

Prophetic Vision

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I'm sure it's not any surprise to any of you to hear that the Christian life that we have—our journey toward the Kingdom of God— is a difficult one. It's one of endurance, as the Bible tells us, it's an endurance race; it's something we have to endure to the end. *It is through much persecution that we enter into the Kingdom of God.* It is through lots of trials. I'm sure, particularly prior to the Feast of Tabernacles, most of us tend to get hit with a lot of trials as we are coming up to the Feast. As you know, Glen Springfield is in my area in Dallas and we got to see that whole situation with Samuel play out. Glen having to change his plans because of needing to be in Florida rather than here. I know his situation is more severe than a lot of us face, but I think a lot of you have all faced—as that time of year came around—more and more trials; more and more difficulties that you're having to overcome. But it's not just that time of year, the Christian life itself, our journey to the Kingdom of God, is *through much tribulation*. It's something that we have to endure through and you don't endure through something that is an easy slide and pleasant. You endure something that is difficult that you have to struggle through. That's how the Christian life is for us. Sometimes that can just beat us up. It can get us down; we can get overcome with it and discouraged and want to give up.

The days of the Feast of Tabernacles and the 8th that we're keeping here and what it all pictures for our future, is something that the Bible tells us that we need to have clearly in our minds. It needs to be our focus. It needs to be what our mind is really focused passionately on, to keep us on track. To keep us continuing to endure so that we'll be motivated and stay on track; motivated to continue enduring, even when it's painful. Even when the Christian life is a difficult struggle.

We are going to look at this particular subject today and if you would like a title for the sermon it's:

Prophetic Vision

The Bible tells us we need to keep our focus on this vision because this is what motivates us to overcome all the difficulties that are thrown at us in the Christian life. As we'll see today, all throughout the New Testament it says that the Christian life is meant to be a struggle. It is meant to be difficult because that is what tests and develops our character. Let's start off with Proverbs 29 and we'll see this is exactly where I pulled my title from.

Proverbs 29:18 *Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint; But happy is he who keeps the law.* (NKJV)

If you have a New King James translation, you will notice that next to the word “*revelation*” there is a little numeral one noted. In the margin, next to the little one are the words “*prophetic vision*”. In other words:

Where there is no “prophetic vision”, the people cast off restraint.

That’s directly where I “stole” my title from. This is exactly what the Hebrew means. The Hebrew word that is translated as *revelation* or *prophetic vision* is transliterated into English as *hazon*, Strong’s #2377 and the definition I’m going to give you is out of The Complete Word Study Dictionary of the Old Testament by Baker and Carpenter.

A masculine noun meaning a revelation by means of a vision, an oracle, a divine communication. The primary essence of this word is not so much the vision or dream itself as the message conveyed. It signifies the direct, specific communication between God and people through the prophetic office or the collection of such messages.

If you think about it, we have a collection of such messages. All the prophecies that we have of the fulfillment of the Feast of Tabernacles and the 8th day, what our roles will be reigning with Christ, are through the prophetic office. This is what our focus should be upon. It says if we don’t have that vision, what happens?

We cast off restraint.

The Hebrew word for *casting off restraint* is transliterated into English as *para*, Strong’s #6544 and Baker and Carpenter define this word as a verb meaning “to let go, to let loose, to unbind”. The definition they give is not really specific nor does it give a really clear idea. But there is a biblical example that we can look at that gives us a very clear idea of what *casting off restraint* looks like. In Exodus 32 we see an example where this particular word is used in a graphic example that paints a very clear picture for us of what this looks like. This is the golden calf incident that takes place while Moses is up on the mountain. They’ve already officially made the covenant with God and Moses has gone up onto the mountain to receive further instruction from God. He has been gone awhile and the people start getting restless.

“We don’t know how long he’s been up there.”

“What has happened to this Moses?”

“Where has he gone?”

What was happening? The people were losing their *prophetic vision*. For them that obviously wasn’t the Kingdom of God or the meaning of the millennium and the 8th day, but think about it: They had received a revelation and instructions from God of what their future would look like. God was going to lead them into the Promised Land, a land flowing with milk and honey and it was going to give them a physical utopia to work with. He was going to dwell among them. He had already laid out for them what their future was going to look like if they obeyed Him. But they totally lost that focus. We are going to see that it was then they *cast off restraint*.

We’ll see the word *para* used later in this chapter, but let’s first read the context to understand what *casting off restraint* looked like.

Exodus 32:1 *Now when the people saw that Moses delayed coming down from the mountain, the people gathered together to Aaron, and said to him,*

“Come, make us gods that shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.” (NKJV)

Moses brought them out of Egypt, not God—they’ve already forgotten about God. This is the same individual Who thundered the voice at Mount Sinai and they were so scared that they told Moses, “You go talk to him, He is scary. You tell us what He said and we’ll follow that.” But now they’ve already forgotten about that—Moses brought them out of Egypt and God is out of the picture. Moses has been gone a little too long and they didn’t know what had happened to him. Now notice what they start doing.

2) And Aaron said to them, “Break off the golden earrings which are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me.”

3) So all the people broke off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them to Aaron.

4) And he received the gold from their hand, and he fashioned it with an engraving tool, and made a molded calf. Then they said, “This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!” (NKJV)

They have immediately gone right back to worshiping idols and pagan worship similar to the culture they had just come out of in Egypt.

5) So when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it. And Aaron made a proclamation and said, “Tomorrow is a feast to the LORD.” (NKJV)

In other words, he is making up a fake Holy Day.

6) Then they rose early on the next day, offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. (NKJV)

This phrase, “rose up to play”, is more of a Hebrew idiom. What it’s saying in a nice way is, they had an orgy.

7) And the LORD said to Moses, “Go, get down! For your people whom you brought out of the land of Egypt have corrupted themselves.

8) They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them. They have made themselves a molded calf, and worshiped it and sacrificed to it, and said, This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!” (NKJV)

Now we see a picture of what they did. Going to verse 21 we see Moses reading the riot act to Aaron for his actions.

21) And Moses said to Aaron, “What did this people do to you that you have brought so great a sin upon them?”

22) So Aaron said, “Do not let the anger of my lord become hot. You know the people, that they are set on evil. (NKJV)

He's blaming the people; he's not taking responsibility.

23) For they said to me, 'Make us gods that shall go before us; as for this Moses, the man who brought us out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.'

24) And I said to them, 'Whoever has any gold, let them break it off. 'So they gave it to me, and I cast it into the fire, and this calf came out.'" (NKJV)

This verse always cracks me up. It's always, "I took all this gold, tossed it in there and magically a calf came out—I have no idea how that happened. It's just a miracle, I threw in all the gold and a calf came out." He's not taking any responsibility at all.

25) Now when Moses saw that the people were unrestrained [this is para] (for Aaron had not restrained them, to their shame among their enemies) ... (NKJV)

You can see what happened. Their picture is a little different to ours—the vision they would be looking forward to is not the Kingdom of God and the fulfillment of the Holy Days. But God had revealed a vision of what their future could look like. But they had totally abandoned that and not focused on it at all. And what happened? They are totally doing pagan worship, they're having an orgy, they're completely violating the commandments. The same thing can happen in a spiritual sense with us, if we don't have our focus on the *prophetic vision* of what all this pictures about our future. If we get focused on the here and now and the trials and issues today and the physical life—or as Rick talked about, the temporary things. If we just want the temporary pleasure of today and our focus gets on that, we can do the same thing. We start giving up and getting our focus away from where it should be and we will *cast off restraint*.

Let's see the opposite of that in 1 John 3. The Bible tells us the opposite of what happens, if we keep the right focus in mind and we are passionately pursuing it, we'll have a totally different reaction.

1 John 3:1 Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.

2) Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. (NKJV)

Notice in particular, verse 3.

3) And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure. (NKJV)

You see the exact opposite of *casting off restraint*. This person has this hope in Him, has the focus on the *prophetic vision* of what God's plan is for us in the Kingdom of God. This focus is not only what that means for us, but on all the roles we will have in working with everyone else to give them the chance of salvation. If our focus is on all of that, what do we want to do? We want to purify ourselves. We see this as this

wonderful, precious thing that we wouldn't want to give up for anything. Regardless of what we have to go through in this life, we'll look at it and say, "If I get to be there, whatever I have to suffer, it's worth it". It is more valuable than anything we could have in this life and that will be our focus.

But if our focus is on this life and wanting to have an enjoyable time here and seeking our own will, what do we do? We prioritize our pleasure today and are not so focused on what the future is and what we need to be doing to overcome. The Christian life by definition is a painful struggle. That's why it says, *through much tribulation you enter the Kingdom of God*. That's why we have to overcome persecution, that's why it's a difficult path we have to go on and endure through—it's painful. When you have to go through something painful, we need a motivator to keep us on track and for us that motivator is to realize that it is all worth it. Regardless of what I have to suffer to get there, when I get there, I know I'll be looking back and I'll know it was worth it. That's the focus we have to have.

What we're going to do today is look at that role and what it means for us, what we have to look forward to and the job we are preparing for. This has to be something that is very much the focus in our daily lives, because if it isn't, we are going to wind up giving up. We are going to get side tracked, we're going to put other things ahead of God and we're not going to be willing to endure whatever is thrown at us. We will wind up missing out on it all. If we don't have *prophetic vision*, we *cast off restraint*. I know that when I get there, even though this hurts and I don't enjoy this now, when I'm there I know I'm going to be happy and look back and say it was all worth it—it doesn't matter.

We talked a few days ago about the New Jerusalem and the whole picture of how the Bible talks about and pictures our reward and salvation as a city. It's a symbolic picture but the idea is, we get to dwell with God and get to be in the spirit realm. The Bible also tells us that this should be our motivator. We will see from the Bible that all the patriarchs throughout time, who went through brutal, awful trials—to the point of losing their lives—did so because this was their focus.

Hebrews 11:6 *But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.*

7) *By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith. (NKJV)*

Just think about Noah's story—he built that Ark for over 100 years. That is longer than most of us ever live today. I'm sure he was mocked and made fun of, with the neighbors saying,

"That crazy guy down the street building that big boat. Do you see an ocean around here anywhere? He is a nut."

He had to endure that for decades on end. How did he do this? By trusting in God's promise, focused on this *prophetic vision* and when it started raining, no one was

laughing at him then. They said, "Let us in the boat too!" because suddenly he wasn't the town joke when it started raining.

8) By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going.

9) By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise;

10) for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. (NKJV)

We talked about this the other day; this is the New Jerusalem that he is talking about.

11) By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised.

12) Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born as many as the stars of the sky in multitude—innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore.

13) These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. (NKJV)

Their focus was on what was going to happen after their physical lives. They endured this suffering because they were focused on that *prophetic vision*.

14) For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland.

15) And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return.

16) But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.

(NKJV)

If they had lost that *prophetic vision*, they would have *cast off restraint*.

17) By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son,

18) of whom it was said, "In Isaac your seed shall be called,"

19) concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense.

20) By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.

21) By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff.

22) By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel, and gave instructions concerning his bones.

23) By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's command.

- 24) *By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter,*
 25) *choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin,*
 26) *esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward.*
 27) *By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible.*
 28) *By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, lest he who destroyed the firstborn should touch them.*
 29) *By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land, whereas the Egyptians, attempting to do so, were drowned. (NKJV)*

As we go through this, you are going to see not only a list of people who had faith in God and believed in Him but who were delivered from severe trials and protected from severe things happening to them. You're also going to see a list of people who endured through horrendous trials. They weren't necessarily protected from them—they died—and sometimes very brutally. But they did so because that focus wasn't on this physical life, it was on the future. It was on their *prophetic vision*. Continue in verse 30.

- 30) *By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they were encircled for seven days.*
 31) *By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace.*
 32) *And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets:*
 33) *who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions,*
 34) *quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. (NKJV)*

Notice these next several verses.

- 35) *Women received their dead raised to life again. Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. (NKJV)*

In other words, they were tortured to death but they did it, why? Because they're focused on the *prophetic vision* of the future.

- 36) *Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment.*
 37) *They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented—*
 38) *of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth.*

39) *And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise,*
40) *God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us. (NKJV)*

They endured through all of this, not receiving the great reward during this lifetime—that was something that was going to happen later. But what was their whole focus on? On the *prophetic vision*, on God’s plan for them in the future—that’s where their focus was and that’s what got them through.

In Revelation 3 beginning in verse 11 we see Christ gave us the same instruction.

Revelation 3:11 *Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown. (NKJV)*

In other words, “Hang on, don’t give up.” Notice the focus He gives to enable that to happen.

12) *He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name.*
13) *He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” (NKJV)*

Christ is encouraging them, “Don’t give up, hang on to receive the promise.” But what does He tell them to focus on? Focus on the promise of New Jerusalem. Focus on eternal life, making it into the Kingdom of God, getting to dwell with Him and the Father together for all eternity, with no physical problems. Keep your focus on that because if your focus is on this physical life, what is going to happen? You are going to give up. You are going to say that this isn’t worth it. If I have to go through all this pain in this life, what’s in it for me? That’s the human perspective. What’s in it for me, why am I doing this? The reason why is because the future of what God has planned for us—what He wants us to do—that’s the “why”, and that’s the “why” that should be motivating us.

Let’s take a look at what this looks like and what our job is.

Revelation 20:4 *And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. (NKJV)*

We spoke about that the other day, as far as judgment being one of the responsibilities we have, reigning with Christ.

4 continued) *... 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 worshiped 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. (NKJV)*

Notice our job is to reign with Christ, to help Him, to be His assistants in working with the rest of mankind. This means that we get to live in the spirit realm and get rid of all of our physical aches and pains and our physical worries and problems and get to live in the spirit realm for all eternity with God the Father and Jesus Christ. It also means we get to play an important role in working with everyone else. It means we get to work with all the loved ones we know, all the friends we have known over the years who haven't had their chance of salvation. We get the chance to turn around and work with them. In a lot of cases, we get a chance to return the favor to people who really helped us out in this life but who we didn't have the opportunity to help them out. They then come and have their chance to be worked with, we can track them down and return the favor. If you're like me, you probably have a list. There are some people I am going to look up if I make it at that time because I owe that person and I'm going to go return the favor and be good to them. Pay back to them, the help they gave me. That's something we can very much look forward to with great anticipation.

There are basically two phases of what you might say are time periods in which we are going to work with mankind. We're going to see some of the differences in these. It gives us an exciting picture to look forward to. The first one is the millennium. We're going to see the utopian environment, the wonderful picture that this has for us. As we go through this, I want you to notice three major themes to understand later why I'm pointing out these themes and making a contrast. In the utopian environment of the millennium, there are three major things to take note of.

No war,
Abundant resources
Everybody is healthy.

You'll understand later why I'm pointing these three out, because we are going to see a contrast. Start out in Isaiah 2:1.

Isaiah 2:1 *The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.*

2) Now it shall come to pass in the latter days That the mountain of the LORD's house Shall be established on the top of the mountains, And shall be exalted above the hills; And all nations shall flow to it.

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.

4) He shall judge between the nations, And rebuke many people; They shall beat their swords into plowshares, And their spears into pruning hooks; Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, Neither shall they learn war anymore.

(NKJV)

Isn't that a wonderful thing to look forward to? No more war—to have a 1000-year break from this. These days you can't turn on the news without hearing about a war and seeing the massive devastation which is taking place as a result of it. I'm sure we've all seen the news footage of the Ukraine and Russian conflict that is going on. In fact, that has escalated even more since we've all been here, with more fighting.

You see all these innocent people caught in the middle of all this conflict. People who had nothing to do with either side of why they're fighting but who are just unfortunately living in the wrong place, at the wrong time and they are caught in the cross fire of this mess. You can't help but feel for these individuals and the suffering they are going through. Isn't it fantastic to look forward to a time where you get 1000 years of a break from all of this. Where people can live in peace and safety without this kind of suffering and not have to face this type of thing on a day-to-day basis. It's an exciting picture to look forward to. But it gets better than this. We're not just talking about a world with no war, we're talking about a world with abundant resources.

How much suffering gets created in life with just shortage of basic necessities. Food, shelter, clothing or whatever is needed. So much suffering throughout human history is just from a lack of resources. Isaiah 25:6 shows us the abundance of crops and plentiful food that is going to be available during this time.

Isaiah 25:6 *And in this mountain The LORD of hosts will make for all people A feast of choice pieces, A feast of wines on the lees, Of fat things full of marrow, Of well-refined wines on the lees. (NKJV)*

We're not just talking about the basic bread and water and food to get by; we're talking about plenty of all the niceties and the delicacies we like to have. This will be readily available to everyone. In Amos 9 we have another statement that tells us just how plentiful food supplies will be. We won't have areas of the world that are starving such as where there is famine taking place today.

Amos 9:13 *Behold, the days are coming," says the LORD, "When the plowman shall overtake the reaper, And the treader of grapes him who sows seed; The mountains shall drip with sweet wine, And all the hills shall flow with it.*

14) I will bring back the captives of My people Israel; They shall build the waste cities and inhabit them; They shall plant vineyards and drink wine from them; They shall also make gardens and eat fruit from them.

15) I will plant them in their land, And no longer shall they be pulled up From the land I have given them," Says the LORD your God. (NKJV)

This makes a picture of the plowman overcoming the reaper. Several years ago, I was talking to a friend of mine who does farming for a living and trying to get some insight into this. I'm a guy who has always worked in HR—more of an office environment, even though I grew up in a farming community, I have not been really knowledgeable in that area. I asked my friend if he could help me understand what this means from a practical point of view—the plowman overcoming the reaper—what difference would that mean in terms of yield and outcome of crops. As you might imagine, he gave me a few disclaimers as you would expect. He said it depends on what crop you're talking about and what area of the world you're talking about, but generally speaking, that would create a picture of getting twice your normal crop yield. You can see the abundance of food that kind of a picture would create—where you don't have a shortage of food resources to feed everyone. It's a wonderful picture to look forward to.

One of the reasons why this will be the case is because we will be dealing with a healed earth. The millennial earth will be what the Bible describes, as a new heaven and a new earth. That's the healed earth after the destruction before the millennium. I gave a sermon in detail on that at the Feast last year, laying out all the scriptures. To briefly look at some of this we will look at Isaiah 35:1.

Isaiah 35:1 *The wilderness and the wasteland shall be glad for them, And the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose;
2) It shall blossom abundantly and rejoice, Even with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, The excellence of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the LORD, The excellency of our God. (NKJV)*

Skip down to the later part of verse 6.

*6) ... For waters shall burst forth in the wilderness, And streams in the desert.
7) The parched ground shall become a pool, And the thirsty land springs of water; In the habitation of jackals, where each lay, There shall be grass with reeds and rushes. (NKJV)*

You see in this a picture where even the deserts—the desolate areas where you can't grow crops today because the weather is not conducive for it, are going to become very fertile areas with lots of water, where crops can be grown. So not only do you have the areas where we are farming today being twice as productive, you have a lot of other areas that you could not inhabit or grow food in, becoming usable land. So, you have this obvious abundance of resources available. Isaiah 41 is another scripture that refers to this as well.

Isaiah 41:18 *I will open rivers in desolate heights, And fountains in the midst of the valleys; I will make the wilderness a pool of water, And the dry land springs of water.
19) I will plant in the wilderness the cedar and the acacia tree, The myrtle and the oil tree; I will set in the desert the cypress tree and the pine And the box tree together,
20) That they may see and know, And consider and understand together, That the hand of the LORD has done this, And the Holy One of Israel has created it. (NKJV)*

One of the reasons that we will have these abundant resources available is because there is a totally refurbished earth that is significantly better than we have today. Not only are the inhabitable areas where we do a lot of farming today going to be much improved and more productive, you have a lot of barren areas that you can't use today—the Sahara Desert, Death Valley—areas like this where you would never think of farming crops—that land will be usable. You'll have this utopian earth to look forward to that creates great resources for everyone.

Notice the themes here—no war, abundant resources—and there's another one. Everyone is healthy.

Isaiah 35:5 *Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, And the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped.*

6) *Then the lame shall leap like a deer, And the tongue of the dumb sing.*
(NKJV)

You have a laundry list of health problems. Three are mentioned specifically—the blind, the deaf and the dumb. The term *lame*. If you look it up in the Hebrew, is more of a generic term for *physical defects*. It doesn't refer to just specifically blind or deaf where you're referring to a specific problem, the lame in Hebrew refers to general physical defects. So, what you're talking about is the healing of everybody—everybody is healthy. Think of how fantastic a world that is going to be. Rick was referring earlier to Samuel Springfield and all that he is going through. If you happened to attend the Feast with us in 2018 or you have heard Glen's message off the website, where he gave a split sermon in 2018 talking about the trials they went through when Sam was first born. Sam wasn't expected to live, they went through a couple of very difficult years with a plethora of health problems, wondering if he was going to make it to the age he is today. So, there was a lot of suffering and even making it through all of that, he has had to deal with Down's Syndrome all of these years. Imagine a world where that just doesn't happen and you don't have people suffering through all kinds of health issues and they now get to enjoy a healthy life. Think of it for someone like Samuel, who has never had a chance to enjoy what we call a normal life. He will have that opportunity then, when all of this is taken away and he gets to enjoy all the things in life that he didn't get to experience the first go around. It's a fantastic picture to look forward to. We can look forward to that with great joy, being involved with helping all the rest of mankind to enjoy all of this. If we make it into the Kingdom as Firstfruits, we will be spirit beings at that point and able to share this joy with everyone else.

Let's also see the second phase of this picture. We have to keep in mind that, yes in the 1000 millennium we have this wonderful picture of a utopia with no war, abundant resources and everyone's healthy. But we also need to keep in mind a very clear detail that the Bible gives us. Growing up in the church there is something that has often been completely ignored and if it's mentioned at all, it's very much minimized. It's the fact that Satan is released again. If we look at that detail and clearly read what the Bible tells us, all three of these criteria that I've made a big deal out of, completely change. We can read it right off the pages of the Bible. I think we often ignore Satan's release and don't talk about it. As physical human beings we struggle with that one. We love the idea of getting him out of the way and you can have this wonderful, utopian environment and everything is peaceful. You have this wonderful picture we like to focus on. Why would God bring the bad guy back and redo this movie? Honestly, if we look at the New Testament and what it tells us is a requirement for salvation, this really is not a puzzle.

Think about it; what does the Bible say, how does it describe the path to salvation? *Through much tribulation you enter the Kingdom of God.* He who endures to the end will be saved. Do you endure through a utopia? No, you endure through something that is painful. Or one of my favorites, 2 Timothy 3:12, *all who want to live Godly in Christ Jesus, will suffer persecution.* There is not an asterisk next to any of these scriptures because there is a massive stack of them. You could give a sermon all by itself on this subject. The path to salvation and what is required, you will see again and again and again, listed all throughout the New Testament. It is painful, it is full of trials, you have to endure through it, it explains that this is how your character is

developed, this is how your faith is tested, this is how God tests our hearts. It's all throughout the New Testament. It will also explain how this whole process works. Look at the book of Job for example. God has Satan on a leash, He controls how long it is and He allows him to try His people and for what? —to test our faith and build our character. If we just accept what the New Testament says, it's not a big surprise as to why Satan would be released again. You can see a huge stack of scriptures that say this is required for our testing, for how our character is developed and I challenge you to find a single one with an asterisk next to it that says, but the exception is the majority of mankind. It's not there—I've been searching for it for over a decade because I came to see this about twelve years ago. To tell you the behind-the-scenes story, there are a couple of sermons on the Pacific website called A Fresh Look at the Book of Job, part 1 and 2 and I gave them back in 2010. When I was doing research for that sermon and going through it all, I started seeing how this subject of suffering and our trials was fundamental to our character development and how God tested us. I looked at it and said,

“Something is wrong. I've been taught a prophetic scenario my whole life that the rest of mankind has an easy slide into the Kingdom of God and they skip all of this. How is that supposed to work?”

I realized, that's why Satan is released.

Let's notice these three things—we'll see in a minute why this is relevant to the subject we are talking about. We're going to start with the verses that refer to the fulfillment of Atonement, but I want you to notice some of the wording.

Revelation 20:1 *Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.
2) He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years;
3) and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. [Notice this last sentence] But after these things he must be released for a little while. (NKJV)*

In other words, it's a requirement. It's not just an “Oops, the guards were not paying attention and he got out.” This is an absolute requirement. It's not a surprise, just look at the role he plays today—it's for the exact same reason. People often ask, why in the world would God allow that to take place, why would He allow him out again? It's for the exact same reason that He allows him to affect mankind right now.

All who want to live Godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.

Who is the persecutor? Satan—there's not another way by which we can be saved so it's the same rules for everybody. That's how the process works, that's how our character is developed, that's how our faith is tested, that's why it has to be done.

Notice it also says he was removed so he could not deceive the nations anymore. Notice when he is released, what does he do? He goes out to deceive the nations—he gets his old job back, we just read it right off the page. Go down to verse 7.

- 7) *Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison*
- 8) *and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea.*
- 9) *They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them.*
- 10) *The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. (NKJV)*

Notice what is happening—it says Satan is released—this is a very brief mentioning here. This is the “Reader’s Digest” version of the story. When I mentioned the three criteria—no war, abundant resources, everybody is happy. What happens when he is released? You have a war—we’ve already violated number one; we have changed the criteria. I won’t take the time to go through Ezekiel 38 and 39, but that’s the more long winded, detailed version of the story—of the Gog and Magog battle. People will often look at this and say this is a small, limited little thing that we can kind of ignore—it’s in the corner and only affects a few people. No, if you read that in detail, you will find that this is no small event. They talk about the nations that are going after Jerusalem. If you notice all the names, you’ll see the nations are from north, south, east and west of Israel. It’s nations in every direction around it. This is a battle that is so significant it takes over seven months to find all the bodies and bury them. The Bible tells us that God intervenes and wipes out those who are coming down, but it takes over seven months to find all the bodies and bury them. There are literally people hired full time—employed—doing this job. They collect all the weapons that are from there and burn them for firewood for seven years afterward. This is not a small event; this is a major thing that happens. I’m just painting a picture and it will be relevant to where I’m going here.

Let’s look at Matthew 25 and think about the statements that Christ makes here. Remember I mentioned three criteria. We went through the millennium because it’s a very clear picture there—no war, abundant resources, everyone’s healthy. We have already seen that when Satan is released, we get a war. Let’s notice the other two criteria change as well. All we have to do is take Christ’s statements for what they state and notice the obvious that has to be true for these statements to have any relevance.

Matthew 25:31 *“When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory.*
32) All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. (NKJV)

Who is He talking to? All the nations—the population of the earth. If we read through this, we will see is this was the judgment as to whether they make it into the Kingdom of God or not and that’s very clear because at the end of it, we see a group that goes into eternal life and a group that goes into the lake of fire. We are obviously at the end of the Last Great Day period here for this to take place, because we’re

judging the salvation of the rest of mankind. But pay attention to the criteria He uses to judge them. For these statements to make sense, these circumstances have to exist.

33) *And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left.*

34) *Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:*

35) *for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in;*

36) *I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.'*

37) *"Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink?*

38) *When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You?*

39) *Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?'*

40) *And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.'*

41) *Then He will also say to those on the left hand, Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels:*

42) *for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink;*

43) *I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.'*

44) *"Then they also will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?'*

45) *Then He will answer them, saying, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.'*

46) *And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."* (NKJV)

He's judging the salvation for the rest of mankind, the people that are not even called until after Christ returns and notice the criteria. You didn't take care of the people that didn't have resources, who were hungry, who were naked, who basically didn't have their basic necessities; you didn't take care of the sick. In their objection to this, they go back to Christ and ask, when did we not specifically do it to You, Christ? They are not questioning the criteria, they are asking, when did we not do it to You? Christ comes back and says, when you didn't do it for the people, you didn't do it to Me. Notice what they don't say. They don't come back to Christ and say,

"What in the world are you talking about Christ? These circumstances have not existed since before You returned to the earth. There are no people suffering a lack of resources, there's no sick people, there's nobody hungry or needing clothing or in prison—what in the world are you talking about Christ? You're stating this like it's a relevant criterion to judge the population at large. Don't you realize that these criteria require that there is some significant number of people facing these harsh trials?"

That that would be a requirement to then turn around and judge people as to how they responded to this? They're not questioning that, because it's a given. Obviously when Satan is released again, these three criteria change, so we have a different picture.

Now let me address why I say all of this and why this is relevant to this sermon. I'm sure a lot of you are like myself—I've been in the church of God all of my life—and there are many times when you're going through harsh trials and facing something and doing the typical human reaction of *"Why me and why am I going through this, what's the purpose, why is God putting me through this?"* Someone you know tells you, that you can take comfort that when you're in the Kingdom, you'll be able to help other people with this. If you're like me, you have had times—before I saw this a little over a decade ago—I would go,

"Wait, I'm suffering all this so I can help people through a perfect, utopian situation in which they never face any hard trials and they have an easy slide into the Kingdom of God and my trials are going to help assist them through that."

How does that work? That doesn't add up. My whole point is, yes, we can read right off the page, that the millennium is a perfect utopian environment and has all the things we just read about. But there are also the basic requirements of the New Testament that we can't ignore.

Sometimes we get so focused on that, we sell ourselves a feel-good fairy tale. We buy into the idea—because we can read the millennial promises and they are very, very clear, there is no debating—the millennium is a utopian environment that is absolutely wonderful to look forward to—but we somehow convince ourselves that people can live in that environment and not have to go through harsh trials and not be tested. Not have to endure. You don't endure through a utopia, you enjoy it. You're not going to face much tribulation in a perfect utopia—that doesn't even make sense. I'm not condemning anybody because for most of my life, I bought the same thing as everybody else. If you think about it, you have to gut the New Testament to buy into the idea that there is an easy slide into the Kingdom of God. This massive stack of scriptures that are all throughout the New Testament that repeatedly tell us that not only do you have to endure through trials, it explains why and what God is doing; how He refining our character, He's testing our faith—all of this is described in great detail. Not one of those scriptures has an asterisk next to it saying except for the majority of mankind. It's just not there, because that's what is required. What this does is give meaning to what we're going through in this life. It's not just us looking forward to being in New Jerusalem in the spirit realm, we look forward to the job of helping other people. Of being able to assist them through the trials and the difficulties that they go through. This gives meaning to what we face today. Going through the agonizing trials and painful situations that we do go through enables us to be equipped to help others. To assist them when they are struggling as well.

To see this concept let's look at a couple of scriptures. I'll give a disclaimer before we go down this road. These scriptures we're going to read are specifically geared towards Christ. We are not High Priests; we don't fulfill Christ's role—I'm not trying to attribute all the things of Christ to us. But the things it talks about—what was accomplished through His suffering so that He could help us—that concept

translates. I'm not saying we have all the other aspects of this. Look at Hebrews 2 and again this is focused on Christ but just notice the details and what His suffering accomplished in terms of working with other people—that's the concept I'm trying to get at.

Hebrews 2:14 *Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil,*
15) *and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.*

16) *For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham.*

17) *Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.*

18) *For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted. (NKJV)*

That's more of the concept that I'm getting at. I'm not trying to place us in Christ's role of being the sacrifice for sins or the High Priest or anything of that nature. But that ability that He could relate because He had been through it. We can see that that's the part that is relevant to us. I'll share with you in a minute, a very meaningful story to me of how someone else's sufferings really helped me in my life.

Hebrews 4:14 *Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.*

15) *For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.*

16) *Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. (NKJV)*

Let me emphasize again, I'm not in any way trying to place us in Christ's role and take on things that are not appropriate to our role. The whole point I'm trying to get you to see is how His suffering enabled Him to understand and to relate to us and us to also realize the credibility that He has for what He was willing to go through. That relationship is very helpful as we're struggling through trials.

To paint a picture of this, let me share with you a personal example of a person who was extremely helpful to me through a very difficult time in my life. It was the trials that he had personally been through in his own life that enabled him to do this. A lot of you are probably know that back in 2008—in fact on June 26, 2008—I sat in an oncologist office with my wife Linda, who was thirty-nine years old at the time and was diagnosed with stage 4 colon cancer and told she had months to live. Ten weeks and two days later she died on September 6, 2008. As you can imagine watching a 39-year-old go from diagnosis to death in ten weeks and two days is a fairly traumatic experience and all that encompassed and even the aftermath.

It was a friend of mine, we'll refer to him today as Bob but that's not his real name, he was someone I had met at a Feast site a few years earlier and we were casual friends—we didn't know each other really well—but when we ran into each other we

were friendly with one another and, we hit it off. Through the whole process of what I went through with her illness and even the aftermath for the next year or two, this individual became the most helpful individual by far, bar none, of anyone who assisted me through this time frame.

Let me paint you a picture here and this is not to brag about my own background but to help understand the magnitude of my point. I have a Master's degree in counseling, I'm also a minister, I've had close relationships with ministers. At the time I worked for a hospital system and I used to place health psychologists in work. My point being, I had a network of people who had credentials and training for doing this type of help. The most helpful person to me, by far, bar none was a hay farmer. Let me explain to you why. As I'm getting to know this individual—we didn't really know each other all that well; we were friends prior to this whole event happening with Linda, but not really close by any means. What this relationship turned into was what I later referred to as my "Saturday night therapy sessions". It evolved to where we were in different time zones, a different part of the country and it worked out and evolved on its own. Every Saturday night for a year or two, we wound up talking and he helped me through all of this. As this relationship started to develop, it was so natural to the way he could relate to all of this. If you have ever been through something of this nature, most people—I'm not criticizing anyone, it's just natural—are uncomfortable with the subject of death and dying and chronic illness. There's a lot of issues with which people just don't quite know what to do. They are uncomfortable but it's not that they don't care, they just don't know what to do with it. They just want to push it away.

Or there's other well-intentioned individuals, who in a death like that, they want to quickly point out the scriptures about the resurrection. That has its place and yes, Paul said comfort one another with these words but let me tell you, it's not a magic elixir. You don't just come to somebody and remind them of the resurrection and now everything is better and they stop grieving. It doesn't work like that and for some people it can be quite annoying. What this individual did—it's always the advice I give to people when they ask how to help someone in a situation like this—it's blunt but it's always my advice: Just shut up and listen. What people are often looking for is how to help, what magic advice can I give them? What do I say? what's the nice words that I can say to make it all feel better? There are not words that you can say that will make it all better, that's not how this works. What my friend Bob was, he was a great listener. He could just ride through it with me. He could laugh with me when I had a dark sense of humor about some of the things that were happening, he could cry with me—whatever emotion I was at, he could just be there and ride with me during it. As we went through this whole situation, he doesn't share with me his own personal background in terms of why he's good at this, but in the back of my mind as this relationship was developing, I'm thinking there is a story here. I don't know what it is, but there is a story because people don't just naturally get good at this. There is something going on that I don't know.

Turns out Rick Railston knew this individual years before I ever met him and I'm talking on the phone with Rick and expressed that—there's a story here somewhere, I don't know what it is but he is way too good at this. Rick surprisingly commented to me, you did know his mom had MS, right? She dealt with that for years. He had to take care of her through that and that's what she died from. I said that I didn't know

that, but that explained a lot. This was a guy with no formal training, he didn't go to school for this, he wasn't trained by anybody—life experience made him incredibly helpful in a situation like this. It was his own trials that enabled him to be by far, bar none, the person who got me through all of this. He was my Saturday night therapist for a year or two, just processing all of this. My point is, the whole point of this sermon is—looking at our *prophetic vision* and the role that we will have in the future. Sometimes we have an inaccurate view of the future and we look at what everyone else is going to be facing when the rest of mankind is called and thinks that it's just an easy slide into the Kingdom. They don't face anything difficult. I know that's a nice, good feeling idea, but it violates the entire New Testament. Again, that's a subject for a sermon all by itself. The point is, this gives us meaning to what we go through today. We need to realize, as we're going through difficult trials and struggles today, it is absolutely true that what we go through today will help us to deal with the rest of mankind later. That desire to be understood is fundamental to most everyone. This is why people oftentimes go to therapists. When they are struggling with something very difficult, something gut wrenching there is a fundamental desire that we as human beings have. We want to be understood; to just have someone grasp what we're going through.

Let me share this with you in the words of an individual in the Bible who is probably the chief example of suffering that there is. Over in Job 19:21.

Job 19:21 *Have pity on me, have pity on me, O you my friends, For the hand of God has struck me!*

22) *Why do you persecute me as God does, And are not satisfied with my flesh?*

23) *Oh, that my words were written! Oh, that they were inscribed in a book!*

24) *That they were engraved on a rock With an iron pen and lead, forever!*
(NKJV)

“Why

This is Job in the midst of his grief and wondering, “Why is God doing this to me, why am I being persecuted? What is happening here?” We get to read this book with the benefit of the first two chapters and get to know the behind-the-scene story. There is nothing which indicates, as he was going through this, that he had any clue about what we are getting told in reading it—he was just experiencing it. His world had been turned upside down and he was going through this gut-wrenching grief and like most people, he just wanted someone to understand what he was going through. Someone who can relate to this. When you remember the trials that you have gone through, as you help other people, think also how many Job has helped because his words were engraved in stone and written in a book. In fact, I'll try to tell this without cracking up because I always get choked up telling this story.

Many years ago, I made my request to God—we don't know who wrote the book, it could have been Job, he might know all of this and might have known this was recorded in the Bible; maybe he did, maybe he didn't, we don't know. I requested of God, if you could give me the honor if I make it into the Kingdom, to be the guy who can go up and show him a Bible, and show him that his words were engraved in stone and preserved forever. Then I want to show him the line of people who want to thank him for his example and how he got them through some of the hardest trials in their lives and that they are standing there at the marriage supper because of him. I

want him to see that. As I mentioned to God, if you won't give me the honor of being the one to show it to him, will you at least let me watch, because I want to be there to see the look on his face. I want him to know and I want to be one of those people in line to tell him how much what he went through meant to me and what a benefit that was. For him to see the huge line of people who want to say the same thing to him. What he went through and his story, helped him to assist thousands or millions of people—who knows how big the number is—because his words were *engraved in stone and preserved forever*. It's that desire to be understood.

If we look at our trials and how they can help us to prepare for the job that we have ahead of us, the same principle applies. We're going to work with people who get the joy of a wonderful utopia for 1000 years. But that is not the entire story. We cannot throw out the entire New Testament and everything it says about the path to salvation because it isn't an easy walk. There is a massive stack of scriptures that you can build up that all talk about this. They all agree with one another and there's not an asterisk next to any of them that says, we are just kidding, the majority of mankind gets to skip all of this. It's just not there. I've been searching for it for twelve years, it's not there. It's a very clear picture, everyone faces the difficult path to salvation because that is simply how it works. The important thing for us to realize is, our job is preparing now, not just assisting people and being a part of helping them have wonderful joy and a utopia, it's to help them through the difficult trials of their time in testing and their time of being judged based upon the criteria that Christ has laid out. For those statements to be made requires that there is suffering taking place. Otherwise, the statements make no sense. The trials we are going through today prepare us for that job and we need to realize that puts meaning into all of the trials that we go through.

As you go through your day-to-day life after this Feast; go back to your home and face the trials that await you there. The ones that will come at you regardless of whatever your life is—there's always going to be more. Realize the key to going through this is keeping our eyes focused on our prophetic vision and the job that God has for us if we make it into the Kingdom of God.