

HOPE FOR HUMANITY

REVELATION TODAY

PRESENTATION 20 • STRENGTH FOR THE JOURNEY

They're tragic, and the stories are not uncommon. Children hurt or killed (**SLIDE • KIDS**) after imitating their favorite superhero. Years ago, a four-year-old boy in Brooklyn died after falling from a seventh-floor window, apparently after trying to fly like Superman. A five-year-old boy in Santiago, Chile died after falling from a tenth-floor window. They boy was dressed like Superman. Two little boys in China, brothers, jumped from a fourth-floor window with their arms outstretched, trying to fly like Superman. The outcome was predictable, with one of the children dying.

SLIDE • SUPERHEROES. There's an endless parade of super heroes, and superhero movies are incredibly popular. What is it with people and their fascination with Superheroes? A man is bitten by a radioactive spider, and develops spider-like super-human abilities. A woman sculpted from clay, and granted life by Greek gods, possessing an array of magical powers. (If you look into the lives of her comic book creators, you'll understand something about this on a deeper level.) And of course, Superman, who was born on the planet Krypton, and was adopted by two human parents before developing superhuman abilities. He could fly, he was incredibly strong, he had x-ray vision, and so on.

It's fascinating that the creators of the Superman connected his story with the life of Jesus in many ways. Very early on his mother's name was Mary. His original name was Kal-El - El mean's "God" in Hebrew, and his father's name was similar. He was the son of a god. I expect the writers looked far and wide for inspiration.

SLIDE • SUPERHERO ABILITIES. But this appeals to people. There's the fantasy of it all, and then there's that fascination with having super abilities, with being able to fly or bend steel or deflect bullets being fired. It seems as though your Average Joe would like to be more than he is. Many of the most popular movies of all time are superhero movies.

But we're humans. Not one of us is going to be able to fly, or wear a magical suit of armor, beat all the bad guys and [so on]

SLIDE • BIBLE. But when you come to the Bible, you do find people who were able to do... super-human things.

- Samson.
- Elijah, went 40 days on the strength of one meal.
- Elisha, raised a dead child to life.
- Peter and John, healed a lame man.
- Prophets were able to know where people would be at a given time.

- There were many people in the Bible who could know the future.
- And then Jesus, of course, who raised the dead, multiplied a little boy's lunch, turned water into wine (or juice), healed the sick...

But these weren't super powers, in the mystical, fantasy, super-hero sense. This was power, but it had a special origin, and the fact is, that same power is available to you. The power to raise the dead? Yes. The power to heal the sick? Yes. The power to know the future? Yes. And an even greater power than that.

When you look into the Bible, you see a collection of people who do what no other group of individuals has ever done.

SLIDE • REVELATION 14:1. "And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads."

A group of people, with Jesus, who have triumphed over the beast and its image, shown in the previous chapter. The Father's name? His Character. Not a tattoo. There's a lot here that's symbolic, of course. They're with Jesus, not a Lamb, so if you're wondering, the number is symbolic too. Revelation 7 says they are sealed with the seal of God, so this means they didn't receive the MOB. They chose obedience and faithfulness. They surrendered their lives to Jesus. This is a group you want to be in!

SLIDE • REVELATION. So are they superheroes? Did they have a special power they used? Revelation 6 asks the question, "Who shall be able to stand?" Revelation 7 answers that question by showing you the 144,000, those who stand faithfully for Jesus in Earth's final days, through the times of Earth's great crisis. How did they do it? Are they any more special than anyone else?

SLIDE • REVELATION 14:12 says, "Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." These people had faith in Jesus, and Jesus living and working in their lives.

So let's zero in on this a little more. Jesus died, rose again and went to heaven. So how does Jesus live in the lives of His people today?

SLIDE • JOHN 15:1 KJV. "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman."

SLIDES (2) • JOHN 15:4-7. Look at verse 4 NKJV. "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you."

This is the wonder of the gospel. Colossians 1:27 speaks of the mystery of (**SLIDE • JESUS**) the gospel as being, "Christ in you, the hope of glory."

But how does Jesus abide in His people? He's in heaven, after all.

SLIDE • 1 JOHN 3:24. "Now he who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us."

SLIDE • 1 JOHN 4:13 says, "By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit."

It's the role of the Holy Spirit to bring the personal presence of Jesus into your life. The Godhead consists of three separate Beings. The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. And the Holy Spirit is given to this work for many very important reasons.

SLIDE • JOHN 16:7. Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.

SLIDE • JOHN 16:8. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.

SLIDE • JOHN 16:13. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.

It is the Holy Spirit that brings into your life the power to resist sin, to withstand temptation. It's the Holy Spirit that brings into your life the ability to follow God's way, to live a life that is pleasing to Him.

SLIDE • NOTICE PHILIPPIANS 2:13. "For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure."

If you could work out how to get this gift, the Holy Spirit, wouldn't that be something? You wouldn't be like some super villain in a comic book wanting to get the super powers of superman or whoever it might be. You'd be good to go, wouldn't you? With the power of the Holy Spirit at work in your life? How do we get that blessing? Easy.

SLIDE • LUKE 11:13. If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?

It's that simple. You ask. Listen to these words from Jesus.

SLIDES (2) • LUKE 11:10–12. "So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?"

SLIDE • JESUS/PEOPLE. They'd have thought that was funny. A father giving a son a scorpion instead of an egg, a stone instead of bread. It's an absurd idea, of course, and Jesus is telling you that the idea God wouldn't give you the Holy Spirit—to lead you, comfort you, strengthen you, guide you, transform you—the idea God wouldn't do that for you is just as absurd.

God promises to lead your life.

SLIDE • PSALM 32:8 says, "I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye."

SLIDE • IN PROVERBS 3, God says, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths."

God promises to guide you. That's the work of the Holy Spirit.

Also, God promises to strengthen you against sin. Look at this.

SLIDE • GALATIANS 5:16. “I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.”

SLIDES (2) • ROMANS 8:1, 4–5. “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit...That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.”

SLIDE • JAMES 4:7–8. “Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.” That’s the work done by the Holy Spirit.

SLIDE • 1 CORINTHIANS 10:13. “No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.”

SLIDE • DOVE. The Holy Spirit comes into your life to give you the strength you need in the face of temptation. There’s never any need to feel as though you’re in this battle alone. God promises to give you His Spirit to strengthen and bless you.

So we remember: “Ask and you shall receive.” We remember: “When he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.”

Now what do you think happens if God sends the Spirit of God into your life, or to speak to your heart, and you ignore what the Holy Spirit says? I don’t mean, if you make a mistake. I don’t mean, if you misunderstand. But what happens when God speaks, and you say no?

You know, there are times it’s right to say no. I mean, clearly, if something is unethical or immoral or illegal, that’s a no. But you knew that already. There are times “No” is the best thing you can say.

SLIDE • JOBS. The late Steve Jobs of Apple said, “People think focus means saying yes to the thing you’ve got to focus on. But that’s not what it means at all. It means saying no to the hundred other good ideas that there are. You have to pick carefully. I’m actually as proud of the things we haven’t done as the things I have done. Innovation is saying no to 1,000 things.” Sometimes, the best thing you can say is No.

SLIDE • BUFFETT. Businessman Warren Buffett once said, “The difference between successful people and very successful people is that very successful people say no to almost everything.”

SLIDE • KID. Parents often need to say No to their children.

SLIDE • STAFF. Bosses need to say no to employees and sometimes vice versa.

15 or 20 years ago, a CEO said No to Walmart. Walmart is the promised land for manufacturers, but one company knew it wasn’t the place for them. What happens is this. Walmart wants to sell your product, but they want to sell it cheaper—usually cheaper than you can afford to make it. So, what YOU do is manufacture a cheaper version of your product, and to do that you might even manufacture offshore to get your costs down. Snapper Mowers—which for years had a reputation for building quality mowers that lasted forever—sold at that time 80 percent of its products through independent dealers, but Walmart wanted to build their outdoor power-equipment business around the Snapper brand. They wanted Walmart and Snapper to join hands and go head-to-head against the home-improvement superstores like Lowes and Home Depot. But Snapper products were never cheap, and the CEO knew that in order to thrive in the Walmart ecosystem, they’d have to become cheaper, and, maybe, cheap. The man from Snapper knew that if they got into a partnership with

Walmart, before long they'd be in a death spiral. Snapper instantly gave up almost 20 percent of its business. The man said, No.

Was it the right decision? It's hard to know. Maybe. But it was right for him at that time. Sometimes you say No. But do you ever say No to God?

When the Holy Spirit speaks to your heart, what do you say? Jesus called to some fishermen and said, "Follow me." They followed. God called the Rich Young Ruler. "Sell what you have and give it to the poor, and follow me." He did not. Who were the wise ones? Earthy fishermen, who spent their days toiling? Or the wealthy young man who lived a life of comparative ease? The answer is obvious. Which one are you?

SLIDES (2) • MATTHEW 12:31–32. "Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come."

We know that God is willing to forgive all sin. So how can there be an unpardonable sin? What is the unpardonable sin?

SLIDE • PREACHING. When Peter was preaching in Jerusalem at Pentecost, just a few weeks after Jesus had died, the Holy Spirit began speaking to hearts. And they sensed the Holy Spirit speaking to them.

SLIDE • ACTS 2:37. "Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

The answer came back...

SLIDE • ACTS 2:38. "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

SLIDE • DOVE. The Holy Spirit speaks with that still small voice that says, Give your heart to God. Surrender to Jesus and follow Him. What happens if we don't respond when the H.S. convicts us, calls us follow Jesus? It gets harder to hear God's voice. It's like hitting the snooze button on an alarm clock.

SLIDE • EPHESIANS 4:30. "And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption."

SLIDE • JAMES 4:17 says, "Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin."

You don't want to grieve the spirit of God. Don't go on in a way you know is not pleasing to God. If it's time for you to make some things right with God, do it now.

SLIDE • PENTECOST. 1 Thessalonians 5:19 "Do not quench the Spirit."

You don't want to pour cold water on the leading of the Holy Spirit. And that's what many people do. God calls, and they say, "Maybe later." God calls, and they say, "Not now." God calls, and they say, "That's a great idea. Let me think about it." As though they have tomorrow! As though they have a limitless future! "I'll get around to it!" And while you're getting around to it, the devil is inventing scheme after scheme to get you to hit the pause button. Family members will advise you not to be

hasty. Friends will tell you not to take it too seriously. The devil will try to sidetrack you. I suggest you don't give him the opportunity.

When we tell God we're not going to follow Him, we're on the road to committing the unpardonable sin, because we're hearing God's voice and we say, "Not now." You know what children are like? You can ask a child to do something, and that child will say, "Okay." If he or she doesn't act right away, they can tune you out, so that you can be calling to them and they don't hear you. We do that with God.

When the Holy Spirit calls us to follow Jesus, when we say no to Him, we're making it harder for God to get through to us.

SLIDE • ROMANS 8:14. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God." The true child of God sees what the Bible says, hears the Holy Spirit speaking, and follows where He leads.

SLIDE • PSALM 51:11. "Do not cast me away from Your presence, and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me."

SLIDE • GENESIS 6:3. "My Spirit shall not strive with man forever..."

SLIDE • NOAH'S ARK. There came a time when God shut the ark.

The Unpardonable Sin, blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, is not a type of sin, but a condition in sin. When we willfully choose not follow the convicting voice of the Holy Ghost, we make it harder for God to get through to us.... We distance ourselves from God, until we can no longer hear His voice. Callouses of resistance develop on our heart. The Holy Spirit can no longer reach us. When we shut out His voice calling us to repentance, we are on the path to committing the Unpardonable Sin.

When God speaks to us, and we continue to refuse to follow Him, eventually we will no longer hear His voice, eventually we will commit the Unpardonable Sin. Why is it never forgiven? Because it is never confessed. It can be anything. That thing you will not give to Jesus becomes the Unpardonable Sin for you.

To continue to resist what Jesus asks, or to keep on doing what He asks us not to, will lead us to committing the Unpardonable Sin.

The Unpardonable Sin is not murder, or worshiping graven images. God can forgive those things. But when the Holy Spirit woos us, speaks to us, and it could be only a small thing, to do anything else but follow Jesus, to deny the One who died for us, is to go down that track. Whatever prevents you following Jesus, whatever you hold onto that stops you from giving God your heart, that becomes Unpardonable Sin. When the Holy Spirit calls, we need to act immediately.

SLIDES (2) • ACTS 24:24-25. "And after some days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish, he sent for Paul and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. Now as he reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and answered, "Go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you."

Felix trembled.

Speaking to King Agrippa, Paul said,

SLIDE • ACTS 26:27-28. "King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you do believe. Then Agrippa said to Paul, "You almost persuade me to become a Christian."

Would you be like the people in Jesus' story who were invited to a feast? One said, "I've bought some land and I need to go and see it. I can't come to the feast." Another said he had oxen he needed to try out. Another said he was newly married and therefore could not accept the invitation to the feast. They were just excuses. Why would you say No to the man who invites you to the great supper. Jesus said, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." And He said, "Whoever comes to me I will in no wise cast out."

There's going to be a great feast, a great supper one day. God is inviting you now to be there. Salvation is the greatest invitation you have ever received. God won't force your hand, of course, but He'll speak to your heart and draw you and attract you and do all He can to demonstrate to you the reality of His love. And the beauty of what He offers.

Hebrews 2:3 asks us a searching question.

SLIDE • HEBREWS 2:3. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation."

Not "reject", but "neglect". If we neglect to follow Christ, accept His word, how can we be saved? The answer is, we cannot.

Are you wrestling over doing the will of God?

SLIDE • JOHN 14:15. If you love me...

Are you hesitating about being baptized?

When Ananias spoke to Saul who became Paul he said,

SLIDE • ACTS 22:16. "And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord."

SLIDE • SECOND COMING.



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