

Preparing To Rule!

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I Corinthians 1:26-29 resounds through our minds as a constant reminder that we are the foolish, weak, base and despised of this world. In these verses God formally states that He has sought no particular advantage in carrying out His purpose by calling us. Paul writes:

For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence.

This is humbling in both a present and future sense. We seem to fall short when we compare ourselves to those who have accomplished great things or seem to have strong and good character in today's world. When we consider the World Tomorrow and the daunting challenges that will face those reconstructing a world out of the chaos of the Tribulation and the Day of the Lord, it is enough to make us feel completely inadequate.

Vanity keeps telling us we are intelligent, beautiful, clever, talented, cultured and unappreciated, but these verses should pull us back to reality. God's assessment is accurate because when we compare our accomplishments with people in the world, ours fade into near nothingness!

Consider these verses in relation to the monstrous and seemingly insoluble problems of today's world—and all those talented, accomplished people "out there" cannot solve them! Here we are, a construction worker, nurse, school teacher, computer operator, bus driver, mechanic, bank teller or homemaker. What would we do if we had the responsibilities the talented people have?

Millennial Problems

Cast that thought forward into the World Tomorrow. How will we ever be qualified to govern even a small town, let alone a great city, several cities, a county or even a nation? Such thoughts daunt us, because we know that, as the Kingdom of God begins, the problems will be exceedingly greater than today.

Will we need to provide a water supply, sewage and refuse disposal, power supply and transportation system? Will we need to devise a city growth plan so that it can grow in an organized way? Will we have to formulate building codes? Will we need to draft a budget to control expenditures? Will we need to collect taxes for roads, schools, police, fire, parks and industrial and housing development? Who will manage the administrators over all the divisions of government? How will we balance permitting personal liberty and creative expression with protecting the environment and the liberties of others?

Better minds in today's world have taken up this challenge and are failing. Many people in government are sincerely trying to make our cities and nations work, and they admit defeat! So what right do the weak of the world have in thinking we can do it better?

We cannot be exactly sure what God has in mind for that time because most of the prophecies of the Millennium picture the perfect world based on the prophet's time. Since then, man has advanced technologically and increased in population. The fulfillment of Revelation 8, 9, and 16 will compound the problem immensely. To the moral, spiritual and ethical problems will be added the utter devastation of transportation systems, communications, infrastructure, housing and a severely reduced and battered population.

If Christ returns on the Day of Trumpets, winter will be just ahead in the northern hemisphere. There will be no harvest to feed those remaining because the waters in the oceans, rivers, lakes and springs will have been poisoned; vegetation blighted; and even the sun, moon and stars somehow "struck"! What monstrous, devastating storms will those conditions generate?

War will have just ceased over much of the earth's surface. A great earthquake, "such a mighty and great earthquake as had not occurred since men were on the earth" (Revelation 16:18), will have rocked the planet, followed by hailstones the weight of a talent falling from the skies (verse 21). Will even one building be left standing when even islands are moved from their places, mountains leveled and valleys lifted (verse 20)? How many trees will be available for building shelters? A huge salvage operation will probably be among the first orders of business.

Are we ready for this? Will we be equal to this task when the time comes?

Even Worse Problems

But that is hardly the worst of the problems we will face.

For thus says the LORD: "Sing with gladness for Jacob, and shout among the chief of the nations; proclaim, give praise, and say, 'O LORD, save Your people, the remnant of Israel! Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the ends of the earth, among them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and the one who labors with child, together; a great throng shall return there. They shall come with weeping, and with supplications I will lead them. I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters, in a straight way in which they shall not stumble; for I am a Father to Israel, and Ephraim is My firstborn.'" (Jeremiah 31:7-9)

What about dealing with all these people? As they come out of their captivity, they will have turned to God, a necessary and wonderful first step. They will have a frame of mind—renouncing self-will—where we can begin to work with them. But this will not magically blow away their character and psychological problems. Even in our own lives since conversion, God has had to bring us face-to-face with weaknesses of character and attitude that we must overcome.

Think of the horrors these people will have witnessed: wholesale murder in death camps, perhaps the cold-blooded butchering of their children and other loved ones. They may have lived as slaves in great degradation, having no choices, separated from loved ones, always wondering what happened to them, fearful that they will never eat another meal, and always facing the betrayal of others

seeking favor and trying to survive. What will these experiences have done to their minds? Because of the need to survive, such circumstances can cause a person to become wholly self-centered. How will we deal with that?

Rebuilding the Ruins

At the very worst of the destruction and mayhem, just when it seems mankind will succeed in totally destroying himself, Jesus Christ will return at the last trumpet. At the same time, we will be resurrected or changed to begin the process of rebuilding lives, towns and nations. This much we know:

» **Isaiah 2:2-3:** 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. 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.

» **Isaiah 51:3:** For the LORD will comfort Zion, He will comfort all her waste places; He will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness will be found in it, thanksgiving and the voice of melody.

» **Isaiah 52:9:** Break forth into joy, sing together, you waste places of Jerusalem! For the Lord has comforted His people, He has redeemed Jerusalem.

» **Isaiah 58:12:** Those from among you shall build the old waste places; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; and you shall be called the Repairer of the Breach, the Restorer of Streets to Dwell In.

Beginning with Jerusalem, the healing and rebuilding will get underway. Gradually, as word of these activities circulates around the globe, representatives of other nations will begin inquiring about why the reconstruction of society works so well in Jerusalem. God's Kingdom will make it work, and at this point each of us comes back into the picture. Will we be able to help? The answer is emphatically, "Yes, you will!" God makes no mistakes in calling people to prepare for service to Him in His plan.

Nor does God fail in carrying through on what He sets out to do in preparing us (Philippians 1:6). "But," we have undoubtedly thought, "what do we know of city management? God should have chosen experts, people already experienced in these areas." Notice, however, how the experts—the strong, mighty, wise and talented of this world—are operating the cities, states and nations today. Are they doing a good job? Something is tragically, horribly missing from their methods!

The Tower of Babel

What has gone wrong? The account of the building of the Tower of Babel raises some interesting implications:

And they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth." But the LORD came down to see the city and the tower which the sons

of men had built. And the LORD said, "Indeed the people are one and they all have one language, and this is what they begin to do; now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them." (Genesis 11:4-6)

How technologically developed the people were at this time is sketchy. The Great Pyramid of Giza, whether built before or after the Flood, is evidence of a high degree of technology. Whatever the case, God's statement that "nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them" implies the builders of Babel were at least on the verge of great technological leaps. How much can a person discover and develop in a seventy-year life span? Yet these people lived hundreds of years! Since knowledge accumulates from generation to generation, imagine how it would build in a person over 500 years!

Consider what man has accomplished in the last 150 years. He has learned how to harness the power of mighty rivers by building dams to produce electricity. He has built soaring bridges across great chasms. He has drilled deeply into the earth to tap its stores of oil and gas to transport ourselves from place to place, heat our homes and fuel our factories. Man has put satellites hundreds of miles into the heavens and placed men on the moon. We can watch the astronauts on television though they are 240,000 miles away!

The list of our technological accomplishments seems endless. Technology, though, is not the answer to mankind's problems. By the time the Millennium begins, the world will have realized that knowledge of physical things cannot solve our problems, especially those of the spirit. Each new technological stride merely titillates us for a while, failing miserably to give a sense of meaning to our lives. Technology cannot rid us of competition and inordinate desire. Instead, it only seems to accelerate the plunge toward oblivion and meaninglessness.

We can be sure God will not permit mankind to rebuild blindly, as Micah 4:1-3 implies:

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 peoples shall flow to it. Many nations 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 the law shall go forth, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He shall judge between many peoples, and rebuke strong nations afar off; 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.

Beginning with Israel, God will take a much more direct and visible role in governing the nations. Representatives of nations will flow to Jerusalem to learn God's ways. They must begin at ground zero and prepare their lives to reflect the image of God, just as we have had to do. That these people come to God is an acknowledgment that they and their forefathers had made a mess of things before Christ returned, and now they want to learn from God and His people how to do things properly.

We Will Be Ready!

As individuals, we may feel our lives are small and inconspicuous. We may not make much money. We may rent a small apartment and not even own a car. Perhaps we even have physical handicaps, be

elderly or think our educational level is too low to be of value to help anyone. We may believe that nothing in our lives is helping us learn to tackle the complex administrative, organizational and personal problems that arise when many people live close together.

Our situation, though, can prepare us to do these things. How? Because this world's problems are much *less* complex than they seem to be! From the top to bottom of society, the overwhelming majority of people do not understand the *nature* of the problems. We are working on and overcoming the nature of these colossal problems *daily*.

We will be prepared to assist these people! We are learning now to live godly lives of giving, cooperating, sharing, submitting to each other humbly, loving and serving our neighbors. We are learning not to look for ways to defend or promote ourselves, seek vindication, amass power or protect our image.

Notice, for example, James 4:1-3:

Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.

This world is filled with wars of every size and magnitude, declared and undeclared. The strong attack the weak, and oppressed minorities fight to throw off the yoke of tyranny. Labor and management throw verbal bombs at each other. Husbands and wives do not divorce because they have peaceful, productive marriages! Increasingly, parents and children seem to look upon each other with scorn and sometimes break into open anger and fighting.

James shows ever so clearly that the root of these problems is lust, merely one expression of human nature. Human nature expresses itself in vanity, jealousy, lust, greed, murder, hatred, avarice, competition, lying, stealing, dishonoring parent, fornication, adultery and—the most damaging of all—idolatry. In fact, we could say that all the above flow from idolatry!

Romans 3:10-18 gives a vivid description of the perversity of human nature:

As it is written: "There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God. They have all gone out of the way; they have together become unprofitable; there is none who does good, no, not one." "Their throat is an open tomb; with their tongues they have practiced deceit"; "the poison of asps is under their lips"; "whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness." "Their feet are swift to shed blood; destruction and misery are in their ways; and the way of peace they have not known." "There is no fear of God before their eyes."

Quite an indictment of the nature that drives human society! This helps us to understand that even the struggles between nations are really only small problems grown great. Two major powers locked in a hot war may seem more complex than neighbors arguing over a backyard fence or a family quarrel, but the causes are essentially the same.

Are there problems in our families? If we make an honest search for the cause, we will find that one or both sides are lusting for something and competing for it. Either abuse of authority or an

unwillingness to submit—or both—will be present because one or both sides want something and feel this is the only way to get it.

Since we cannot serve two masters, lust drives us to serve ourselves to get what we desire. The spin-offs will be insensitivity, inattention, lack of cooperation, gluttony, alcoholism, quarrels, adultery and lying. Our children will learn to be disobedient, nervous, selfish and rowdy.

Faithful in Little

In II Corinthians 11:3, Paul writes that men's minds have been "corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." This means that the massive city, state, national and global problems are merely individual problems multiplied by the population. Nothing will change on earth until individuals are convinced that the solution to the problems begins with them. They first have to work to change themselves before they can begin to expect the community's problems to disappear.

This principle holds true in marriage. If the cause is the same as in individual family quarrels, the solution is also the same. Love, tolerance, kindness, mercy, patience, forgiving, sharing, cooperating and helping, all done with and through contact with the true God and the power of His Spirit activated and used by the individual's faith, will do the trick.

Luke 16:10-13 adds to the picture:

He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much. Therefore if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if you have not been faithful in what is another man's, who will give you what is your own? No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

Jesus Christ does not need to see us in action administering a great city to know how we will govern in His Kingdom. He can see how we solve our problems in our own little life, whether we humble ourselves to be faithful by submitting to His way. Or do we "solve" our relationship problems with others by shouting, punching, hating, crawling into a shell, refusing to fellowship, going on strike, spreading gossip, seeking others to take our side or running down another's reputation?

He can tell by the way we manage our own or our company's money; how we maintain our property; and how we dress. Christ can even judge our abilities by how we drive our car! Some people turn into aggressive, lead-footed monsters behind the wheel. Are we so vain to think the road belongs to us? Would He entrust a city to such an obnoxious person?

A woman once asked Mr. Armstrong what she had to do to worship God and prepare for the Kingdom. Who knows what she expected, but he advised her to begin in her bedroom! No one knows whether he meant that she should work on her prayers, keep the room neat and clean or improve her relationship with her husband—maybe all three. The principle is that preparation for the Kingdom is achieved by working on the little things of life God's way.

Matthew 25:21 illustrates this clearly. "His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'" In this parable, the servant who misused his position was disqualified because the lord could not trust him to use what was given him in a godly way.

Can we see this, brethren? ***The very elements involved in the process of sanctification are the ones that prepare and qualify us to rule!***

What kind of decisions do we make in the everyday things of life? The choices required to live God's way are really very simple. Basically, they are a matter of saying, "Yes" or "No" to God's law. It does not have to be complicated for God to judge where we stand. He did not give Adam and Eve some long, complex mathematical, engineering or political test. It was a simple test of obedience involving one of the most basic areas of life—food. You can eat this but not that.

We do not have to be an Adolf Hitler to prove ourselves unsuitable to rule over others. How we treat our spouse, children or friends will provide ample evidence. Do we carefully think through what we say? Do we keep our word? Are we short-tempered, hard to get along with, stubborn and uncooperative unless things are done our way? Are we quick to judge, impatient, malicious, foul-mouthed or rebellious? Do we seek preferential treatment or position?

Christ needs to know if we will live His way now, before He entrusts us with the power of office in His Kingdom. The leaders of this world are not interested in the Way (see Acts 9:2; 16:17; 18:25-26; 19:9). They consider it foolish, unrealistic, impractical and simplistic. So they make treaties and break them, and the wonderful advances of technology continue to prove useless in things that matter. The Kingdom of God, however, will produce all the good things written in the prophecies because the government itself reflects them. They are in its character, and they have already manifested themselves in each ruler's life.

The Knowledge of the Lord

Isaiah 11:9 prophesies of a wonderful time that is just over the horizon, and it explains why the World Tomorrow will be so wonderful. "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea." When the knowledge of God is fully taught, believed and lived by those dwelling on earth, an ideal world will result!

We will be the ones teaching the people the knowledge of God. They will be led to repentance and faith as we "rule them with a rod of iron" (Revelation 2:26-27). God's rulership is not abusive, but it is a firm guidance along the *only* way that works, His way. We will be qualified to lead them as priests of God because we will really know our subject. We will have studied it and lived it until it became thoroughly ingrained as our character. Because we will be living it, we will be good examples, which is as good a teaching method as there is. Because we have lived it and proved it and seen its fruits, we will be teachers dedicated to seeing our students improve, prosper and live joyously. Good teachers are not cruel or vindictive. They do not relish having to rebuke. We will be slow to anger, meek and self-controlled with a sincere desire to help.

Some worry that they will be unable to express themselves adequately before others who may have greater education. Never fear! Hebrews 2:18 shows an interesting principle about teaching, "For in

that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted." We will communicate well with our students, even as Christ does, because we will be speaking from experience. We will be speaking in terms they understand because they will be going through then what we are now.

Physically constructing a town, city or even a nation is the easy part. The talent will be available in the people who survive into the Millennium. The hard part is working to rid mankind of the underlying problems of his nature and character. As long as our students are sincerely trying and overcoming even ever so gradually, we will patiently teach God's way of life over and over again. We will communicate humility and warmth to them even as Christ now does to us. When we are finally put in a position where we can truly help, we will need to express God's perfect, healing and positive love with every ounce of our being.

As we approach this year's Feast of Tabernacles, let us prepare with the purpose of our awesome destiny in mind, imitating Him even now, for this is the way He is preparing us to rule in the wonderful World Tomorrow!