



Chapter 10

YOUR HERITAGE

*Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord,
the fruit of the womb is His reward.*

(Psalm 127:3, NKJV)

A sense of expectancy grips the world. The promotion of world government and a cashless society, the development of complex surveillance systems, the imminent rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem, a United States of Europe in place, all seem to suggest that we are teetering at the end of the age. Christians and Jews alike anticipate the soon coming of their Messiah while the New Age movement poses ready to herald a powerful leader who will rule their world.

If your leanings are “pre-trib”, you are undoubtedly looking for the momentary return of your Lord. If you favor a “mid-trib” or “post-trib” stand, you probably expect to see the anti-Christ appear on the horizon at any moment. Either way, you sense the time is near.

When I was growing up, fifty years ago, astute Bible scholars were similarly persuaded. They saw

prophecy being fulfilled before their eyes and felt that nothing precluded the second coming of their Lord. Other generations also seemed convinced that the end times had arrived. As far back as New Testament days John, the apostle, wrote:

Even now, dear children, we are getting near the end of things. You have heard, I expect, the prophecy about the coming of antichrist. Believe me, there are antichrists about already, which confirms my belief that we are near the end. (I John 2:18, Phillips)

We are told to recognize the signs and to long for our Lord's appearing. But Peter tells us:

...do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. (II Peter 3:8)

The Lord obviously doesn't limit Himself to our concept of time. Other generations have been wrong. What mortal can positively affirm that ours will be the one to hail His coming? This is why we must be *ready* knowing He could arrive at any moment while at the same time preparing for whatever the future may hold if He does not.

We cringe at the rampant erosion of our freedoms, the abandonment of moral standards, and the rejection of absolutes that we have seen in recent years. We have watched Judeo-Christian principles plummet from being

the accepted standard of behavior and ethics to the present climate of skepticism and even animosity. If we're alarmed by the acceleration of evil we have seen in recent years, the corruption, lawlessness, immorality, and depravity, consider what our children will face should the Lord tarry.

In Psalm 127:3 Solomon tells us:

Children are a gift from the Lord; they are a reward from Him. (NLT)

Your children are God's gift to you and your gift to the next generation. So if this is not the generation to hail the second coming of our Lord Jesus, how can we best prepare our children for what unspeakable evil they could well encounter in their day? The spiritual battles they face could be more violent than anything we have experienced perhaps more vicious than ever before experienced in history.

Traditionally, parents work hard to prepare their children for "a good life". They strive to provide security, a good education, good training, and solid values. But this next generation will need much more.

When anti-Christian forces have taken over in other countries, such as Nazi-Germany and Communist China, children have been taken away from their parents and put into state institutions. This was done in an effort to control the thinking and dictate the lives of the next generation. You may want to believe that this can never happen here. Do not be deceived. You may have seen TV specials or heard on Christian radio programs how easy it

has been for the authorities to snatch children, even babies, away from their parents. And how difficult it has been for parents to get them back once this was accomplished. This has been done on a mere accusation of abuse with no trial or substantiation. Obviously, laws permitting such things are already on the books. And as Christians are being cast more and more in a “villainous” role, accusations of mind control and abuse of *children’s rights* could be fabricated and presented as acts in violation of a “politically correct” administration.

This is not written to cause alarm. It is intended to alert you to the fact that we are living in critical days. Do not underestimate the need to prepare your children and arm them spiritually for what could be ahead. The time for preparation could be very short.

In the Old Testament, the Lord gives emphatic and explicit instructions to parents regarding the upbringing of children. Time and again He emphasizes the responsibility of parents to instruct and prepare their children, even little ones (perhaps, especially, little ones) for life in a hostile world.

Deuteronomy 6:6-9 ...you must commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these commands I am giving you today. Repeat them again and again to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are away on a journey, when you are lying down and when you are getting up again. Tie them to your hands as a reminder, and wear them on your forehead. Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. (NLT)

Psalm 78:1-8 O My people, listen to My teaching. Open your ears to what I am saying... I will teach you hidden lessons from our past — stories we have heard and know, stories our ancestors handed down to us. We will not hide these truths from our children but will tell the next generation about the glorious deeds of the Lord. We will tell of His power and the mighty miracles He did. For He issued His decree to Jacob; He gave His law to Israel. He commanded our ancestors to teach them to their children, so the next generation might know them — even the children not yet born — that they in turn might teach their children. So each generation can set its hope anew on God, remembering His glorious miracles and obeying His commands. Then they will not be... stubborn, rebellious, and unfaithful, refusing to give their hearts to God. (NLT)

According to Bible scholars, an orthodox Jewish boy was pretty much under the care and influence of his mother until he was about 3 years of age. At that time, responsibility for his education shifted from the mother to the father and his training in the Torah began. By the time he was 12 years old, he could usually quote the first five books of the Bible from memory and then he proceeded on to the Psalms and Prophecies.

II Chronicles 31:16 makes specific reference to children, *three years of age*:

In addition, they distributed to the males three years old or more whose names were in the

genealogical records — all who would enter the temple of the Lord to perform the daily duties of their various tasks, according to their responsibilities and their divisions. (emphasis added)

In the priestly order, apparently little boys at the age of three years went to the temple with their fathers to begin their religious training and begin serving in the Lord's house.

Regarding Hannah and Samuel we're told:

After he (Samuel) was weaned, she (Hannah) took the boy with her, young as he was... and brought him to the house of the Lord at Shiloh. (1 Samuel 1:24 - emphasis added)

According to Maccabees 7:28, Hebrew women usually nursed their children for three years. So the reference to Samuel, *young as he was*, probably suggests that he was about three years old. This was the time when he would normally be weaned and his religious training would traditionally begin.

The Lord carefully taught his people the importance of impressing Scripture on young, tender hearts, while they were still sensitive and responsive. Undoubtedly, the Hebrews began teaching their children to memorize God's Word at the early age of three so it would be received into *virgin* soil. At this time, the impressionable mind would not have to unlearn the things of this world in order to accept the things of the Lord.

Do you think three years old is too young for a child to begin memorizing Scripture? Ponder this! *Perhaps the most difficult mental exercise most of us achieve in our entire lifetime is to learn the English language.* How old were you when you mastered it? How long would it take you to become fluent in English if you were to begin today? The Lord has made the young mind like an enormous sponge with great capacity.

In the New Testament, Jesus emphasized the importance of little children being encouraged in spiritual things. Mark records this interesting incident:

Then some people came to Him (Jesus) bringing little children for Him to touch. The disciples tried to discourage them. When Jesus saw this, He was indignant and told them: "You must let little children come to Me — never stop them! For the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Indeed, I assure you, that the man who does not accept the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." Then He took the children in His arms and laid His hands on them and blessed them. (Mark 10:13-16, Phillips)

Many translations use the term *babies* in describing the little ones who were brought to Jesus in this incident as recorded by Dr. Luke in Luke 18:15. The KJV, NKJV and RSV use the term *infants*.

The King James Version says Jesus *took them up in His arms*. They must have been very young children for Him to pick them up in this way. *These* are the ones Jesus

uses to illustrate tender hearts and minds that are open to accepting the kingdom of God.

There are many stories in the Gospels which tell about people who were brought to Jesus. A parable about the kingdom of God speaks about *compelling* people to come. It is significant that the Lord says here “...*let the little children come to Me — never stop them!*” Apparently *little* children will come to Jesus instinctively if we adults just don’t stop *them*.

And how might we in today’s world “stop” *little* children from coming to Jesus? Could it be by not teaching them how to fix His precious Word in their little hearts and minds, to memorize it, so they can learn about their Lord from His own Word while they are still sensitive and open to His love?

Another incident is recorded in Matthew 18:1-4:

It was at this time that the disciples came to Jesus with the question, “Who is really greatest in the kingdom of Heaven?” Jesus called a little child to His side and set him on his feet in the middle of them all. “Believe me,” He said, “unless you change your whole outlook and become like little children you will never enter the kingdom of Heaven. It is the man who can be as humble as this little child who is greatest in the kingdom of Heaven.” (Phillips - emphasis added)

Notice that He *set* the *little* child in the midst of them. He must have picked him up to *set him on his feet*, so he could not have been very old.

Again a *little* one of tender years was used to illustrate humility and was held up as an example of one who is *greatest* in the kingdom of Heaven. Jesus, apparently, could find no better example than one of these little ones, probably a toddler, to illustrate His point.

The writer of Hebrews states:

In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days He has spoken to us by his Son....
(Hebrews 1:1-2 - *emphasis added*)

In the Old Testament, *the Lord spoke to the Israelites through Moses* when He said:

“Fix these words of Mine in your hearts and minds... Teach them to your children....”
(Deuteronomy 11:18,19)

In the New Testament *God speaks to us through His Son*. Jesus said:

“You must let little children come to Me — never stop them! For the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.” (Mark 10:14, Phillips - *emphasis added*)

“It is the man who can be as humble as this little child who is greatest in the kingdom of Heaven.”
(Matthew 18:4, Phillips - *emphasis added*)

Why is it that we so often waste these impressionable years and then when they're gone, try to play catch up?

How often have you heard it said that we must wait until children are “old enough to understand”? This is another example of the devil’s treachery. While we’re waiting for them to be *old enough*, he’s busy sowing his seeds of doubt and deception into their sensitive minds. Then when we get around to planting the good seed, the soil is already strewn with trash to be cleared. The enemy doesn’t wait to start his work. Why do we?

We are making a grave mistake if we let other things take priority over teaching our children to memorize God’s Word. The all-important truth of the Word is readily received into the sensitive, responsive heart of a *little* child. It’s important for us to take advantage of an early start because the evil one will not delay introducing his destructive rationale. Do you have to teach a baby how to lose his temper?

Communist leaders have been quoted as saying, “Give us a child until he is seven (years of age) and we will have him for life.” Apparently they are convinced that a child under seven can be easily influenced and indoctrinated and that teaching received before that age will dramatically influence his entire life. They must also conclude that a mind is more prone to resist the introduction of new rationale after the age of seven and must be more difficult to impact after that time. Those who do Satan’s work seem to know the significance of starting early. Do we?

Hebrew law and tradition, as taught in Scripture, were designed to assure that worship of Jehovah God would be passed down from generation to generation and not lost through ignorance. Our Lord was born almost

fifteen hundred years after the law was given. His mother and Joseph were devout Jews, fostered by generations who memorized the Torah and taught it to their children. Their faithfulness to Jehovah, and strict adherence to Jewish law preserved the Messianic line of faith. It was into this established Jewish lineage that our Lord Jesus was born.

Could it be that our failure to follow this example of teaching children to memorize the Word is contributing to the breakdown of Christian homes we see today? Some pastors contend that the trend seems to be for second generation Christians, today, to have weaker convictions than their parents. And that the third generation tends to wander even further from the Lord. How different this is from the strong faith lines of Mary and Joseph that persisted for so many generations. Should we be looking more closely to the strict teaching laid down in Scripture for answers to today's problems?

Recipients of the Old Covenant had great reverence for God's Word. They knew well the importance of memorizing the Scriptures in context. Their lives and the lives of their children were wrapped around the Holy Word as they memorized it and meditated on its truths. Should not we of the New Covenant be as vigilant to follow the guidelines laid down for training and equipping our children? Perhaps never before in all history have believers been so remiss in making the memorization of God's Word a viable part of their lives and the lives of their children. And perhaps never before in all of history was it needed more than it is right now in our materialistic and depraved environment.

If the Lord has given you the heritage of children, it's clear from His Word that it is your responsibility to instruct them in His ways. It is your responsibility to see that they are learning to memorize His Word. This invaluable resource will then remain in their hearts to influence their lives whatever happens. The training of our children is not the responsibility of the church, or the Sunday School, or the Christian Day School. The Lord entrusted children and their training to *parents*. We must not fail to prepare them today for what they will surely face tomorrow. Their arch-enemy stands poised, ready to engulf those who are unsuspecting and/or ill-prepared.

As long as your children are under your care and instruction, it's important to stimulate and challenge them to broaden this area of their Christian experience. You may even want to include the entire family in the project.

A wife and mother wrote:

My family had been memorizing Scripture for several years. We knew that it was very important for our children because it explained to them why we did or didn't do so many things. But memorizing a verse here and a verse there seemed a bit disjointed.

The Lord used a *Sword of the Spirit* presentation at our church to inspire our family to begin memorizing the book of James. We have completed the first chapter and are excited about beginning the second. (Ed: They have since completed the entire book.)

At first our children, then 6 and 8, were a little reluctant. They didn't see how in the world they would ever be able to memorize a whole chapter. But we took it a verse at a time, and they began to see that it was possible. In fact, my husband and I hold the children back from memorizing more quickly simply because it's harder for us.

It's amazing how the Lord has given us all insight into what we are memorizing. The children are always reminding us of some verse from the chapter and applying it to a situation. It gives our family a common language when we are encountering a problem and looking to the Lord for a solution.

When Moses was making his parting remarks to the Israelites, his emphasis was on teaching the children. He was about to depart for Mount Nebo where he would meet his Lord. He had lived with these people for over 40 years, struggling with them and with their parents, trying to guide them in God's ways. Now they were on the brink of success. The *Promised Land* lay ahead. These were *his* people, a fledgling nation. They would soon enter enemy territory without him.

Throughout the book of Deuteronomy, Moses reminds them of God's admonitions and warnings in preparation for the crucial days ahead. Now he concludes with this summation. These were his last recorded words to the nation of Israel. If he were to speak to us today, this would undoubtedly be his exhortation to us as we and our children face the crucial days ahead.

“Take to heart all the words I have solemnly declared to you... so that you may command your children to obey carefully all the words of this law.”

“They are not just idle words for you — they are your life.” (Deuteronomy 32:46-7)

Deuteronomy 30:19-20 records another exhortation that is as relevant to us today as it was when Moses challenged the children of Israel, hundreds of years ago:

“This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the Lord your God, listen to His voice, and hold fast to Him. For the Lord is your life....”

Moses here emphasized to the children of Israel that a decision must be made. There was no middle ground. They must choose the path they would take. They could either accept and pursue the admonition that had been presented or disregard and reject it. This same choice is yours, even now, as you are reading this. Even now, these hundreds of years after it was spoken, Moses is presenting this same choice to you. You can accept and pursue it or choose to disregard and reject it. It is your choice, yours to decide. The enemy of our souls has a way of manipulating our minds to make us think that by procrastinating or by just doing nothing we are somehow not choosing. Never is our decision so definite as when we choose to do

nothing. If the Lord has blessed you with the heritage of children, this is a decision you must make.

The Words that our Lord spoke to Moses echo down through the ages:

*“Fix these words of Mine in your hearts and minds... Teach them to your children....”
(Deuteronomy 11:18,19)*

“They are not just idle words for you — they are your life.” (Deuteronomy 32:47)

*“Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the Lord your God, listen to His voice, and hold fast to Him.”
(Deuteronomy 30:19-20)*