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Presentation Transcript
Jesus' Return – A Festival of Trumpets
August 16, 2019

A friend of mine asked me if I'd do a presentation to help her explain Christ's return to her young children. This, to me, is quite a challenge when we think about the horrific things detailed in the book of Revelation – many of them too violent for small children. We don't want to traumatize them. We just want them to understand, as best they can at their age, what they need to understand about it. And, at the same time, there are those who are older and can accept more of it. So, this is all going to be presented with a caveat. Use discernment that being a child's parent can provide. One question to ask is, "What is your child ready for now?" And there may be three or four answers, depending on the three or four children you have. So, if you have children in an age range, go to the lowest level of maturity. I probably didn't need to say all that. Most parents know that, but I'm a little paranoid about it, since, in my work, I quite often deal with people who were traumatized as children by watching movies with their parents that they should have never seen at that age. So here we go.

We're celebrating the Feast of Trumpets – one day of seven festivals that God has laid out on our annual calendar. By the sacred calendar of ancient Israel, this festival was the first day of the seventh month. And every first day of every month was a special day, commemorated by the blowing of a *shofar* – a trumpet made of a ram's horn. So the seventh month was when the seventh trumpet was sounded. And most of us know that the seventh trumpet has a special meaning in the Bible. In Revelation, we can read of seven angels. Each blow their trumpet in succession to announce various events, predicting what's going to happen in rapid succession before Christ's return. The seventh trumpet pictures the return of Christ. So today, we celebrate and look forward to that future event.

Children have less context – less life experience – than adults. So, if they're going to make sense of what about what we're going to teach them about His return, we have to become very specific. And I think most importantly, we need to go to where it all started. When God created Adam and Eve, they were good. Let's look at that in Genesis 1:31.

Genesis 1:31 – *God saw all that He had made and it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.*

So it's important for kids to know that when God made Adam and Eve, they were good and they had a good relationship with God. They obeyed what God told them to do, so they didn't feel guilty about anything. They didn't have any shame. They had a very good life with God and got along with Him well.

But we know, today, people are not always good. We *all* do things that we know are wrong and we all feel guilty from time to time. So how did this happen? How did this feeling of guilt enter into the world? How did it start? So then we would go to Genesis 3 – to the story of Adam and Eve in the Garden, and point out that the devil was allowed in there as well, and that he convinced Adam and Eve to disobey God. And then we can explain how it all went downhill from there. Once they began to disobey God, they felt guilty. And so we find there they were hiding from God they were so afraid of Him. Whereas, just a few days before, everything was great. So, because of what they'd done wrong, God sent them out of the Garden, where life was much, much harder. Today we have weeds that have to be pulled. Back then, there were none. All the animals were friendly. Now some are dangerous. We can't be around them or they'd hurt us. It wasn't like that when God first created them. This is also an explanation why there are so many people today who don't care about or know God, why there are bad people who hurt others. Because of all the evil that we all do, like Adam and Eve, we all have to die eventually. And you might use whatever examples that you could think of about your family, or what's going on in your neighborhood, or at your school. You know, you can point to school bullies, as an example of how things have gone wrong in the world. We need to use examples that are concrete so our kids can understand what we're talking about.

So what we're doing here is, we're painting a picture from creation to Christ and this present evil world. And then, we're going to talk about how then, after a long time, God did something that He'd been planning from the beginning – something *very* good. He sent Christ, who died in our place so that we don't have to, because all the sins that people commit – all the means things people do – that means that we're going to have to die because of those things. So He sent Jesus, who died in our place, so that we don't have to.

Jesus' cousin, John the Baptist – when Jesus was alive on the earth – said in John 1:29, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.” And he said that when he saw Jesus coming toward him. So, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. So Jesus died and was resurrected after three days. And that happened during the Festival of Unleavened Bread, which is in the spring.

So we've got from the beginning up until Christ. We've explained how things went bad and what God is going to do to fix that. And the first thing He did was, caused Jesus Christ to suffer and die so that our sins could be paid for and we could live with Him forever in His Kingdom.

So now we're going to talk about from Christ to the end. He then started the church on the Feast of Pentecost. And the church has been at work ever since, setting an example for those who don't know God, so that they might have a chance to get to know Him and be washed clean of their sins. And you can talk about how you, as parents, became converted, if you both are, and that you're a part of that church, and that they can look forward to being a part of it too. In fact, in a way, they are, because they're special because you're special to God.

So God very much liked the way the world was in the Garden, and He has a plan to make it all become the same way again. In a sermon that Peter gave on Pentecost – the day the church started – in Acts 3, verse 19, we can read this:

Acts 3:19-21 – *Peter said to the people, “Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out – that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.”* I think, in the King James Bible, it says, “...that times of restitution.” So things are going to be reset and brought back to the way they were. *Refreshing* means the same thing, I guess. You were okay, and then ran out of steam, and then you were refreshed. And then he said: “*So that your sins may be wiped out – that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that He may send the Christ, who has been appointed for you, even Jesus. He must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as He promised long ago through His holy prophets.*”

So He's up there now, waiting – waiting to get the word from the Father to return to the earth and set things aright. There's also a place in the Bible where Jesus talked about coming back – when the disciples asked Him. It's in Matthew 24:3.

Matthew 24:3 – *As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, “Tell us,” they said, “when will this happen and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?”*

So they wanted to know about it. Then the rest of the chapter – Matthew 24 – is Jesus explaining how we could tell when times are getting close. I'm not going to go into that, because there is some pretty graphic stuff in it, but you can look at that and see what you might want to explain out of it. But they were concerned about when He was coming back, and we all are too. We're all waiting to see what's going to happen.

So then we're going to talk about the return of Christ. And in Revelation is where we're going to spend most of our time here now. There is a buildup of events that are going to occur before the return of Christ. And it's impossible for me to detail how much a parent should share with their children about these events, but they're all right here in Revelation. And you can use them as you see fit. If you want a chronology, you can go to the old booklet – *The Book of Revelation Unveiled At Last*, by Herbert Armstrong. I've up a link to it on the Website. The way you would find that is to go to the page we have on *Series*, called *Holy Days*. Then you would look for this

sermon, which is *The Return of Christ*. And in the page about that, you would find the link itself to that old booklet. Another place – more recent – and maybe easier to find would be the September/October issue of *Beyond Today* magazine by the United Church of God. And that would be 2018. It has the traditional timeline on pages 36 and 37 as sort of a footer to the article. In that edition, there are also a couple of articles in that issue as well, which are about Christ's return.

But following our rule of Bible study, as we go through this, what's the point? That's what we're to ask. And the point of all this – all this stuff – is, because of the evil in the world, many, many bad things are going to happen – and just before Christ's return. And that may be all a young child needs to know – that it's going to be a time of upset. But God promises to protect His church, and that when Jesus comes, He's going to stop all that and make the earth a better place for everyone. So we can tell all our children that all the bad things people do and have done are going to be fixed when Christ returns. Everything is going to be set aright and people are going to have a chance to repent of their sins and change their ways. And when that happens, then the earth is going to become a peaceful place.

Now, the sign that it is finally time for Jesus to return is called the seventh trumpet. Seven angels come down from heaven, we're told in the book of Revelation, and each of them – one after another – blows a trumpet. And the last – the seventh trumpet – sounds. That's the symbol for the time when Christ returns. Let's read about that in Revelation 11:15.

Revelation 11:15 – *The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said, "The kingdoms of the world have become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He will reign forever and ever."*

So this is an announcement about what's going to happen, and it's presented as though it's already happened, because nothing can stop it. It's as good as done. And then in verse 16, it says:

V-16-19 – *The twenty-four elders, who were seated on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshipped God, saying, "We give thanks to You, Lord God Almighty – the One who is, and who was – because You've taken Your great power and have begun to reign. The nations were angry and Your wrath has come." You know, God is upset about all the things that have happened on the earth since the Garden of Eden. He hasn't forgotten any of it. "And the time has come for the judging of the dead and the rewarding of Your servants, the prophets, and Your saints, and those who reverence Your name, both small and great, and for destroying those who destroy the earth."*

So there's a price to be paid for all the evil that's been done along the way – all the murders that have been committed, and all the wars that have been fought. So that's what this is about. And the twenty-four elders, when they hear the seventh angel sound his trumpet, they are so amazed and so happy that they fall on their faces before God and worship Him, and they say these things.

So that's so important for us to know that this is going to happen. Why would you even be a Christian if you didn't have some kind of hope that things are going to get straightened out? And this is *our* hope.

So once that seventh angel sounds his trumpet, something wonderful happens immediately after that trumpet sounds. Let's read about that in 1 Corinthians 15. This is the apostle Paul – one of the original apostles – speaking to the congregation in Corinth by letter. And he said:

1 Corinthians 15:50-55 – *I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Listen, I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed – in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye – when? – at the last trumpet. So, when Christ returns, that's the very first thing that's going to happen. The people who have been faithful to God in this life are going to be resurrected from the dead to imperishable – in other words, immortal. They'll be changed from one kind of being to another. He says in verse 53: For the perishable – the physical – must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. So that's pretty clear, isn't it? When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that was written will come true, "Death has been swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? Where, o death, is your sting?"*

In every person is the desire to live forever. And yet, without God, that's not going to happen. We're all going to die. But God is going to resurrect those people who are willing to follow Him to an eternal life. And for those who, in this lifetime, have lived and died with God, that resurrection comes when Christ returns. We might talk to our kids about how people in the world think that we're going to go to heaven when we die, and yet, the Bible says we go to sleep in the grave, and we wake up when Christ returns.

So after the resurrection of the dead, then what happens? Well, we can read about that, too, in the Bible – in Revelation 19:11.

Revelation 19:11-16 – *I saw heaven standing open and there was before me a white horse, whose rider was called Faithful and True. You might point out that Faithful and True are capitalized, because they are names for God. With justice He judges and makes war. You know, we have social justice in the world today and political correctness, but when God comes, it's just going to be justice. He judges and makes war with justice. In other words, those who have done wrong are going to get it, and those who have not are going to be resurrected to life. His eyes are like blazing fire and on His head are many crowns. He has a name written on Him that no one knows by He Himself, and He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood. His name is The Word of God – which is the name of Jesus. The armies of heaven were following Him – Who do you suppose those armies are going to be? Well, we've already read about it, haven't we? The resurrected saints – riding on white horses, dressed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of His mouth comes a sharp sword, with which to strike down the nations. He will rule them with an iron*

scepter and He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of Almighty God. And on His robe and on His thigh He has this name written: King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He's coming with power and there will be people that won't want Him to come, and won't be willing to follow Him, and so He's going to have to fight with them until they submit – which is not going to take long, because He has more power than they have.

Okay, so what happens after that? Well, we can read in Revelation 20 through 22 about the millennium and the second resurrection – for all those who were not in the first one. You know, it does talk about the *first* resurrection in Revelation, so that means there has to be at least one more. Right? Well, after the millennium, there's going to be a second resurrection for all those who are not resurrected in the first. Think about that. All the people who never accepted Jesus are going to finally get a chance to meet Him, to learn of His ways, and to believe in Him – *all* of them – all the people that died – with Adam, all the way through all the Buddhists, all the Muslims, all the Hindus, all the people of all the different religions of the ancient world that we don't remember anymore. *All* of them are going to have a chance. How can all that many people live on the earth at one time? Well, there's going to have been a thousand years of time to get ready for them.

So the events in Revelation 20 through 22 – at least, in my mind – are all detailed chronologically, so there's no real need for me to go through them one by one.

Now, if you read these passages in Revelation 20 through 22, if you wonder what's real and what is symbolic, just bypass that question and ask, "What is God clearly teaching me in this passage?" That's all you have to know. This is a story to help us understand what's going to happen next. And, if we get off on the details of what this means and that means... – like that sharp sword that comes out of Jesus' mouth. Is that really what's going to happen, or is that a symbol for warlike words or intent that He has exercised toward the people who want to fight Him? Some people think it's literal. Some people think it's a symbol. But the point of it is, He is going to come and He is going to destroy those who are going to destroy the earth. We don't know exactly how.

Let's talk about symbol versus reality for a minute. In our ongoing series, *Bible Stories for Adults*, we talk about the confusion that's been created when people stop asking what God means by the story and start trying to dig into the details. How did God create Adam and Eve? Was it by fiat or by evolution? Well, I believe it was by fiat, but I'm not holding my breath on that one. If God comes and says, "No, I did it by evolution," I'll say, "Amen. Yes, Lord." But there are two reasons why I believe that He did it the way it says in the Bible and that those aren't symbols. One is, that that's what it says, and two is, that after all the years since paleontology began, there's still not a single example of the gap between one creature and another in the earth's record – not one example of that change in *any* creature. Now think about the millions – maybe billions – of fossils that have been excavated and not a single shred of clear evidence. You'd think it would be there. You'd think you could see it all the way through – all through the whole

thing. There's no such "missing link." But the Bible doesn't really address this issue. It tells us a story. And if we ask, "What's the point of the story?" then we know what God wants us to know, provided we come up with the correct point. So, we should always do this with our children: What can we learn from this story?

Another good one is: Will Christ return on a white horse? And not only Christ, but you and me with Him? It does say, "...they're going to be riding white horses," doesn't it? So, do we need to take riding lessons? Well, I think, when the time comes, we'll have everything we need to do what God wants us to do. And I'm sure that God has shown John what warfare at the end time would look like. And it seems really clear that, if He was showing John what was really happening – you know, like thermonuclear weapons, and Chinook and Apache helicopters, and F26's or whatever they are now – he wouldn't really have words to describe that. I don't know that that's what he was showing him. Maybe He really was showing him a cloud of locusts and scorpions with stings in their tails. I don't know. But we *do* know that, if he was looking at modern warfare, he understood the destruction and not the means. And he certainly understood the destruction in this example. So, if that's what God wants us to get – there's going to be destruction.... You know, there are passages in Revelation where John describes warfare in terms...it sounds like a man seeing something he doesn't have words for and yet, doing the best he can. He sees flying scorpions that made a terribly loud sound with stings in their tails. Let's read that – Revelation 9:9.

Revelation 9:9-10 – *...they had breastplates like breastplates of iron – so would the fuselage of a helicopter or a jet plane might look like that to him? – and the sound of their wings was like the thundering of many horses and chariots rushing into battle. They had tails and stings like scorpions, and in their tails they had power to torment people for five months.*

Now, let's look at that again. You see that word *like*? He doesn't say that there were horses and chariots. He says, "There were *like* thundering of many horses and chariots." Have you ever seen a Chinook helicopter? I got to go inside one at Double Eagle Airport a while back. I got to play with the Gatling gun and listen to the pilot tell us about how that could hold twenty-some special forces troops – each one of them weighing 200 pounds with 135 pounds on his back. And you could lift that with a helicopter. And guess where they go in and out? They go in and out the back. Do you remember what the MOAB bombs were? It stands for Massive Ordnance Air Blasts. Of course, the Air Force guys call them the Mother Of All Bombs. Those are the largest bombs that we have that aren't nuclear. And they can push those out of the back of a transport plane – or even a helicopter, if you can get far enough away from it in time.

Are there creatures in heaven that look like the horses we know? I think it does mention that. It's all very interesting to think about to me. What did he see? Well, yeah, it's fun to talk about it, but the important thing is to get the point. And that is, that there's going to be a lot of trouble down here on earth before He returns.

You know, I have to tell you that I'm still a little bit biased toward riding a horse. Why would you think that? Well, look with me in Job – Job 31. Here Job has just told God about all his troubles. And God is now putting things in perspective for Job, so that he can understand it. And it's in this passage that's something that makes me wonder – Job 39:19 – this is God talking to Job:

Job 39:19 -24– *Do you give the horse his strength? Or clothe his neck with a flowing mane? Do you make him leap like a locust, striking terror with his proud snorting? He paws fiercely, rejoicing in his strength and charges into the fray. He laughs at fear – afraid of nothing. He does not shy away from the sword. The quiver rattles against his side, along with the flashing spear and lance. In frenzied excitement, he eats up the ground. He cannot stand still when the trumpet sounds.*

Don't forget to comment on the Website. Until next time, this is Bill Jacobs for LifeResource Ministries, serving children, families and the Church of God.