

Seeing the Finish Line

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Good morning to all of you. Here's a little memory test. Does anyone recognize the name Derek Redmond? Don't be bashful. You don't need to shout it out or anything. Nobody? Not a one. Okay. Well, actually that's not really fair of me, because if you recognize the name "Derek Redmond," you'd have to go back to the 1992 Olympics which were held in Barcelona, Spain. Derrick Redman was a young, black, British athlete who competed in the 400-meter race. As the story goes, the race began and Derek was running in the pack, where he should be. At about 150 meters into the race, he just comes to a halt. He takes a few staggering steps and falls onto the track. He collapsed right there. He snapped a hamstring muscle. He said later on that the pain was so excruciating that he could hardly breathe. He said he thought he had been shot; he felt so bad. Anyhow, he struggled to his feet and the EMTs were bringing the stretcher out. Most people would have opted for the stretcher so they could get to Emergency to take care of the injury. Meanwhile, his father came out of the bleachers and he headed for Derek on the track. The security personnel were all trying to stop him. He brushed them aside, saying, "He's my son, he's my son." He ran over and grabbed Derek and helped him to his feet. Derek is crying on his Dad's shoulder because of the pain. He said, "Dad, I have to go to the finish line." His dad said, "Son, you don't have to do this." Derek said, "Yes, I do Dad. I have to." So his dad helped him. Remember he's got 250 meters to go. So he's trying to get to the finish line. He sees the finish line. That's his goal; that's his focus. That's where he is going. So his dad helped him. They stumble along and just as they get to the finish line, his dad let go of Derek and let him go across the finish line all by himself.

You know, that's a great story because there are 65,000 spectators watching that race that day. They all came to their feet and gave Derek a standing ovation. What a great, inspiring story that is. You can imagine how his father felt when his son crossed the finish line. If you actually want to see a video of that, I believe there's a YouTube video if you just Google 1992 Olympics, you will see the story of Derek Redmond. There's probably an official record somewhere, but nobody knows who actually won that race, but they remember that young man and the courage he had.

Spiritually speaking, we too have a finish line. Let's turn to Luke 12, if you would please. I watched that video and it kind of brought tears to my eyes seeing the struggle they were going through. I just couldn't help but empathize with the father because we are kind of in the same situation. It says here in Luke 12:31 and 32; I'm using a New King James unless I indicate otherwise. You remember the context here in Luke 12. He's telling his disciples, "Don't worry about all the stuff, all the things that you need to think about normally, what you wear, what you eat." He says, "Don't worry about that. This is what you should focus on. This is what you should look at."

Luke 12:31. *But seek the Kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you. (NKJV)*

32) *Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*

You can kind of relate to the emotion that God has when we are actually, finally in His kingdom, because that is our finish line, to be in God's Kingdom. It's not a waypoint along the way, it's not a place of safety no matter how much we want to hope for that and hope that we'll have that point of refuge, but it's God's Kingdom. He says, "Your Father's good pleasure." You can look that up in some other translation. You can look at the Greek, Aramaic, you can look at it all, but what it really means is that as far as God is concerned, it's a done deal for you and I to be in His kingdom. It's just there waiting. Let's go to Luke 15 and add a little bit more to this. In verse 7, remember the context here. It's the parable of the lost sheep, the whole point being that God's love encompasses everyone. He doesn't wish that anyone should perish. He wants everyone eventually to be in His kingdom, at a minimum to have that opportunity.

Luke 15:7. *I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance. (NKJV)*

You can just imagine the emotion there will be at God's throne when we are resurrected, when we are coronated with Christ and become part of God's Kingdom. We become spirit beings. The best way to relate to the emotion is that of a wedding. What does everybody like about a wedding? I don't know what you like, but the favorite thing for me is to see the bride coming down the aisle. Marie and I redid our vows on our 25th Anniversary. Some of the gals in our Church got together. They probably felt sorry for us, but we were married before that! We were married by a J.P. But anyway, they wanted us to redo the vows. I'll tell you what, when Marie was walking down that aisle in that beautiful dress, I thought my heart was going to come out of my chest. We will have our 49th this coming year.

But, once again, just think about the pleasure that God, Jesus Christ and the angels are going to have. Think of that picture of 65,000 people giving that young man a standing ovation for what he did. If God's Kingdom is our finish line, and it is, that's where we're headed, that's where we are going, that should be our goal and focus, but we kind of lose sight of that once in a while, don't we?

The question I would like to ask is, how clearly do we see ourselves in God's Kingdom ... making it to that finish line? If you want a title to this, I've just entitled it, Seeing the Finish Line. Do we see it?

We're here at the Feast picturing the beginning actually of a new government on the earth. We are going to be a part of that. We're going to be part of God's government, because God's government is going to replace all the governments that are on the earth. Let's see a little bit of that in Revelation 17. Let's background this a bit.

Revelation 17:1. *Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and talked with me, saying to me, "Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters,*

Note the word "judgment". We're going to see that again. That's going to become very important to us.

2) *"with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication."*

We won't go through the symbolism here. We've been through that many times.

3) *So he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness. And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast [which was] full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. (NKJV)*

4) *The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication.*

Verse 5 puts a name to this harlot.

5) *And on her forehead a name [was] written: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.*

Christ is not bashful at all about naming this particular thing that is going to come on the earth. We will get into that a bit more later.

6) *I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And when I saw her, I marveled with great amazement.*

7) *But the angel said to me, "Why did you marvel? I will tell you the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carries her, which has the seven heads and the ten horns." (NKJV)*

Remember when we had the old booklets on Revelation and we got a graphic picture of what all this was going to look like.

8) *"The beast that you saw was and is not, and will ascend out of the bottomless pit and go to perdition. And those who dwell on the earth will marvel, whose names are not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world (that's not God's people; that's not us, that's the world) when they see the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.*

9) *"Here [is] the mind which has wisdom: The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits."*

That kind of nails it down geographically.

10) *“There are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, [and] the other has not yet come. And when he comes, he must continue a short time.*

11) *“The beast that was, and is not, is himself also the eighth, and is of the seven, and is going to perdition.”*

We’ve gone through that before. We’re going to go to Daniel in a little bit and I won’t try to explain all this because, I don’t know about you, but I can’t keep all this straight. I’ve got to have the charts. I’ve got to have study notes in front of me from all the things we’ve covered over the years. Let’s go to verse 14.

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.”* (that’s us)

15) *Then he said to me, “The waters which you saw, where the harlot sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations and tongues.”* (NKJV)

We know that seas and waters represent people; they represent nations and all of that. So we have a picture here of a system of government that is going to come about in the end time. Also, to background a little more, what’s the beginning of all this?

We’ll be turning to the book of Daniel because this is part of the whole picture. Again, I’m just forming up something for us. God revealed to Daniel the prelude to this government, this world’s system that we’re going to see, particularly in the western part of civilization in this end time up until the coming of Christ actually. We know that the origin of that system can be traced back to ancient Babylon. We’ve got old Nebuchadnezzar in Babylon. The Babylonian system actually set the model for what we will see and actually do see in part. We have all the symbolism and imagery that we could put some speculation and theories to, but do have indicators that we can see. Those are the things that we should be watching, things that we know will happen.

Going back to that Babylonian system, we can see it was an organized government that merged religion and government together. Actually, in the end times, it will merge some other things. That was the pattern that we see back in Daniel. The prophecies in Daniel clearly indicate that this whole Babylonian system is going to be reproduced again in the end. If we look at that and can actually see the indicators and pieces, we can see that the centers of government, the centers of powers change. That’s going on around us every day. Sometimes we can pick up on it, sometimes we can’t. We know also that it’s going to be a religious, economic, political and, therefore, out of necessity, a military system. It’s going to rise out of the crisis in everything we see going on around us today. Whether we want to recognize it or not, and it’s easy for us to lose sight of things and lose sight of our finish line. We get a little numb or desensitized to the crises that are going on around us, and there’s a lot of it. There’s not going to be a vacuum when it

comes to governing this world. Something is going to fill that. Satan will be right there; he's going to make sure that it's filled.

Let's go to Daniel 2. Nebuchadnezzar had a dream. We've been through this many times. He wants to know the interpretation of the dream. He's going to kill everyone who couldn't tell him what his dream was. Nebuchadnezzar wants the interpretation of that dream, of that image. Daniel and his friends didn't want to be killed because they were lumped in with the astrologers and others.

Daniel 2:28. *"But there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets [Daniel is telling this to the king], and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days. [what's going to come in our lifetime probably] Your dream, and the visions of your head upon your bed, were these:*

29) "As for you, O king, thoughts came to your mind while on your bed, about what would come to pass after this [in the future]; and He who reveals secrets has made known to you what will be. (NKJV)

39) "But as for me, this secret has not been revealed to me because I have more wisdom than anyone living, but for [our] sakes who make known the interpretation to the king, and that you may know the thoughts of your heart."

It's interesting, I heard a minister say that the "our sakes" was actually talking to the people that God was working with at that time. We know there were four there, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. They had been given pagan Babylonian names. We won't go into all that. We've been through that before as well. Actually, try some of those names they were given: Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego. Try your spell checker on those! You're going to have a real problem.

We can see by the few examples given in Daniel, because there are some examples where God helped them. God helped them for one reason, because they trusted and obeyed God. That's why they were helped. They had the incident right off the bat in Daniel with the unclean food. They were having a substantial issue there until God intervened and they were allowed to have the kind of food they requested because they wouldn't eat the unclean food. They actually thrived on the other food.

Then there was the incident where they refused to worship the idol. God intervened for them again, didn't He? They survived the furnace, the three friends. Towards the end of the book, we have the example of Daniel who wouldn't change his prayer habits. He was praying to the true God and they threw him to the lions and he survived that. The whole point is again, they looked to and trusted in the true God because they knew who the true God was. They didn't have any question in their mind. In that Babylonian system they would not survive.

We can see a type of that. We wouldn't survive either without God's help. We know that. We understand that perfectly. In Revelation 18:4, just as a reference scripture, it says,

Revelation 18:4. *“Come out of her my people, lest you share in her sins and lest you receive of her plagues.”*

So God wanted the people He was working with on a personal level at that time to know His long-range plan. We can see part of that today. Back then, they saw some of the pieces. We can put the pieces together a little more accurately because of history and all the things that have happened in our time. So, by extension, we can know the same thing. We do understand some of the symbols and imagery and we know that this evil system is going to be replaced by a righteous system.

We know too that what Nebuchadnezzar saw was this enormous statue of a man with different parts composed with different materials, the gold, the silver, the iron, the feet of iron and clay mixed which is an indicator because iron and clay don't mix. When I went to college, I had a metallurgic course and nobody heard of trying to merge dirt and iron. It just won't work. It's not chemically possible. But what it points to is an instability in the feet of that image, and we know that the image Nebuchadnezzar saw was actually broken up. It was destroyed by the rock, which represented Christ, who in the end time would break that up. Here again is an indicator. It is instability and we can see the instability in the crises in the world around us now. Just about anywhere you care to look, you're going to see that instability. We know it's going to be unstable economically, politically and again, we have a bunch of that.

We could also see in Revelation 17:18 (we won't turn there) but it tells us a lot about this system in the last days. Major indicators will be financial or economic. Revelation, as we know in chapters 17 and 18, talks about the merchants of the earth. There's going to be international trade going at a certain point for a limited amount of time. We remember in those scriptures where it does come to an end and the ship masters say, "Woe is me!" They stand off and look at this system and its not functioning or operating anymore, but it was for a while. They can't sell anything. Nobody buys their stuff anymore, is what they're complaining about. So, right at the end there's an indicator there. At least for a period of time, there's going to be a very prosperous world. Even then we have that instability. We can see the ups and downs. All we have to do is look at the U.S. financial crisis. If we don't really think we're in a crisis, look at the huge debt and the ups and downs of the stock market.

Like everyone else, we watch the news. I mainly watch it for the weather reports because I golf. I don't really do well in snow and stuff like that, although I have played in the snow. If you're on a well-maintained golf course, they will sweep the snow off the greens, but where do you find the ball in between? It doesn't work very well.

But the news is an indicator. Watch the stock market. It goes up, it goes down, it goes up and down. What it's doing is responding to different events in the world, things that we can't really see. It's responding to shortages of commodities. It's responding to unemployment. It's responding to the economic conditions of other countries. There are all kinds of things going on. It goes up and it goes down. I don't recall ever seeing it take such drastic ups and downs, so that's an indicator.

Most of the time, we watch the news for the weather and the stock market report, etc., because we have millions of dollars in there ... Yea, right! I am entertained mostly by the comics in the newspaper. I like the one that used to be "Far Side" so that tells you a lot about me. Gary Larson was one of my favorite cartoonists. I like the one where this guy has the "Last Word Cemetery". I love those. These are the last words that are on the tombstone. One of them said ... "Why hire an electrician?"

In one editorial, they were extolling the present administration with all the entitlements and benefits, and were saying how great it was. Someone answered that editorial and said, "Yea, you enjoy all those things. The next time you talk to a toddler, thank him, because they're the ones who are going to pay for all this." That's right. We have a financial crisis.

A lot has to happen. We don't know exactly what we're going to see, but there's going to be a fundamental change in the financial system and economy of the world. Yes, the Middle East will probably be part of it. Again, there's a commodity there, right? All these things are indicators. In order for that type of a system to thrive and survive, it has to come up with new laws and all kinds of things to protect itself, to protect the system. We can see those indicators in Revelation 17 and 18, and you can go through that. It's all going to evolve into what we've known for years, called the mark of the beast. That is the term used in scripture.

Coinciding with that, we're also going to see a great false church. We're going to see a church with a charismatic false prophet. He's going to be able to mesmerize people. They will believe what he says. It's a controlling mechanism. We're also going to see a ruler that's called the beast, who is also very charismatic. It's just going to happen that way. We know, too, that this entire system is Satan inspired. God dethroned Satan and he craves power. The trouble is, it's always evil power. It's a system that was developed and started in Babylon and we see it shaping again today. These conditions exist. They are happening.

The point for us is, while all this is going on, we're going to be asked to step in and take a part in this whole thing, because we're going to be given a job. We can look at that academically and say, "Wow, that's a pretty big picture." Again, we have to ask ourselves, "Can I see myself in God's Kingdom? Can I see my part in it? Can I see myself in a functioning role in God's Kingdom?" We can go through life in our little comfort zone, in our own protective boxes in life and we kind of lose sight of that. We're not here today because God looked down and seeing a bunch of weak, foolish people, a bunch of base things and saying to Christ, "Well, let's just help them out." That's not why we're here. That's not what we're doing. We're here because God is going to replace this corrupt system that is coming on the earth. God's government will replace that, comprised of His family, His children. That is what we are in training now to do. Tom mentioned a little bit of that in the sermonette.

Let's go to Daniel 7 and see what it talks about there. He is being shown the final days of that governing system called Babylon the Great. It's what we see forming today, actually. What we're seeing today is kind of an outgrowth of that system. It started in Babylon and there it's a coordinated system between the merchants, the government and religion. That's been going on through time but it's going to coalesce into this world dominating system. We have to consider the factor too that ancient Rome, which is represented by the iron on the image, and even right down to the end being mixed with clay. It's an unstable religious system. We can see how Rome, whenever they conquered a country and took it over, they would absorb the government of that country. Sometimes they would leave a puppet in place, but whose laws did they follow? They were Roman laws. We see that in the New Testament, even though they let the Jews in some measure self-govern and take care of themselves. We look at what's going to be formulated. In ancient Rome, they would actually fund the religion, so they could control the people. They funded and controlled the idols, the worship systems and all that and they could control the people. That is what they did. Don't we see that in a lot of countries today? The mobs and the riots, they would like to have us believe that these are spontaneous, but it is not. We know the clerics and people are behind that. Let's look in Daniel 7. We know this chapter parallels chapter 2. It talks about defining four separate empires and their eventual destruction, but it also points to a fifth empire that will be formed. We will have a part of it. This Babylonian system will be removed.

Daniel 7:7. *After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, exceedingly strong. It had huge iron teeth; it was devouring, breaking in pieces and trampling the residue with its feet. It [was] different from all the beasts that [were] before it, and it had ten horns. (NKJV)*

This is coming right down to the end time.

8) I was considering the horns, and there was another horn, a little one, coming up among them, before whom three of the first horns were plucked out by the roots. And there, in this horn, [were] eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking pompous words.

Again, we've gone through the sequence of the rise and fall of these empires and the individuals involved in them. Again, this is an indicator, because what we see here is an individual with great arrogance coming on the scene, speaking these pompous words.

9) I watched till thrones (thrones symbolize rulership) were put in place, and the Ancient of Days was seated (that's talking about God the Father); His garment [was] white as snow, and the hair of His head [was] like pure wool. His throne [was] a fiery flame, its wheels a burning fire; (NKJV)

And we've heard before the symbolism that what looked like wheels of fire are the spinning wings of the angels that are around God's throne.

10) A fiery stream issued and came forth from before Him. A thousand thousands ministered to Him; ten thousand times ten thousand (angelic beings) stood before Him. The court was seated, and the books were opened. (NKJV)

A judgment was going to be made and that's an important time for us, because we're going to be there and have part in that judgment. It's a judgment against that system, Satan's Babylonian system.

13) I was watching in the night visions, and behold, [One] like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! ...

So we come to this time, the court is seated, the judgment is about to take place. This Babylonian system that we see shaping up in the world right now is going to come to an end. This takes place where it says...

13b) ...He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him.

What's going on here is Christ is being brought before God's throne for two reasons: (1) for His own coronation; and (2) to present His bride to the Father.

That's what is going on here.

14) 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,...

This is that fifth empire that will last forever.

14b) ...Which shall not pass away, and His kingdom [the one] which shall not be destroyed.

That's actually where you and I get involved. We're going to become part of this, and this is a picture of this. Hold your place in Daniel, but I'd like to go to Revelation 20:4, where it says,

Revelation 20:4. *And I saw thrones (again, positions of rulership), and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. (To us) ...*

Now think about that for a minute, because at the beginning of God's Kingdom, judgments are going to be made. It comes right back to the question of, how do we see ourselves making these judgments? Do we see ourselves as judges making judgments? How can we be ruling and qualified to make these judgments? Remember, all these empires, all these rulers of the earth down through time haven't been able to get anything right, but we have to. We are going to. How are we going to do that? Let's continue...

4b) ...Then I [saw] the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshipped the beast or his image, and had not received [his] mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

So when Christ takes over, we are going to be part of that world ruling government for a thousand years and beyond. Let's go back to Daniel 7:17. Again, we're kind of drawing a picture here. Those of us who are still awake are maybe seeing that picture!

Daniel 7:17. *Those great beasts, which are four, [are] four kings [which] arise out of the earth.*

We know that the four kingdoms were the Babylonian, the Persian, the Greco-Macedonian of Alexander the Great, and the Roman Empire. In the end, we're going to see a re-emergence of a king of a consolidated version of this system.

21) I was watching; and the same horn was making war against the saints, and prevailing against them,

So before we receive these positions of government, these positions of judging, we're going to have to go through this war. We hope everyone won't have to do that, but there's going to be a war against the Church. In all of our years that we've been in the Church, we haven't seen a lot of heavy persecution. Like someone said, "We've been kind of a blessed generation of the Church." We haven't had that much, but this war against the saints is not a very pleasant thought. We most likely will face a very serious persecution. We have to remember why we are being called. We're going to talk about how we are going to get there and how we are going to qualify and assume the responsibilities we have, because that is why God has called us; not because He didn't have anything to do or we didn't either. We have a reason to be called.

22) Until the Ancient of Days came, and a judgment was made [in favor] of the saints of the Most High (so at this point, the court's on our side), and the time came for the saints to possess the kingdom.

All of our lives, everything we've been up to before now, everything we've done, all the trials we went through, everything has been about God's Kingdom and this time. It's pointing to this time. It's going to come to this point where the saints are going to possess the kingdom. That's what these scriptures very clearly tell us. The government is going to be in our hands under Christ.

23) Thus he said: "The fourth beast shall be a fourth kingdom on earth, which shall be different from all [other] kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, trample it and break it in pieces.

Historically, that is what the Roman government did, it kind of jumps back and forth here.

24) The ten horns [are] ten kings [who] shall arise from this kingdom. And another shall rise after them; he shall be different from the first [ones], and shall subdue three kings.

25) He shall speak [pompous] words against the Most High, shall persecute the saints of the Most High,...

Right here, it's coming down to the time of the end and how God's Kingdom is going to work. The face of this individual is very pompous, very arrogant; he is running things in the world, he's craving more and more power and people are going to throw their support behind this leader. We may think, "Well how could people do that? How could people throw their support behind a guy like this?" He's a nut, but just think back to the 1930's what happened. We saw that. It wasn't time for God's Kingdom to happen, but what was going on? There was a financial crisis and there was a huge depression in Europe. Somebody came along and he promised everything. Like somebody said, "He promised a chicken in every pot and a Volkswagen in every garage." Adolf Hitler, and look what happened. I got into trouble once because I said something about the Nazis because they thought it was a great system. They were prosperous and everyone had a job. What they failed to mention, and I pointed out, was that a lot of that was built on the back of human slavery. If we look in Revelation, we will see that's going on too, they're dealing in everything, even human slaves. We can look back and see what brought about that change and it was financial. A big indicator, it just wasn't time for God's Kingdom.

Mr. Armstrong thought that Hitler was the beast and that the Babylonian kingdom was forming. It just wasn't time for it. Let's continue the verse.

25b) ...And shall intend to change times and law. Then [the saints] shall be given into his hand for a time and times and half a time. (And we know what that is)

27) 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.

Again, that describes the coronation of the bride of Christ and when we come into the picture.

Again, it's very plain that we are going to have those responsibilities. Someone asked me what scriptures I was going to use. I wanted to say, "Well, all of them!" We can see in many places where we are going to have this job, these responsibilities.

Again, the question for us is, do we see ourselves having the qualifications? Do we see ourselves in God's Kingdom, at the finish line, being changed and in God's Kingdom?

Let's go to Zechariah 14. Again here is a projection, here's a prophecy right down to the end. We probably read this every Feast of Tabernacles.

Zechariah 14:1. *Behold, the day of the Lord is coming (this is a time setting) and your spoil will be divided in your midst.*

He's talking to Jerusalem, if we look at the context.

2) *For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem; the city shall be taken, the houses rifled, and the women ravished. (talking about horrible times) Half of the city shall go into captivity, but the remnant of the people shall not be cut off from the city.*

We can't tell exactly what's going to happen there. Let's go down to verse 4.

4) *And in that day (again, a time setting) His feet (Christ's feet) will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, from east to west, [making] a very large valley; half of the mountain shall move toward the north and half of it toward the south. (NKJV)*
5) *Then you shall flee [through] my mountain valley, for the mountain valley shall reach to Azal. Yes, you shall flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah King of Judah. Thus the Lord my God will come, [and] all the saints with You. (Some translations say, "with Him.")*

So again it shows there in the context where the saints (us, as spirit beings) are actually going to emerge on the scene as all this takes place. That's where we come in. If we get the context, the whole picture there, it should have a great deal of an impact on us. We review this every year at the Feast and at other times during the year, but again, do we clearly see our place in that?

Let's go over to Matthew 19:28. We know the context: it will be easier for a rich man to go through the eye of a needle than to be in God's Kingdom. The disciples were amazed at that, because they were impressed with the wealthy. We're kind of that way too, aren't we? All things being equal, we would rather live in a mansion than a 2,400 square foot house.

The disciples wondered, "Who can be saved?" That's a question for us also. How can we be saved?

Matthew 19:28. *So Jesus said to them, "Assuredly I say to you, that in the re-generation, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory (talking to disciples, soon to be apostles), you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. (NKJV)*

As we know, as we go on here, the disciples said they had lost everything, but what He tells them in the last part of verse 29, that if you've left everything, if you've given everything to obey Me, to follow Me and live My way of life, you will receive everything one hundred-fold, plus you're going to inherit everlasting life. We look at the disciples in the New Testament and like I said many times, you take away the electronics and mechanics and everything we have today and you have the same people and the same human nature. It's the things we deal with all the time, the things the Bible deals with all the time, but were these guys any different from us? No, not really. These guys were a cross section of everything. They had tax collectors, fishermen, (maybe truck drivers?) No. Maybe boat drivers! They had a little bit of everything then. The point is, Christ didn't go around looking for people that were qualified to do the things that He was going to have us do. He didn't go around looking for brilliant government administrators and all that. The Jews had a lot of very smart people. There were lawyers and they were baiting Christ all the time. He didn't choose those guys. He chose those who had fish stink on them. They had calluses on their hands from handling the nets. He said, "I'm going to make you fishers of men."

Go back to Matthew 17. We're going to get a glimpse of how it's going to be.

Matthew 17:1. *Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves;*
2) *and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light.*
3) *And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him.*
4) *Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles (Did they understand what tabernacles meant? Sure.): one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah."*

What we see here is a vision of the transformation that occurs when a human being is changed into a spirit being. We know from Romans 8:29 that Christ was the first born among many brethren. It wasn't a one-time deal; it's going to happen again. So that means that we too are going to be transformed, just like this vision they saw. We have to ask ourselves, how are we going to get there? How is this going to happen? We get this little glimpse here, but do we realize that we are going to be as different then compared to what we are now as Christ was then? We are going to be that different. That's an incredible image of ourselves, if you want to put it that way. We think about the incredible ability that God is going to give us. It is incredible power and God is going to give that to us, once we have made that transformation. Again, we wonder, how is this going to work? How are we going to do this? How is all of this going to come about?

There is an elderly man who belongs with another group, but he attends with us whenever he has the opportunity. He has all kinds of health problems. I was visiting with him recently. He was running through the list of his health problems. He has circulation problems, breathing problems and all kinds of things going on. He said, "Jack, if I repeat myself, don't pay any attention to me. My memory is kind of fading." I'm sitting

there thinking, he's in his mid-80's and I'm impressed that he can remember that he has a memory. The first thing to go is the memory, right? Our memory gets a little fuzzy as we get older. It just happens.

When I made my living as an instructor, a huge problem for us was retention. It's a big problem for any teaching industry. There are all kinds of figures, statistics, etc. You pump a bunch of information at someone or a class like we did. Sometimes I had a class of fifty or sixty people and I knew they weren't going to walk out of that classroom with everything I tried to tell them. This was a nuclear power plant and it's kind of important that they remember some of it. So retention was a very big piece of that.

But what if we had perfect recall? What if we had perfect retention? What if we could know every word in the Bible and know exactly how to apply it? What if we could do that? What if we had no pain, no physical aches, nothing to slow us down? We adults would look at kids and say, "I wish I had half of their energy." We look at them now and say we would settle for one percent. But just think about the phenomenal difference we are going to experience compared to how we are today. Again, we ask this question: How can we rule in God's Kingdom? How can we be qualified to do that? Right now we are just a fraction of what God is going to make us, just a little bitty piece of it. We need to think also that what we're going to become is so overwhelming. We need to consider this concept, and I think we do if we seriously meditate about it. God has to leave us in this fragile condition because He needs to know one thing. He needs to know what is going to qualify us. He has to know what's going to last. He has to know what's in our hearts and minds and He has to know it's going to stay there. He's not going to give us that transformation if He doesn't know that. We won't cross that finish line. We simply won't be there.

So what does God need to know? Let's turn to Mark 1 and verse 14. This is one of the first scriptures we ever learned coming into the truth.

Mark 1:14. *Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, 15) and saying, "The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel." (NKJV)*

Every time Christ talked about the kingdom of God, somewhere in the context there if you look at it closely, it's going to be repentance, it's going to change. That's all repentance means. It just means that we see ourselves. God calls us and shows us ourselves; we repent and we change. That's what happens when we are baptized. We come to a certain knowledge, we see ourselves, we see that we need to change, we see ourselves in relation to God and we ask for baptism. We are baptized and hands are laid on us, God gives us His Holy Spirit and from that point, it's like going from point A to point B, the finish line. Our lives change and should change dramatically.

Where do we get that information? from God's word, right? This whole thing again and how we meet those requirements of being in God's Kingdom, we need to ask ourselves

again. Let's turn to Matthew 19 to see what we need to do and how we get there. We know this is the story of the rich young ruler.

Matthew 19:16. *Now behold, one came and said to Him (this young ruler), "Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?"*

That's getting right down to the question we are asking here. What do we need to do in order to obtain this transformation into a spirit being?

17) *So He said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one [is] good but One, [that is] God. ...*

That's what we go through our entire lifetime, don't we? God is good. Christ wouldn't even take that credit to Himself, because He was in human form, but we look at ourselves especially in the spring when we examine ourselves. We look at ourselves and it isn't so good. We want to be like Christ. We want to be like God. That's the ideal. Someone mentioned the other day, Matthew 5:48, where it says become perfect. That doesn't mean partially. That means perfect. If you look up that word, that's what it means. That is the goal to shoot for, to become perfect.

17b) *...But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments."*

This brings us right to what's important to God. If you want to enter into life, keep the commandments. Now we're not talking about a pharisaical approach where you can keep the commandments and somehow earn salvation. It doesn't mean that at all. Verse 18 explains a little more.

18) *He said to Him, "Which ones?" ...*

He wanted to put a tape measure on it. What do I really have to do? What can I get away with? What's enough? 50 percent? 80 percent? 90 percent?

18b) *...Jesus said, (He's quoting Exodus 20. Right out of the things we will be teaching as spirit beings.) "You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not bear false witness.*

19) *"Honor your father and your mother, and you shall love your neighbor as yourself."*

He's consolidating the entire principal of the Ten Commandments. Let's read something else He said. Let's go back to Matthew 13, one of the parables. This sheds a little more light on it. I heard this once from the New Century Version and I will use that, because it does make it a little more "tellable". I adopt words from my grandkids, so I might say something strange. Did I ever mention that our grandkids live right across the street? That's an inside joke.

Matthew 13:18. *So listen to the meaning of the story about the farmer*

19) What is the seed that fell by the road? The seed is like the person that hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it. The evil one comes and takes away what was planted in that person's heart. (New Century)

That's kind of the state the world is in, just doesn't get it. They don't hear it and don't get it.

20) And what is the seed that fell on the rocky ground? This seed is like the person who hears the teaching and quickly accepts it with joy.

And we know we've heard many times before, we have four categories here. The first people don't get it, which represents the majority of people today. No matter what they hear, no matter the way they hear it, they don't get it. The second one gets it and even accepts it and goes for a little while, but when things come up, they let it go. It kind of explains some of the experiences we've had in the Church. There were people who got it, accepted it, but didn't stay with it.

21) But he does not let the teachings go deep into his life, but keeps it only a short time (That's why it happens.) and when trouble or persecution comes because of the teaching, he quickly gives up.

It may be a problem at home, a problem on the job, it may be persecution over the sabbath or holy days, it may be a serious illness. People give up over those things. People who are in a lot of pain all the time, they're hurting and suffering and they give up. Again, as it says here, the teachings of God's way of life doesn't run deep in us. That's what needs to happen.

22) What is the seed that fell among thorny weeds? That seed is like the person that hears the teaching but lets the worries of this life and the temptations of wealth stop the teaching from growing.

It just doesn't grow. Many times someone in this condition will repeat the same mistakes over and over again, spiritually they wither and die. That's what this is saying. But notice in all cases here, they hear the message, but hearing the message doesn't make the changes we need. It doesn't produce fruit in our lives. It's not just hearing the messages, we have to do something with them. Now verse 23, the fourth category, where we want to be.

23) What is the seed that fell on good ground? That seed is like the person that hears the teaching and understands it (really gets it); that person grows and produces fruit, sometimes a hundred times, sometimes sixty, sometimes thirty.

But there is growth, there is development that takes place in that person's life spiritually.

I'll just read the following verse from Isaiah. Again we use this many times. It looks like from the warden back there that I'm running out of time. This is important to us.

Isaiah 2:3. *Many people shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths." For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. (NKJV)*

That is our job description. It's exactly what that is, yours and mine. This is what we have to do. We have to be following God's teaching. We have to be keeping God's commandments as clearly taught by Christ, but we're going to be teaching the law. What is the law? Actually, the law is this whole book, or collection of books, however you want to look at it.

Again, we need to ask the question, do we need to be a lawyer, do we need to be an official, a judge? No, we need to be somebody who knows this book because that's what our job is going to be. So many scriptures clearly teach and tell us that. We're going to have to be the kind of people that really know and can teach this book and really apply it. We're doing some of that right now, aren't we? Certainly, we're keeping the Feast.

Back in Leviticus 21 where it talks about the Feast of the Lord, we're going to be teaching the Feast. We can see scriptures in Zechariah and other places where we're going to be teaching people God's word. We're going to be quoting Leviticus where it talks about the Feast of the Lord. We're going to be saying, "This is the Feast and the plan of God." That's what we're going to be teaching. When we're changed, we'll probably be able to speak all the languages of the world, until God institutes a new language, until there is a new language. Tom was talking a little bit about that. At the beginning of the millennium, you know God can give the gift of tongues. He's done it before. What are they going to need to know when we talk to them in their language? They will need to know this book. That's what we will be able to teach them. Tom talked a bit about that, about being teachers in the world tomorrow.

To make the point clear, the qualification for us is going to be: have we done what we know in this book? That's what's going to qualify us. It says in Isaiah 2:4, that God will judge between the nations and rebuke many people. That word "rebuke" means to correct, but if you look at Strong's or any other word dictionary and dig down into that, you're going to also find that "rebuke" can also mean to reason together. That's kind of like what Rick talked about the other day, reasoning together. I told Rick that same day that I was a bit disappointed in that sermon, actually because I was always a big fan of the 5,000-foot drop thing. Well, we don't get to do that!

The point is, where it says in those scriptures in Isaiah that the people are going to learn, the key word there is "learn". What they learn is what's going to change the world and it's going to come from what we know that we teach them. For us it's not just studying and reading this book, it's applying it, isn't it?

Revelation 3:21. We can't get by without mentioning the somewhat less than warm Church. That's the context here, people that are letting things slip away. They aren't really applying what they know from the book. They aren't qualifying.

Revelation 3:21. *"To him who overcomes ...*

What are we overcoming? The things that are contrary to God, contrary to what He is telling us to do from this book.

21b) ... I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. (NKJV)

It doesn't get any clearer than that.

So the message for us is pretty simple. God is looking for one thing from us, people that know this book. I know we're sitting here now and thinking, "Maybe I don't know the Bible very well. I just don't quite get everything all the time." Like us, we're getting a little older, things slip and it's a little harder to retain things.

Just to use an example, I was reading one time and I know this is kind of a gruesome picture, but I have a point. I was reading about these masters of samurai and how they make the different cuts with the sword and all that. One of the things they talk about is when the head gets severed from the body, the theory is that one can actually live and have consciousness for about thirty seconds. I hope that doesn't happen to any of us, especially me. Anyhow, the point is it's a physical, biological mechanism, what we have here, what we have in the skull right now. What about when we get changed? We have perfect memory. No, we won't be robots, but we're going to have perfect memory. We will be spirit beings with a huge reservoir. We can only cram so much in here now and, like I said, as we grow older biologically, the body starts to lose its struggle to stay alive and everything else goes with it. We will have this enormous thirst for knowledge and we'll be able to absorb everything that Christ teaches us. He will be able to set us down in a classroom and teach us everything we need to know, all the things we ever wanted to know, all the things that, right now, are unknown to us.

We were visiting with someone the other day about all the things in the universe and on this earth that we don't have a clue about. We'll be able to absorb all of that and Christ can give it to us. Once we get it, we will never forget it. We'll be able to absorb every word out of this Bible. We'll be able to apply everything, all the principals in it. We will get all of that because we're going to have those classes. We're going to get it. That's how we're going to qualify to have all that. God is going to fill all those big gaps in our understanding.

You can envision, too, that there might be meetings of different groups of us as spirit beings where Christ says, "Well, I want you to go here, I want you to go there, I want you to do this and that." We're not going to sit there stuttering and say, "Well, I don't know how to do that." We will have that knowledge or He wouldn't give us the job; and if we don't, He'll just give it to us. We won't be stammering and falling down and saying

we can't do it because we will have the ability and the means and the education to do that because we will have this tremendous power.

Over in Matthew 7, again this is what we have to do. We're familiar with this.

Matthew 7:21. *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven."*

That is absolutely crystal clear. It can't get any clearer than that. It's in plain language right there. You have to trust and faithfully follow God and do what God says.

22) *"Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?'"*

23) *"And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'"* (NKJV)

I don't even know you. You haven't done these things. You've just been a big front. What He's telling them is, "If you can't follow the rules and do what you need to do, you can't be in My kingdom. You're just not going to be there." We're not going to get that transformation. It comes down to these very simple things. He who does the will of the Father; that's what we need to do. Are we perfect in that? No. No way. Again, that's the ideal, but we're not there. We make all kinds of mistakes. Sometimes we say, "Oops!" We didn't get that the first time. We need to go around and do it again. God doesn't give up. He keeps working with us.

Paul said that he didn't do the things that he really wanted to do. He knew, though, that with Christ he could do that.

So, again, it's he who does the will of the Father, who will do whatever God tells him to do. That's what qualifies us to be able to judge, be able to rule, that puts us in the position to be able to absorb and accomplish all the things written in this book. We can take that all in and then teach it. That's how we do that. We really have no excuse. It doesn't matter who we are. If we're doing what we know to do, we don't have to know the whole thing. We don't have to do the whole thing perfectly. It says, "He that does the will of the Father." This is God's will, whatever part we understand that we're doing day in and day out, and a good piece of it is right here, keeping the sabbath and doing all those things. That's going to be our job and our responsibility, so we have to do these things in order just to be there, to be at that finish line.

I don't know if that helps to see this a bit more clearly. When the time comes, when this great Babylonian system is put down, we're going to be given that responsibility. We're going to be the judges and all those things that Christ wants us to be. We have to do what He tells us to do now in order to be there. We want to do that for one very main reason, because God is going to give us all eternity to do what He wants us to do.