision can also be as if one is really there. St. John was really there in heaven. He was a prophet but he was also a seer, that is a ‘see-er’. He ‘saw’ things in the spirit and he ‘saw’ these revelations in the spirit! God will speak to us both in dreams and visions.”

Anna was also puzzled. “I know about the Holy Spirit. He’s inside of us ... but what’s just a spirit?”

“I guess I better explain that!” their instructor continued. “Well, remember I said we were going to tell Holy Ghost stories? The Holy Ghost is the same as the Holy Spirit. But a spirit can never be seen with our physical eyes. We can only ‘see’ what he does. Yeshua taught that a wind - and the Greek word for ‘wind’ is the same as for ‘spirit’ - the wind blows where it wishes, and you can hear the sound of it, like the rustling of the leaves or like a kite flying high in the sky. Sometimes the wind is a gentle breeze but sometimes too much wind may cause a hurricane!”

“But I can see a hurricane!” said Donny.

“We’ve been in a hurricane!” added Lynette. “Along the Gulf Coast. It was quite scary!”

“Me, too,” Grandpa acknowledged. “A few times. However, you can’t see the wind, but you can see what it does. Do you want to explain that, Samuel, since you’ve been studying the weather?”

“Well, I’ll give it a try,” he agreed. “A hurricane, while powered by wind, is much more than just wind. One sees the clouds going round and round, rain pouring, dust, debris and maybe some limbs from a tree or two. You see these things but never, never the wind. The wind is an invisible current of moving air! Does that sufficiently explain it?”

Donny nodded his head. “Yeah. I think so.”

“Great job!” congratulated their teacher. “You can’t see the wind but it is there. Likewise, the Holy Spirit is there, like the wind, is always present, for God is everywhere. He’s here right now! If one is keen to it, one may sense His Presence. Be still a minute. You may sense His Presence right here now!”

The youths were quiet and still. Then a real wind just happened to blow softly.

“I have goose bumps,” whispered James.

“Maybe you are sensing the Holy Spirit!” commented the aged man. “Anybody else feel something?”

“I feel that the Holy Spirit is hugging me, as if He had His arm around my shoulder,” added sweet Patty.

“I feel it, too!” Lynette whispered.

There was continued silence. The flames of the campfire danced in rhythm as the wind blew gently. It was an awesome experience!

Grandpa spoke quietly. “We’ve been talking about spiritual things ... the Word of God. And in that silent episode, we were even more sensitive to the Spirit! What a wonderful experience! So now, back to our story. John the Apostle had this vision. The first vision was of Christ, the Messiah. Yeshua is the King of Kings. So do you know that some Christians will be called to rule with Him?”

“Hey, I want to be one to rule!” asserted John.

Grandpa smiled as he looked at him. “Well, you better obey the LORD now! This life is school for eternity! How well you obey the LORD here determines the post that you will

have for eternity! So His government will reign on earth someday - and I hope soon! So you better fly right, son!”

Then John pretended to be an airplane making the children giggle. He was always good for a laugh!

“Now calm down!” But the teacher had a smile on his face. “Let’s finish this lesson. Where were we?”

“Yeshua is the hero of Revelation,” replied Peter.

“I think we’re past that. Oh, yes!” Grandpa continues. “These are some of the names of Yeshua that St. John heard when he had this vision: Yeshua is the Beginning and the End.’

“What does that mean?” asked Donny.

“Good question! Everybody, cover your eyes and don’t peek!” Their teacher drew a circle in the ground, lit by the campfire. “Open your eyes, everyone. Well, it’s not a perfect circle. However, I think you’ll get the point. Where does this circle begin? Where would be the beginning? Is it here?” He pointed. “Or there? Or even here? Who wants to guess?”

“I will!” responded James, the observant one. “I think it’s there - where you started it.” He had noticed a little gap in the drawing.

“Well, that *is* where I started it.” Grandpa also noticed the gap. “But if this circle were perfect, you couldn’t tell! In a circle, you don’t know where the start is and you don’t know where the end is! So Yeshua is the Beginning and also the End. As the circle symbolizes eternity, Our God is the Eternal One. God has no beginning and no end yet Yeshua is the Beginning and the End!”

“That is totally cool!” exclaimed James.

Grandpa went on. “In St. John’s vision, Yeshua proclaimed Himself to be the First and the Last, the Alpha and the Omega, which also mean the very same thing.”

Donny mumbled something to his sister Gracie.

“What did you say?” questioned Grandpa. “Speak up there, Donny!”

The child repeated loudly, “I don’t know what the Alpher and the Mega mean.”

“Oh, excuse me,” Grandpa apologized.

“I’ll give you a hint. It’s all Greek to me!” joked John who knew just a little of this language. “These are the first and last letters of the ...”

“Greek alphabet!” James butted in. “‘Alpha’, the first letter. ‘Mega’, the last. In Spanish, ‘Mega’ means ‘very big’ as in ...” The boy began to sing, “My God is so big, so strong and so mighty...” James flexed his muscles.

The other youths joined him in singing. “There’s nothing that He cannot do.” They all knew this song from Sunday school. But Grandpa could not keep from laughing!

“Why are you laughing, Grandpa?” asked Rosa. She had been quiet for sometime, being busy chomping down on the s’mores.

“James, it’s ‘Omega’. O-Me-Ga! It’s Greek, not Spanish!” Grandpa responded between the guffaws!

“But we can still sing this song!” Rosa asserted. “So God is Oh Mega! Oh VERY BIG!”

“Oh Mega! That’s cute!” chuckled Grandpa. He also began to sing. “My God is Oh Mega, so strong and so mighty...”

The youths joined, “There’s nothing that He cannot do.”

In the dirt, Grandpa begins to illustrate these symbols in Greek. “Now, let me explain. Let me draw it for you ...”

A

“That’s just like ours!” blurted out Peter.

“Yep. It sure is!” replied Grandpa. “But the Omega is different.” He continued to draw.

Ω

“Yeshua is also called the Alef & Tav. Let me draw that too. Alef is the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Here ...

א

Tav is the last letter.

ת

So these are expressions of beginning and end. Do you see it? It’s like saying A through Z. First and Last, Alpha & Omega, Alef & Tav, the Beginning & the End! God is the only Eternal One, as the circle represents.”

“I’ll just call Him simply that,” Gracie remarked. “The Eternal One! I like that!”

“That’s what the French call him in their Bibles, l’Eternel!” offered Jeanette.

“Right!” Grandpa added, “Also, that is what ‘who is and who was and who is to come’ means! Our God is eternal! He is the great ‘I AM’! He always was, and is, and will be! Now isn’t that exciting! We serve an absolutely incredible God! Oh, that makes me want to dance! Where’s the music?”

“There’s no music, Grandpa!” commented Joshua. “But I can give you a beat!” He began to bang out a beat on the log.

“Great!” The gent started singing. ““My God is Oh Mega, so strong and so mighty...’
Everybody sing!”

They all started to sing but no one was dancing. So then Grandpa did a little jig. “What? Nobody wants to dance? Come on, Patty. Let’s show them how it’s done!”

Patty didn’t have time to react. The elderly man took her hand and swung her around. Soon he had everyone dancing.

Psalm 149:3

Let them praise his name with dancing, making melody to him with tambourine and lyre!

The Names of

Yeshua HaMashiach

Alpha & Omega, the Beginning & the End,
the First & the Last, Faithful and True Witness,
Lord of Lords, King of Kings,
Root of David, the Lion of Judah, the Lamb,
the Living One, Firstborn from the Dead,
the Holy One, the Word of God,
Bright & Morning Star,
the Son of God, the Son of Man,
Lord God Almighty,

I AM

Who was, Who is, Who is to come!
Amen!

CHAPTER FIVE - VISIONS OF SEVEN

Today in Texas ...

First Night - Introduction to the Book of Revelation

“Wooo! I’m out of breath!” The grandfather sat down on his log and took a well-deserved drink. “Now where were we? Let’s see ... back to the vision. Saint John - I’ll call him Saint John so we won’t confuse him with our own John here.”

“Though I am a saint!” John professed. “It says so, right in the Bible!”

“Yes, you are!” Grandpa was glad to know that he had taught his grandchildren well.

“Christians are saints! We’re the apple of God’s eye, and the elect! And those faithful will rule and reign with Christ when He returns!”

Joshua exclaimed, “I’m going to rule! Super fine!”

Grandpa cautioned, “But you will reign under Christ! You have to be obedient to the LORD! That’s what we are doing in this lifetime, learning obedience to the King of Kings. Where was I? Yes. Saint John had a vision of the LORD and in this vision, Yeshua had white hair!”

“Huh? In the pictures I usually see of Him, His hair is brown, maybe sometimes black!” said Peter.

“Well, He probably had brown or black hair when He lived on earth,” replied Grandpa.

“Or maybe it was red, like mine!” added Gracie, playing with her locks. “Maybe. Jewish people sometimes have reddish hair.”

“Maybe. Who knows?” their teacher threw his arms up. “We just don’t know what color His hair was. Yet St. John saw the Messiah with white hair!”

“So is he now old like you, Grandpa?” asked Anna.

The children laughed.

“Do you think I’m old?” Grandpa was being playful. “Just because I have white hair? Gee. It’s nothing compared to the Ancient of Days!”

“Who?” asked the younger children together.

Grandpa winked. “God the Father is also called ‘the Ancient of Days’! The prophet Daniel, who was also a seer, see-er, refers to Him as such. And the Ancient of Days had white hair ... white ‘like pure wool’! But maybe the white hair in this vision symbolized purity. God is so pure and holy!”

“Maybe God dyes His hair,” Anna said jokingly.

“Silly! God doesn’t dye His hair!” asserted James. “God can do anything. And if He wants His hair to be purple, He could do it just by saying it! Didn’t God say, ‘Let there be light!’ And presto! There was light! And God said...”

“I see this is going to be the version of the creation story à la James,” interrupted Rosa, who had already heard his little sermonette.

“Whoa, James! You definitely give a good sermon,” congratulated their teacher. “But let’s keep on topic and get back to the visions! Now, for the letters to the seven churches.”

“Were there just seven churches back then?” asked Patty.

“No,” stated Grandpa. “So then, why are there seven churches? Why are there seven golden lampstands that represent the seven churches? Why are there seven stars? Why are there seven angels with seven trumpets? There are a whole lot of ‘sevens’ in the Book of Revelation!”

That made Patty smile. “I like the number seven!”

“I like it, too!” Grandpa replied. “However, ‘seven’ is a number that means symbolically ‘perfection’ or ‘fullness’ or ‘completion’. So the LORD was including all these seven churches to typify the complete church, all the assemblies in every age.”

“I’d like to go to a perfect church,” commented Anna.

“Ha!” Grandpa guffawed. “Not here on earth! Somebody once said that if you find a perfect church, when you get there, it won’t be!”

Some children seemed puzzled but Grandpa was laughing.

John immediately caught the joke and laughed, too. “Ha-ha! I get it! It won’t be perfect because none of us are perfect!”

“Yep!” agreed Grandpa. “Nobody is perfect! However, if we walk in the Holy Spirit ...” He got up and started walking ... “we can sin less and less.”

The old man began to sing. “Walk in the Spirit, just like John; Walk in the Spirit, just like John ...” He added, “We’re not talking about this John,” and he tapped the boy. “We’re talking about St. John the prophet!” He continued to sing and clap to the beat.

The kids began to dance and clap, too. They enjoyed being with their grandfather! He seemed to make everything fun!

Finally, being a little tired, Grandpa sat down and caught his breath. “That melody was an old black spiritual. But I put in ‘walk in the Spirit’. It actually goes: ‘Walk in Jerusalem, just like John.’ John in the Book of Revelation, talked about the New Jerusalem with streets of gold! But that’s at the end, the end of Revelation.”

“Gold? Streets of gold?” Anna was shocked. “They must be very rich!”

Grandpa smiled. “In every way!”

Revelation 21:21

The twelve gates were twelve pearls: each individual gate was of one pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.

Galatians 5:1

CHAPTER SIX - NO REBUKES

Today in Texas ...

First Night - First Vision

“One, two, three ...” Grandpa began to count the children. “There’s too many! Twelve. But we need only seven. So, we can leave the teenagers out! Sorry!”

“What?” cried the teens.

“What are we being left out of?” inquired Samuel.

“The seven churches,” their teacher explained.

“We already go to a church,” Peter replied, not understanding.

“Well, y’all are part of *the* church, the elect.” Grandpa continued. “But we’re going to pretend that y’all are the churches of Revelation. Some of these churches were not living up to what they should be. So we’re going to pretend. Let’s see. James, you’re not a teen yet, right?”

“I’m eleven,” he replied.

“Great! Then James will be the Church of Ephesus,” Grandpa went on. “John, you just turned thirteen, so you won’t be needed this time. Sorry.”

“That’s okay.” John was not disappointed at all.

“I’ll skip Samuel, too,” their teacher said.

Samuel moaned.

“So,” Grandpa continued, “Donny, you will be the Church of Smyrna. Peter, you’ll be Pergamum. Anna will be the Church of Thyatira. Joshua, the one in Sardis. And Patty, you’re going to be the great church of Philadelphia.”

“Good!” the little girl responded. “That’s where the Liberty Bell is! In Philadelphia! We have relatives in Philly and I’ve been there to visit them.”

Grandpa smiled. “That’s the Philadelphia in Pennsylvania. But this Philadelphia is on the other side of the globe - in what’s today known as Turkey. All these churches were in present day Turkey. So, last but not least ... I ran out of pre-teens! So, who wants to be Laodicea?”

Samuel quickly raised his hand.

“Great, Samuel,” Grandpa patted the boy on his back. “You will be Laodicea! Now, we’ll go over it again! So we will add some adjectives and that will help you remember. James, you’re going to be the Church of Ephesus, ‘Forgetful Ephesus!’”

“Forgetful Ephesus?” James repeated. “What did they forget?”

“I’ll explain later,” Grandpa stated. “Now, Donny, you will be Smyrna. Smyrna suffered a whole lot. We’ll call it ‘Suffering Smyrna.’”

“Suffering Smyrna,” the little boy echoed.

Grandpa continued. “Next, Peter, let’s come up with an adjective for Pergamum. Hmmm. Pergamum was polluted ... polluted spiritually. ‘Polluted Pergamum.’ Yes, That will be easy to remember!”

“Polluted Pergamum,” restated Peter, wondering how a church could be so polluted.

“Anna, let’s call this church ‘Too Tolerant Thyatira.’”

“What does ‘tol-e, tol-e-rant’ mean?” she inquired.

“We’ll get to that soon,” Grandpa spoke. “Joshua, the church in Sardis. We’ll call it ‘Spiritless Sardi.’”

“Spiritless?” Joshua was confused about the adjective. “I guess you’ll explain that later, too.”

“For sure. Now, for Patty. This assembly was faithful, so we’ll call it, ‘Faithful Philadelphia.’”

Patty recited, “Faithful Philadelphia. I like that!”

“Great! So who will you be?” Grandpa looked at Samuel. “You’ll be Laodicea. Laodicea was lukewarm. ‘Lukewarm Laodicea.’ That’s how the LORD described this church: lukewarm! ‘Lukewarm Laodicea.’ So these churches in Revelation - all but two

of them - were scolded, were rebuked by the LORD Himself! The church is not yet perfect but we will be!”

“Why did the LORD scold the churches?” asked Rosa. “What could they have done that was so wrong?”

“The LORD is a good father,” their instructor responded. “And sometimes one needs to scold children so that they don’t get into more serious trouble. Now, Donny, please stand up! And arise, Patty!”

The two arose, wondering what would happen next.

“Look at these two churches!” Grandpa drew Donny and Patty to his side. “These two churches received no rebuke from the LORD! That’s great!

Donny is representing the Church of Smyrna, ‘Suffering Smyrna’. You were willing to suffer and maybe give up your life for Christ! Many in Smyrna were martyrs. They died because they confessed Christ! Even today, we have martyrs for Christ. So, ‘Suffering Smyrna’ is still amongst us. If you are willing to even die, to be martyred for the LORD, how could Yeshua rebuke them?”

Samuel became pensive. “Many of these martyrs are in countries that have no freedom of religion. My ancestry is from a country that doesn’t honor that right. One can be arrested or even die, if you’re a believer!”

“Thank God, we have the First Amendment in the US,” James noted.

“But not every country has that,” said Lynette sadly. “I pray, and I hope you will, too ... for those facing persecution thru these awful governments!”

“Amen!” Grandpa was pleased with his granddaughter, that she would be moved to pray for the persecuted church. “Now, we go on to Philadelphia. Patty, what is your adjective?”

“Faithful! Faithful Philadelphia!” she shouted.

“Faithful Philadelphia was true to its name,” the teacher went on. “They kept the Word of God, kept the LORD’s name, and they kept going! Onward Christian soldiers! Faithful Philadelphia didn’t have a rebuke from the LORD. ‘Philadelphia’ means ‘brotherly love.’ The members of this church would have been showing brotherly love. This is a command of God: to love. And this congregation kept His Word so they must have been loving their brothers!”

“And sisters,” Jeanette added.

“Yes. Sisters, too.” Grandpa concurred. “St. John talks about love in his letters and love is also a fruit of the Spirit. So, good for y’all, ‘Suffering Smyrna’ and ‘Faithful Philadelphia’! Patty and Donny, take a bow! Bravo!”

The children all clapped for them. Both of them were new to this summer camp, so it made them feel very welcomed.

Grandpa smiled. “Smyrna and Philadelphia, there are crowns awaiting you in heaven!”

CHAPTER SEVEN - FIVE CROWNS

Today in Texas ...

First Night - First Vision

“Crowns?” Peter was surprised. “What for?”

“Remember we’re going to reign with Christ,” reminded Rosa.

“But not only that,” the teacher added. “Specifically, Smyrna will receive the ‘crown of life’ for enduring through extreme persecution. One cannot do this without the aid of the Spirit of Christ! Philadelphia, as well, will receive a ‘crown of glory’ as they loved and cared for their brothers. There are five crowns mentioned in Scripture for faithful followers of Christ. The crowns, which symbolize victory, nobleness, and authority, are for deeds done in Christ. We will have heavenly rewards!

“I want all five crowns!” John shouted.

“Me, too!” Peter concurred.

“Wow! But there are conditions for these crowns,” responded Grandpa. “Getting into heaven is by the grace of God through faith in Christ, but rewards have conditions! But we’re going for the gold, right, everybody?”

“And the gold streets!” Anna piped in.

Grandpa smiled. “So, there’s the ‘imperishable crown’ for those who have self-control which is a fruit of the Spirit. So that’s likely to be most saints ...” He looked at the lad who was scarfing down another s’more. “... maybe with the exception of John. How many of them have you had?”

“Uh ... I don’t know. I stopped counting at five.” He looked a little guilty. “Besides self-control doesn’t matter when it comes to s’mores! Right?”

“Right! I think I had seven,” Joshua said.

“Well, I had eight!” James shouted. “But they were small ones.”

“So no self-control, so no crown for y’all!” Grandpa replied jokingly. “Just kidding! Now, let me see. There’s the ‘crown of rejoicing’, for leading someone to Yeshua. Everyone should have this crown, too, as we should all be leading someone to Christ. And last but not least, is the ‘crown of righteousness’. This crown is bestowed on saints who are eagerly waiting for our blessed hope!”

“Blessed hope? What’s that?” inquired Donny.

“It’s not a ‘what’ but a ‘who’!” The gent stood and moved over to the boy and patted him on the head, as he spoke these words: “That, my son, is our great God and Savior Yeshua the Messiah! The King of Kings is coming back!”

“Super, super wow!” exclaimed the boy.

“And then we’ll throw all the crowns before Jesus,” added Samuel. “That’s also in the Book of Revelation.”

“Yes,” Grandpa agreed. “Because the Lamb of God alone is worthy! Christ suffered and died for our sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God. It’s all due to Him! Yeshua won this battle for us! HalleluYAH! The battle is over! For without Christ, one ‘can do nothing’! Therefore, He alone deserves these crowns! He alone is worthy! Therefore, we will cast our crowns before Him! Glory be!”

Revelation 4

10 the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying:

*11 “You are worthy, O Lord,
To receive glory and honor and power;
For You created all things,
And by Your will they exist and were created.”*

1 Peter 3:18; John 15:5

CHAPTER EIGHT - THE OVER-COMERS

Today in Texas ...

First Night - First Vision

“James, I just can’t believe you ate eight s’mores!” Jeanette whispered to him. “You’re going to have a tummy ache! That’s way too much sugar!”

James wasn’t as quiet as she. “Nah! Not likely!” He patted his hand on his stomach and smiled. “They were so, so yummy!”

The youths took notice of this conversation, but Grandpa brought them back to the topic at hand. “Now, we go on to the churches that were given rebukes by the LORD.

Personally, I don’t ever want to get scolded by the LORD. Do you?”

The youngsters agreed. Then Lynette spoke up “So what happened to the rest of these other churches, Grandpa?”

“Those who heard ... and acted upon what the Spirit spoke to each assembly, they would become over-comers! Smyrna and Philadelphia were already over-comers due to their faithfulness!”

“What’s an over-comer?” questioned Donny who wasn’t shy about asking.

“Hmmm. An over-comer. Let’s have a demonstration!” The teacher looked around on the ground. “Did you bring those play swords with you, John?”

“They’re right here,” answered John.

“Here! You take one and I’ll take one.” The grandfather positioned himself to fight. “En garde!”

They had a few tussles and then Grandpa made his move and was over the boy with the play sword to his chest. “Yep! I still have what it takes! An over-comer is one who has the victory!” He let the boy up.

“Wow!” John was a little out of breath from his ordeal. “You caught me off guard! Next time, I’ll be better prepared.”

“But you did put up a good fight! I’m a little winded myself.” Grandpa took a deep breath. “So, an over-comer wins the fight! But this is not a battle with bodies. The real battle is a spiritual battle! A battle fought thru prayer and perseverance, thru endurance! If we walk by the Spirit of God, who is within us, we will be over-comers! We can be over-comers thru Christ. Our victory is in Christ! So, now, Ephesus. Who is Ephesus?”

James raised his hand. “Me!”

“Come on down, ‘Forgetful Ephesus’!” exclaimed the teacher. James came over to stand in front of him.

“Ephesus had a serious rebuke. You asked what Ephesus forgot? Well, I’ll tell you,” conveyed Grandpa. “They forgot Yeshua!”

“What? How did they forget Him?” bellowed James. “He died for us!”

“Yes! We owe Yeshua our very lives!” the gent agreed. “The Church of Ephesus left it’s ‘first love’, not remembering that it was Yeshua who saved them from hell. ‘There is no other name but Yeshua by which people can be saved!’ They forsook the Messiah as their ‘first love’! How could that be? Many in Ephesus at this time had left their first love, the love of Yeshua, and replaced it with something OR someone else! But Christians should love God first and foremost.”

“Sad!” the twins commented in unison.

“I just don’t know how you can forget about Jesus!” exclaimed James.

“Then you’re an over-comer!” Grandpa smiled. “However, the LORD warned the Ephesians that if they didn’t repent - turn back their ‘first love’ to Yeshua - they would lose their place as a lampstand, an assembly of Christ! On the other hand, if they repented, they were promised to ‘eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.’”

“Is that the ‘tree of life’ that was in the Garden of Eden?” asked Rosa.

Grandpa was pleased that the teen would remember this. “Symbolically, this ‘tree of life’ represents the Messiah - He is the ‘tree of life’! The LORD said, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.’ Yeshua is life! Do I hear an ‘Amen’?”

“Amen!” sounded the youths.

“Now, it’s time for Peter. Come on down!” said Grandpa. “You will represent the Church of Pergamum, ‘Polluted Pergamum’. They were knowingly eating things that had been sacrificed to idols and also other grievous sins. God doesn’t like idols. He says to flee from idolatry!

Now, do y’all remember the story of this King Nebuchadnezzar? He set up an idol, and wanted his subjects to fall down and worship this golden image. But three young Hebrew men wouldn’t bow to this statue. Anyone who wouldn’t worship this idol, would be thrown into a fiery furnace. Yet when they were thrown in, they were not hurt! In there, with these three lads was a fourth figure! And who do you think that figure was?”

“Jesus!” the kids responded.

“Yep. Jesus,” concurred Grandpa. “Yeshua the Messiah! He kept them from harm! This true story was written through the Prophet Daniel. So, Peter, representing the Church of Pergamum, will you have nothing to do with idols?”

“Of course not! I want to be loyal to the LORD!” he cried.

“Congratulations! You’re an over-comer!” the grandfather affirmed. “So, who’s next? Why, I think it’s you, Anna. Do you remember who you are?”

“Yes, I’m Too-something-tira,” the sweet girl replied softly.

“Too Tolerant Thyatira,” the gent corrected her. “That’s a big mouthful for such a little one. The people of Thyatira were not doing right by the LORD. God has rules, and these rules are for our own good, but this church was way too tolerant. In other words, they let anything go! It didn’t matter what the Word of the LORD had commanded. They thought it was okay to go against God’s Word. They compromised. They compromised their faith.”

Gracie looked puzzled. “I thought tolerance and compromise were good things.”

“Sometimes they are,” the teacher agreed “but not with the Word of God! Someone said that ‘a compromise is an agreement nobody likes that everybody can live with.’ Hah! Sometimes a compromise is all one can do at the moment. For example, the Missouri Compromise of 1820, drew a line in the States from east to west, and divided this nation into half free states and half slave states! But God frowns on slavery! The US had to fight a bloody war, the Civil War, to set men free. By the way, there was a song that was penned at this time by a Mrs. Howe. She was a Christian and I believe that these lines were inspired by the Holy Spirit.”

Grandpa began to sing:

“‘In the beauty of the lilies Christ was born across the sea,
With a glory in his bosom that transfigures you and me;
As he died to make men holy, let us die to make men free,
While God is marching on.’

Come on children, you know this chorus! Sing it with me.”

The children started to sing. Then they rose up and marched around singing this famous song.

“Glory, glory, hallelujah! Glory, glory, hallelujah!
Glory, glory, hallelujah! His truth is marching on.”

“Well, that was great!” Grandpa continued. “We got a little energy out! But we went down a long rabbit trail! So that is a story of a national compromise that didn’t do too well historically.

But especially when it comes to our spiritual lives, there should be no compromise. So let’s get back to Too Tolerant Thyatira. That’s a mouthful even for me! Too Tolerant Thyatira! The members were letting anything go in there church. Yet Christians should have a higher standard than the world around them. There’s just some things that unbelievers do that true Christians should not do at all! So, the members were too tolerant and in so doing, they were breaking God’s rules. They were not walking in the light! Yeshua proclaimed, ‘I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.’

Also, they were following some teachings that were just not Scriptural. So, Anna, as you are pretending to be the church of Thyatira, do you want to be too tolerant, meaning accepting ungodly beliefs and ungodly behaviors of other people? Do you want to compromise your beliefs?”

“I want to do what God wants me to do,” the little girl sighed. “As best as I can!”

“Then you’re an over-comer! Congratulations!” Grandpa declared. “So we learn to never, never compromise your faith!”

Colossians 1:13

He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son,

1 John 5:4 (ESV)

For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.

CHAPTER NINE - A DEAD ASSEMBLY

Today in Texas ...

First Night - First Vision

“Joshua, you are ... DEAD!” Grandpa exclaimed.

“What?” he cried. “I’m dead?” Joshua fell on the ground pretending to be deceased.

Grandpa laughed and then he took a more serious stand. “You, as the church in Sardis, are dead, or spiritless. Anyone remember Adam and Eve?”

“Sure do!” replied James. “They took the fruit and ate it. It must’ve been a banana!”

“What?” cried the children.

“It must’ve been a banana because it made them slip!”

Samuel was the first one to catch this joke. But the others soon caught on.

Lynette, amid laughs, remarked, “Adam must have blamed the banana so the poor fruit was found guilty! The banana is now ap-PEEL-ing his case.”

Laughter erupted. When the chuckles subsided, Grandpa resumed his true story. “The LORD told Adam that if they ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil on that day they would surely die. Did they die?”

“Uh ...”

Jeanette spoke up. “They didn’t die physically that day, but they did die spiritually.” She knew the answer as she had been in other Bible studies.

“Right,” agreed Grandpa. “When one dies spiritually, one is not in the Presence of God! This church had so many spiritless people that they were called dead! One needs to be born-again, born of the spirit to be alive spiritually! These Sardinians needed to be born-again and then they would be over-comers! And these over-comers will walk with the LORD in white garments!”

“Just like a bride!” Lynette, the romantic, sighed.

“Amen!” concurred the gent. “Just like the Bride of Christ! So, will you be born anew, born-again, Joshua?”

“I was already born-again!” Joshua said, “when I was eight!”

“Yes, yes. That’s wonderful!” Grandpa commended him. “But I’m talking about the church of Sardi. You’re representing that church now. So, as the church of Sardi, or better yet, as a member of the church of Sardi, do you believe Yeshua died for your sins?”

“Definitely!”

“Do you believe that Yeshua rose again the third day?”

“Definitely!”

“Do you believe these things in your heart of hearts?”

Joshua placed his hand on his heart. “Oh, yes!”

“The Scriptures say that if you confess with your mouth the LORD Yeshua and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. So now you may confess that Yeshua is LORD!”

“Yeshua is LORD! HalleluYAH!” Joshua raised his hands to His Savior.

“Then you are an over-comer!” Grandpa declared.

Joshua took a comical bow. He was playing his part well.

“You’re going to walk with the LORD in white clothing,” the grandfather continued.

“And your name will still be in the Book of Life! It won’t be blotted out!”

“Book of Life?” questioned Rosa. “I’ve never heard of that!”

“It’s God’s list of those will inherit eternal life,” replied the teacher.

“Am I in it?” asked Patty.

“Of course you are!” Grandpa hugged the little girl. “You’ve been saved, haven’t you?”

CHAPTER TEN - A LUKEWARM ASSEMBLY

Today in Texas ...

First Night - First Vision

“Now, we just have one more church,” continued the teacher. “We already did Philadelphia who had no rebuke. So now, it’s going to be Laodicea! Stand up, Gracie!”

Gracie stood up and took a bow. “I’m ‘Lukewarm Laodicea’. And also, my drink is lukewarm!”

“And a lukewarm drink is not quite as refreshing as it could be,” Grandpa commented.

“Now, as a Laodicean, you think that you’re rich and wealthy. So you don’t need anything, do you?”

Gracie nodded, supposing that was what she was to do.

“But you are spiritually poor! You are ...” Grandpa put emphasis on each word,

“‘wretched ... miserable ... poor ... blind ... and naked’”!

The younger children giggled at the word “naked”.

“Spiritually naked, that is!” The grandfather laughed. “Just like Adam and Eve were.

They had to find fig leaves to cover themselves after they sinned. We are naked without the spirit, as Adam and Eve were naked without the cover of the spirit. They had been clothed with glory, shining in their appearance, until that fateful fall of man. Now, true Christians shine before God! But that’s another story. The LORD tells the Laodiceans to be clothed in white garments, so that they wouldn’t be naked any longer! These white

garments represent good works. One cannot do these righteous acts alone. The Holy Spirit, living inside each believer, equips us to do these good deeds.

Also, this city was famous for their eye salve so the LORD used it in his illustration. Yeshua tells the Laodiceans to anoint themselves with eye salve.”

“Why?” asked Donny.

Grandpa smiled at the young boy. “Because they were blind ... spiritually blind. He was telling them to use spiritual eye salve. If you anoint your spiritual eyes, then you could see spiritually. Many times the LORD speaks figuratively. He compares things in the natural world to things in the spiritual world because we can not normally see the spirit world. For example, Christ is not a literal ‘door’, but He is the figurative ‘door’ into His heavenly Kingdom. We are not literally ‘sheep’ ...”

“Baaa!” Some feisty boys cried.

“Funny, boys!” responded Grandpa. “The LORD is the Good Shepherd and we are His sheep. So where do sheep get their wool cut?”

No one had an answer so the teacher answered his own question. “At the baa baa shop.”

“Ha-ha! You told a joke, Grandpa!” Jeanette was surprised, amidst the laughter of the children. “In all this Bible preaching, you told a joke!”

Grandpa grinned. “You didn’t think I had it in me?”

Rosa spoke up. “I got another joke!”

“Don’t say you have a joke,” said John. “It is supposed to be a surprise, like what Grandpa did, Rosa!”

“Well, I do have a joke! How do Mexican sheep say Merry Christmas?”

Samuel replied, “They don’t! They say Baa Humbug!” The children laughed.

“No!” Rosa was a tad bit disgruntled. “These are nice Mexican sheep and they say ...

James butted in. “Fleece Navidad. Ha-ha!” He started singing. “Fleece Navidad! Fleece Navidad!” The other children joined him.

When the song ended, the teacher continued. “No more jokes, for now. It’s getting late. So, we are not literally ‘sheep’ but it is used symbolically. And Christ is not a literal door, or a literal fountain, and NOT literal ‘bread’! But He is the spiritual food for life eternal.

This is important to know because much of the Word of God is figurative or symbolic, especially in the Book of Revelation. So much symbolism! Yeshua, while He was on earth, spoke in symbols and, in public, in parables. A parable is a way to tell a simple story that teaches a spiritual truth. Some people back then were not ready for the truth, and some people are not ready for the truth today, either. They hear the words spoken but do not really hear in their heart, nor do they understand. But I’ve gotten off track! Where was I?”

Matthew 13:13

“Eye salve,” James offered. “You were talking about eye salve.”

“Oh, yes!” The teacher went on. “The Laodiceans were told to anoint themselves with eye salve - spiritually!

Now, why was it called ‘Lukewarm Laodicea’? Because they were! ‘Lukewarm’ when it comes to the LORD! Maybe their wealth and many possessions had turned them from Yeshua and caused them to be lukewarm.

Nearby Laodicea, there were two springs: a hot springs and in another place nearby a spring that was known for its cold, refreshing waters. The Messiah drew attention to these springs to get His point across. He said that since they weren’t cold or hot but lukewarm that He would spit them from His mouth! Some translations use a different word than spit.”

“Maybe vomit,” Joshua suggested. “Can you imagine the LORD vomiting?”

“Yuck!” Donny made a face.

“Double yuck!” Joshua replied.

“Nasty!” Grandpa agreed. “So Gracie, do you want to be lukewarm?”

“No, sir-ee!” she replied.

“Great!” Grandpa was happy. “So how can you go from being lukewarm to being on fire for the LORD?”

She hesitated. “Maybe pray some more. Maybe read my Bible more. And maybe tell other people about God’s amazing grace!”

“Great!” the teacher applauded. “But now ... and I don’t want any show of hands from this ... I want you to think about it, ponder it. How’s your spiritual fervor? Are you passionate? Are you firm in your faith? Or have you become lukewarm?”

Everyone was quiet. Some were thinking about these questions and some were just quiet because everybody else was.

Then Gracie broke into prayer. “Dear Father in heaven, you know better than I do my heart. Please help me not to be lukewarm. I want to be on fire, on fire for You!”

Revelation 3:20

Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.

CHAPTER ELEVEN - A STILL, SMALL VOICE

Today in Texas ...

First Night - First Vision

“Do you have an ear?” asked Grandpa. “Let me see them!”

The children lifted up their hands to their appendages.

James began to sing. “Do your ears hang low? Do they wobble to and fro?” He turned to John, and said “Yep. They do!”

John wiggled his ears lower and made a funny face. The children giggled.

“Enough of this silliness!” Grandpa jested as he was trying to stop the laughs coming from his own mouth! He now turned earnest. “We are talking about something so serious! With each address to these seven churches, the LORD ended it with ‘He who has an ear’. Do you have ears?”

“Got ‘em right here!” said Joshua.

“Yes, of course, you do!” agreed the teacher. “But do you have spiritual ears? ‘He who has an ear, let him hear!’ Repeat it: ‘Let him hear.’”

The youths repeated the phrase, “Let him hear!”

Grandpa resumed. “‘Let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’ The ears that Yeshua was talking about were spiritual ears that hear and listen and obey! It is important to really hear, deep in your heart, the things that the Holy Spirit speaks to you!”

Donny had a question. “Does the Spirit speak to you like in your ear, so that you actually hear Him?”

“You have a Bible there. Go to John 10, verse 4,” Grandpa replied. “That will give you an answer. Please read it.”

Donny begins: “And when He brings out his own sheep, He goes before them; and the sheep follow Him, for they know His voice.”

“They know His voice!” their teacher repeated. “Little Samuel - not our Samuel here because he’s way too big! - but this little Samuel in the temple of the LORD long ago, heard the voice of God calling his name OUT LOUD. He thought it was the priest Eli in another room. But it wasn’t him. So he went back and he heard his name called again. And he went back to Eli and Eli said to go back and lie down. But the priest finally realized that it was the LORD who was calling the boy. So he told him to go and lie down and if He calls you again, say, ‘Speak, LORD, for Your servant is listening.’ He went and lay down. Then the LORD came. He stood there, calling ‘Samuel! Samuel!’ So Samuel answered, ‘Speak, for Your servant is listening.’

But that is kind of rare to hear the voice of God out loud. But it does happen. I’ve heard the voice of God that way, when I was young in the LORD. But more often it’s a still,

small voice ... in your heart. The Holy Spirit speaks in many ways. Sometimes you are reading your Bible and a Scripture just stands out to you. Have you ever had that happen?"

Some people raised their hands.

"Has anybody had a dream that they knew was from God?" questioned Grandpa.

Some people raised their hands.

"Y'all have been hearing from God! Bravo!" Their teacher was excited. "The LORD's voice can manifest in various ways. Sometimes you get a profound sense of peace. That could be from the Holy Spirit. Or a sudden conviction comes that something you're doing is wrong. Better be careful! Or one knows in their heart that this isn't the road to take. You just know. That could be the Holy Spirit speaking to you!"

So let's be open as to how God may choose to speak to you: through the Word of God, or the circumstances you are in, or in a riddle, or a still, small voice! He speaks in numbers, also. For example, seven is a reoccurring theme in the Book of Revelation. We just concluded the seven churches. Yeshua included all these seven churches to typify the complete church, all churches in every age.

Oh, the LORD speaks in visions, too, just like St. John. The magnificent vision of Christ and Him giving the letters to the seven churches was his very first vision in the Book of Revelation. I would venture to say that John probably had more visions in his many years but they're not recorded. Maybe they were personal or for someone in particular.

But never go against the written Word of God ... in context. That's important! Scripture is sure! One can't argue with Scripture! So that is how the LORD speaks to us routinely.

When you are more mature in your walk with the LORD, maybe one of you may have a vision! Just a thought for you to think about in your beds tonight!"

Deuteronomy 6:4-5

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.

Proverbs 1:5-7

*A wise man will hear and increase learning,
And a man of understanding will attain wise counsel,
To understand a proverb and an enigma,
The words of the wise and their riddles.
The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge,
But fools despise wisdom and instruction.*

The Second Vision

The Six Seals: Revelation 4:1-6:17

TWELVE - THE SILVER CORD

Today in Texas ...

Second Night - Second Vision

The kids were huddled around the campfire. Some were cozy in their camping chairs, or not too cozy on logs or big stones. This was the second night at the campout. They were ready to sit still as they had been swimming most of the day.

“That was so much fun!” stated Peter. “I wish we could do that everyday!”

“Well, after awhile it would be boring,” Lynette commented. “But it sure was fun today!”

“Especially when James did that belly-flopper!” laughed John.

“Say, Grandpa, are we going to talk about angels tonight?” Anna asked.

“Angels? Yes!” replied the teacher. “We’re going on to the second vision tonight.”

“Oh, I like angels! The little cherubs are so awfully cute!”

“Well, Anna, these are not little cherubs,” Grandpa noted. “No way! If you saw one of these angels, you just might be a little scared! They are mighty and powerful angels! And big!”

“Oh,” muttered Anna.

“Now, to begin this Second Vision,” Grandpa continued. “St. John is taken to a prophetic ‘door’ standing open in heaven. Just as Yeshua is a symbolic ‘door’, this is not a literal ‘door’, but symbolic. Then John heard a voice like a trumpet that said, ‘Come up here!’ That’s how translators have interpreted this Greek word as ‘trumpet’ - but it was the sound of a shofar. They didn’t have trumpets in ancient Israel. A shofar is usually made from the horn of a ram. I brought a shofar along to show you.”



He then put the shofar to his mouth but the sound that came out was more like a little mutter. “I’ve never been too good at blowing the shofar!”

“Can I try?” asked Lynette. And so it began. Each child tried but no one could get more than a little sound.

“Well, that was fun,” the grandfather remarked. “It takes some skill to blow a shofar. Maybe we can work on it later.

So, back to our story, St. John was caught up into the heavenlies. The LORD was going to show what must happen. So John was given a prophecy about the future! The future is told to the prophets of the LORD and St. John was a prophet!”

“So, basically much of the Book of Revelation is a prophecy?” asked Gracie.

“Much of the whole Bible is prophecy,” Grandpa explained. “Prophecies, predictions about the Messiah: when He came the first time which have already happened. There are about 300 prophecies about His First Coming. And there are over 1000 passages that relate to His Second Coming. Yes, Yeshua is coming! It’s a sure bet! The prophecies about His First Coming were so very accurate! Why Psalm 22 speaks about His death on the cross, even the words Christ spoke. Therefore, we can be sure He is coming again! HalleluYAH!”

Little Patty didn’t miss her cue to say “HalleluYAH!”

Grandpa continued. “Now, the LORD told St. John to ‘COME UP!’ So John was immediately, IMMEDIATELY in the Spirit. So what can we deduce from that statement?”

Peter confessed that he didn’t know. “But it must be something special!”

“Indeed, it is! Now St. John was ‘in the spirit’ during the First Vision,” the teacher explained. “Then for the Second Vision, the Bible reads that he was ‘immediately in the spirit’. This obviously separates these two visions. One cannot be instantly in the spirit if one is already *in* the spirit! So, anybody wants to take a crack at what ‘in the spirit’ means?”

“It must have something to do with this vision,” guessed Jeanette.

“That’s valid,” Grandpa agreed. “But we can be ‘in the spirit’ at other times! One can be filled with the Holy Spirit, that is to be willingly to be totally controlled by the Spirit. One can be in prayer and meditation and praising God. But in the case of St. John, it was somewhat more intense. He was caught up to heaven. Wow!”

“Super wow!” Donny was impressed .

“St. John was being prepared to receive a divine revelation from God,” Grandpa continued. “He needed to be in the Spirit!”

The teacher paused. “Everybody on earth has a body. We have a soul - the mind, will, and emotion. And we also have a spirit, that part of us that communicates directly with God. God is a spirit. God speaks in the spirit. Born-again believers are spirits. We

communicate with God through words or thoughts in the spirit. St. John was operating in this spirit. His body was on the isle of Patmos at that time. However, his spirit was in heaven - the very throne room of heaven.”

“His body was on earth ... but his spirit was in heaven?” Patty was trying to imagine this. “How can that be?”

“Who knows?” Grandpa lifted his shoulders. “Maybe that’s a question for God! But maybe it has to do with a silver cord!”

“A silver cord?” Jeanette exclaimed. “I’m not sure I’ve ever heard about it!”

“Nor I,” said her twin. “And I’ve been reading the Bible for sometime!”

“Yep. A silver cord!” the teacher affirmed. “You’ve probably read it, Lyn. But I think it’s only mentioned once in Ecclesiastes, a book by King Solomon. It speaks of a silver cord. If it is snapped, the body, compared to a ‘golden bowl’, dies. That’s why we need to be born-again of the Spirit *before* one dies physically. If you are not born-again of the Spirit, then your spirit is dead to God, separated from God through sin. When the silver cord snaps, well, it’s all over for you! See, your soul, which is eternal, can’t enter heaven where God is. So your soul will spend an eternity without God. And that’s tragic!”

“Sad. Very sad!” opined Gracie. “This info was very valuable! But you went down a long rabbit trail.”

“A bunny trail!” Anna interjected as she made her bunny hop on a make-believe trail.

Grandpa continued. “But I was explaining about St. John - how he could have his body on earth and his soul and spirit in heaven. This ‘silver cord’ - and one cannot see this because it’s spiritual - this ‘silver cord’ could be what connects the body to the soul and spirit. In the case of St. John, the ‘silver cord’ is not snapped in this case. It just goes wherever, even up to heaven, another dimension, keeping the body connected to the soul and spirit. Maybe that’s an explanation. I hope it’s right. We’ll know when we get to heaven! Now we’re going to talk about the Throne Room of God!”

Ecclesiastes 12:6 (BSB)

Remember Him before the silver cord is snapped and the golden bowl is crushed, before the pitcher is shattered at the spring and the wheel is broken at the well,

CHAPTER THIRTEEN - THE CELESTIAL THRONE ROOM

DISTANT PAST

On the isle of Patmos in the Mediterranean Sea, about 2000 years ago ...

The prophet John mulled over the wondrous sights he saw in the vision as he drew an arc with a stick in the dirt. He muttered to himself. “A rainbow in the very Throne Room of God!”

Then he drew a simple sketch of lightning. “From the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices.”

“Then there’s the glassy sea.” But he didn’t even attempt to picture it. *How could you draw a sea so extremely calm? How could anyone depict these heavenly visions?*

“It’s too much ... too much! Oh, I wish I could draw these scenes!”

The thought came to him from the Spirit, that these scenes were not suppose to be drawn. *How could anyone do justice to such heavenly visions? And how ever could I draw the LORD Himself? What an exquisite vision! Any image wouldn’t do it justice! It just would fail to capture the magnificent essence of His Being.*”

As he put the stick down, the prophet transitioned into prayer. “My King! My glorious King! How can I ever describe You? You are ... like a jewel, like a pure polished, sparkling jewel! Most wonderful! Most marvelous! So, so brilliant! So, so radiant! Beyond description!”

Revelation 4

Today in Texas ...
Second Night - Second Vision

“Anybody like rainbows?” the grandfather asked.

“I love them!” Gracie declared. “In my paintings, I often add rainbows.”

“Did you know there is a rainbow in the throne room of heaven?” the teacher inquired.

“St. John was there! In the throne room! And he saw a rainbow!”

“Just an ordinary rainbow?” asked the curious James.

“Ordinary? No rainbow is ordinary!” Grandpa articulated. “But first, I’ll tell you about the LORD. He’s preeminent - in other words, the best! St. John saw God Almighty, seated on the throne. He saw His brilliant splendor, the surpassing brightness of the Holy One. St. John compared Him to two gemstones: the first, a gemstone that was like a sparkling diamond. The second, another red jewel that gave the appearance of fire! It must have been magnificent!”

“Wow!” exclaimed Rosa. “I wouldn’t imagine that God would be compared to a diamond!”

“My Bible reads ‘jasper’” remarked Lynette, looking at her sacred book. “I thought jasper was green. Green is my favorite, you know.”

“Jasper comes in many colors,” Grandpa responded. “However, it says later in Revelation, talking about the New Jerusalem, that the jasper was clear as crystal. So, I

assume that this is the same type of jasper. However, this translucent jasper also symbolizes purity and holiness which YaHWeH is.”

“But where is the rainbow?” Patty asked.

“Oh, yes! I said that no rainbow is ordinary,” the teacher declared. “But this one in the throne room was super cool! Quite extraordinary! It encircled the throne round about. It formed a complete circle, not a half circle like we normally see here on earth in a rainbow. So some scholars believe this to be a halo, as in a solar halo. I’ll show you a picture of one here with our own sun.” He went through his papers to show them. “It’s very interesting! And in ancient times, this phenomenon had the same symbolic meaning as the rainbow.”



The youths gathered round the picture and were all astounded.

“I’ve never seen one of these!” spoke Samuel. “It is quite amazing!”

“Well, in all my years, I’ve never seen one!” Grandpa admitted. “So, this rainbow or halo shone like an emerald! And some scholars believe it was all green.”

“Imagine that! An emerald green rainbow?!” Lynette reflected.

“How could a rainbow be just one color?” Jeanette replied.

“I don’t know,” responded Lynette. “I like an all green rainbow. Just a thought. It would have to be different shades of green, as an emerald does with its various reflections. I once did a painting where all the leaves were variations of green, each one subtly different.”

“That sounds like as interesting painting!” The teacher went on. “Well, there are lots of opinions on this rainbow. Nobody knows what heaven - or the throne room - is like till we all get there! This rainbow feature might be like the rings around the sun, as in a solar halo. Then others believe the rainbow is all green that has the various shades as Lynette suggested. Or maybe, the rainbow sparkled as an emerald yet it was like the rainbows on earth with various hues. So guess how many colors are in a rainbow on earth?”

“I know!” said Patty enthusiastically. “Seven”

“Some people say there are only six,” John added. “Some don’t count indigo as a separate color.”

“What?” the children cried.

“I was just playing devil's advocate!”

Grandpa giggled. “This is a bible study! No devil's advocate here!” He made a solemn face but everyone knew he was jesting.

“Ha-ha!” laughed John. “But I really think there are seven colors in a rainbow. After all, some big-wig organization has officially recognized indigo as a distinct color! It’s an on going debate! But I really think there are seven!”

“So, I think there are seven, too!” Grandpa concurred. “Who thinks there are seven?”

Everybody raised there hands.

“Patty, do you know the colors?” asked the teacher.

“I think I do!”

“Think ‘Roy G. Biv’” suggested James, giving her a mnemonic.

“That’s too complicated and I don’t think she knows too much about long ago English battles,” protested Lynette.

“How about this one: ‘Read Out Your Good Book In Verse’” Gracie added. “That would be most appropriate here!”

“I’ve never heard of that one!” John replied. “Well, Patty, are you going to name the colors?”

“Yep!” She smiled. “Violet, indigo, blue, green, yellow, orange, and, of course, red!”

“You named them backwards!” Joshua roared.

“Uh-huh!” Patty was still smiling. “From the inside out! My Gramma gave me a way to remember this: ‘violets in bloom greet you on rising’.

“Well, that is so utterly cool!” Jeanette declared. “‘Violets in bloom greet you on rising’. I like that!”

“Me, too!” Grandpa jumped in. “Well, you know that the rainbow was given after Noah’s flood as a sign that the LORD would never flood the whole earth again. Therefore, a rainbow speaks of God’s mercy! Yes, it’s a beautiful sign! So here’s another seven. Seven colors of the rainbow. Yesterday, we discussed that seven is a reoccurring theme in the Book of Revelation. ‘Seven’ means symbolically ‘perfection’ or ‘fullness’ or ‘completion’. A rainbow with seven distinct colors is in the throne room of God!”



“And the seven colors *could* be all green,” Lynette piped in. “With various shades!”

“Super wow!” chimed Donny imagining this all-green rainbow.

“Yep,” the teacher conceded. “Or not. So the seven colors of the rainbow suggest that God is perfect in mercy. Also, in the throne room, there were seven lamps. These lamps represent the seven Spirits of God.”

Anna was confused. “I thought there was only one Holy Spirit!”

Grandpa laughed. “Well, remember that the number seven signifies complete and perfection. The Holy Spirit is perfect, isn't he?”

Everyone nods in agreement.

“These seven lamps were most likely a menorah. I brought one to show you.” The gent passed the small menorah around.

Grandpa continued. “It says in Scripture that the temple built on earth was a facsimile of the one in heaven. It's a duplicate. The menorah was made of pure gold signifying purity and has seven candlesticks for flames. The flames are fueled by pure olive oil that needs to be continually supplied. Oil represents the Holy Spirit. One needs to have the Holy Spirit working in our lives daily to be a flame for Christ!”

“That's like last night!” Gracie interrupted. “I prayed that I want to be on fire for Christ! LORD, Your will be done in me!”

“Wonderful! A heart-felt prayer!” Grandpa was pleased. “In this tabernacle on earth, there was no natural light. So the menorah with its seven flames would give light continually. As the menorah illuminated God’s dwelling place, Yeshua illuminates the whole world!

On the menorah, there is one central shaft called in Hebrew the *shamash*. It was lit first. This was used to light all the other candlesticks. Symbolically, Christ is the *shamash*, the servant lamp who ignites all others. Yeshua Himself now walks among the other lights, His people. Believers are also called to be light. The Messiah said Himself, ‘You are the light of the world.’ That’s us! How can you be light?”



Samuel knew a Scripture that spoke of this. “‘Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.’ That’s from Matthew 5:16.”

“I have another Scripture,” said Jeanette. “‘Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD rises upon you.’ Isaiah 60:1”

Lynette added one more: “‘For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the LORD. Walk as children of light, for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness, and truth.’ Ephesians 5:8-9.”

“Wow! I am impressed!” Grandpa was more than delighted with his grandchildren. “Y’all know about being light! We certainly need it in this crazy, crazy world!

Now, one other thing about this menorah in the throne room. There is a list of the seven Spirits that the Prophet Isaiah wrote about, chapter 11, verses 2. These would be the Spirit of the LORD; the Spirit of Wisdom; of Understanding; the Spirit of Counsel; of Strength; the Spirit of Knowledge and finally, the Spirit of the Fear of the Lord.”

“Fear?” asked Peter.

“Fear of the LORD,” Grandpa repeated. “Well, fear of the LORD is obedience to God because He knows what is best for each of us. It’s a deep respect for Him. And that would imply that we don’t take the name of the LORD lightly. One should never say ‘Jesus’ as an expletive or a cuss word!”

“My grandma would make us eat soap if we ever did that!” said James.

“Yuck!” the youths responded.

“Yep. My mother washed my mouth out with soap a couple times!” Grandpa made a silly face. “It was nasty! But I learned not to use cuss words! We should be careful with the words we use!

Also, fear of the LORD is also to hate evil. God hates evil. He wants only good for us! Sadly, there is a lot of evil in the world today. Those people who didn’t have the fear of the LORD and did evil consistently are the ones who will have the dreadful events of the Book of Revelation come upon them! Unfortunately, some do not listen to the Word of God! The LORD will end evil in this world and He will establish here on earth a Kingdom where there is goodness and peace and joy! So, where were we before this sidetrack?”

“The menorah,” replied Gracie.

“Well, we’re done with that,” Grandpa remarked. “So, who wants to know the significance of the number twenty-four?”

Exodus 25:40

And see to it that you make them according to the pattern which was shown you on the mountain.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN - TWENTY-FOUR

Today in Texas ...

Second Night - Second Vision

“Twenty-four!” cried Patty. “That’s my birthday! I was born on the 24th day of July. We celebrated my birthday just recently.”

“I don’t think that that’s what Grandpa meant,” mumbled Rosa to her. “Happy belated birthday, by the way!”

“Happy birthday!” Grandpa picked a little flower and gave it to her. “But what does twenty-four mean in Scripture? Anybody know?”

When no one responded, the teacher answered his own question. “Twelve is the number of governmental perfection and authority. Twenty-four is double that. Double perfection! In this heavenly throne room, beside the one where the LORD was sitting, were twenty-four thrones. And who do you think were sitting on these thrones?”

“Duh. I guess twenty-four people!” Joshua replied.

“Exactly!” the teacher went on. “On the thrones were twenty-four elders. An elder is a senior official having authority. There are various theories about who these twenty-four elders symbolize. One is that they could represent leaders from the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve apostles. (Of course, this doesn’t include Judas Iscariot who betrayed Yeshua.)

“Let me see, if it doesn’t include Judas, who’s the 12th?” asked Donny.

“It could be St. Paul who speaks of himself as an apostle. Back to the subject, these elders are lifting up worship and will be ruling and reigning with Christ! And, the overcomers are going to rule and reign with Christ as well! HalleluYAH!”

“You keep on saying that. I don’t know anything about ruling. Heck! My dog doesn’t even obey when I tell him to sit!” commented Peter.

The children chuckled.

“You need to be more assertive!” Grandpa advised. “And as far as ruling, being obedient to God’s rules is the first step. How can we reign with Christ if we don’t obey His rules?! Remember yesterday we talked about the seven churches. Two of them had no rebukes but five were cautioned about sins against the faith. Maybe many were not true Christians. One must overcome these sins - by the Holy Spirit working within us - to be victorious!”

Rosa was a little puzzled. “Why did you say ‘true Christians’?”

“Good question!” Grandpa grinned. “People join churches for other reasons. They want to get some contacts for their businesses. Or people need a church’s food pantry. Or the church serves meals. But they haven’t been born again, born from above, which is necessary to be a true Christian. They might talk like a Christian, and do things that Christians are supposed to do, but they don’t have the Holy Spirit living inside of them! Not everyone in a church is necessarily a true Christian! One need to be born-again of the Spirit. So, tell me, do you think everybody in these seven churches were true Christians?”

“Not the dead ones!” Joshua again played dead. “They were dead. The Spiritless Sardinians! Is that right? It sounds like sardines!” He giggled. “The Spiritless Sardinians! But some of us came alive!” He jumped up and began to walk around. Grandpa and the youths chuckled at his antics.

The teacher went on. “But do you suppose that others in these churches were filled with the Spirit of God?”

“Some, I suppose,” answered Lynette. “Maybe most of them?”

“Maybe.” Grandpa continued. “When people come to the LORD, they are changed, transformed to be more like Christ. This life-long process is called sanctification. We must listen to the Holy Spirit and follow Him. Remember there was always at the end of these messages to the churches, ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’ Anybody listening?”

“I am,” replied James. The others nodded their agreement.

“Now let’s get back to twenty-four!” Grandpa drew the numbers in the dirt. “Twenty-four is the number of divine governmental order. The twenty-four elders obey Christ as He is the King of Kings. The elders may assign someone to carry out what the LORD requires. As we who will be reigning with Christ in His Kingdom, we can start now to be obedient to His wishes! Then we are better prepared to rule in His Kingdom in the future. According to how we obey Christ, this will determine how He can use us in the next season: His thousand-year reign on earth.”

“A thousand-year reign?” questioned Donny. “His reign should be forever!”

“Why it is forever!” Grandpa exclaimed. “But I said ‘on earth.’ Yeshua will reign on this earth for a thousand-years or a millennium. Then ... why we’re getting ahead of our game plan. That’s at the end of the book! But we do have a time of peace coming on this planet!

Now the Scriptures indicate that these twenty-four elders are the redeemed. They sing a new song, a new song of grateful redemption! Somebody read Revelation 5:9-10.”

Samuel stood to read:

“And they sang a new song, saying:

‘You are worthy to take the scroll,

And to open its seals;

For You were slain,

And have redeemed us to God by Your blood

Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,

And have made us kings and priests to our God;

And we shall reign on the earth.

The teacher continued. “The lyrics indicate that they are from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. Well, now, how can that be? The elders are but twenty-four and certainly there are more nations and languages than just twenty-four! Can anyone explain that?”

The youths looked puzzled.

“These visions are bewildering!” stated Lynette as she shook her head in amazement.

“Yes. How can anyone understand them?” added Rosa.

Grandpa knew this was a difficult book to study but he felt the time was right. “Well, many people, many scholars have been trying to figure out this Book of Revelation. Sometimes there is more than one answer. Many books in the New Testament are straightforward. They mean what they say and they say what they mean. Of course, Yeshua spoke in parables and used metaphors. These are very common in a language and don’t distract from the meaning but adds to it!”

“What’s a metaphor?” whispered Donny to Gracie.

Grandpa overheard. “Ask your question so anyone can benefit!”

Donny repeated the question out loud.

“Gracie, do you have a suitable answer?” the teacher inquired.

Gracie, who was the oldest girl there, replied. “It’s a figure of speech, a comparison. Last spring, we studied the poem ‘Hope is the thing with feathers’ which is a comparison. The poet, Emily Dickinson, compares hope to a bird. ‘Hope’ is not *really* a bird but it makes for a lovely poem!”

“That’s a great comparison,” added Jeanette. “Especially since one of the symbols of the Holy Spirit is a dove.”

“There are a lot of metaphors in the Bible!” Grandpa explained. “Can you think of one?”

“Christ said that He is a door,” James remembered from the night before.

“He’s a Rock! Or *the* Rock!” John contributed.

“He’s the Light of the world,” stated Samuel.

“So now you know what a metaphor is,” the teacher concluded. “Now, getting back to the Book of Revelation. Scholars and preachers and saints have many different opinions about this book. But as we get closer and closer to the day when the LORD returns, we should have a clearer understanding. We need to hold the Scriptures in our hearts and then when something happens, we can say, ‘This is that’. St. Peter declared ‘this is that’ when they gathered for prayer at Pentecost in the upper room. He said ‘this is that’ which was spoken by a prophet named Joel. Joel predicted that God’s Spirit would be poured out on all flesh. People would prophesy and have dreams and have visions. St. Peter and those saints were then living in the end-times but so are we two-thousand years later. We are definitely closer to it now! Some prophecies have already been fulfilled since now Israel is a nation again. Israel is very important to end-time prophecies, but that’s another topic.

So, we need to say ‘this is that’ again. We don’t know exactly how Revelation will all play out. But we have the Scriptures. If you know the Scriptures well, one can say ‘this is that’ when that event is at last fulfilled!”

“This is that! Sounds like the name of a song.” John started chanting and doing a little boogie. “This is that. Don’t want to be a copy cat. This is that. I’ll print it on my hat!” The young ham had everyone clapping and rollicking.

Acts 2:16-21

But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:
‘And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God,
That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh;
Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
Your young men shall see visions,
Your old men shall dream dreams.
And on My menservants and on My maidservants
I will pour out My Spirit in those days;
And they shall prophesy.
I will show wonders in heaven above
And signs in the earth beneath:
Blood and fire and vapor of smoke.
The sun shall be turned into darkness,
And the moon into blood,
Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord.
And it shall come to pass
That whoever calls on the name of the Lord
Shall be saved.’

CHAPTER FIFTEEN - A NEW SONG

Today in Texas ...

Second Night - Second Vision

After John's hilarious performance, Grandpa paused a moment to take a swig of his water. "Now to get back to the question at hand: the elders are only twenty-four so how can it be that they sing a song about peoples and tribes and nations and languages, many more than twenty-four!"

Rosa took a guess. "Maybe they are singing it *for* those other people?"

"That was a good guess," replied the teacher. "However, these elders represent the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve apostles but we can also say that symbolically the twenty-four represents *all* the saints! We will all be reigning as kings and priests singing before the King of Kings ... in utter unity!!"

"Priests?" asked Peter. "Who's a king and who's a priest?"

"We're both!" replied Grandpa. "We, true Christians, are called to be both kings and priests! Kings - in the sense we will be ruling and reigning with the King of all Kings. Priests - because we will be serving the Messiah, our High Priest, and interceding - that's praying for others as He does. Did you know that the Messiah is praying for you even now?"

"For us? Impressive!" expressed Joshua.

"Super, super wow!" said Donny.

“He is praying for me right now?” asked Patty.

“Yes. He is.” The teacher patted her on the head. “The Messiah prays without ceasing, as we should! Maybe He’s praying that you will understand some of the mysteries that you are about to hear! Maybe not today, but in the future. The Holy Spirit will bring them to your attention and you’ll remember them with a new understanding.”

Patty looked somewhat astonished as to the mysteries he mentioned. She gently hugged the elderly man.

“So, then,” Grandpa continued his teaching, “we will be restored to what we were intended to be: our priest-king roles in the cosmos. Now isn’t that exciting!”

“Just think, a king!” John exclaimed. “Wow, oh, wow!”

“But I don’t know much about being a priest,” James admitted quietly.

Jeanette, who was sitting at his side, overheard. “You’ll learn!”

Grandpa went on. “The twenty-four elders and the four living creatures ...

“What? Four living creatures?” John gasped. “This gets weirder and weirder!?”

“Très bizarre!” added Jeanette.

“I will get to this soon ... it’s a whole discussion.” The teacher continued. “The twenty-four elders and the four living creatures were singing this new song, indicating that the

LORD had redeemed them! They are the redeemed! Who is redeemed? People who put their faith in Christ. But this new song is *only* for the redeemed! Then later, angels joined them in a different song with every creature joining in to praise YaHWeh!

Someone is constantly praying and praising our heavenly Father. Someone is seeing something new that they haven't seen before, about our LORD, our Adonai. That's why they are consistently crying 'Holy! Holy! Holy!'

So what does 'holy' mean? It means to be 'set apart'! This is the essence of God. He is set apart from all creation! God is perfect love and He is perfect in His nature!

Do you know that since God is holy, He commands us to be holy, too? So how can we set ourselves apart? The Scripture tells us to think on good things. When we think about good things, good things will come out of our lives. But if you put garbage in, garbage will come out of your lives."

"That's a popular expression," said Samuel. "Garbage in, garbage out!"

"Yep. Garbage in, garbage out!" the teacher concluded. "Good things in, good things out! The Holy Spirit within us will aid us to act holy. We are being transformed into Christ's glorious image! HalleluYAH!"

Revelation 4:8b

And they do not rest day or night, saying:

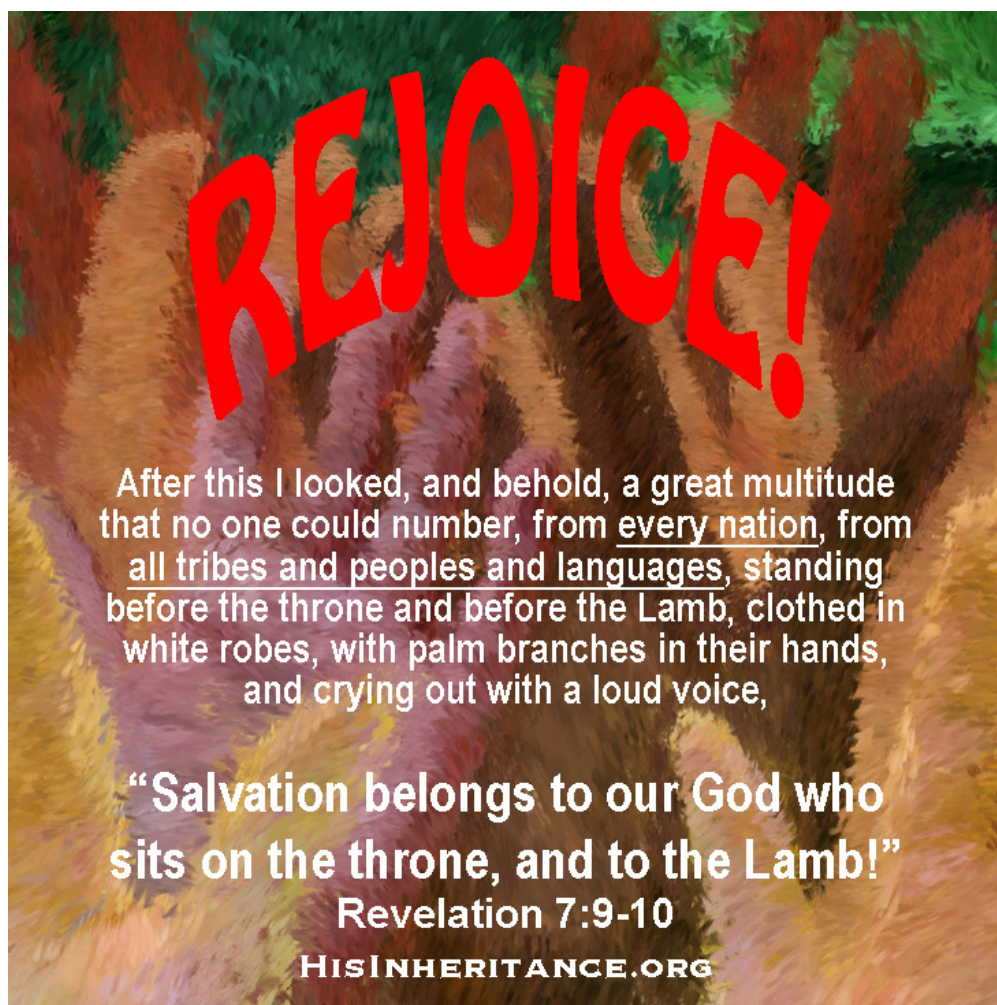
“Holy, holy, holy,

Lord God Almighty,

Who was and is and is to come!”

1 John 3:2

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.



CHAPTER SIXTEEN - THE FOUR LIVING CREATURES

Today in Texas ...

Second Night - Second Vision

“So I want to know about these four living creatures,” commented Donny. “Living creatures! That’s funny!”

“Why doesn’t he just call them animals?” Joshua commented.

“Maybe because they are much more than animals!” Grandpa responded. “They sing. They praise God. And they have eyes in the front and in the back. Multiple eyes!”

“They sound very strange!” Patty declared. The other youths agreed.

“Very bizarre!” commented Samuel.

“Très bizarre!” repeated Jeanette in French.

“Muy extraño!” Rosa added this same phrase in Spanish.

“Well, who can say this in Chinese?” Their teacher looked around and no one could reply.

“Gotcha! So, what do you think the many eyes on these creatures symbolize? Any guesses?”

Lynette offered her opinion. “They can see just about everywhere and so that would make them very watchful and alert.”

Gracie was thoughtful. “Maybe the many eyes are all fixed on God.”

“A wonderful idea!” Grandpa was surprised that this profound idea came from one so young. “Just as the eyes of a servant are focused on his master. Anyway, these four living creatures all were somewhat different. They each had different faces! The first was like a lion. The second was like a calf or a young bull. The third had the face of a man. And the fourth was like a flying eagle. Now, isn’t that interesting! Do you think these were symbolic in St. John’s vision or do you think that these living beings are really there in the throne room?”

The youths thought a bit.

“I don’t know,” mused Samuel. “It’s difficult to say.”

“Maybe they are both - symbols and also there in heaven,” remarked Jeanette.

“Well, we don’t know for sure,” the teacher confessed. “Some scholars believe that the four living beings are angels as it comes near to a description in the book of Ezekiel. This is one theory, but the creatures in Ezekiel are not exact. But maybe the LORD is saying something different using the symbolism.

Another theory is that the living beings, all four of them, represent all creation. A lion would symbolize wild beasts. After all he is the ‘king of the jungle’! The calf would represent tamed beasts. Man would obviously be humanity. And the eagle would represent the birds. One of the psalms say ‘Let everything that has breath praise the LORD.’ All living beings have breath! This theory is credible, also.

Ezekiel 1:5-25

Others say that these living beings represent the traits of the Messiah. Each gospel - Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John - that's the order in the Bible - shows a different aspect of Yeshua's characteristics, and we, as Christians, too, should have these traits!"

"Just maybe all these theories are all right!" Gracie suggested.

"Out of them all, I'd like to be the lion!" John let out a "Rrrrrroar!"

"Knowing you, I suppose you would!" said Samuel with a smile on his face.

Grandpa laughed and then continued. "In each theory, the living being is symbolic of various traits or qualities. The first face is that of the lion. So what does a lion represent to y'all?"

Peter replied. "As you said before, he is the 'king of the jungle'!"

"Brave!" blurted out James. "He'd be positively brave!"

"He is strong!" commented Anna shyly.

"They say that a lion can pull over a ton!" John obviously knew this subject. "They can even drag a buffalo! There's nothing that can oppose these wild cats!"

"Thank you for the trivia!" said Grandpa.

“No problem!” he replied. “Did you know that a lion’s roar can carry for five miles? That’s an awfully powerful roar! The lion is warning other animals, especially other lions, that this is where he rules. It’s like he says, ‘This territory is taken!’”

“And when the LORD returns,” the teacher concluded, “the Lion of Judah, with a real cosmic roar, will declare that this earth is taken for the Kingdom of God! HalleluYAH!”

**Do not fear, little flock,
for it is Your Father’s good pleasure
to give you the KINGDOM!**

LUKE 12:32



CHAPTER SEVENTEEN - HOLY FACES

Today in Texas ...

Second Night - Second Vision

“So the lion is courageous,” Grandpa continued. “You mentioned that, James, when you said he was brave. He’s strong and powerful, as you suggested, Anna. He claims his territory with a roar so that represents authority, John. And he is the king of the jungle as Peter said, and that represents royalty! Courage, power, authority, and royalty. Yeshua has all these traits! Now, for the other faces! What does the young bull represent?”

“It’s also strong,” contributed Donny.

“Yep. But not quite as strong as the lion,” Grandpa agreed. “But what does the bull do with that strength? He plows fields! He serves his master. Anyone have another trait of the bull?”

“Weren’t calves used for sacrifice in the Old Testament?” asked Lynette.

“Precisely!” replied Grandpa. “A young bull was used for a sacrifice in the days before Christ. So the calf symbolizes Christ’s sacrifice for us! So the bull could represent a servant’s heart and sacrifice. As Christians, we should also have these traits of serving the LORD. So, now we have the face of a human.”

“Our highly-developed brains make us unique,” Gracie asserted. “So ...”

“Ha!” James couldn’t help but laugh. “Highly-developed? Not some of my classmates!”

The grandfather grimaced at James for his critical remark. “You’ve been well-educated. Not everyone is so blessed!”

Yet Gracie wanted to make her point. “Compared to animals, we do have highly-developed brains! Even a dummy ...”

“Some that you would call ‘dummies’ are really not,” Samuel interrupted. “I once met a man who was autistic, an autistic savant. He could play on the piano classical music magnificently but when it came to his social behavior ... well, he was somewhat of a dud. He went with us to lunch and he hardly said a word. Yet he played this complicated piece from Mozart, without sheet music, and he played it quite well!”

“Maybe he was just shy,” commented Rosa.

“Nah, the lady with him told us he was autistic.”

“Could he play raz-ma-taz jazz?” Joshua played the “drums” on his knee.

“If he heard it, I’m sure he could!” Samuel replied.

“Well, that goes to prove,” Grandpa declared, “that there’s a purpose for every person as they are made in the image of God. So, getting back to the face of a man. We humans have intelligence and reasoning. We engage in abstract thought.”

“Abstract thought? What do you mean, Grandpa?” Patty asked politely.

“We think about love and beauty and such things.”

“Oh. I love to think about these things ... ‘Love is patient, love is kind.’” Patty was quoting Scripture. “‘It is not jealous; love does not brag, it is not ... it is not ’” She had forgotten the word.

“It is not arrogant.” Jeanette continued the verse. “In other words, love is not being puffed up about yourself!”

“I like the part that says ‘Love never fails’.” Lynette joined in. “Love goes on and on. Love will last forever! Love is everlasting, so love never fails!”

“And God is love!” Jeanette added joyfully.

“Yes, God is love!” the teacher concurred. “Then we should display self-sacrificing love as well. So, what are some more unique traits of humans?” Grandpa was trying to keep the kids on the subject at hand.

The young minds thought, then one by one they answered the question.

“We are very creative!”

“We have languages.”

“And we can learn and get an education.”

“Music! People love music! And they create the lyrics and the melody.”

“We can choose to do what’s right.”

“We can believe in God.”

“And we have free will.”

“Great!” the teacher stated. “And that’s important! God didn’t desire a bunch of droids to do automatically what He commands. He wanted us to have free will - to love Him freely. If we love God, we should choose to obey Him since Our heavenly Father knows what is best for us! But if we sin by not obeying Him, we can repent. Is this an act of free will?”

The youths replied in the affirmative.

Grandpa continued. “He calls us to believe. Is this an act of free will?”

“Yes!”

“And He calls us to follow after Christ,” the teacher said. “Some don’t. Some will. The choice is yours! But the rewards in heaven are eternal! Remember, dear children, that you have ‘Only one life, ’twill soon be past, Only what’s done for Christ will last.’ That’s a poem by a missionary, a Mister Studd. He was a famous cricket player but he left that prosperous life. He felt a call of God. So he went to the Far East and then Africa to serve the LORD as a missionary.”

“Do you *have* to be a missionary?” asked Patty. “To serve God?”

“No. You have free will, *remember!*” Grandpa chuckled. “Anyway, you could be a missionary in your own home town! Just tell people about the gift of grace through Christ.”

Patty was relieved. “Good! I don’t like snakes!”

“What?” said some youths in chorus.

“Snakes!” Patty expressed. “There are snakes in Africa!”

“Well, there are snakes here, too!” commented James. “I killed one just the other day! It was only a garter snake. But there are poisonous ones here, also.”

“Yuck!” the girls cried. They gingerly checked around to see if there were any near them.

Jeanette then told this story. “I heard about this missionary that went to Africa. He was going to kneel by his bed to say his prayers, but he was so very exhausted. He just wanted to go to sleep. However, he decided to kneel there at the side of his bed to pray. And he was so glad he did!”

“So what happened, Jeanie?” asked Anna.

“Well, a nasty ol’ snake slithered out from under his pillow!”

“Yuck!” sounded the children.

“That’s an interesting story, Jeanie,” her grandfather remarked. “Where did you hear it?”

“I think from Granny!”

“Hmmm. Never heard that one!” The grandfather smiled as he thought about Granny, the love of his life. “Now, there’s one more thing about human traits. People have a desire for meaning, a purpose in life. What is your purpose in life? Have you ever thought about that? No answers now, but I just want you to think about it. So, now we are on the last living creature: the eagle. Now what does the flying eagle denote?”

“Well, an eagle flies high,” Rosa replied.

“Higher than most birds. Up to 20,000 feet.” James also liked to read. “And eagles can soar up into the stratosphere, even flying above storms. They ride on the air currents.”

John butted in. “... on thermal updrafts.”

“Hold on! No meteorology for now!” Grandpa knew that John would like to explain about updrafts but the hour was late. “I forgot to mention that all these living beings had wings! Six to be exact! They could fly! But the eagle maybe flies higher! Now, it was thought by ancient civilizations, that eagles could look directly into the sun without being blinded. So the eagle symbolized spiritual sight, looking at God! In this Gospel of John, we can spiritually look at God, too. So, this gospel launches us higher, into the heavenly stratosphere ... as we ride the wind of the Spirit.”

“Isn’t that a song?” Lynette began to sing hesitantly, recalling the words. ““Ride the wind of the Spirit!”” Then she sang boldly. ““Just wing it! Wing it! Ride the wind of the Spirit!””

Some youths who were familiar with the chorus, began to sing. And just at that point, Granny approached. “You’re singing my song! You know I wrote that when I was arranging a camp many years ago. I had never planned a camp before and I didn’t know what to do about some details. The LORD told me to ‘Wing it!’ So I did! Now, ‘winging it’ is like spreading ones wings and trusting you’ll stay in flight even without an obvious plan. But God knows the plan! You have to trust in the Holy Spirit!”

“Just like the eagle does! Eagles ride on air currents, Granny!” James repeated his knowledge. “And an eagle can get up to 20,000 feet just on these air currents!”

“Really?” The grandmother was surprised. She made her way to a log but then James offered her his seat in a camping chair.

“Thank you, James!” Granny resumed her train of thought. “So at this camp, everything worked out. I trusted God for the details and we had a most wonderful time!”

“So you’ve had some experience before this camp?” asked Rosa.

“Yes, oh yes.” Granny was remembering that first camp. “That’s a story for another time! But we need to get back to what Grandpa is teaching because it’s almost time to get ready for bed.”

“All right!” Grandpa was happy to oblige. “In the case of an eagle, ‘wing it’ means they ride the unseen air currents and just go where the wind carries it. In the same sense, John’s Gospel rides the ‘wind’ in a true Spirit-led manner. I love the Gospel of John. It truly shows that Yeshua is the “I AM”, part of the name revealed to Moses at the burning

bush! Yeshua proclaimed, ‘Truly, truly I say to you, before Abraham was born, I AM.’ That’s from John, John chapter 8. This is a favorite verse of my children.”

“That’s my dad!” said Joshua.

“And my dad, too!” Peter and his sister Patty had been adopted by the eldest son.

“And our mother as well,” Gracie asserted as she winked at her brothers, John and Donny.

Grandfather was pleased that all his children were loyal Christians. He resumed the lesson. “The Gospel of John proves that Yeshua is God, ‘God with us’ as His title ‘Emmanuel’ indicates! When Yeshua proclaimed that He was the ‘I AM’, some Jews took up stones to throw at Him for supposedly blaspheming God. They were familiar with the term ‘I AM’! Yeshua was claiming to be God - which He is! So, now do you see why the Gospel of John, sends one into high altitudes - symbolically? This gospel soars up into the spiritual stratosphere!”

Jeanie was pensive. “That makes me want to read the Book of John again!”

“So, we’ll bring a close to this lesson.” Grandpa, after a long day, was getting pretty tired. “Let me recap. The four living creatures could represent the four gospels character traits of Yeshua. The Gospel of Matthew brings out the lion conveying that Yeshua is King. We are also called to be kings. The Gospel of Mark features the young bull showing that Yeshua is a servant and the sacrifice for our sins. We, too, should be servants of God. The Gospel of Luke demonstrates the human side of Yeshua as the Son of Man, one of His very favorite titles. We obviously are human and have free will and good brains that

enable us to think and reason. And the Gospel of John reveals that Yeshua is God and highlights the eagle taking you higher and higher, spiritually. They all represent the holy faces of the four living creatures.”

“Wow! All that in one book! Revelation is really fascinating!” spoke Lynette.

The teacher was delighted. “Well, I’m glad you found that fascinating, Lynn! Now I want to conclude, by re-emphasizing that the four living beings could also be seen as a collective whole. That is to say that they represent all the saints! The traits of our Messiah will become our traits, too. If we follow Him, we will become more like Him.

Also, collectively, someone is constantly praising God around the earth! These four living creatures do not rest day or night, saying ‘Holy, holy, holy!’ The saints as a whole are consistently worshipping God! Also, in heaven where our spirits are! Do you know that it says in Scripture that Christians are seated in the heavenly places? We, in our spirits, *are already there in heaven!* It must be that silver cord that we were talking about earlier! We are already in the throne room! We are physically on earth, but our spirits are in heaven. Just think about that!

“We are two places at once?” Peter was a little confused.

“Yep. On earth. And your spirit is in heaven,” Grandpa replied.

“But how can that be?” Anna was also puzzled.

Grandpa replied with Scripture "... 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.' He has a lot in store for y'all!

"Like flying?" asked John as he made his arms like wings and began to flop around.

"Like angels!" Grandpa looked at his watch. "But it's late! Well, I've left you with some things to ponder. We're getting into some pretty deep subjects! And don't worry if you don't figure this out - it'll take some time, maybe years, and y'all are so young. Just know that the Word of God is true."

"Let's fly back to the house," John proposed.

So all the children made believe they were flying. Some jumped over the big rocks in their effort to gain some height. Grandpa smiled. Granny chuckled. "Someday ... they all will be soaring to new heights!"

Ephesians 2:6 AMP

And He raised us up together with Him [when we believed], and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, [because we are] in Christ Jesus,

1 Corinthians 2:9

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN - THE SEA OF GLASS

Today in Texas ...

Third night - Second Vision

“Well, I wonder where all that rain came from!” sighed Lynette as she stood at the window looking out at the storm.

The scholarly Samuel answer her. “The sun heats the bodies of water and then the water to turns into vapor ...”

“I didn’t want a science lesson!” Lynette was annoyed. “It was just an expression!”

“... and then it rises into the atmosphere.” The boy spoke this gingerly, trailing it off at the end.

Just then the grandmother entered the room. “We’re going to meet in here tonight. Can you get the chairs arranged, please? I’m going to get you some cookies from the kitchen. And please make sure Grandpa is standing by the fireplace so everyone can see him.”

When all the youths gathered, the study began.

“Now, isn’t this cozy?” Grandpa asked. “It’s a good time to be inside. So ... can you tell me what was in this throne room in heaven?”

“A rainbow!” Patty exclaimed.

“A green rainbow - maybe!” Lynette put forth.

“And there were four living critters,” said Peter.

“Creatures!” corrected Jeanette. “Four living creatures or beings.”

“And one of them had a head of a lion.” John roared.

“The others had a head of a bull, a man’s head, and then an eagle,” Samuel answered.

“Anything else?” Grandpa asked.

Rosa thought. “I remember! There were twenty-four ... I think they were called ‘elders’?”

“Got it!” The teacher was impressed with these youths. “Do you remember anything else?”

“I remember!” Joshua blurted out. “There were twenty-four thrones!”

“Yep,” Grandpa replied. “The elders were sitting on twenty-four thrones. And there were other things in the throne room as well. Firstly, there was a glass sea, which we haven’t discussed yet. This is a sea of glass as clear as crystal. Now in the Bible, there is much symbolism. Why do you think there is a sea of glass, clear as crystal?”

“You can look through glass,” Donny remarked as he peered through the window.

“Yes. So glass is transparent,” the teacher agreed. “And it allows light to pass through. As saints of God, we should allow the True Light of Christ to pass through us so that we can show the works of God. Transparency symbolizes that nothing is hidden. Everything is revealed in the Light of God. But what else does this symbolize? Oftentimes the sea represents disorder, confusion, and chaos. That seems to be the world in which we live. But in God’s presence, there is a calming atmosphere. There is peace, the shalom of God.”

“What’s ‘shalom’?” asked Peter.

“That there is a very good question!” replied the grandfather. “Simply put it means ‘peace’. However, when one greets someone in Israel or a synagogue, one says ‘Shalom!’ But ‘shalom’ is much more than just a greeting! And it’s much more than just ‘peace’. Shalom embraces peace of mind and peace with your neighbors. Shalom is your complete wholeness in body, soul and spirit. Shalom would include ones welfare, ones safety, ones harmony and even ones physical health. Shalom is what we all will have in heaven! The shalom of God! But, to a degree, we can have it now!”

“Shalom! Shalom!” Granny overheard. She entered the room with a tray full of sweets. “Anybody for cookies? I made them myself!”

“Oh, these look scrumptious!” said Gracie.

James took a bite. “They taste great, too!”

Grandpa, after downing two cookies and a half a glass of lemonade, continued. “We were talking about ‘shalom’”. The Messiah is called the ‘Prince of Peace’ and in Hebrew

that would be ‘Sar Shalom’. Didn’t know y’all would be learning Hebrew at this camp! Can you all repeat it for me? If you’re not chewing on a cookie!”

Everyone echoed it back. “Sar Shalom!”

“Now y’all are getting ready for the Millennium!” the teacher resumed. “Maybe Hebrew will be spoken there! That’s the language of King David and, of course, Yeshua. He also spoke Aramaic, and maybe some Greek, and maybe a smattering of Latin and an old form of Egyptian, as He once lived there as a toddler. But He knew the Scriptures in Hebrew. The Millennium, which comes later in this book, is something to which we look forward!

So, now, we’re talking about the sea of glass. This sea is very different from the seas found on earth. What are most seas like here?”

“They can be very dangerous,” replied Rosa. “I once got into a rip-tide and couldn’t get back to shore. A lifeguard came to help me. I was so very exhausted!”

“Oh, my!” Gracie sighed. “Wasn’t that scary, Rosa?”

“Quite! But I still like to swim in the ocean! That didn’t stop me!”

“Yep. The waves can be menacing!” Grandpa concurred.

“They roar! RRRRRRoar!” John was being silly again but it made the children laugh!

“Yes they do! The roaring of the waves!” Grandpa roared also. “RRRRRoar! So, many seas on earth would represent chaos and peril. There is an old Christian song ‘for those in peril on the sea.’”

“I know that song!” Granny began to sing. “‘Eternal Father strong to save, da-da-da the restless wave, da-da-da-da, da-da-da-da, O hear us when we cry to Thee, For those in peril on the sea.’ Please forgive me ... I forgot some of the words! Now that song was not just sung when people crossed the oceans by boats ...”

“Ships, my darling!” Grandpa was always correcting her when she said boats instead of ships!

“Yes, ships,” the grandmother continued. “But that song could be sung anytime ... because in this world, we are in peril from the tumultuous waves of life. We go through stormy seas, so-to-speak. When I was very ill, that was a stormy time for me, but the LORD heard my cry! Praise God! And when the angels said ‘peace on earth’ at the birth of Christ, they weren’t talking about no more wars! They were speaking about peace with God! We can have peace with God, because Yeshua made a way to attain that peace through faith in the Him. So Christians have a peace with God! We will have total peace when we reach our destiny of heaven. And that’s why there’s a calm sea of glass! We *are* that sea of glass before the throne! We will be in the total shalom of God! Glory be! Glory be to God above!”

Silence prevailed. The Holy Spirit moved upon them in a moment of quiet.

Jeanette broke the silence. “Granny, I didn’t know you could preach!”

“Well,” Granny replied gently, “there’s a lot of things, you don’t know about my life. But when the Holy Spirit prompts me, I can preach. By the way, I have a photo of a glassy sea! Grandpa and I were on vacation in Florida. I think the gulf was blocked by islands so the waters were very calm. It’s hard to discern where the water ends and the sky begins! I’ll show it to you later. It’s the glassiest sea I’ve ever seen here on earth!”

Isaiah 57:20

But the wicked are like the tossing sea; for it cannot be quiet, and its waters toss up mire and dirt.



CHAPTER NINETEEN - LIGHTNING & THUNDER

Today in Texas ...

Third night - Second Vision

Right after Granny spoke, there was a sudden burst of lightning. It shone into the room through the paned glass windows.

“Right, LORD! I forgot to mention the lightning and thunders!” Grandpa talked quietly to his heavenly Father, and then he turned to the youths to speak. “Everyone! Let’s gather around the windows to see this absolutely amazing lightning!”

‘Wows’ and ‘ohs’ came from the audience for this spectacular sky show. At one of the most illuminating streaks, a ‘super wow!’ came from Donny.

In between the flashes, Grandpa would speak. “Lightning and thunder are around the throne of God.” Another sudden bolt flickered through the sky. “Lightning is pure light. And we know that Scripture reads that ‘God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.’”

“Did you know,” asked James, “that lightning is hotter than the sun? Much, much hotter!”

John supplied the detail. “It’s about five times, FIVE TIMES hotter than the surface of the sun!”

“Wow!” came the responses.

“Could you tell us more about lightning, John?” Grandpa knew that he had been reading about it in science books.

John was only too happy. “I’ll try. But scientists don’t even know some stuff about lightning! Now, to begin there’s a wind blowing, up and down and every which way. Without those updrafts and downdrafts, there wouldn’t be any lightning! I happened to mention an updraft when we were talking about eagles last night. Remember?”

“Yeah, I do!” replied Joshua. “The eagle rides the updraft, an air current.”

“Basically, lightning is also a current - a current of static - that means ‘not moving’ - static electricity.” John, being the ham that he is, wanted to add some drama to this.

“And no thunderstorm is born without the clash of these updrafts and downdrafts — that wrestle warm and cold air together until the skies literally tremble with energy.”

As he said these words, he shook his hands for added emphasis. His audience appreciated his efforts, so he proceeded with his performance.

“Within the midst of a cloud, invisible electrical charges build and build, straining, just straining, for release. Then, in a blinding instant, much faster than a speeding bullet, lightning tears through the sky!” On this last phrase, he raised his right arm and placed it towards his left shoulder, then flung the arm quickly out.

“Lightning! This is a blazing river of heavenly fire, a massive discharge of electrical energy coursing through the charged air with the strength of a thousand power plants, the voice of static power ... unleashed. The bolt sears the air, superheating it beyond

imagination, and the sky itself answers with the thunderous cry of BOOM!” The young thespian bowed amongst the cheers.

“Bravo, John! Bravo!” Granny shouted. “You do have a flair for the dramatic!”

“Thank you, Granny!”

“So then the lightning comes and then the thunder afterwards, right?” questioned Donny.

“That may seem to be, BUT,” John answered, “they are actually one and the same event. The thunder is the sound produced by the discharge of electrical energy during a lightning strike.”

“Then why do we hear thunder afterwards?” asked Peter.

“Because light travels much faster than the sound! So lightning and thunder happen at the very same time. But the light reaches your eyes in a jiffy, while the thunder takes its time to get to your ears.”

Grandpa interrupted. “That’s how I knew this storm was two miles away. If you count the seconds between the bolt and the thunder, then divide by five, you’ll know approximately how far away the lightning is from us. So if thunder comes in five seconds after the flash, the strike was roughly one miles away. Ten seconds is two miles. Yet, if you can hear thunder, the storm is close enough to get inside. Don’t stand under a tree. And if you’re swimming, jump out of the water! Just a few safety precautions.”

John was still eager to continue with his little show. “Hey, do you want to hear about the mysterious ball lightning, too? I can tell you about that!”

“What’s ball lightning?” asked Rosa.

“No, no,” replied Grandpa. “Too complicated. And scientists don’t know enough about it.”

John looked a little sad. “That would have been fun! I’ll explain it to you later, Rosa, and anyone else who wants to hear.”

“But you did a great job, John. You really did!” Grandpa resumed his lecture. “Now, a question. Lightning is around the throne of God. So what does lightning symbolize?”

The youths thought a bit.

“You did say that lightning is pure light!” answered Rosa. “And God is light. And God is pure.”

“And the light reveals things ... that cannot be seen in the dark,” Gracie added. “So maybe it symbolizes bringing something to light?!”

“Precisely!” the teacher declared. “A revelation! The light or lightning pierces the darkness. Therefore, in Scripture, lightning often represents revelation from heaven, or an illumination of knowledge. There are always new traits of God that we haven’t seen before and that’s why the angels, the four living creatures, and saints cry ‘Holy, holy, holy!’ They’re always discovering new attributes of this magnificent God that we serve!

In one of the psalms it says that God's lightning lights up the world ... and the earth sees and trembles. John, you can tremble now."

Like before, John humorously trembles. The youths joined him in the comical trembling.

Granny began to sing the chorus from of an old African hymn: "'Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble!'"

When she sang this, other youths acted out the trembling.

"Y'all were having too much fun!" Grandpa asserted at the end of their spiel. "But when this psalm speaks of trembling, it is not so funny! It would be very serious! The earth is trembling for fear, the fear of the LORD. 'It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.' That's from the Book of Hebrews. YHWH is God Almighty and we should have an awesome wonder of Him! So, what's next? Ah, thunder. What would thunder represent?"

Immediately Samuel replied, "The voice of God! I remember this incident from the Bible. God spoke over Jesus and some people thought it had thundered!"

"Right on!" Grandpa gave him a pat on the back.

"So sometimes God's voice can sound like thunder?" asked Rosa.

"Yep. To human ears," replied the teacher.

“I wonder if He’s saying anything now with all this thunder!” Peter pondered.

“Probably not. This was a very special event in the Bible.” Grandpa wanted to conclude this topic. “So, in nature, lightning and thunder occur at the same time. In the same way, the spiritual lightening of divine revelation flashes across our hearts along with His thunderous voice.

However, there seems to be a slight delay in our hearing or acting on His Word, just as the thunder in nature is perceived afterwards! We look for confirmation of His Word. One wants to know if one heard correctly. The best confirmation comes through Scripture but it can come in other ways such as through another Christian. When one is sure, one should respond in obedience. The word ‘hear’ or ‘shema’ in the Hebrew means to hear or listen *and* act upon it! If one hears the Word then one should obey the Word!”

“Then one could say, ‘to hear is to obey’!” Lynette remarked.

“But just how do you know for sure?” questioned Gracie. “I mean, what if you didn’t hear correctly?”

“Good question! Peace is a key,” Grandpa answered. “If one has peace about a given situation in the spirit, that would be ‘hearing’ from God. On the other hand, when one does not ‘feel right’ about it in the spirit, it’s an indication that it would be a wrong choice. We should follow the peace of God!

So now, to put this in a nutshell, lightning reveals, and thunder declares the truth! Yeshua, in the Book of Matthew, proclaims that ‘As the lightning comes from the east, so will the coming of the Son of Man be.’ It’s going to be a big, big event! A most dramatic and magnificent moment! Meditate about this tonight.”

Suddenly, lightning brilliantly lit up the room. The thunderous boom was heard soon afterward.

Matthew 24:27



CHAPTER TWENTY - A NIGHT OF PRAISE

Today in Texas ...

Third night - Second Vision

The lightning and thunder had subsided a bit after that last big sky event. The rain had softened to a light pitter-patter.

“Well, that worked out well for us!” the grandfather mentioned. “Now, we can hear some music! We’re going to sing! And we can now hear the piano, which would have been hard to hear with all that thunder! So, now, are we the redeemed?”

“Certainly!” Gracie responded and others agreed.

“Well, we’re going to sing this new song!” Grandpa said. “It’s similar to the new song that is recorded in the Book of Revelation. And only the redeemed can sing this song! The redeemed come from every tribe, every tongue, every peoples group and every nation.”

“That’s an awful lot of people!” stated James. “Probably millions, maybe billions!”

Grandpa continued. “But before we start singing, *when* do they sing this new song?”

No one knew the answer. But John took a guess. “It must be after they are redeemed, so it would be *after* we are all in heaven.”

Samuel offered his opinion. “Well, since the 24 elders and the four living beings represent all of us, the redeemed, that does make sense. So I would say, *after* also.

Jeanette was reading in her Bible. “But before the Millennial reign of Christ on earth because it says ‘we *shall* reign on the earth’. That’s in the future.”

“Our days go by one at a time, but with God, it’s different,” Grandpa explained. “God lives outside of time! It says in the Scriptures that one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years is like one day. Can you even imagine that? A thousand years to God is like they are all rolled up into just one day? God is the I AM who was, and is, and is to come! Truly, who can understand God?”

“Now, let’s all stand to worship the LORD!” Granny proposed singing the old standby hymn, ‘Holy! Holy! Holy!’ to begin. “The four living creatures sing ‘Holy!’ around the throne.”

Their voices lifted to the heavens. And YaHWeH was pleased.

When this song came to an end, Grandpa told them the next part of this vision. “Anna, you’ve been waiting for an angel to appear! And now it does!” He gave the little girl a wink.

“Was it beautiful?” she asked.

“Well, it probably was because God enjoys beauty. But it was a mighty angel who posed this question: ‘Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?’ But there was no one! St. John was weeping because there was no one to loose the seals. Scrolls are secured with seals, so one must loose the seals to get at the content. However, St. John is

told not to cry! Someone *is* worthy! Only one! The Lion of the tribe of Judah! The Lion will loose the seals!”

John began a roar and then the other boys started howling, also.

“That’s Yeshua the King of Kings!” announced Lynette. “Remember the lion symbolizes royalty!”

“Right on!” the teacher exclaimed. “St. John is told to behold but then, the Lion changes into a Lamb! There stood a Lamb in the midst of the throne room. The Lamb is figurative of Yeshua. What does the Lamb stand for?”

“A sacrifice ... for our sins!” answered Gracie.

“Yep!” The teacher concurred enthusiastically. “The Lamb of God, slain from the foundations of the world.”

Rosa was following along in her Bible. “He was in the throne room, ‘as though it had been slain’? What would a slain Lamb be doing in the throne room?”

“Good question!” Grandpa thought a bit. “Many of these things are symbolic. It’s important to know the reason Christ is worthy! He was slain for us!”

“For sinners crucified, O holy sacrifice ...” Granny sang softly. Then she said, “Christ still has the scars of the wounds He bore on our behalf. They remained in His resurrected body as a reminder to us.”

John 20:27

“It also says here,” Rosa continued, “that the Lamb had ‘seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth.’ I get the seven eyes, because seven means complete or perfect, but what are the horns for?”

“Horns represent power,” replied Grandpa. “Also authority. The Lamb has full power and authority. He has power and authority over the earth. Actually, He has authority over the universe!” The grandfather turned to his wife. “Granny, will you start us in a song?”

Granny was already seated at the piano. “Please pass these song sheets along to everyone. These happen to be older songs but we need to keep their message alive! Also, they are about redemption. The saints in the throne room sing songs with the same theme. They are very grateful for redemption. Aren’t you?”

“Amen!” came from the youths. So the redeemed of the LORD sang an old Fanny Crosby song appropriate for the occasion.

“Redeemed! Redeemed! Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb; Redeemed! Redeemed! His child, and forever I am.”*

And then the chorus sang a song about every tribe:

“Let ev’ry kindred, ev’ry tribe, on this terrestr’al ball, to Him all majesty ascribe, and crown Him Lord of all!”**

The voices of the worshippers sang the songs of the redeemed and praised the Most Holy One. Then in closing, the choir of campers chanted:

“Blessed LORD of all we come, bowing down before Thee
 Blessed LORD of all we come, bowing on bended knee
 Waving palms of praise before Thee
 In quiet reverence, we adore Thee ...” ***

A moment of silence followed naturally ... or supernaturally!

After they were done lifting praises to God, Grandpa reminded them of these facts:

“Now both the four living creatures AND the 24 elders sing a new song. They sing that the Lamb has ‘redeemed us’. So these elders and living beings are the redeemed of the earth! They sing about being made kings and priests! Who could this be but the redeemed of the earth! But now, when they sing the last two songs in Revelation, the angels join in! But there is no reference being made to being redeemed! Please read verses 5:11 and 12, Rosa.

Rosa stands to read:

““Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice: ‘Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, To receive power and riches and wisdom, And strength and honor and glory and blessing!’”

“Doesn’t that make you happy, Anna?” asked Grandpa. “Lots and lots of angels!” She put on a big smile. He continued. “Millions, maybe billions of them! And notice that it says ‘saying’ as opposed to ‘singing’. There is a debate whether angels can sing! Some

say ‘yes’ and some say ‘no’. But that’s a whole other topic! So, next on the agenda. Please, Rosa, go on and read the next verse.”

She stood to read again.

““And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying:

‘Blessing and honor and glory and power

Be to Him who sits on the throne,

And to the Lamb, forever and ever!’”

Grandpa thanked Rosa for reading with such enthusiasm. “Yes! This is true cosmic worship! Every creature! No one is excluded! Every creature in heaven - the angels! And on the earth - people and critters. Under the earth – this would include those who died without Christ and even the demons. They must also acknowledge Christ’s supremacy! God does invite the whole world to turn to Him to be saved. But some ignore it. Pity!

Even the critters of the sea give honor to YaHWeH! ‘Let everything that has breath, praise the LORD!’ The entire universe is united in worship to God Almighty! So I’m glad you were part of this worship tonight! You were singing, maybe with the angels, though you may not have heard them! They live in a different dimension.”

“Dimension?” questioned Donny.

“Too big a topic for tonight!” replied the teacher. “It’s late!”

But Patty remarked “I *did* hear the angels singing! Maybe it came over from that other dimension!”

Psalm 96

1 Oh, sing to the Lord a new song!

Sing to the Lord, all the earth.

2 Sing to the Lord, bless His name;

Proclaim the good news of His salvation from day to day.

3 Declare His glory among the nations,

His wonders among all peoples.

13 ... For He is coming, for He is coming to judge the earth.

He shall judge the world with righteousness,

And the peoples with His truth.

Notes on Songs:

*“*Redeemed, How I Love to Proclaim It!*” Lyrics: Fanny Jane Crosby (1882)

**“*All Hail the Power of Jesus’ Name*” - Lyrics: Edward Perronet (1779)

***“*Blessed LORD of All*” Lyrics: Carolyn Anne Venable (2012)

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE - THE FOUR HORSEMEN

Today in Texas ...

Fourth Day - Second Vision

As she came down to breakfast, Anna, holding her stuffed rabbit, couldn't wait to tell everyone the news! "Guess what I saw? This morning, I woke up and lifted the window shade and guess what I saw?"

"Maybe your silly rabbit!" jested Joshua.

"Not this rabbit!" as she hugged the toy gently. "But it was a rabbit! A real, live rabbit! It was eating grass. And this rabbit was huge! I've never seen such a big rabbit!"

"Well, you probably saw a jackrabbit," commented James. "They live here. I've seen them on rare occasions."

"You have?" Anna sounded a little disappointed. "And you didn't tell me? You know I love rabbits! Shame on you, brother!" she said jokingly.

"Jackrabbits are technically hares," Samuel claimed. "Did he have extra long ears?"

"Yep!" Anna confirmed. "They were super, super big!"

"Yep. That's a jackrabbit!" Samuel concluded.

At that Granny walked in with a stack of pancakes. "Here you go, everyone!"

They all relished the meal that had been set before them. Then Grandpa got up and made an announcement:

“Today is going to be a little different. We’re going to have our study this morning. Then tonight we have a surprise for you.”

“What’s the surprise?” asked Lynette.

“Well, if I told you that, it wouldn’t be a surprise, now would it?” quipped Grandpa. “So, let’s get our Bibles and go outside before it gets too hot. In the morning, with the breeze, the weather is pleasant!”

When they had gathered at the fire pit, the teacher resumed his study. “Remember, in this second vision, St. John was told he would see things in the future, that is ‘which must take place after this.’ So the apostle saw these Seven Seals on a scroll. There’s different interpretations for these Seven Seals, so maybe they are partially right in some aspect. Scholars disagree on Biblical matters yet they use the Word of God. I’ve been wrong on a number of issues, but when the LORD corrected me, I changed my mind. This is what I consider likely: the Seven Seals as an overview of history through the Church Age.”

“Church Age?” asked Donny.

“Yes,” replied Grandpa. “From the beginning of the church at Pentecost, from two thousand years ago, we are living in the Church Age. And it goes on till the LORD returns.”

“That’s a long time to wait for the LORD to return,” commented Rosa.

“But we have His Word and we hold to that promise!” Grandpa responded. “And some prophecies that were about His soon return have already happened. But let’s get on to the First Seal. When the Lamb opened this First Seal, a white horse was revealed. The rider on this white horse had a bow and he went out to conquer.

As I look back at history - and it’s important to know history! Many people don’t know history! This is a paraphrase of a famous quote - ‘Those who don’t know history are doomed to repeat it.’ Know your history - and, if possible, get it from original sources! Read the Constitution. The Bible is full of history and events and it’s been verified through archeology. But I digress.

Now, to this First Seal! This horseman rode on a white horse. It says in the Scriptures, he went out to conquer. Islam, beginning in the 6th century, has conquered much of the world today. Islam poses as a false religious system but the head-honchos - that is the leaders - the leaders really want world domination. They want to control the world! So when the Muslims couldn’t get their false religion through persuasion, they took it by force, killing people that opposed them.”

“That’s not nice!” cried Patty. “A religion killing?”

“Well, ‘religion’ has killed many people through the centuries,” Grandpa said sadly.

“I heard some news reports that some Muslim terrorists are trying to take over Africa even right now!” James was always thoughtful of other people. “We should pray for those Christians who are under attack.”

“But I heard this was a religion of peace,” said Peter.

“Well, it’s a flat-out lie,” Grandpa interjected. “Islam has been going forth to conquer almost from the start. They conquered the Holy Land. Jerusalem came under Muslim rule for centuries.”

“Jerusalem?” Rosa was shocked. “Jerusalem is the city of God! I want to go there someday. But if it’s under Muslim rule, maybe I shouldn’t.”

“You didn’t let me finish my statement,” Grandpa chided gently. “Jerusalem came under Muslim rule until 1917. Eventually, Israel became a state in 1948. Israel is the land that God promised to Abraham and the tribes of Israel. It is God’s will. This is one of many prophecies have come true about the Jewish people returning to Israel before the LORD’s return, after many had been scattered abroad for centuries. Yet still some Jews were in the land of Israel all along.

Anyway, getting back to this First Seal. The Book of Revelation prophesies that Christ, as the Lion of Judah, will return. And guess what He will be riding on? On a white horse! So to imitate Christ, Mohammed, the founder of Islam, had a white horse. Mohammed is a counterfeit! So, needless to say, Islam continues to be a problem in the earth today - a very real problem so that Christians and Jews are dying for their faith in YaHWeH.

Now, Seal One is about a horsemen. Seals two, three and four, are also about horsemen. Collectively, they are called the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse. Apocalypse is another term for Revelation. These Four Horsemen are mentioned by the Prophet Ezekiel as God’s ‘four severe judgments’ which are sword, famine, wild beasts, and pestilence. The whole earth is under judgment from the LORD, but God hopes to get us back to Him!

Ezekiel 14:21

Now the Second Seal talks about a rider on a red horse. Red is a color chosen by communism. Communism, as a political movement, started in 19th century. Marx and Engels published The Communist Manifesto in 1848. After the Russian Revolution in 1917, when Vladimir Lenin and the Bolsheviks overthrew the Tsar, the world's first communist state was created: the Soviet Union. Have you learned about the Soviet Union in history?"

A few nodded their heads.

"Good, I'm glad they're teaching you some history," the teacher stated. "So the Soviet Union became the first communist state. Their flag was red. Then there's China. We call it Red China because China is now under communism. And communism scorns and persecutes true Christians!"

"Why?" asked Patty incredulously.

"Because Christians believe in the One True God ... and they believe in liberty! Now, this horsemen had a great sword, which could stand for any kind of weapon. Back then, when St. John wrote this, they didn't have guns nor other horrendous weapons, so he used the sword. Some murderers are still using the sword. So, this horseman on a red mount took peace from the earth. No one knows for sure, but estimates report communism killed maybe 100 million people in less than a century!"

"My goodness!" cried Jeanette. "That's so, so evil!"

"Evil, indeed!" her twin concurred.

“And that doesn’t include the Holocaust under the Nazis, a different political structure,” Grandpa continued. “Hitler was responsible for six million Jewish people being murdered. And much more than six million were murdered during that time which included Christians, influential people and others.

Now, for the Third Seal. The third horseman rode a black horse with a pair of scales in his hand. He had scales because that is how people measured weight in the past. This man represented that there would be such scarcity on the earth. It would cost a days wages for wheat. In the 20th century, there were plenty of famines. People starved to death!

From 1932–1933, in just the Ukraine, deaths directly from famine were estimated to be more than 3 million and that’s a low estimate. The Kazakh Famine, 1930–1933, saw estimated deaths running in the neighborhood of 2 million people. This is what communism reaps - not a harvest, but famine! Remember that!

The Bangladesh famine, in the 1970’s, had one and a half million people starved to death! Islam happens to be the main religion in Bangladesh. The flooding of rice fields initially contributed to this disaster but food was there but poor workers couldn’t afford it! The filthy rich in any country always eat. But the poor people, that was a different story. This Third Seal predicted that it would cost a days wages for wheat. That’s a lot of money for low-paid workers. In this case, rice which was a staple for that part of the world. However, while the people starved, food was available at high prices. Only the poor were unable to buy it. As Christians, we need to help people in times of disaster. We need to share our food and many Christians did this at this time.

But an interesting note - this Scripture records that a voice was heard saying ‘Do not harm the oil and the wine’. The rich are seldom hurt by a famine. They eat the ‘oil and wine’, luxuries for the rich. However, I think this also has another reason scripturally. Symbolically, the ‘oil and wine’ refer to the saints! Oil represents the Holy Spirit and His overflowing blessings and provision for His saints. In a Psalm, Psalm 37, it says: ‘I have been young, and now am old, Yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his descendants begging bread.’ As Christians, if you’re walking with the LORD, you shouldn’t have to beg for bread.”

“That’s great! I *love* bread!” John was being silly again. “Momma, momma, please! Could I have that last piece of bread, please! Pretty please! And with butter on top!”

The children laughed. It was a good break in the middle of this heavy discussion. Grandpa welcomed it.

“No bread. How about an apple?” Granny offered as she walked to the fire pit.
“Anyone?”

Most of the children happily welcomed the delicious fruit.

Then Granny brought up an interesting opinion. “Do you remember the stories of how Yeshua miraculously fed the hungry with loaves and fishes? The Christian Church has been doing this in the natural - feeding the poor. However, I believe, that in the tail end of these last days, the church with the gracious help of the LORD will be doing it supernaturally, just as our Messiah did in his three and a half years of His ministry. There will not be enough to go around in the natural, but the LORD will miraculously multiply! That’s how He will provide for His church in trying times. And you may be a part of it!”

“Huh?” James stopped eating his apple long enough to get out these words: “We’ll multiply food?”

“Actually, the LORD multiplies!” Granny made this point clear. “We just pass it out!”

The youths were absolutely amazed at this possibility.

“Can it be?”

Ezekiel 14:21 ESV

“For thus says the Lord GOD: How much more when I send upon Jerusalem my four disastrous acts of judgment, sword, famine, wild beasts, and pestilence, to cut off from it man and beast!

1 Corinthians 13:12

For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO - DEATH & HADES

Today in Texas ...

Fourth Day - Second Vision

“Now we’re going on to the Fourth Seal,” Grandpa resumed his lecture. “This is not all fun and games, but it is necessary to understand the Book of Revelation. Here we see a fourth horseman on a pale green horse. The rider’s name was Death! Hades, a symbol of the grave, followed along with him. When the horseman kills, Hades is there following right along to take them to the holding cell, the grave.”

“I don’t like talking about Death,” Anna cried. “Let’s get back to the angels!”

Granny moved to snuggle the little girl.

“I understand,” Grandpa admitted. “But we live in a world where people die. Since the fall of man, when Adam and Eve disobeyed God, that has been the case. The consequences of disobeying God are very serious. Death entered the world.”

“But all they ate was an apple!” Anna protested.

“And I hope it was as good as this one!” interjected James chomping down his apple.

“Yumm! What kind is this?”

“It’s a Pink Lady,” replied Granny quietly, not wanting to get off the subject.

“No one knows what kind of fruit it was,” countered Jeanette. “It could have been grapes ... or any fruit for that matter. Right, Grandpa?”

“Right! But it was from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And that’s the key! Now, Adam and Eve had disobeyed God by taking fruit from this tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Yet God had provided for them a garden with so much abundance! God had met their every need. But Satan, the deceiver, tricked Eve. And Adam, along side of her, ate the fruit. So goes the fall of man. God had warned them, but they didn’t listen. He told them ‘in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.’ And sadly they did! They died spiritually that very day! Their bodies took a little longer. So now physical death is a part of this life. But God had a plan for redemption, the Messiah, the Tree of Life! When Christians believe in the Savior they are born-again of the Spirit. They may die physically, but their spirits live on eternally. And that’s the very Good News! And one day, we will receive new bodies that are able to live in heaven. And again, I’m off on a tangent! So, now, let’s return to the horseman on the pale green horse, this grim reaper.”



Tree of Life

Donny nudged his sister Gracie. “Grim reaper?”

“That’s a term for this horseman because he brings death to so many people.”

Grandpa resumed. “Now this fourth horseman was given power to kill. This grim reaper doesn’t care how he brings death – through sword, famine, disease or beast. And probably this prophecy doesn’t happen all at once! It’s not likely that one morning we will wake up and two billion people are killed. However, communism is still killing Christians in prisons around the world. Islam is still killing. Wars are still killing. Famine is still killing. And beasts are still killing.”

“Beasts?” Samuel interjected. “What is, according to one newspaper, ‘the deadliest beast in North America’? Anyone?”

“In North America? Maybe bears!” guessed Jason.

“Wrong!”

“Snakes?” winced Patty.

“No!”

“What’s fearsome?” Rosa took a stab. “Wolves?”

“Wrong again! It’s deer!”

“Deer?” cried Lynette. “Those gentle creatures. They wouldn’t hurt a fly!”

“Well,” Samuel went on, “they leap along on the highway and cause so many car crashes. That’s why this article claimed them as the ‘deadliest beast’. Surprised?”

“Yeah,” admitted Donny. “Deer! Who would have guessed?”

“Bees kill a bunch of people, too!” Gracie added. “And wasps and hornets, *if* you are allergic to them!”

Rosa thought of her uncle who recently died from a disease. “Maybe these beasts include some viruses. They’re microscopic beasts but really deadly.”

“So, sadly death comes,” the teacher went on. “That ol’ grim reaper! Death prevails since the fall of man and will prevail until this age ends. But in heaven there is no disease! HalleluYAH!

Now, the first Four Seals have already been released, that is the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse. They all brought death! However, as Christians we have nothing to fear! The words ‘Fear not!’ are sounded throughout the Scriptures. We have eternal life! We should not fear death! For the Scriptures proclaim that Death is swallowed up in victory! This fourth rider is Death. Hades is there following along beside him. But we can say, ‘O Death, where is your sting?’”

“Stinging like bees?” questioned Patty.

Grandpa chuckled. “Well, we’ve talked about bees killing people, so I can see how you arrive at that! However, this sting causes pain - the sting of Death! If we weren’t Christians, this Death could separate us from God, which would cause pain in hell! But

we have the victory because it doesn't separate us from God! We have life in Christ even through physical death! We have spiritual life! So we can say confidently, 'O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?'

Death is a gruesome reality, but the Good News is we who are spiritual don't really die! We are just transformed from one reality to the next reality! This is not our home! We're going to heaven!

And when the Millennial Reign of Christ comes, we will have peace at last on this planet! We will be ruling and reigning with Him, the Prince of Peace! That's the Word of God. So in all this tragic gruesomeness, we have a sure hope - Our Christ! HalleluYAH! Glory be!"

1 Corinthians 15:54-55

Isaiah 9:

6 For unto us a Child is born,

Unto us a Son is given;

And the government will be upon His shoulder.

And His name will be called

Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God,

Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

7 Of the increase of His government and peace

There will be no end ...

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE - THE HOLY MARTYRS

THE DISTANT PAST

In ancient Babylon, more than 2,500 years ago ...

Daniel took out his papyrus scrolls and sat down. He held the reed pen and carefully dipped it in the carbon ink. “This is going to be something to write about! Glory be to God!”

He wrote and wrote the vision he had seen. Finally, he penned:

‘Then the kingdom and dominion,
And the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven,
Shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High.
His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
And all dominions shall serve and obey Him.’

And then he concluded.

“HalleluYAH! Your holy saints, after all they’ve been through - suffering, persecution, even death - are given the wonderful Kingdom! Glory! Glory be to YaHWeH!”

Daniel 7:27

DISTANT PAST

On the isle of Patmos in the Mediterranean Sea, about 2000 years ago ...

“What did the LORD tell us?” St. John had come out of his visionary state. “When He comes, He will be ‘on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory’. HalleluYAH! You’re coming, My King! The saints will be with You! But the events leading up to your coming are so very terrifying!”

Matthew 24:30

Today in Texas ...

Fourth Day - Second Vision

Rosa picked out a Pink Lady apple from the bag and chomped down on it. “Yumm!”

It looked so good to Grandpa, that he grabbed one. “Do you mind if I eat this before I go on?”

After he had finished, he began the next segment. “We’re up to the Fifth Seal. This is about martyrs. A martyr is a person willing to die for a belief, particularly a belief in the God who made heaven and earth. The Greek word for ‘testimony’ is where we get the word ‘martyr’. A testimony is a witness for Christ.

Ever since the stoning of St. Stephen, soon after the LORD’s Ascension into heaven, there have been many, many martyrs for Christ. All the apostles, except for St. John, were

martyred. St. John was sent into exile and he also suffered. Then there were the martyrs under the Roman Empire. Many were martyred in big arenas for public shows, even having lions attack them.”

“How nasty!” exclaimed Anna. “Just because they were Christians?”

“Sadly, this was the case,” sighed Grandpa. “Then there were the martyrs of the Inquisition during the Middle Ages in Europe. During the Reformation, it was so very cruel, but customary, to burn at the stake ‘heretics’ who disagreed with the church in power at that time. This wayward church had faulty doctrines, not always according to Scripture. But these reformers were faithful to God! So they, too, became martyrs.

But now we come to this time. There are more martyrs today than ever! Over one million Christians were martyred worldwide in the first ten years of this 21st century!”

“Over one million martyrs?” Samuel was astonished. “I knew there were martyrs today but I didn’t know the numbers were so large!”

“So, now you see why I believe we’re in the Fifth Seal.” The teacher went on with the tragedies. “There are martyrs today from Africa. This insidious Islam wants to take over and they terrorize and kill people who oppose their evil ways. Whole villages in Africa are affected by this. And then there is communism. Communism is still killing Christians for their belief in the true faith.”

“We must pray for these troubled saints,” sighed Gracie. “Maybe some will live.”

“Amen!” Grandpa continued. “So these martyrs, now in heaven, are asking the LORD, ‘How long? How long, O LORD, until You judge and avenge our blood?’ A white robe was given to each of these martyrs. However, they needed to wait until all those faithful saints who would be killed as they were, was completed. There would be more martyrs for Christ!

I don’t want a show of hands here, but to think about this. How many of y’all are willing to give their lives for Christ who gave His all for you? Think ... and pray about this in your beds tonight. And please pray for the persecuted saints.

Now, we’re up to the Sixth Seal. The Sixth Seal is the sign - the sign that Yeshua the Messiah is about to appear! This is exciting for the loyal believers but it’s bad news for those who have not given their lives to Him.

But don’t fret! We, as Christians, will be out of here! As the Scriptures say, ‘God did not appoint us to wrath’. He promises this. The wrath of God will come. This is very different from the trials and tribulations that are a result of living in a fallen world. But ‘God did not appoint us to wrath.’ Christians will be caught up together in the clouds to meet the LORD in the air at the last trump! Wow! He’s coming back for us!”

“That’s us!” shouted James excitedly. “Me and y’all and Grandpa and Granny, we’ll all be there!”

Grandpa smiled at his enthusiasm. “Now getting back to this Sixth Seal. On the earth, but we will be with our LORD, there will be a great earthquake! There will be all kinds of cosmic disturbances: the sun becomes black, the moon becomes like blood, and the stars of heaven will fall to the earth.”

“And we won’t be here?” asked Anna, wanting to make sure she heard right.

“Yep. The resurrection of our bodies will have taken place,” Grandpa assured her. “We will be with Yeshua! I’ll show you the Scripture ... please go to Matthew 24. Let me see, go down to verse 29. Please read, Samuel. Read through verse 31.”

Samuel stood up. “Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.”

“There! It’s in there!” the teacher exclaimed. “The Scripture clearly says ‘Immediately after the tribulation’. There is now no more tribulation, no more distress! Why? Because the saints have been transported. This is the resurrection of the just, mentioned by Yeshua. In ‘the twinkling of an eye, at the last sound of the trumpet’, we saints shall be changed! We will be wondrously transformed! We will have resurrected, glorified bodies! Now doesn’t that sound marvelous?!”

Rosa thought of her grandmother who was diagnosed with an incurable disease. “And we won’t get sick, right?!”

“Yep!” Grandpa agreed. “No more arthritis for me! HalleluYAH! We, as Christians, are promised so much. It’s totally grace! We don’t deserve all these promises ... ‘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.’ Amen! ... Now, where was I?”

“You were talking about the Sixth Seal,” Lynette reminded him.

“Yes. The Sixth Seal. I said it was bad news for the unbelievers. People, even kings, will hide themselves in caves and in the rocks of the mountains. They will be terrified of the brightness of the LORD returning to earth. The LORD, it says in Scripture, will destroy His enemies ‘with the brightness of His Coming’.

“Wouldn’t this brightness affect us, too?” asked Donny.

“Nah, we’ll have new eyes. We’ve already been resurrected!” replied Grandpa. “And also, Yeshua will slay the wicked with just His breath. It’s no problem for the LORD of glory! He is a mighty warrior! This battle will be swift! It’s not a long, drawn-out war. We will see that when we cover the other visions.”

“You said there were seven visions, Grandpa!” John commented. “How are we going to do all of them?”

“I’ll have to hurry! So, the last verse of this second vision, in Revelation 6:17, states: ‘For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?’ *Who then is able to stand?* No one! Those who are left behind are those who did not put their faith in Christ

to save cannot stand. And God gave them every chance. He sent warnings through angels! But it's too late now. So the wrath of God is upon them. The wrath of God, being in the Sixth Seal, is at the end, the end of this age.

So that's the second vision. It starts in the throne room and ends with the Sixth Seal, the sign of the LORD's coming! It's an overview of the Church Age. The Church Age ends during the resurrection of the just.

Now, you may understand why there are seven visions in the Book of Revelation. There are twenty-two chapters in the Book of Revelation. How could it be that the sixth chapter of Revelation speaks about the wrath of God which is towards the end chronologically? Think about it! Any questions?"

There were plenty of questions. Yet the youths did not know how to express them.

"That is so much to absorb, Grandpa!" Jeanette sighed. "There are just too many questions!"

Yet James had one: "Are we having hamburgers for lunch?"

1 Thessalonians 4:17

Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.

The Third Vision

The 144,000: Revelation 7:1-7:8

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR - THE 144,000

Today in Texas ...

Fourth Day - Third Vision

“Always thinking about food, James!” Grandpa took a gulp of water. “Me, too, when I was your age. Now, let’s start on the Third Vision.”

“But we need to have lunch,” James protested.

“Oh, it’s really short!” responded the teacher. “It’s only eight verses!”

“That is short!” James was relieved. Then he grabbed another apple. “I’m hungry!”

“Always are, it seems!” Grandpa went on. “Anna, you will like this because it has angels in it. They are there to do God's will, carrying out His commands. Four angels will stand at the four corners holding back the four winds. The winds will not blow anywhere on the earth.

Can you imagine no wind on the earth? No leaves fluttering in the breeze. Sailboats going nowhere. Many of these new-fangled windmills that are used for electricity are out of commission. That would be a problem!”

“No lightening!” John added.

“Huh?”

“Remember! There needs to be wind! The updrafts and downdrafts are needed for lightening,” John explained.

“Wow! Good point!” The grandfather hadn’t thought about this. “So, I don’t know how long this will be - that there’s no wind. It doesn’t say specifically in Scripture. Maybe it’s for a day or seven days. We just don’t know! But maybe it’s a spiritual wind - the wind of the Holy Spirit!

Now, another angel comes on the scene. He will carry the seal of God. This is *not* one of the Seven Seals that had been keeping the scroll closed. This seal is for the protection of the righteous when God judges the earth, just like the blood of the lamb placed on the doors during that first Passover protected the Israelites. This seal carries the name of God the Father and the name of Yeshua on it. ‘Yeshua’ means ‘salvation’.

This other angel will announce to the four angels holding back the wind to not harm any who will have the seal of God on them. One hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel are to be sealed - twelve thousand from each tribe. Now what is the significance of the number 144,000?”

John thought. “The square root of 144 is twelve. Does that have something to do with it?”

Revelation 14:1

Donny was puzzled. “What’s a square root?” He had not yet been taught that in his math class.

John answered him. “Square root is a number multiplied by itself. $12 \times 12 = 144$. Remember that 12 had a symbolic meaning in the Bible. What was it?”

“It has to do with government,” Lynette recalled.

“Yes,” Grandpa replied. “Twelve is the number of governmental perfection. Additionally, the number 144 means ‘the Spirit-led life.’ These sealed saints, marked with the name of ‘salvation’, have a perfect government because it is directed by the Holy Spirit. And one thousand means the ‘Glory of God’. All together, 144,000 is the ‘Spirit-led life leading to the Glory of God’. And these 144,000 saints certainly would lead to the Glory of God!”

“But will there *only* be 144,000?” asked Joshua.

“Do you think that there were only 144,000 that could be sealed?” Grandpa posed the question. “In the natural, when it comes to the sealed ones of the tribes of Israel, maybe the number is exact or rounded. What would 144,000 saints do? A mighty work in the last days! Why only the twelve apostles turned the world upside down!

But possibly the 144,000 is also symbolic. Maybe there’s both a literal and symbolic meaning. 144,000 from the tribes of Israel literally will follow the Lamb wherever He goes! Symbolically, they represent true believers, those who follow the Lamb wherever He goes! Get it?

Many theologians believe that the 144,000 speaks of a representation of God's redeemed people, encompassing both Messianic Jews and Christians who will be led by the Holy Spirit. They rely on this special help from the LORD because they will be contending with the antichrist. Also, from other Scriptures in Revelation, the 144,000 are morally pure. These saints also sing the new song - the song of the redeemed!

Some believe that the 144,000, both in a literal sense and also a symbolic sense, will be evangelists. However, there is no verse in Scripture that they evangelize. Nothing is noted about them preaching or evangelizing. Yet, in the Fourth Vision, St. John sees a 'great multitude... from all nations' who are redeemed.

Some interpreters assume that the 144,000 must have been the ones who evangelized that multitude. They are servants of God. And as servants of God, they should evangelize. Don't you want to tell people about the Good News of God's grace?"

"I told all my friends about Jesus," John answered.

"Me, too!" Lynette expressed. "I *do* want all my friends to go to heaven! But many are Christians already."

"Except for that atheist," Jeanette added. "She's nice but she doesn't believe in God. Her parents are atheists, also."

Revelation 7:9–14; 14:4

“Being nice doesn’t get one to heaven,” the grandfather remarked. “But that’s another subject. So these 144,000 follow the Lamb. They are sealed with the name of the Father and the Son. This is in contrast with the mark of the beast that appears on those who do not belong to the Lamb. We’ll discuss the mark of the beast soon.”

“The beast!” John makes a nasty face, taking on the appearance, as best he could, of an ugly beast.

“The mark of the beast? That sounds scary,” Peter remarked.

“Well, it is! If you take this mark, you’re doomed!” Joshua exclaimed. “That’s what I’ve heard!”

“Now, don’t anybody worry!” Grandpa wanted to relieve the children of any fears. “We Christians are sealed by the LORD! The Holy Spirit has sealed us for the day of redemption. So, if you are a true Christian, you don’t have to worry about taking the mark of the beast! Also, Yeshua said that no one can snatch believers out of His hand! That’s Scripture and it’s true!”

“Wooo!” exclaimed James. “Thank God for that!”

Rosa began to sing: “He’s got the whole world in His hands!”

Those who knew this song, joined in. Joshua drummed out the beat on his legs.

Ephesians 4:30; John 10:28

“The LORD does have the whole world in His hands, but ...” Grandpa emphasized this point, “... it’s born-again Christians who are protected from the judgment of God! Even in the Old Testament, in the Book of Ezekiel, the LORD had somewhat of a seal, a mark, upon the Israelites when He was going to judge Jerusalem. An angel put a mark on the foreheads of those people, the faithful remnant, who sighed and cried over all the idolatry that had been done in Jerusalem. The judgments do not come to those who have been faithful to Him!”

“God certainly takes care of His own!” cried Gracie.

“Yep. He does! Though we all go through trials and tribulations,” cautioned Grandpa. He leaned down and drew a figure on the ground. “Now, what is interesting, is this mark of the Israelites is shaped like a ...”

“A cross!” cried Jeanette. “Well, I’ll be!”



“Yep. The Paleo-Hebrew ‘tav’ is a cross!” Grandpa explained. “Long before Yeshua was crucified, God wrote it in His Word. Yeshua’s cross sealed the deal for us! The ‘tav’ sign indicates that we are truly God’s people! HalleluYAH!”

Patty jumped up and let out a “HalleluYAH!” too!

“Now, getting back to the 144,000!” Grandpa would now conclude his sermon. “They are mentioned later in the Book of Revelation close to the end of the 14th Chapter, the Fourth Vision when they return with the Lamb. But what is important now is that they are sealed! Praise be to God!

That wraps it up for this lesson. Next will be the Fourth Vision. This vision begins and ends with songs of praise! The Throne Room of God is eternally filled with songs! I hope y’all like singing! We’ll be doing a lot of it there!”

Granny grabbed Anna’s hand, the one without the bunny in it. “Let’s walk back together, okay?”

Then the little girl made a confession. “I don’t like to sing! I sound like a frog!”

“A frog?” the grandmother questioned. “It couldn’t be worse than a toad!”

Anna giggled. “But I’d like to have a beautiful voice like you!”

“I will tell you a story,” Granny went on. “One time, a long, long time ago, I was ministering in song to the elderly people in a nursing home. This old gent’s singing was absolutely horrid! He was quite annoying! I was so frustrated with his toad-like voice! Just then, I heard a voice, the voice of God. He told me that He liked it! He actually enjoyed this man’s croaky singing! Now, who am I to argue with the LORD?”

“But how can He like it?” Anna questioned.

“Remember that God looks on the heart. And, then possibly, on the way up to heaven, voices are changed, transformed into the proper notes! Now, everyone is singing in key! That would not be too difficult for a great and mighty God like ours! But the LORD always looks on the heart of those who are singing His praise! He loves it! So everyone can make a joyful noise! Even frogs and toads!”

Anna contemplated this idea. “I’m going to sing! Even if it’s a joyful, funny noise!”

Granny smiled.

1 Samuel 16:7

But the LORD said to Samuel, “Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”

Psalm 95:2

The Fourth Vision

The Grumpet Judgments: Revelation 7:9-15:4

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE - THE STARS AT NIGHT

Today in Texas ...

Fourth Night - Beginning of the Fourth Vision

The sun had set over the Hill Country and the twilight had come. Eager youths had assembled at the fire pit, anticipating the big surprise that was promised them. Granny had brought some song sheets and some other information which she passed out.

“Oh the stars at night, are big and bright, deep in the heart of Texas ...” Granny urged others to sing. “Y’all know this song! Sing it! The words are on your song sheet.” She started again and sang the edited version with which people were familiar. And they all clapped at the appropriate times. They sang it twice.

“That was so much fun!” cried Joshua. “I like the clapping!” He had been clapping on his legs.

“You would!” James noted. “You’re a born drummer!”

Anna, holding on to her stuffed bunny, mentioned “I like the part about ‘the rabbits rush’!”

“You would!” James agreed. “Do you ever go any place without your silly rabbit?”

She shook her head, upset by his remark.

“I love her bunny,” Rosie remarked. “It’s so cute!”

James claimed that he was just joking and didn’t mean anything by his comment. “Sorry if I hurt your feelings!”

Anna smiled warmly at him.

“I like your bunny, too.” Granny said. “So, we’re up here to gaze at the stars. That’s why I chose this song!” She looked up at the heavens. “Well, I’ll be dazzled! Nothing like the Texas sky at night! And it’s a clear night. Why look at all those stars! I brought some star charts, so y’all can know which stars you’ll be seeing.”

“Hey, I can see the Big Dipper!” shouted James. “That’s the first constellation I learned to recognize.”



“Actually, it’s not a constellation. It’s an asterism,” Samuel corrected. “An informal pattern of stars. There are 88 constellations in the sky but the Big Dipper is not one of them. However, it’s part of the constellation of Ursa Major, or the Great Bear.”

“Well, you know what I mean,” the boy responded. “Hey, I found Polaris! It’s easy to find by the Big Dipper.”

“Polaris is also called the North Star,” Jeanette added. “And it points true north.”

“The North Star is a constant in our current cosmos,” stated Granny. “Just as the North Star guides travelers through the darkness, the Word of God guides believers. But it’s wonderful that God put in place a star for navigation! He thought of everything!”

“Did you know that the North Star is not one star, but three?” John offered his two cents. “They appear as one to your eyes, but there are three stars there. Polaris is a triple star system.”

“I didn’t know that, John,” admitted the grandmother. “Kind of like the Trinity - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit! Three, as it appears in our understanding, but still one!”

“Look! Here comes Grandpa!” Donny announced. “What is he carrying?”

“This? I’ll have to take the cover off and then you’ll see!” the grandfather replied.

“Let me help you,” said John as he unwrapped it. “Hey! It’s a telescope! And a colossal one at that!”

Grandpa was enthused. “Do you like the surprise?”

They all cheered.

After setting up the telescope, Grandpa went over the rules. “Now, you’ll have to get in line to see this. Well, actually, you can sit, if you want. We’ll call you by age. The youngest goes first. That means you, Patty! Have you ever done this before?”

“No, this is my first time ever!”

The grandfather helped her to stand on a rock. “Before using the telescope, can you see the Big Dipper? Now, look and we’re going to find the North Star. Now, position your eye on the telescope. Do you see the Big Dipper?”

The youths waited with anticipation for their turn. Granny, in the meantime, was looking up at the stars. She murmured to herself, “Count the stars. Count the stars.”

Lynette overheard her. “What did you say, Granny?”

“‘Count the stars, if you are able to number them.’ That’s what God told Abraham, the patriarch of the Hebrews. And He added, ‘So shall your descendants be.’ Abraham believed YaHWeH and God ‘accounted it to him for righteousness’. Now today, Christians are still righteous by faith in God’s word.’ Oh, I seem to be preaching now!”

The two of them gazed up at the galaxy of glittering stars. Then Granny spoke quietly, “Do you know the gospel is written in the stars? For example, Virgo is the Virgin and it ends with Leo the lion which signifies the king, the King of the universe! It’s fascinating! God actually wrote the story of salvation in the stars! He can do that!

Nothing is too difficult for God! Maybe sometime Grandpa will do some lessons on this. Maybe next summer.”

“Hey, Lynette!” Grandpa was calling. “It’s your turn!”

All of them took another turn, and then another. They found planets and constellations. Peter, for the first time, witnessed a shooting star! It was a very good night for star gazing!

“We should sing to the God of all this wonder!” Granny exclaimed. “Let’s start with this song. It’s similar to that which the saints said in the Fourth Vision of Revelation: ‘Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!’

They sang the song and then went on to sing another one also based on another saying of the throne room worshippers:

“Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom,
Thanksgiving and honor and power and might,
Be to our God forever and ever.
Amen.”

After they were done singing, the assembly sat in awesome fascination under the many stars of heaven. Then Granny spoke: “Are you amazed at the God who created all this before you? Who created out of nothing all that we see in this vast universe! And then, He created us to enjoy it!”

“Yeah! I actually feel sorry for the people who don’t get to enjoy the night skies,” sighed Jeanette. “They show God’s power!”

“And wisdom!” exclaimed Samuel. “Everything had to be just right in the cosmos for us to live on this planet.”

Grandpa had finished putting up his telescope and was now ready to join in the conversation. “We are only a speck in this universe yet our heavenly Father cares. For God so loved the world that He sent His only begotten Son to die for us!”

John 3:16

The students echoed ‘Amen!’

Grandpa continued. “In this book we’re studying, there is a whole lot of worshiping, praising and singing going on in the throne room of heaven. The Second Vision of Revelation has two chapters that include much praise!

The Fourth Vision begins with praise to God by the great multitude of martyrs. It ends with a song of praise. And in the middle of it, there is thanks given to God by the saints. This praise is also proclamation of the LORD’s reign and it is almost in the very middle of the book of Revelation!

Also, the Seventh Vision begins with praise by the saints.”

“And, we will be there, too? Right, Grandpa?” asked Lynette.

“Yep!”

“And these saints are from all over the globe?” Jeanette pondered.

“Yes, indeed-y!” replied the gent. “From every nation, tribe, and tongue! We will be there in our new resurrected bodies! That’s fantastic, because this body of mine is getting too old! And it is tired! So, now that we’re done with this lesson, let’s pack it all in, and get back to the house where I can put up my feet on a recliner!”

But Donny had a question. “When we are in heaven, do we ever get tired, Grandpa?”

“Huh. You got me! Yet even God took a day of rest!”

Psalm 19:1 (ESV)

The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims His handiwork.

Isaiah 40:22

*It is He who sits above the circle of the earth, And its inhabitants are like grasshoppers,
Who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, And spreads them out like a tent to dwell*

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX - FALLEN STARS & THE DRAGON

Today in Texas ...

Fourth Night - Fourth Vision

“I’ll put out the fire,” James offered. “You have a seat and just relax, Grandpa!”

“Thank you! But I will supervise!”

The other boys came along to help.

“By the way, Peter, a shooting star is not a star at all,” explained John. “It’s a meteor burning. But they sure are fun to watch!”

“Really? They aren’t stars?”

“No, if they were stars, we would see a star totally wiped out!”

“Oh! Really?” Peter muttered.

Granny overheard. “One time a very long time ago, I once saw this shooting star ... or as John would say, a meteor burning!” She winked at the boy. “At that time, I was praying for someone. He was being influenced by a devil, by a fallen angel. When I saw this falling star, I knew in my spirit, that the LORD had answered my prayer! It was a sign to me! That fallen angel would no longer be a problem! And it was true.”

“No more problems ever?” asked Gracie.

“No more ever! That person has now come to Christ!” replied Granny.

“Great story!” Grandpa applauded. “I want to bring some clarity to this, however. Ancient people didn’t have all this scientific knowledge to call them ‘meteors burning’. The Israelites thought shooting stars were messages from heaven, just like Granny did! In Scripture, falling stars often symbolize angels and/or the shaking of heavenly powers. So when a star falls, it may signal a collapse of powers. So Granny believed that now this fallen angel would not be influencing her friend anymore. Praise God!

Stars symbolize angels, as it reads in Revelation that ‘the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches.’

“Angels? So why do you think angels smell so fantastic?” asked John.

“They smell good?” Anna was surprised.

“This must be a joke!” commented Jeanette. “Well, John, let’s hear the answer!”

“Angels are scent from God!” John waited for the laughs, but there were none - only little grimaces on the faces. “Don’t you think that was funny?”

“Ha-ha,” Joshua retorted unenthused. Then the youths laughed at his un.

“Well, let’s get back to the subject,” Grandpa resumed. “Stars symbolize angels: ‘the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches.’ Also, the prophet Isaiah wrote this: ‘How you are fallen from heaven, O morning star ...!’

Isaiah 14:12

Yeshua spoke of the future when ‘the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.’ Revelation speaks about the dragon sweeping a third of the stars from heaven. So, therefore, stars are, in many Scriptures, angels!”

“The dragon is Satan, right, Grandpa?” questioned Donny.

“Yep!”

“Didn’t he take a third of the angels with him?” asked Lynette.

“Yep!” the gent replied. “A third of the stars of heaven, now fallen angels, were in rebellion against the LORD. God threw them to the earth where they are doing Satan’s bidding, causing confusion and instigating evil. That nasty ol’ dragon! But I’ll be speaking about this later. We know where Satan ends up!”

“In hell!” Some youths replied.

Grandpa continued. “But first, he is being cast into the abyss or the bottomless pit.”

“What? A bottomless pit?” Rosa was astounded. “That sounds super intriguing!”

“It is!” Grandpa agreed. “Just maybe this abyss is a black hole. It’s a possibility! Have you heard of a black hole?”

Some had, but the younger children had not. So Samuel, having studied this, gave the definition. “A black hole is an area of the cosmos where gravity is so, so strong that nothing, *nothing*, not even light, can escape. And most black holes are formed from collapsed stars. Certainly,” as the boy chuckled, “one could say that Satan is an extremely star!”

The children laughed.

“This fizzled-out fallen star will soon be sizzling down in hell!” added Rosa poetically.

“But not before he’s thrown into that black hole!” expressed Lynette. “Imagine that!”

“Well, this is just a possibility!” The grandfather remarked. “We won’t know for sure until that day!”

By the way, when the LORD returns, it is called the Day of the LORD. The Book of Revelation outlines the *ultimate* Day of the LORD when YaHWeH will intervene to judge evil, rescue His chosen, and establish His righteous reign! This is the Second Coming of Christ! He’s returning as the King of Kings, the Lion of Judah! Oh, what a Day! The return of Yeshua HaMashiach, the Messiah! And we will be with Him! Riding on white horses! Glory be! HalleluYAH!”

Little Patty added her “HalleluYAH!” Others repeated the phrase.

Then Grandpa asked Peter to pray. He was somewhat surprised that as the youngest boy that he would be called upon to pray. But he went for it. “Dear Daddy in heaven, thank you! We thank you for this beautiful night! I thank you that I saw a shooting star. I’ve never seen one before! So I’ll never forget this night ... really! Amen!”

“Amen” came the response from the youths.

“I do hope you will all remember this night, for sure! So that’s it for tonight,” Grandpa concluded. “But, tomorrow, we’re going to do a little archery. Does that sound fun? Before we end, we’re going to discuss a most significant wedding, the wedding of all ages, and the new heavens and the new earth. ”

The crew sauntered back to the house, discussing the events of this marvelous evening. Soon they were snug in the comfort of their beds but their alert minds were racing. They had much on which to reflect:

Would they have dreams of a shooting star?

Would they have visions about reigning under the omnipotent King of Kings?

And what about that great and awful Day of the LORD?



What ever would it be like?

To be continued in a future book.